



Main Model United Nations Conference

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SDGs – Leave No One Behind

BACKGROUND

GUIDE

UN WOMEN

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Main Model United Nations Conference 2023

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Words of Welcome

Distinguished Representatives, dear Faculty Advisors,

we are honored to welcome you to the 18th edition of the MainMUN conference and are looking forward to three days of discussing, debating and voting on matters of international importance.

As your Chairs, we are happy to introduce ourselves to our future delegates: Hello everyone, my name is Marc, and I am thrilled to be one of the two Chairs of UN Women at this year's iteration of MainMUN. After being a part of the MainMUN team during my Bachelor Studies in Economics and Business Administration in Frankfurt and chairing the Economics and Social Council as well as the Security Council, It is a great feeling to be a part of the conference again. I look forward to meeting you all in March and having a great time together.

My name is Bo and even if I have been chairing for a long time, this will be my first time chairing at MainMUN and I am excited for the debates and look forward to meeting you all!

At MainMUN 2023, we will be modeling the work of UN Women, thus you will participate as an ambassador of one of its Member States. The topics for this year's conference at the UN Women committee will be:

Topic I: *Ensuring Access to and Legality of Reproductive Health Care and Reproductive Rights.*

Topic II: *Representation of Women in Higher Education Faculty and Executive Positions.*

The following study guide is to provide you with basic committee and topic information. Nevertheless, we highly encourage you to do further research, using additional resources, as well as the ones provided under *Advice for Delegates*. Furthermore, writing a position paper can be a good start to exploring the position of your assigned delegation, taking into consideration cultural, economic and other differences that may distinguish your nation from other Member States. Finally, a position paper allows you to receive feedback from your chairs and to start off the conference well prepared and confidently. However, if you ever feel uncertain about information regarding the conference or have any concerns regarding your committee please do not hesitate to reach out to your chairs or any other member of the MainMUN 2023 team.

We are looking forward to getting to know you better and a great weekend of diplomacy, tackling issues that influence our day-to-day life.

Yours Sincerely,

Marc & Bo

(Chairs of UN Women at the MainMUN 2023 conference)

1. Committee Description

The foundation for UN Women's work was laid on July 2, 2010, when Resolution A/RES/64/289 was unanimously passed by the United Nations General Assembly (GA) (General Assembly 2010: 8). Through this, the GA voted to create a new UN entity to merge and expand the efforts of previous UN bodies concerned with topics of gender equality and women's empowerment. These bodies include the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) which was established in 1946, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which were both founded in 1976, as well as the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) which had been established in 1997 (UN Women 2023a). Since then, UN Women has installed an Executive Board with three-year memberships held by representatives of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and other States as well as other contributing countries that work together in an attempt to promote gender equality across the globe (UN Women 2023b).

One of the core functions of UN Women is to negotiate and formulate "globally agreed standards for gender equality" (UN Women 2023c). However, the organization's work does not stop there but UN Women partners up with various global players to assist UN Member States in implementing "those standards by providing expertise and financial support" (UN Women 2023c). As a first step in this process, UN Women is dedicated to lead by example by "ensuring the equal and active participation of women at all levels of the UN system" (UN Women 2023c). Moving from a UN level to the importance of gender equality in a global society, UN Women targets its efforts toward enhancing leadership and political participation, providing opportunities for economic empowerment, ending violence against women, striving for peace and security, providing humanitarian action, assisting in governance and national planning, incorporating youth, empowering women and girls with disabilities, fighting the spread of and enhancing information on HIV and AIDS, and working toward sustainable development (UN Women 2023d).

Affirming the continuing relevance of these targets, this committee is going to not only discuss the access to health care services but also the importance of education in the enhancement of female leadership.

As for the discussion of health care, MainMUN 2023 introduces Topic I: *Ensuring Access to and Legality of Reproductive Health Care and Reproductive Rights*. While the 2020s have seen more and more countries revising and restricting the regulations for and accessibility to reproductive health care, UN Women has reaffirmed that “[r]eproductive rights are women’s rights and human rights” (UN Women 2022) in a statement from June 24, 2022. This decision is based on the fact that “[t]o be able to exercise their human rights and make essential decisions, women need to be able to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children” (UN Women 2022).

Concerning the discussion of female leadership, MainMUN 2023 dedicated Topic II to the Representation of Women in Higher Education Faculty and Executive Positions. In line with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 education, especially in the tertiary sector should be made available to all women and girls equally. Looking more closely at decision-making positions and professorship in academia, one can see that women are chronically underrepresented. Changing that is the objective of the discussion about this topic at MainMUN 2023.

1.1. Basic Committee Data

Founding	2 July 2010 (UN Women 2010)
Representation in SDGs	<p>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDGs 2023)</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere ● 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation ● 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation ● 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared

	<p>responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life ● 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
<p>Governance</p>	<p>Based on a multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure with the General Assembly (GA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission on the Status of Women constituting the structure for normative support functions and providing normative policy guidance, and the GA together with the ECOSOC and Executive Board constituting the structure for operational activities and providing operational policy guidance (UN Women 2023e).</p>
<p>Executive Board Members 2023 (UN Women 2023b)</p>	<p>Composition: 41 Member States elected for three-year terms by the ECOSOC in accordance with the following chart: Africa (10), Asia and the Pacific (10), Eastern Europe (4), Latin America and the Caribbean (6), Western Europe and other States (5), and contributing countries (6).</p> <p>Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Burkina Faso (2025) ● Cameroon (2024) ● Côte d’Ivoire (2025) ● Egypt (2024)



- Eritrea (2025)
- Gabon (2025)
- Gambia (2024)
- Kenya (2024)
- South Africa (2024)
- Zimbabwe (2025)

Asian and the Pacific:

- Afghanistan (2024)
- Bangladesh (2024)
- China (2025)
- India (2024)
- Japan (2025)
- Qatar (2025)
- Republic of Korea (2025)
- Tajikistan (2025)
- Thailand (2024)
- Turkmenistan (2024)

Eastern Europe:

- Bulgaria (2025)
- Poland (2024)
- Latvia (2025)
- Ukraine (2024)

Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Colombia (2024)
- Dominican Republic (2024)
- Guyana (2024)
- Panama (2025)
- Paraguay (2025)
- Trinidad and Tobago (2025)

	<p>Western Europe and other States</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ireland (2024) ● France (2025) ● Italy (2024) ● New Zealand (2025) ● Switzerland (2025) <p>Contributing Countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finland (2025) ● Germany (2025) ● Norway (2025) ● United States (2025)
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2. Topic I: Ensuring Access to and Legality of Reproductive Health Care and Reproductive Rights

2.1. Introduction

Even with globalization and the higher standard of education worldwide, gender equality thus seems utopian as the Gender Equality Index decreased throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (World Economic Forum 2022: 5). It all starts with respect and dignity for women to achieve gender-equal world. A gender-equal world includes equal political representation, equal pay for equal work, and eliminating gender-based violence.

Accessibility to reproductive health care is a significant factor in ensuring gender equality. Thus, featured in target 5.6 of Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. While this attests to the importance and awareness of the topic, recent global events such as the overturn of Roe v. Wade in the U.S. which coincided with the overturn of §219a in Germany in 2022, paint the picture of unequal access to reproductive health services and reproductive rights. Nevertheless, the effects of these events cannot only be measured in their media coverage but also become evident through the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which states that

“14. Women still do not have access to the full range of their sexual and reproductive health and rights” with “190 million women of reproductive age (15-49) who wanted to avoid pregnancy [that] were not using any contraceptive method” (UN Women 2021: 4).

2.2. Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights Around the Globe/Concepts, Facts and Figures

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sexual and reproductive health involves five key components, namely:

- Ensuring contraceptive choice and safety and infertility services;
- Improving maternal and newborn health;

- Reducing sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and other reproductive morbidities;
- Eliminating unsafe abortion and providing post-abortion care; and
- Promoting healthy sexuality, including adolescent health, and reducing harmful practices (UNFPA 2010:13).

2.2.1. Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Adolescents

In today's world there are several challenges preventing people from enjoying their full reproductive rights and adequate reproductive health, even though sexual reproductive rights should be considered as essential human rights (United Nations 2014: 8 & 80). One group especially affected are young people. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the ability of adolescents to decide on matters affecting their lives, there are still a lot of states requiring parental consent for adolescents to gain access to contraceptives and education on sexual health (ECOSOC 2012: 9). This can lead to adolescents not seeking health education, and even in situations where parental consent is not required young people may be prevented from getting adequate advice due to the stigma related to sexuality, and sometimes due to relatively high costs of contraceptive products for young people (ECOSOC 2012: 9).

2.2.2. Rape and Female Genital Mutilation

Women are affected most when it comes to infringements of sexual and reproductive rights. Discriminatory practices against sexual and reproductive rights continue to exist, and violence against women, including rape, is a main contributor to this issue (United Nations 2014). A multi-country study in Asia and the Pacific found that almost half of the 10,000 men interviewed admitted to using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner, and nearly a quarter of the interviewees admitted to having committed rape against a woman or girl (United Nations 2014:28). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is another serious issue affecting women and girls, with at least 200 million women alive today having undergone some form of FGM (UNICEF 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines FGM as "the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (WHO 2022a)", stating that "[t]he practice has no health benefits for girls and women" (WHO 2022a). While the number of women and girls being affected by FGM has been declining over the last decades, the core issue of women being subjected to rape and FGM remains a human rights

issue of great concern, which not only affects a victims right to sexual and reproductive health care. Adequate access to information and education on sexual and reproductive rights is necessary to address this issue (United Nations 2014: iii).

2.2.3. Maternal Health

According to Amnesty International about every 90 seconds a woman dies in pregnancy or during childbirth (Amnesty International 2017). While the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) (the number of maternal deaths per 100.000 live births) dropped by 38% between the years 2000 and 2017, the total number of deaths remains high and the vast majority of cases occur in low and lower middle-income countries(WHO 2019). The difference in the MMR between low income countries and high income countries is particularly notable. In 2017 low income countries had an MMR of 462 per 100.000 live births, compared to an MMR of 11 per 100.000 live births in high income countries (WHO 2019). Among the main causes for maternal deaths are severe bleeding, infections, complications during or after delivery and unsafe abortions (WHO 2019). Most maternal deaths would be preventable, as the necessary health care solutions and procedures for managing complications are well known and would in most cases be easy to administer, given adequate provisions for the treatment. The main issues affecting these numbers are inadequate and poor health services, the distance to health facilities, lack of information, cultural beliefs, and poverty (WHO 2019). The issue of maternal mortality is addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with SDG 3 including the target to reduce “the global MMR to less than 70 per 100 000 births, with no country having a maternal mortality rate of more than twice the global average”(WHO 2019).

2.2.4. Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV

There are more than more than 1 million new sexually transmitted infections (STI) every day, with an estimated 374 million STIs per year around the globe (WHO 2022b). All in all there are more than 30 different bacteria, viruses and parasites that can be transmitted through sexual contact, some of whom can be transmitted to unborn children during pregnancy (WHO 2022b). STIs can have serious consequences, including but not limited to an increase in the risk of an HIV infection, increasing the risk of cervical and other cancers, inflammation and infertility, stillbirth and neonatal death (WHO 2022b). As with the issue of maternal mortality, treatments and means for the prevention of STIs are well known. Condoms are one of the most effective measures of protection against STIs. Vaccines for STIs such as Hepatitis B are developed and effective, with vaccines against other STIs being in clinical

development or undergoing clinical trials (WHO 2022b). Adequate access to health institutions and to information on the spread and prevention of STIs is needed in order to lower the number of STIs.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is probably the most well-known disease, which can also be transmitted during sexual contact. It causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In 2021 around 38 million people around the globe were living with HIV, 1.5 millions of whom got infected in 2021. Around 650.000 people died from the disease in 2021, with 40.1 million people having died from AIDS-related illnesses since the beginning of the HIV pandemic (UNAIDS 2022). While HIV can be transmitted via other means such as contaminated drug use equipment, the transmission during sex remains one of the main causes for an HIV infection (NHS 2022). As with other STIs, access to and adequate use of condoms are one of the most effective ways of preventing an HIV infection through sexual intercourse (WHO 2022c: 30).

2.2.5. Abortion and Unsafe Abortion practices

Each year around 73 million abortions take place worldwide, with 61% of unintended pregnancies, and 29% of all pregnancies ending in an induced abortion (WHO 2021). The WHO includes comprehensive abortion care in its list of essential health care services, and sees the procedure as a simple health care intervention, that can be managed by a variety of health workers, and in the first weeks of pregnancy even be safely self-managed by individuals, given the proper access to information and quality medicines (WHO 2021). However, estimates from 2010 to 2014 concluded that 45% of induced abortions worldwide have been carried out under unsafe conditions, with one third of those being performed under the least safe conditions, e.g. using invasive methods by untrained individuals (WHO 2021). 97% of unsafe abortions take place in developing countries, with more than half of unsafe abortions occurring in Asia. Approximately 3 out of 4 abortions in Africa and Latin America are considered unsafe, and almost half of all abortions in Africa are carried out under the least safe conditions (WHO 2021). The inaccessibility of quality abortion care leads to the violation of human rights of women and girls seeking such care, including violations of the right to life, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the the right to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of children, among others. Between five and 13% of maternal deaths worldwide can be attributed to unsafe abortions. 30 women die for every 100.000 unsafe abortions carried out in developed countries, while 220 deaths per 100.000 unsafe abortions occur in developing regions (WHO 2021).

Studies have shown that a restriction of access to abortion does not lead to a reduction in the number of abortions, but affects whether the abortions are carried out in a safe and dignified manner, with the number of unsafe abortions being significantly higher in countries with very restrictive abortion laws, when compared to countries with less restrictive laws. Among the issues restricting access to abortion are high costs, the stigma associated with people seeking abortions as well as health care workers carrying out abortions, and the refusal of health workers offering abortions based on conscience or religious beliefs (WHO 2021).

2.2.6. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Reproductive Rights

Looking at the aforementioned examples, information about reproductive rights and adequate access to reproductive health facilities contributes positively to the enjoyment of reproductive rights around the globe. According to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development:

“reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents“(UNFPA 2014: 60).

This confirms that the issue of reproductive health care and reproductive rights is strongly interlinked with issues of human rights, including gender equality. Studies in 57 countries by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) found, that only 55% of women who are married or in a union are able to decide completely independently on issues regarding their sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health (Kanem 2020). It is estimated that around 232 million women worldwide who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraceptives (Kanem 2020).

Several states and regions have implemented some kind of legislation or treaty to address the issues of equality and non-discrimination when it comes to reproductive rights. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, was passed by African Union Member States in 2003. It calls on states to guarantee equality and non-discrimination in health care, noting that gender-equality requires that women’s health needs are

met (OHCHR 2018: 6). According to comments to the Maputo Protocol, it obliges states to address legal and policy barriers as well as cultural, social, religious and economic barriers preventing women from attaining their respective rights (OHCHR 2018: 6).

2.3. International Framework

UN and Regional Documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, laid the groundwork for further establishing rights to reproductive health care and reproductive rights. These issues were first specifically addressed at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt (UNFPA 2014). The report highlights the importance of sexual, reproductive and health rights for both men and women, and grants people the right to a healthy and safe sexual life (UNFPA 2014). Consequently, several other conferences, as well as resolutions in the General Assembly and ECOSOC stressed the importance of sexual and reproductive rights. The 1994 ICPD report therefore posed a remarkable achievement for the implementation of reproductive rights and reproductive health in international debates (United Nations 2014). In November 2019 at the ICPD+25 Nairobi Summit celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ICPD summit and reaffirmed its goals. Accomplishments since the first ICPD summit were reviewed and countries pledged money to support sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, as well as pledging around \$8 billion to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths, zero gender-based violence and harmful practices and zero unmet need for family planning by 2030 (United Nations 2023a).

The SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 with the goal of achieving the targets set out in the SDGs by 2030. Goal Three of the SDGs calls to "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"(United Nations 2023b). Several sub-targets of SDG three are addressing the issues of reproductive rights and reproductive health directly. Goal 3.1 aims to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100.000, goal 3.3 aims to end epidemics, including the AIDS epidemic, goal 3.7 aims to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, and several of the sub-goals include some form of education and information on health-related topics, including reproductive health (United Nations 2023b).

2.4. Advice for Delegates

However, while the ICPD and its subsequent summits brought the issue of reproductive rights and reproductive health to the attention of the international community, and while the SDGs promote the implementation of measures to ensure reproductive rights and adequate health measures for all, there are still many areas that need improvements in order to achieve these goals. Delegates of UN Women at MainMUN 2023 are tasked with finding comprehensive solutions to further implement the rules and principles set out in the ICPD and the SDGs. What measures can be taken to improve the integrity and operativity of medical infrastructure, including the building of roads, healthcare centres, and training of medical professionals, to ensure quality access to healthcare for women and girls? What measures can be taken to tackle the legal and cultural issues regarding the reproductive empowerment of women and girls through access to safe and affordable abortion and contraception methods? What is universal access to reproductive health? Why is it important? How far have we progressed? And where do we go from here? These questions need to be addressed during the debate at MainMUN 2023, and we are looking forward to your input. As a starting point we prepared some guiding questions for your research on your countries position:

2.4.1. Guiding Questions:

1. What laws has your country passed concerning reproductive rights and reproductive health?
2. What is the current situation in your country concerning cases of rape, unsafe abortion, female genital mutilation and/or other human rights violations related to reproductive rights?
3. What measures has your country taken to educate its citizens on reproductive health?
4. What can your country contribute to achieving the respective SDGs on reproductive rights by the year 2030?

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3. Topic II: Representation of Women in Higher Education Faculty and Executive Positions

3.1. Current Situation

In recent years it has become apparent that gender equality is an important step towards the completion of the SDGs. In many areas there are measures taken to ensure gender equality is not forgotten. However, “[i]n all the places, where decisions are made, gender parity is far from being achieved” (UN Women 2022: 19). This is especially true for political positions of power, as in 2022 only 27 countries had a female head of state, that is 14% worldwide (ibid.). On national political leadership level, it would take an estimated 40 years to reach gender parity (UN 2022).

But how about academia, higher education faculty and executive positions of women? In 2018, of the 200 best universities in the world, according to a ranking by the Times Higher Education, only 18% were led by women (AdvanceHE 2018). In order for gender equality to become reality, there needs to be more representation of discriminated groups in decision-making positions. The distribution of men and women is unequal in a lot of sectors, at MainMUN 2023 we will be predominantly talking about the tertiary education sector. In the European Union (EU),

“women are overrepresented as teachers at the levels of primary and lower secondary education, but their representation within decision-making positions is rather low, especially in tertiary education” (EIGE 2023a).

At the global level, there are 43% of women as teachers on the tertiary level (UNSD 2020). However, leadership positions are still rarely attained by women, for example in Brasilia, the applications for school leadership positions were mostly sent in by men, with only 25% of all schools had some women applying. Another example is Bulgaria, the education ministers of the last 140 years were predominantly male, of all 96 ministers, 5,2 were female (UNESCO 2020: 3).

In 2020 there were 66% of women finishing upper secondary education and 41% enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 36% of men (Statista 2023). However, there is a huge imbalance between men and women in academia, especially in executive positions and research positions. Education is the foundation for women and girls everywhere in order for equal opportunities and to remove gender inequality (SDGs 2020: 2). But not only gender, also race, class and disability are factors that historically have been keeping people from reaching a higher education (UN 2023). There are many benefits to

education of women and girls, such as reduced infant mortality, later pregnancies, and marriages (Karam). Gender inequality in education also stunts economic growth of countries (Klasen/Lamanna 2009: 92). The report on the progress of the SDGs, as analysed on a gender level, shows that the world is not on track to reach gender equality by 2030, it is far from it. It may take approximately 286 more years to remove all discriminatory laws and for complete legal protection for women and girls (UN Women 2022: 2). In this report it is also shown that the pandemic has stunted the quest for gender equality everywhere in the world. Especially reaching goal 4, quality education, has suffered a setback of the recent progress. Girls were placed “at greater risks of gender-based violence, mental health disorders, and food and economic insecurity” (UN Women 2022: 9).

In conclusion, women and girls are less represented at higher education faculty and executive positions, and in general are less likely to enter into the labour force, even with graduating from a tertiary education institution. That’s why it is important to debate opportunities for women to get into decision-making positions in the tertiary education sector.

3.1.1. The Matthew and Matilda Effect

In academia there are certain theories, and for this topic the Matilda effect is particularly interesting. However, to understand the Matilda effect, it is necessary to rudimentary also know the Matthew effect. The Matthew effect describes the phenomenon that when a scientist is already famous, work they did not do alone or even work they did not do at all, gets associated with them (Rossiter 1993: 325). The Matilda effect in return refers to the “systematic under-valuing of women’s contributions” (Rossiter 1993: 334). Brought forward by Margaret Rossiter (1993), especially in the context of women in science, she gives many examples where women were the main thinker behind a scientific breakthrough, but more often than not their male counterpart received the recognition.

This lack of recognition of women’s work is also a barrier that needs to be broken in order to reach gender equality in higher education faculty and executive positions. Especially in the research sector there is a big gender disparity, as only 30% of researchers are female (UNSD 2020).

3.1.2. Gender Mainstreaming

Another important concept is gender mainstreaming. When policies are written and implemented, most of the time they do not include different policies or consider different strategies for different genders. But in most cases this is important, as the main objective of gender mainstreaming is combatting discrimination based on gender (EIGE 2023a).

Gender mainstreaming generally means bringing gendered issues into the public perspective and to transform it from a niche topic that only addresses women to a topic that is important for everyone (ILO 2022). The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has defined gender mainstreaming as thinking about the implications of certain policies and laws for women and girls. What is especially important is that gender mainstreaming does not exclusively mean women, but gender.

“Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts” (ILO 2020).

The United Nations (UN) are also implementing gender mainstreaming strategies in their work, and in the Beijing Action Plan of 1997 gender mainstreaming was identified as one of the key strategies in order to successfully reach gender equality worldwide (Un Women 2020a).

In the context of universities, it is therefore important to implement gender mainstreaming policies to allocate higher education faculty and executive positions fairly.



Figure 1: EIGE (2023): Dimensions of Gender Mainstreaming. Online: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming> (Last accessed: 09.01.2023).

3.1.3. Women in STEM

A special case is the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sector in tertiary education, as this is predominantly male and the numbers between women and men differ even more as in other areas. Through gender bias and other stereotypes, girls at a young age are turned away from STEM related fields and do not pursue a tertiary education, nor a doctorate or a research position in these fields (UN Women 2019).

For reaching the SDGs, STEM subjects and knowledge is important, as for example innovation in climate mitigation related technologies is crucial. Furthermore, the SDGs are holistic and complement each other, there is for example a special focus on STEM in goal 4. Including women and girls in innovation and STEM areas

“promotes scientific excellence and boosts the quality of STEM outcomes, as diverse perspectives aggregate creativity, reduce potential biases, and promote more robust knowledge and solutions” (UNESCO 2017: 15).

It is therefore important to teach young girls and boys early on that research fields do not have gender and that STEM areas are not inherently male.

Between 2014 and 2016 of all the female students globally, only 30% chose STEM related fields, with only 3% studying Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). And then gender disparities widen. After completing the first degree, most women do not choose to complete a higher degree in STEM, such as a Masters or a Doctorate (UNESCO 2017: 23). The reasons for this can be, next to gender bias, “perceived compatibility of certain STEM fields with female identity, family obligations, the working environment and conditions” (UNESCO 2017: 23). These are generally also some of the reasons why women in general do not pursue higher education faculty and executive positions.

3.2. Frameworks

In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the resolution A/RES/34/180 to end all discrimination against women. Articles 10, 11 and 13 highlight the educational and work force perspective, they affirm that discrimination against women is not in accordance with the UN (OHCHR 2023).

In 1995, the fourth conference for women took place in Beijing. The result of that conference was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, A/CONF.177/20. The goal was clear,

“The Platform for Action imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work” (UN Women 2015).

Article 14 of that resolution also declared that women’s rights are human rights (UN Women 2020: 14). The General Assembly (GA) regularly publishes resolutions that concern the follow-up of the fourth conference for women, and the implementation of the Beijing Action Plan, the most recent one, A/RES/74/128, was published in 2019.

The Sustainable Development Goals are the goals set by the United Nations (UN) in the Agenda 2030. The Resolution A/RES/70/1 was adopted by the GA in 2015. The topic of women in higher education faculty and executive positions are mostly associated with goal 4 and 5. Goal 4 being Quality Education, as target 4.3 calls for “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university” (SDGs 2023a).

Goal 5, Gender Equality, more broadly calls for equal opportunities between all genders, and calls for action to protect girls and women. Target 5.1 puts an emphasis on ending all discrimination against women and girls and Target 5.5 calls for “Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making” (SDGs 2023b). These two targets most closely resonate with the topic of women in higher education faculty and executive positions.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) also repeatedly brings forward resolutions concerning gender mainstreaming and gender equality. The most recent resolution E/RES/2019/2, set the goal to implement gender mainstreaming policies and perspectives in all UN policies and programmes. Therefore, all future resolutions and policies should commit to gender equality through gender mainstreaming (ECOSOC 2019). The committee that champions women’s rights globally is UN Women. They publish reports and data concerning the progress of gender equality, for example the report on the progress of the SDGs or in general data on issues related to gender equality. Furthermore, they report before the GA, for example on the progress of the Beijing Plan for Action. UN Women publishes a lot of different materials, ranging from reports to action plans or articles (UN Women 2023)

Regarding every aforementioned resolution on the subject of gender mainstreaming, the UN Secretary-General also writes a report concerning the progress of gender mainstreaming in UN policies and programmes. The last one, E/2021/52, is from 2021 and highlights the damages to gender equality by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also the crucial role women have played in combatting the virus and their work in many different sectors that helped the system to not collapse (UN 2021).

3.2.1 Policies and Laws

Most countries of the European Union (EU) have some kind of law regarding gender equality in universities and higher education. But also the EU itself has dedicated policies concerning that topic. For example, in the Treaty of Amsterdam from 1997 the Member States dedicated themselves to gender equality at the workplace and to end discrimination against women (Eurofound 2010).

The African Union (AU) also has strategies to combat discrimination against women and to empower women and girls in all sectors of life. In 2019 they launched a strategy that relies on six pillars, including education for all and more women in leadership positions (AU 2023).

However, there is still to do concerning the situation of laws concerning gender equality at the workplace. In 2021, 90% of the Member States of the UN had provisions regarding the rights of women concerning employment and protection in their constitutions (UN Women 2020c).

3.3. Examples from around the World

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has published the “Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool” (EIGE 2023b). Universities and other academic institutes can find practical advice and tools there to diminish the gender gap in higher education. It for example has a step by step explanation how to reach gender equality at universities faster, and what faculty needs to implement in order to make sure that more women take on higher positions. They offer videos and webinars on the topic of implementing a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and other guidelines to ensure gender mainstreaming in the EU (EIGE 2023d).

Other universities have also established institutes for Gender Equality, but not every tertiary education facility has the resources to establish an institute that holds them accountable, and not every facility sees the need for such an institution.

In a lot of Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan, Armenia or Azerbaijan the number of female professors is exceptionally high, with Kazakhstan ranking at 68% women as professors. This has a lot to do with equality in the school system, however, it also has to do with a much higher paying private sector and the tendency of men to take on higher paying jobs (World Atlas 2017). But equality in the education sector and equal chances for all are important in order to reach gender equality everywhere.

3.4. Challenges

Globally, there are more women than men to enrol in tertiary education facilities, even though there are regional differences (UNDESA 2020a). More men than women teach at tertiary level, globally 43% percent of teachers at tertiary level are women, but regional numbers differ extremely. In Central Asia the number is 54% and in Sub-Saharan Africa there are 25% of tertiary level teachers female (UNDESA 2020b).

Studies have shown that women more often than not do not apply to executive positions or higher research positions, reasons for that are manifold. In higher education faculties gender bias can be seen

very clearly. There are many barriers for women to break through, origins are different. Barriers can be institutional, “such as lack of clarity or consistency in promotion and tenure expectations, a lack of mentoring by a senior faculty, expectations for excessive service, and devaluing or research interest and scholarly work”(Mahat 2021: 9). Other barriers can be cultural or personal, for example family that demands attention and the lack of community that can support academic aspirations (Mahat 2021: 9). There is also the problem of the so-called explicit and implicit gender bias. The former is when its actively expressed and thought that certain jobs are inherently male and women are not capable enough to do them. It is still more common than one thinks, even if there is no scientific proof that such statements have absolutely no truth in them. The latter gender bias, the implicit one is harder to detect, but found in every aspect of life. In academia there is the expectation that women can not work late or are interested in certain topics, not only from possible employers, but also from family and friends.

“Implicit gender biases are built through many different mechanisms: by media showing images of scientists as men, by faculty having mostly male professors, by the working culture of many academic departments which fits easily to a man, and less easily to a woman” (Simitsek 2017).

But not only gender bias and barriers play a role, there are many challenges regarding the implementation and execution of gender related actions, campaigns, plans etc. The most basic requirement is that the need for a so called “Gender Equality Plan (GEP)” (EIGE 2023c) exists. If there are not enough people to recognise that implementing a GEP is beneficial, then there will likely be no GEP. Furthermore, if there are not enough men, or too many men resisting such a GEP, it will also not be implemented. Gender equality can only be reached if men are working towards that goal not against it (ibid.).

Another factor that is also seen in other gender equality programs, not only in academia, is the belief that a GEP itself is discriminatory and women can reach everything on their own, if they are good enough. In higher education this is called meritocracy, that only the best scientists land executive and faculty positions, and that their gender, class or race does not matter.

As demonstrated are there many challenges, most of them have to do with structural barriers, as well as different opinions and mindsets concerning GEP in higher education faculty and executive positions. These barriers have to be taken down, so more women and other marginalised groups can take on higher education faculty and executive positions.

Another enormous challenge is the lack of opportunities for many girls to enrol in tertiary education. In two-thirds of the countries of the world, gender parity has been achieved in the enrolment of primary schools, and in most countries the numbers are close, although the Covid-19 pandemic has undone some of the progress achieved before 2020 (World Bank 2022). But after that, the numbers differ and even

though globally the numbers of enrolment, not completion, into tertiary education facilities is a little higher for women, this differs extremely looking at different regions of the world. Furthermore, finishing university does not change the numbers of female employment on the labour market, with regions like South Asia with 24% compared to higher scoring regions like East Asia, 59%, or Latin America, 53%. And even in these regions, the numbers of women and men are not equal (World Bank 2022).

Why is this important to know? When talking about women in executive and higher education faculty positions, it is also important to look at the way before, does everyone have the chance to equally reach tertiary education and therefore have the chance for a research position or a position at university? The answer is no.

3.5. Advice for Delegates

We hope that this background guide has given you an overview of the topic and its challenges. Now it is your turn to research what your country is doing regarding gender equality in tertiary education executive positions and what other measures could be implemented, whether worldwide or just in the country you're representing (as well as similar countries). Important is also finding out who your allies can be and informing yourself about your country's stance in the UN Women. For finding out more, you may look at the Bibliography, but we also have provided some useful links where you can start. You should also think about the role of the United Nations in this topic and how the UN Women Committee can actively bring change to the current problematics.

3.5.1. Further Research for Delegates

Some links that may be helpful for your research

<https://www.unwomen.org/en> The website of UN Women.

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/where> This are some policies and laws by the Member States of the European Union.

<https://www.statista.com/> For interesting statistics you can always visit this page.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022> The report on the progress of the SDGs as seen from a gendered perspective.

<https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/gender-report/laws-and-policies-promoting-gender-equality-in-education-are-inadequately-implemented/> The UNESCO Gender Report.

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3.7. Table of Figures

Figure 1: European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) (2023): *Dimensions of Gender Mainstreaming*. Online: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming> (Last accessed: 09.01.2023).