



Towards equality

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office for Gender Equality FÖGE

OUR MANDATE

The article on equality in the Federal Constitution and the Gender Equality Act are the starting point for our mandate. It includes:

- > the removal of all forms of direct or indirect discrimination;
- > the promotion of gender equality in all areas of life.

The Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE is an office within the Federal Department of Home Affairs.

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

We are involved in the drafting of legislation and in parliamentary business.

Achieving gender equality requires amendments to legislation. Within the Federal Administration we give our opinions on parliamentary motions, changes to the Federal Constitution and on proposed laws and ordinances.

Equality before the law is the basis for real equality.

REAL EQUALITY

For men and women to actually have the same opportunities in all areas of life, initiatives and projects that implement what is enshrined in the Constitution are required. Traditional roles and models need to be scrapped and new paths found.

We promote equal opportunities and equal pay in the workplace

Not affording men and women equal opportunities means: Casting aside talents, not exploiting potential and putting a motivated working climate at risk. Thus it is in the interest of our companies themselves to employ, develop and remunerate their employees without prejudice. We support them in this, for example through the development of a tool for internally checking pay equality or by awarding financial support to innovative projects working to achieve equality.

A working climate free of sexual harassment fosters both the motivation and the health of employees and increases the productivity of the company. We help achieve this.

We promote equality in the family

Families need a conducive environment in order to successfully achieve a fair division of paid work, caring for the family and housework. We are committed to facilitating the combination of work and family life and to achieving a fair division of paid and unpaid work between the genders.

We are committed to preventing domestic violence

Real equality is only possible in relationships that are free of violence. We help to prevent and combat violence between couples who are in a relationship or going through a process of separation.

INFORMATION, AWARENESS RAISING AND ADVICE

Information, awareness raising and advice

We inform the public and raise awareness. We commission academic studies and publications and thus provide important information leading to targeted projects. We write information sheets, brochures and guidelines on current topics, and through conferences, seminars, impetus programmes and campaigns we ensure that information is passed on and the awareness of the public and specific professional categories is raised.

We advise associations, companies, organizations and administrations

We provide our specialist knowledge to bodies both inside and outside the federal administration. As a centre of competence within the Confederation for equality issues we are the hub for joint projects.

OUR NETWORK

At a national level

we have constant contact with all organizations involved with equality issues. Our key partner organizations include:

- > the Swiss Conference of Gender Equality Delegates;
- > the Federal Commission for Women's Issues;
- > Swiss women's, men's and equality umbrella organizations.

Together with the Swiss Conference of Gender Equality Delegates we give our opinions on equality issues and conduct nationwide campaigns and projects.

At an international level

contact with the UN and the Council of Europe is extremely important for our work. Part of our task is to implement international guidelines in Switzerland.



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THE LAW

EQUALITY AS A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

Since 1981 the Federal Constitution has included a specific provision on gender equality (Article 8, paragraph 3). This explicitly enshrines the obligation of ensuring gender equality not just in the eyes of the law, but also in reality.

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GENDER EQUALITY ACT

Gender Equality Act and prohibition of discrimination

The Gender Equality Act GEA, which came into force in 1996, is designed to promote actual equality of men and women. It prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of gender and is applicable to all employment relationships. The prohibition of discrimination applies in particular to

- > recruitment;
- > allocation of tasks;
- > working conditions;
- > remuneration;
- > professional development;
- > promotion;
- > dismissal.

Sexual harassment is also expressly prohibited.

The more people there are who know about the law and call for its enforcement, the faster we will achieve equality.

Rulings

Two databases give a good overview of rulings under the Gender Equality Act.

www.gleichstellungsgesetz.ch

www.leg.ch

INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

Switzerland acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW in 1997. We actively support the implementation of this Convention and have a leading role in drafting the periodic country reports on Switzerland submitted to the CEDAW committee. We head the interdepartmental "CEDAW" working group which was created to implement the recommendations of the CEDAW committee and to prepare the Swiss country report to be presented to the CEDAW committee.

We are involved in the drafting of legislation and in the handling of parliamentary business

Within the Federal Administration we give our opinions on bills (laws, ordinances), Federal Council reports and parliamentary motions from other administrative units. We ourselves draft bill texts, reports and answers to parliamentary motions and send these to the other offices and also the Federal Council.

We provide tools for assessing the impact of proposed legislation on gender equality

According to the Parliamentary Act (Article 141, paragraph 2, letter i), the Federal Council must submit bills accompanied by a dispatch explaining how the bill will affect gender equality. The FOGE supports and advises the responsible federal offices during this process and provides them with three work tools: An initial review form, an "Assessment report on the impact on gender equality" questionnaire and a "Guideline".

www.ebg.admin.ch

We support the application of the Gender Equality Act

In order for the Gender Equality Act to be applied more widely, we write publications on important aspects of the Act (e.g. equal pay, sexual harassment). These are aimed at a wide audience: Employers, employees, lawyers, courts and advice centres.

In order to facilitate the application of the GEA, we also collaborated on the new version of the commentary on the Act in German and French.

It is often difficult to decide whether the basic principle of "equal pay for equal work" has been broken in a specific case. The courts then bring in experts, who submit their expert opinions in the form of a report. On behalf of the Federal Council we have created a guideline on expert opinions for judges.

We give our opinion on cases before the Federal Supreme Court

We are regularly asked by the Federal Supreme Court to give our opinion on cases that have come to the Court under the Gender Equality Act.

We make our knowledge available

We organize conferences for experts and give presentations on the Gender Equality Act and on gender equality issues in a national and international context at events for people in the legal profession.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

We coordinate and connect

We promote cooperation and networking within the Federal administration as well as between the Confederation, cantons and non-governmental organizations. We head the Swiss Conference of Gender Equality Delegates' permanent working group on legal issues and take part in the Swiss Conference of arbitration bodies established according to the Gender Equality Act.

We maintain international cooperation and connections

We represent our country on the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission (Commission pour l'égalité de genre GEC) and attend the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women CSW in New York as members of the Swiss delegation. We cooperate with other international organizations (e.g. OECD, OSCE), promote and coordinate information exchange, collaborate on country reports and take part in important international conferences.

www.unwomen.org/en/csw

www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/EQUALITY/



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

REAL EQUALITY IS ONLY POSSIBLE IN RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE FREE OF VIOLENCE

Domestic violence and, as one of its most frequent manifestations, intimate partner violence cause above all a great deal of human suffering. They furthermore violate basic human rights and contravene Swiss law.

Since 2003, we have been working on behalf of the Federal Council to reinforce and add to the measures we have to combat genderspecific violence.

We concentrate on preventing and combating violence between couples who are in a relationship or going through a process of separation and we take into account the situation of both the victim and the perpetrator, regardless of their gender.

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Legal bases

An overview of the legal bases for combating domestic violence at federal and cantonal level can be found on our website.

www.ebg.admin.ch

Figures

Every year cases of domestic violence are registered in the police crime statistics. An indepth analysis of these data that permits statements on the development of these figures can be found on the website of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, along with victim support statistics.

www.bfs.admin.ch > Kriminalität/Strafrecht > Häusliche Gewalt

Consequences for the whole society

As well as the suffering it causes for those directly involved, domestic violence also results in costs which we all pay for. A study by the FOGE sets out, using very conservative estimates, the costs to society arising from use of the police, justice system, support services and the health-care system, as well as from lost productivity (due to illness, invalidity and death). They are estimated at around CHF 164 million to CHF 287 million each year.

Causes

Researchers today agree that there is no one single cause of violence, but that it is the result of a combination of different causes. A study by the FOGE has identified risk factors that increase the potential for domestic violence and thus provides important information on how to prevent it using targeted measures.

Victims find support...

There are recognized victim counselling services in all cantons. Their services are provided free of charge and do not require criminal charges to have been brought.

www.opferhilfe-schweiz.ch

... as do those perpetrating violence

There is also cantonal advice and support provision for the persons perpetrating violence.

www.fvgs.ch > Beratungsstellen

Coordinated action

In the cantons, intervention and coordination structures to prevent and combat domestic violence have been set up. Their objective is to stop violence, protect victims and make the perpetrators of violence take responsibility for their actions. These bodies have come together to form the Swiss Conference against domestic violence SKHG.

Wide-reaching commitment to stopping violence

In Switzerland, numerous different umbrella and specialist organizations are committed to improving ways of preventing and combating domestic violence. We work continuously with these bodies.

WHAT WE DO

We inform and keep records

In a range of studies, reports, evaluations and information sheets we illuminate the causes and effects of domestic violence and thus contribute to the development of efficient measures and tools for prevention and intervention. Our Domestic Violence Toolbox provides information and intervention materials for experts in this area (available in DE, FR and IT only).

www.toolbox-häusliche-gewalt.ch

We coordinate and connect

We promote cooperation and networking within the Federal Administration as well as between the Confederation, cantons and non-governmental organizations.

We organize specialist events

At the national conference on domestic violence held each year, experts from the cantons discuss various aspects of the problem and current practical issues.

We are involved in the drafting of legislation and in parliamentary business

We give our opinions and prepare reports as part of internal federal consultation processes and in response to parliamentary motions, and strive to achieve effective legal protection against domestic violence.



WORK

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The Gender Equality Act enables men and women to defend themselves against direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace. This is important, since ensuring equal opportunities at work plays a key role in achieving equality in other areas of life.

However, legislation alone is not sufficient. Targeted measures are required because:

- > women still earn less than men;
- > there is clear evidence that women are poorly represented at management level;
- > there is still a very stark division between typical women's professions and men's professions;
- > it is extremely difficult to combine work life with family life;
- > sexual harassment at work is widespread.

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WHAT WE DO

EQUAL PAY

We research and inform

We use targeted studies to uncover discrimination in the workplace and develop ideas for action. We provide brochures, guidelines and tips for professionals in the field as well as for companies and employees. We hold conferences for various target audiences and give presentations as guest speakers.

Our equal pay platform provides comprehensive information on the legal situation, causes of pay discrimination, what the public sector is doing to prevent it and measures and tools to tackle pay inequality.

www.ebg.admin.ch

We develop and maintain tools to use in practice

One of our stated objectives is to provide companies with practical support. For this reason we have worked with experts to develop various tools for implementing equal pay:

- > Logib, a free self-test tool for employers to test pay equality in their company www.logib.ch;
- > a helpline, an information brochure, an advertising clip, multilingual tutorials and detailed instructions on how to use the Logib self-test tool, www.logib-schritt-fuer-schritt.ch/en/logib-step-by-step;
- > various publications for employers and employees on implementing equal pay;
- > a gender-neutral work evaluation tool as a basis for determining a non-discriminatory pay level for a particular function.

We educate people

We offer interested companies the opportunity to learn how to competently conduct a pay equality self test in workshops on how to use the Logib software.

We train and refer experts

These experts are able to help companies test whether male and female employees are receiving equal pay, for example by offering their knowledge on equal pay or by introducing a gender-neutral work evaluation tool.

We check that pay equality is implemented

According to federal procurement law, suppliers must respect an equal pay policy. We use random checks to ensure that this regulation is being observed and support employers in implementing pay equality. We work closely with the Federal Procurement Conference to achieve this.

WORK AND FAMILY

The ability to combine work and family life is key to achieving true equality. This requires conducive general conditions. Only then can couples work out a fair division of paid and unpaid work. All men and women should be able to share responsibility for paid work, caring for the family and housework, regardless of who earns what.

Conducive general conditions that support the combination of work and family life are:

- > in the economy: pay equality, part-time work, flexible working hours models, parental leave;
- > in the childcare system and the school system: crèches, all-day schools, block teaching schedules;
- > in social and family policy: family allowances, supplementary benefits, credits for families, recognition of care work;
- > in social insurance: measures to reduce the burden on families, recognition of the contribution of families, credits for care and education, recognition of care work;
- > in taxation policy: reforms of family taxation, tax allowances for families.

We offer well-researched information and decision-making bases for the introduction of specific measures in the political and economic arenas and try to provide an impetus for this action.

Tips for couples....

Our projects and brochures for mothers and fathers and parents-to-be give tips on how to divide tasks up fairly.

www.fairplay-at-home.ch

... for fathers and for companies

In a guideline for fathers employees find out what they can do to gain more time for their families. Part-time work plays an important part in this. How can companies create better conditions for parents? A brochure reveals ways of doing this.

www.fairplay-at-work.ch

WHAT WE DO

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment in the workplace stems from a lack of respect, it violates the dignity of the victim and can demotivate them or even make them ill, thus ultimately reducing the productivity of the company.

Together with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, we are working to combat this and offer:

Information and tools for employers...

Companies are legally obliged to ensure a harassment-free working climate. We provide basic material on how to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace as well as support in the search for experts. A checklist shows companies how they can prevent and combat sexual harassment.

... and a practical advice guide for employees

This contains general information on the issue of sexual harassment as well as practical advice on how victims of sexual harassment can combat it.

Our website for employers and employees is also an extremely important source of information.

www.sexuellebelästigung.ch



PROMOTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Many organisations and companies recognised the advantage of promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace long ago. They benefit from the potential offered by well-educated women. They know how to motivate their employees by providing fair working conditions and interesting development opportunities. New working time models make it easier to combine work and family life.

As part of the Gender Equality Act, the Federal Government promotes equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace. Financial support is given to practical projects with a real impact. The FOGE is responsible for awarding financial support.

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From 2017 to 2020, support will be given to projects focusing on the following main areas in line with the priorities that have been set:

Priority A

Programme to promote the development and implementation of services and products for companies, especially those aimed at achieving wage equality for men and women and the promotion of work-life balance.

Priority B

Programme to promote the equal participation of men and women in jobs and sectors with a shortage of skilled workers.

If the finances allow, other gender equality projects that do not come under priority A or B may receive financial support.

Support totalling some CHF 4 million is available each year.

Supported projects

Since 1996 the FOGE has financially supported numerous pioneering projects conducted by private and public institutions and organisations. These projects promote, for example, family-friendly working conditions in companies, contribute to equality in the workplace, encourage equal career opportunities and facilitate women's access to the labour market.

Our Topbox database gives an overview of the projects supported. The material used and the know-how acquired is available to all interested parties. www.topbox.ch

How to request support

For detailed information on the financial support provided in accordance with the Gender Equality Act, as well as documentation, request forms and an overview of the projects supported, please visit our website. www.ebg.admin.ch/fh

Deadlines for requests: 31 January and 31 August of each year.

Information and advice

Staff at the FOGE would be pleased to advise you by telephone, in writing or in person, without any obligation on your part.