

GUIDELINES FOR A GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

English summary

1 - Introduction

The *Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment* in the Netherlands enables the reader to decide whether or not a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) is desirable or necessary in a specific case and describes the basic principles and method for carrying out a GIA. The *Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment* is meant for policymakers at central government level and for heads of departments, who have to decide whether a GIA will be commissioned, as well as for researchers and executive departmental staff, who will be guided through the actual steps that have to be taken when carrying out a GIA. The *Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment* was published by the Directorate for the Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy of the Dutch government.

2 - Why perform a Gender Impact Assessment?

A Gender Impact Assessment is an *ex ante* evaluation method, designed to identify possible gender effects in general policy and to develop alternatives that promote social equality if negative effects are found. The Gender Impact Assessment instrument described in this brochure is specifically meant for central government policy.

As a part of the gender mainstreaming strategy, a GIA can enhance the quality and effectiveness of government policy. It is important that government policies contribute to the realisation equal opportunities for all. This is laid down in national and international laws and agreements. Government departments have their own responsibilities to achieve these goals.

3 - GIA yes or no

This part of the *Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment* takes the form of a questionnaire that can be used to decide whether or not a GIA should take place in a certain case.

1. Is there a conceivable link between the subject of the policy and the balance of social power between men and women? *No->4, Yes->2, Don't know->2.*
2. Is changing the social relations between men and women an explicit goal of the intended policy? *No->3, Yes->4.*
3. Is changing the social position of specific groups of women (according to ethnicity or social background) an explicit goal of the intended policy? *No->4 Yes->no GIA.*
4. Will the position or behaviour of a certain category of people directly or indirectly change as a consequence of the intended policy? *No->no GIA, Yes->5.*

5. Is it possible that the requested changes or the instruments used will have different or greater consequences for certain groups of women or men (according to ethnicity or social background)? *No->no GIA, Yes->a GIA is necessary.*

4 - Basic principles for GIA: theoretical basis

The GIA instrument has a solid theoretical basis and has recently been revised on the basis of some 10 years' experience with this instrument. The point of departure for the GIA is the existence of structural inequalities in power between men and women.

There are four important domains in which inequalities embodied:

- Labour. This domain is about paid and unpaid labour, where there are still major differences between men and women.
- Private life. This domain is about sexuality, reproduction, forms of cohabitation and relationships with children. Different social definitions of motherhood and fatherhood, for instance, have a strong impact on the social positions of men and women.
- Citizenship. This domain is about the possibilities for actively participating in society and about control and decision-making. Here there are still great differences between men and women.
- Knowledge. This domain is about the production of knowledge and truth: how is knowledge constructed and how are notions of what is 'true' created and dispersed?

The inequalities embodied in the major domains are maintained by several principles:

- The distribution of and access to resources. Important resources are time, space, money, goods, education, influential relationships, control and information.
- Rules relating to gender. There are social norms and attitudes as well as formal regulations that define the desired qualities and accompanying behaviour for men and women.
- Violence. This is an important instrument of power, which is not equally distributed. Sexual intimidation is a typical manifestation, as is domestic violence.

5 - GIA Method and Plan of Action

The GIA should be carried out by external researchers. It takes place in six steps:

- Step 1 - Analysis of the Policy Plan: Description and analysis of the target groups, the type of policy, the arguments used.
- Step 2 - Description of the Present Situation and of the Expected Trend: Information on differences between the relevant social groups in the important domains and maintaining principles.
- Step 3 - Analysis of the Effect of the Policy Plan: Thinking through the consequences on the basis of the information from the earlier steps.

- Step 4 - Evaluation of the Effects of the Policy Plan: Assessment of the consequences according to the evaluation criteria (see 7 - Framework for evaluation)
- Step 5 - Developing Policy Alternatives: Description of necessary or desirable changes in the policy plan
- Step 6 - Producing the Report: Clear, structured and concise.
- These steps are all described in detail in the *Guidelines*.

6 - Make the GIA a success

The success of a GIA is dependent on several factors;

Planning: be sure to start timely, when there is still some room for manoeuvring.

Expertise: engage several forms of expertise in the research team: general research expertise, gender expertise, knowledge of the policy field, expertise in policy advice and possibly judicial/legal expertise.

Resources: be sure to have sufficient budget and enough time to complete the project.

Commitment: engage complete commitment of the organisation, especially at the top, that commissions the GIA.

Embedding: To embed the results into the policy process:

- Start in time and run the project parallel to the process of policymaking.
- Organise meetings to engage commitment in the organisation.
- Engage those who will implement the policy.
- Promote and enhance gender expertise within the organisation (training, workshops).
- Inform the parliament (especially the Lower House) of the results.
- Evaluate the implementation of the results after some time.

Report: In the GIA report, remember to adjust the language to the policy makers who will have to use the report, choose a clear framework for the publication and keep it short.

7 - Framework for evaluation

The effects of policy must be first of all be evaluated against criteria that reflect the final goals of the process of bringing about social equality:

- Equality: equal opportunities, equality before the law and equal treatment in equal cases.
- Pluriformity: a wide and realistic range of behavioural alternatives for everybody.
- Autonomy: having a true say about how individuals organise their own lives.
- Social responsibility and care: the opportunities for individuals to take on social responsibility for others and take care of themselves.

Furthermore there are national and international goals and agreements that can be taken into account:

National:

- The official emancipation goals of the Dutch government
- National legislation in the field of equal treatment
- Article 1 in the Dutch Constitution
- General Act on Equal Treatment
- Several specific acts on equal treatment

International:

- UN Women's Treaty
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Treaty on Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Several European guidelines

8 - Consultancy model

Instead of independent research, a GIA can also be performed as a consultancy project. This makes direct implementation of the results possible. Important conditions for success are:

- A strong position of the consultant
- Commitment for policy efficiency from the parties involved.