**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Section 1

Stakeholder Details

Contents

Stakeholder Name	Telephone Number		
Professor Yvonne Galligan	02891875868		
Stakeholder Address	**Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)**		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government	
	Academic	x	Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	
	Other (Please Specify)/ Member of the Public			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder
I am a professor of comparative politics at Queen's University Belfast, and Director of the Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics there. I have studied and published on comparative women's political behaviour, representation and political institutions.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions
The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit <u>electronic</u> responses using this pro forma. Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report. Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2

Introduction

Powers

2.1. The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:

I. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and

II.   consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

2.2.   The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:

i.   **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

ii.   **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**

iii.   **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

iv.   **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014.**

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

2.3.   The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review**:**
   • **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3

BACKGROUND

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

3.1. The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.[1]

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

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[1] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

These include:

> *Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.*
> *Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.*

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to *'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.*

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

> *Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.*

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is *'representation in public life/decision-making'*, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4
Questions to consider

(1) Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

The classical identification of barriers to women's political participation and representation are usually described as *the 5 C's* – cash, confidence, childcare, culture and candidate selection.[2] Although analytically distinct, they interact with each other to distort the opportunities for women with ambitions to enter political life.

Other analyses describe the challenges/barriers as being of an individual, societal, or political kind. The *individual* challenges may have to do with personal sense of confidence in taking part in politics, with all of its attendant consequences for personal privacy, financial costs, time demands, and family life. *Societal* challenges indicate the extent to which women are expected by social norms to take the major responsibility for parenthood and other caring duties. Engaging in political life may be seen as not compatible with these social expectations. *Political* barriers generally relate to candidate selection processes, the way in which an electoral system determines party strategy and voter behaviour, constituency size, and other features of the political system that influences the choices of parties and voters. It is well known, for example, that a first past the post electoral system, in single member districts, strongly favours the selection of men as candidates, while interchanging women and men on party lists in PR list systems delivers more gender-equal outcomes.

These different ways of looking at the challenges/barriers to women's prospects for entering politics are compatible. They can be applied to women's political opportunities in Northern Ireland, as in other contexts.

Since 1998, women's employment rate has grown, recovering strongly from the economic downturn of the mid 2000's (1998-60%; 2014-64%), while that of men has fluctuated but returned to 1998 levels (1998-73%; 2014-73%).[3] These general statistics hide gender differences in labour-force participation, with over one third (37%) of women in work holding part-time positions in 2014, compared with 8% of employed men.[4] These general trends indicate that there is a strong pressure on women in NI to fulfil traditional caring roles, as evidenced by the fact that 68% of women working part-time said that they did so because they 'did not want a full-time job', while 35% of men gave this explanation.[5] This broad cultural norm – that women combine work and family responsibilities - feeds into political and public life, skewing some women's expectations of participation (individual), cultural perceptions of what constitutes a politician (societal), and party selection options (political).

While cultural norms are slow to change, behavioural change can be prompted by legislation, voluntary party commitment, focused actions, and the highlighting of role models. The institutional environment, too, plays a part in surmounting the challenge of women's under-

[2] Kenworthy, Lane and Melissa Malami (1999), Gender inequality in political representation: a worldwide comparative analysis, *Social Forces* 78:1, pp. 235-269.

[3] NISRA (2014a) Labour Market Statistics Press Release 13 August, p. 5; NISRA (1998) Labour Market Bulletin 12, p. 60. The employment rate is calculated as being the proportion of people of working age who are employed.

[4] NISRA (2014b) Labour Market Bulletin 24, p. 18.

[5] NISRA (2014b), p. 19.

representation in public and political life. These points are discussed further on in this submission.

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

In recent years, women's under-representation in political life has been taken to indicate a deficiency in the working of democratic politics. Recent research of other parliamentary arenas has shown that when women are part of a parliament in sufficient numbers (a 'critical mass' of at least 30%), then the issues brought to legislative scrutiny expand to include 'women's' interests (MacDonald and O'Brien 2011; Chaney 2012, Childs and Krook 2009).[6] Quite some attention, then, has been paid by civil society groups and by political parties to initiatives to encourage more women to opt for politics. While legislated (mandatory) and voluntary quota mechanisms (and these vary in form depending on the electoral system) have been found to effectively increase women's representation, this measure cannot exist successfully in isolation from other supporting initiatives.

If the political gender gap is to be closed, or at least reduced, women must be willing to run for election. One way of stimulating women's political ambitions is to **profile female politicians as role models.** This has been found to be an effective stimulus to women's greater interest in, and attachment to, politics. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007: 936) found this to be so in their

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[6] MacDonald, Jason A and Erin E. O'Brien (2011) 'Quasi-experimental design, constituency and advancing women's interests: Re-examining the influence of gender on substantive representation', *Political Research Quarterly* 64:2, 472-486; Chaney, Paul (2012) 'Critical actors vs critical mass: The substantive representation of women in the Scottish Parliament', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 14:3, 441-457; Childs, Sarah and Mona Lena Krook (2009), Analysing women's substantive representation: from critical mass to critical actors, *Government and Opposition* 44:2, 125-145

extensive study of women's political interest in European countries. They found that;

female politicians in democratic nations do function as true role models, inspiring women and girls to be politically active themselves. Women of all ages aremore likely to discuss politics, and younger women become more politically active,when there are more women in parliament.[7]

New research (Gilardi 2014), drawing on the experience of municipal elections in Switzerland shows that this strategy is particularly effective in the early stages of addressing the political gender imbalance.[8]

This is an initiative that is well within the capacity of the NI Assembly Education and Outreach service to undertake, if not already doing so.

Raising women's and girls' interest in political affairs is one step, and needs to be capitalised on to convert interest and political activity into an ambition to become an elected representative. In this regard, various mentoring programmes that demystify politics, provide women with the skills to run political campaigns, and bring their ambitions to the attention of party officials are useful. and not to rule out the adoption of such initiatives, as their cumulative effect can be to normalise women's political participation, raise individual women's ambitions to be representatives, and contribute to a more diverse body of legislators. Mentoring programmes have grown in popularity over the past 5 years, and among some recent examples are the Edmonton city council 'Opening the Potential' mentoring programme for women between the ages of 22 and 40 interested in municipal politics[9]; the Fabian Women's Network programme[10] and the social entrepreneurial Women for Election programme that has successfully guided many women to candidacies in the Republic of Ireland.[11] These programmes successfully mobilise women in wider civil society to consider political careers, to join political parties, and to develop the skills required for campaigning.

A mentoring initiative could be jointly undertaken by the Assembly, a women's civil society organisation, and/or a relevant academic unit.

Another significant arena in which initiatives can take place to encourage and increase women's political participation and representation is that of the Assembly. Being an elected representative is about undertaking a job of work on behalf of the citizens, and the Assembly is the place in which that work is carried out. Like any organisation, the written and unwritten rules, customs and practices influence the manner in which the work of the institution is carried out. Much attention has been given to examining the gendered nature of organisations (a common research strand in corporate organisations, and becoming increasingly important in higher education and higher professional bodies and institutions), with gender audits revealing and addressing gendered needs and interests, and benefits accruing for women and men, and the organisation as a whole. Attention has now turned to parliaments/legislatures as gendered institutional environments, bringing to light the gendered behaviour, practices, and rules that govern the working of parliaments.[12] It examines the institutional conditions in which parliamentary 'critical actors' can effect policy changes that lead to higher levels of equality in

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[7] Wolbrecht, Christina and David E. Campbell (2007) 'Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as political role models', *American Journal of Political Science* 51:4, pp. 921-939

[8] Gilardi, Fabrizio (2014) 'The temporary importance of role models for women's political participation', *American Journal of Political Science* (forthcoming).

[9] http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/opening-the-potential-mentoring-for-women.aspx (accessed 25 August 2014);

[10] http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/19/mentoring-women-key-gates-power and http://fabianwomen.org.uk/mentoring/ (accessed 25 August 2014);

[11] http://www.womenforelection.ie/about-us/ ((accessed 25 August 2014)

[12] Holli, Anne Maria (2012) Does gender have an effect on the selection of experts by parliamentary standing committees?, *Politics & Gender* 8, pp. 341-366; Mackay, Fiona (2008) "Thick" conceptions of substantive representation: Women, gender and political institutions, *Representation* 44(2), pp. 125-139.

society. Thus, this research, known as feminist institutionalism, takes the legislative setting as a vital contextual factor in facilitating policy change and studies the behaviour of critical actors within that context.[13] In parallel to this research, there is a new wave of reflection on the working of elected institutions arising from the increasing presence of women in parliaments. This practice-based assessment questions of some of the customary traditions, practices and behaviours found in elected institutions. This has led to legislative assemblies being seen by some representatives as gendered institutions, In coming to this conclusion, they concur with academic research, though their evaluation stems from an experiential knowledge of parliament rather than from a theoretical perspective.

Following the line of thinking that parliaments are gendered institutions, international studies have introduced the idea of 'gender-sensitive' parliaments. The Interparliamentary Union, an early leader in developing this idea, and has adopted a definition of a gender-sensitive parliament that is now widely accepted, as follows:

> *...a parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive example, or model, to society at large. They ensure that their operations and resources are used effectively towards promoting gender equality.* [14]

Lena Wängnerud (2013) argues that gender-sensitive parliaments have distinctive characteristics in three related spheres:

- there is implementation of equal opportunities for women and men to influence internal parliamentary working procedures;
- there is generous space for women's interests and concerns on the parliamentary agenda; and
- the outcome of parliamentary debate is the production of gender-sensitive legislation.[15]

The opposite of these gender-sensitive principles, Wängnerud notes, is when a parliament is fully patriarchal and elected women are systematically discriminated against; there is no space for the raising and discussion of women's interests and concerns; and the parliament reproduces gender-based power structures.[16] Many of the research documents on the subject of gender-sensitive parliaments address the three categories identified by Wängnerud, and treat them as areas for action.[17] This paper draws on these documents and related academic research to give an overview of practices in other legislatures with a view to informing discussion on gender-sensitive practices in the NI Assembly.

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[13] Krook, Mona Lena and Fiona Mackay (2011), *Gender, Politics and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[14] Interparliamentary Union (2012), *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, IPU, Geneva, p. 8, available at www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/action-gender-e.pdf (accessed 9 June 2014). See also Palmieri, Sonia (2011) *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: a Global Review of Good Practice*, IPU, Geneva, p. 6.

[15] Wängnerud Lena (2013) 'Beyond Presence: the principles of gender-sensitive parliaments', paper presented at 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29-Sept 1.

[16] Wängnerud, p. 13

[17] See, e.g. National Women's Council of Ireland (2014) *A Parliament of all Talents: Building a Women-friendly Oireachtas*, Dublin: NWCI.

Internal parliamentary working procedures

When it comes to considering elected chambers as 'gendered institutions', one of the first areas of focus is that of working practices and how these impact on women's and men's lives. These working practices have been the subject of academic comment, along with constituting an aspect of parliamentary reform.[18] Along with academic observations, elected women repeatedly identify maternity, paternity and caring leave as issues that elected bodies have not addressed in a systematic manner.[19] Some men, too, find the restrictive practices of legislatures a real hindrance to their balancing work and family life especially around times of childbirth and paternity, and when they have long-term caring commitments. There are some good practice initiatives, though, that assist parliamentarians (women and men) to reconcile their political and family obligations, as follows:

Changes to **parliamentary working times** in order to accommodate the balancing of work and family responsibilities is a common reform in assemblies wishing to institute a more gender-sensitive approach. This was a consideration in the creation of the Scottish Parliament and NI Assembly, and was extensively discussed in the House of Commons Speakers Conference Report.[20] Adjournments are now aligned with the school calendar in the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly, similar to the practice in the Canadian Federal Parliament. The IPU reports that 39% of parliaments have their recesses aligned with the school calendar, and that 22% have discontinued night sittings.[21]

The facility for **proxy voting** is seen as a family-friendly reform, but not widely practiced. Yet, proxy voting could be a mechanism to facilitate the participation of women representatives absent for maternity reasons, or women and men absent due to illness or defined family responsibilities. New Zealand instituted proxy voting in 1996, as an alternative to pairing. A member who cannot be present in the Chamber gives authority to another member to cast a vote in his/her name. The Speaker decides on disputes over proxies.[22] The Australian parliament introduced proxy voting for MPs who are nursing mothers, with chief whips casting a vote on behalf of the absent mother. In some parliaments, pairs can be provided for nursing mothers and in others (such as the European Parliament) babies are permitted on the floor of the chamber.[23] Proxy voting could be extended to male MPs as fathers-to-be, to enable them attend the birth of their child and take paternity leave.

Childcare provision is an institutional measure that can support MPs and parliamentary staff. Increasingly, this facility is being introduced into parliaments. The Canadian federal parliament is an example. It provides onsite daycare with spaces for about 30 children between 18 months and 5 years. [24] In 2006, a childcare facility opened for members and staff of Leinster House and the following year was extended to staff working in nearby government departments.[25] However, the provision of childcare alone will not deliver a gender-sensitive parliament. It needs to be part of a more all-encompassing initiative that seeks to address the

[18] House of Commons Speakers Conference (on Parliamentary Representation) (2010) *Final Report*, London: Stationery Office; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2013), *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians*, London: CPA.

[19] Marx, Jutta and Jutta Borner (2011), *Gender Mainstreaming in Latin American Parliaments: A work in progress*, Lima: IPU and IDEA; House of Commons Speakers Conference, paras 264-274.

[20] House of Commons Speakers Conference, paras 275-286.

[21] Barnes, Andre and Lauren Munn-Rivard (2013), *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: 1. Advancements in the Workplace*, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, p. 2

[22] http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/how-parliament-works/ppnz/00HOOOCPPNZ_171/chapter-17-temination-of-debate#_Toc263861154 (accessed 9 June 2014).

[23] Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Network (2010), *Report to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*.

[24] Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 3

[25] Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (2006), *Annual Report 2006*, Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas, p. 31.

predominantly male-gendered culture of legislative bodies.

In addition to addressing family responsibilities, academic and practitioner studies indicate that legislative bodies are arenas in which sexual harassment is prevalent – with both women and men experiencing this abuse of power.[26] Policies on **combatting sexual harassment** assist in the creation of a respectful, inclusive and safe workplace, a matter relevant to parliaments as well as to other workplaces. The Canadian Federal Senate and House, for example, have policies and procedures for the prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace applicable to all who work in parliament buildings, including volunteers and temporary workers.[27]

The parliament is also a working environment for professional administrative staff, and a 2012 survey by the European Parliament of national parliaments revealed that most did not have a specific programme to encourage **equality between women and men in senior management positions in parliaments**. There are exceptions, as the following examples illustrate:

Finland: The Parliamentary Office equality plan for 2010-11 included targets and practical actions to achieve a gender distribution of at least 40% of women and men in all positions, including senior management, in the parliament.

Germany (Bundestag): the parliamentary Plan for Equality, 2010-2014 has the target of reaching 50% of women in all positions;

The **Dutch parliament** signed a voluntary public code, "Talent to the Top" Charter, containing clear agreements on the realisation of gender diversity in senior management, with annual reporting on progress submitted to the Talent to the Top Monitoring Commission

Space for women's interests and concerns on the parliamentary agenda
A scan of the literature reveals a range of informal and formal arrangements that provide space for discussion of women's interests, concerns, raise awareness of the gendered nature of public policies, and provide an input into legislative deliberation. A common mechanism for this process is the creation of **women's parliamentary caucuses**. In an IPU survey in 2008, almost half of the 77 parliaments surveyed had instituted women's caucuses.[28] A recent study by Sonia Palmieri for the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) focused on the prevalence of women's caucuses in Europe, particularly OSCE countries. It found that women parliamentarians reported many advantages in having a network of this kind. These include promoting women's numerical and substantive representation, highlighting the importance of gender issues within parliamentary deliberations, and ensuring that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into legislative decision-making.[29] The survey also highlighted the obstacles to the creation and sustainability of these informal arrangements. The challenges relate to lack of resources, undefined or unclear relationship to parliamentary structures (especially parliamentary committees), and discriminatory cultural and institutional values in favour of men. Political polarisation of the parliament was among the most difficult of obstacles to overcome, as it was found to inhibit consensus-building on a common agenda among women representatives. Nonetheless, the report provides an 8-step plan for the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus as follows:

1. Initiate broad consultations

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[26] Channel 4 News investigation, Sexual harassment culture in parliament exposed, 10 April 2014

[27] Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 4

[28] Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 5

[29] Palmieri, Sonia (2013) *A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region*, Warsaw: ODIHR, pp. 17-19.

2. Outline common goals and objectives
3. Identify resources
4. Define the structure
5. Agree on activities
6. Build relationships
7. Engage in outreach
8. Assess progress[30]

This report contains many interesting examples of the opportunities and obstacles to the creation and maintenance of a women's parliamentary network or caucus. Among the case studies, three are of particular relevance to the NI Assembly: Sweden, Poland and Kosovo.

The **Speakers Reference Group of the Swedish Parliament** has no formal powers, but is a forum for raising awareness on gender equality within parliament. Its purpose is spelled out in the *Gender Equality Action Plan of the Swedish Parliament 2010–2014*, in which the Reference Group is recognized as a key focal point of the Riksdag for promoting gender equality. The body is provided with a gender secretariat comprised of two parliamentary staff (civil servants) with gender expertise who are responsible for research and administrative support. The Group has its own budget provided by the Parliament. It undertakes three main sets of activities: arranging seminars and workshops in the field of gender equality for parliamentarians, party officials and parliament staff members; arranging a large public seminar on the topic of gender equality on a regular basis; and conducting additional activities, including support to MPs on issues pertaining to gender equality. It also meets with foreign delegations to discuss its activities and share practices.

The **Polish Parliamentary Group of Women MPs** re-established in 2012, is a cross-party grouping of about 50 MPs and has close ties with the Polish women's movement. It collaborated with women's civil society groups on the issue of women's political representation, leading to modifications of the electoral code in 2011 to equalise the opportunities for candidacies between women and men. Thus, the electoral code now guarantees women and men 35% of the positions each on electoral lists.

The **Women's Caucus of the Assembly of Kosovo** was created in 2005 and comprises all women MPs as members. Although it is not formally recognised by the Assembly, the caucus operates in a highly structured manner. Its 7-member board represents the seven political groups in the Assembly, meets on a monthly basis and is administratively supported by an assistant provided by the Assembly. The caucus has developed a strong degree of cooperation with the committees and with the Speaker, has adopted a Strategic Action Plan and drafts an annual Action Plan in close consultation with civil society and international organisations. In 2012 the Caucus focused on devising and presenting reforms to the rules of procedure of the Assembly in addition to raising awareness on women's health issues in parliament and among the wider public, in cooperation with the ministry of health.

In addition, the aims of the recently-formed **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)** explicitly seek to increase women's parliamentary representation and participation as one of a number of gender-sensitive objectives for the 2013-17 period. To that end

> *Members emphasized the adoption and implementation of mechanisms to advance women's effective participation, by considering affirmative action policies, including quotas, constitutional, legislative, electoral and political party reforms.*

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[30] A more detailed discussion of the elements of this 8-step plan can be found in the study.

> *Members further acknowledged the importance of a gender-sensitive Parliament;*
> *increased roles of women as Presiding Officers, heading parliamentary*
> *committees; rotation of leadership positions such as Chief Whip, Minority/Majority*
> *Leader(s); mentoring and shadow leadership; and encouraging debate on gender*
> *as a cross-cutting issue and gender responsive budgeting. They also recognized the*
> *need for developing the capacity of women once elected to Parliament, the need to*
> *strengthen national women's machineries, the need for building links with civil*
> *society, and the need to encourage mentoring.*[31]

Annual CPW conferences have addressed a number of aspects regarding increasing women's political participation in addition to gender-related issues, and networking.

The production of gender-sensitive legislation

The concept of gender mainstreaming, developed in the mid-1990s, sees gender equality as a process rather than an isolated project. Since this time, much research has taken place around the term, its meaning and its application to policy.[32] As McNutt notes, it is 'an integrated policy strategy with specific policy instruments (gender-based analysis, gender budgeting, accountability mechanisms, and critical engagement procedures) co-ordinated across government departments and agencies'.[33] Increasingly gender mainstreaming has come into parliamentary scrutiny of government policies, and is seen as a tool for enhancing the delivery of gender-sensitive public policies.[34] In 2011, the European Parliament passed a motion in which it

> *Commits itself to regularly adopting and implementing a policy plan for gender*
> *mainstreaming in Parliament with the overall objective of promoting equality*
> *between women and men through the genuine and effective incorporation of the*
> *gender perspective into all policies and activities, so that the different impact of*
> *measures on women and on men is assessed, existing initiatives are coordinated,*
> *and objectives and priorities, as well as the means of achieving them, are*
> *specified*[35]

A considerable amount of parliamentary work takes place in committees, which provide an arena for deliberating on many aspects of a policy issue. An analysis of women's committee membership can indicate a replication of the gendered division of labour found in society more generally. Indeed, there is now much evidence to show that women generally serve on

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[31] Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2013), *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians*, London: CPA, p. 8

[32] Pollock, Mark A. and Emilie Hafner-Burton (2000), Mainstreaming gender in the European Union, *Journal of European Public Policy* 7:3, pp. 432-456; Elson, Diane (2002) Gender responsive budget initiatives: Some key dimensions and practical examples, Paper presented at the conference on *Gender Budgets, Financial Markets, Financing for Development*, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Berlin; McNutt, Kathleen (2010) An integrated approach to gender equality: From gender-based analysis to gender mainstreaming, *JSGS Working Paper Series*.

[33] McNutt, p. 2.

[34] UNDP (2004), *Developing capacity for gender-sensitive parliament: A gender mainstreaming strategy for the National Assembly* [of Laos], UNDP Project LAO/02/M01; European Parliament (2014), *Gender mainstreaming in committees and delegations of the European Parliament: a study for the FEMM Committee*, EP: Brussels.

[35] Motion for a European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament, 2011 (2011/2151 INI)

committees dealing with health, education, social and youth affairs while men dominate economic, financial, security and foreign policy committees. Eileen Connolly makes a general point in a study of the Oireachtas that 'gender stereotyping in [committee] portfolio allocation is a very visible aspect of a 'masculine culture' in parliament as it confines women to a narrow range of political roles and excludes them for the most part from the most influential political positions'.[36] Thus, the distribution of women members on parliamentary committees can influence the extent to which gender issues are addressed in the course of committee business.

The procedural arrangements for raising and discussing gender equality issues also merits attention. Many parliaments have a gender equality committee that provides a focal point for raising gender interests, offers a channel for women's civil society to contribute to parliamentary issues, and can provide gender expertise to other legislative committees. Many gender equality committees adopt a gender-based analysis of legislation, highlighting the different impacts of policy on women and men, and identify areas of potential amendment that would contribute to the wider goal of achieving gender equality. In 2005, the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women published a report *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success* that 'recommended the initiation of consultations aimed at "the development of legislation that would ensure the systematic application of gender-based analysis to all … federal policy and program activities."'[37] However, when committees other than the Status of Women Committee review legislation they do not regularly consider the gender equality dimension. Thus, in the Canadian parliament (as is the case in many other legislatures), there is no systematic application of a gender-based analysis of public policy.[38]

Gender-sensitive budgeting, however, is becoming a more widespread practice. It is defined as:

> *an approach that aims to mainstream gender in economic policy-making and seeks to transform the entire budgetary process. Gender budgeting refers not only to expenditures earmarked for women, but also to an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective, including security, health, education, public works, and so on, to ensure that the allocations and resulting impacts respond to the needs of both women and men*[39]

However, Palmieri notes that many gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives are undertaken as pilot exercises, but are not sustained thereafter. The Canadian Status of Women Committee recommended in 2008 that the Canadian government resource the capacity of the Status of Women Canada to provide gender-responsive analysis to the government. [40] In contrast, the Gender Equality Committee of the Mexican parliament attaches to each federal budget a disaggregation by sex of the public expenditure.[41] In Scotland, the independent Equality and Budget Advisory Group (EBAG) made up of government and civil society actors, works with

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[36] Connolly, Eileen (2013) 'Parliaments as Gendered Institutions: the Irish Oireachtas, *Irish Political Studies* 28: 3, p. 361. See also European Parliament (2012), *Gender Equality: what do parliaments of the European Union do – an exchange of best practices*, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/webnp/cms/pid/1925 (accessed 8 June 2014)

[37] Munn-Rivard, Laura (2013) *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: 2. The Work of Legislators*, Ottawa: Library of Parliament Publications, p. 3.

[38] Munn-Rivard, p. 3

[39] Palmieri, 2011, p. 6

[40] Munn-Rivard, p.5.

[41] Marx and Borner, p. 40.

the Scottish Government to:

> *Provide advice and support for the mainstreaming of equality in policy with the appropriate allocation of resources; Contribute to mapping the pathway between evidence, policy and spend; Improve the presentation of equality information in the Scottish budget documents; Contribute to improved commitment to and awareness of mainstreaming equality in to policy and budget processes*[42]

(3a) Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

(This box will expand as you type)

Political parties, too, have a role to play in equalising opportunities for women's participation. Many parties across the world have taken voluntary measures to do so, through (for example) target-setting for internal leadership positions at multiple levels, and candidate gender balance, as well as support for women-specific networks, and dedicated training including mentoring programmes. These measures are effective when party leadership actively supports and commits to this change agenda, which in turn contributes to a change in the culture of a party towards the acceptance of women in representative roles. Recent research from Canada highlights the informal environment in which candidate selection takes place: the gender of party leaders at the level at which candidates are selected plays a significant role in determining if women get through the selection process (Cheng and Tavits).[43] There is a pointer here for political parties – auditing the gender composition of constituency chairpersons and taking measures to ensure that the leaders of the party at local/constituency level are gender-balanced. It is at this point (among others) that the role model dimension comes into play: as Cheng and Tavits observe 'female (male) party leaders may not just prefer but actually do support the nomination of female (male) party candidates'[44], women party leaders are more likely to support potential women candidates in other ways too, such as mentoring. This is a point that the parties represented in the Assembly may wish to consider in the context of reviewing the adoption, implementation and working of mechanisms available to parties to encourage and support women's candidacies (such as mentoring, having a gender-balance policy on seat vacancies, selections and co-options, making selection rules and procedures transparent and readily accessible to party members, women's networks and supports, dedicated funding for women candidates to aid with caring responsibilities during campaigns, and a family leave provision in place to assist women and men representatives with parenthood and long-term caring responsibilities). It is also important that initiatives designed to increase women's candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive support by the party leadership, and are communicated to supporters.

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[42] Equality Budgeting in Focus: the Scottish Model, available at http://equalitybudgeting.ie/index.php/publicationsresources-2/equality-budgeting-in-focus-the-scottish-model/ (accessed 15 June 2014).

[43] Cheng, Christine and Magrit Tavits (2011) 'Informal influences in selecting female political candidates', *Political Research Quarterly* 64:2, pp. 460-471.

[44] Cheng and Tavits, p. 467.

(3b) Question	
Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?	
(This box will expand as you type)	

(4) Question
What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?
(This box will expand as you type) See (6) below

(5) Question
What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?
(This box will expand as you type)   - Recognising women already active in the political arena as role models (see below);   - Attention to the cultural norms of policy, behaviour and practice in the Assembly (see below)   - Raising public awareness, through an Assembly inquiry, on sexism in the media, and measures to combat it   - Ensuring that women politicians are presented as party spokespersons in news and current affairs programmes as often as men   - Establishing a working party on a gender-sensitive parliament, with equal membership of women and men politicians and parliamentary staff, chaired by the Speaker (see

below)
- During Parliament Week (November each year) and International Women's Day/Week (March each year), that at least one event or occasion be organised that draws attention to women politicians. One could be a networking event, enabling women politicians and women in leading positions in Northern Ireland network together, share the challenges of leadership, and support one another's endeavours. The event could be organised by the Assembly in partnership with one or more leading women's organisations from business, civil society, the professions, and academia.
- Developing cross-parliamentary networks with women in other legislatures on these islands and utilising the global parliamentary networks to which the Assembly has access to foster women MLAs active participation in these networks
- Ensuring that all official delegations from the Assembly to other parliaments and on legislative business outside of Northern Ireland are gender balanced, and that no delegation is composed of one female representative.

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(6) Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

(This box will expand as you type)

Elected assemblies can do much to foster and promote women's political participation. This is also the case for the Northern Ireland Assembly. As a first step to progressing this issue, the AERC may wish to commission further research to **consider where the Assembly stands in relation to the three aspects of a gendered institution**:

- Are there opportunities for women and men to address Assembly working procedures with a view to making these procedures more gender-sensitive?
- What space is there in Assembly business for the consideration of women's interests and concerns?
- Does the outcome of Assembly debates promote and secure gender-sensitive legislation?

These questions can support the development of an **Action Plan** in which specific features of the Assembly as a gender-sensitive working environment for representatives and parliamentary staff are identified and pursued. Another starting point for this conversation could be the compilation of a **gender audit** which examines standing orders, rules and regulations, training plans, and maps the gender participation among all staff grades and among MLAs to identify problems for resolution. These questions can also support the production of **gender-sensitive public policy**, to the benefit of all inhabitants of Northern Ireland.

An **institutional context** for considering these questions is required. In this regard there seems to be merit in having a discussion between the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, the OFMDFM Committee, and the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325 on identifying a suitable and effective forum in the Assembly for addressing the issues raised by the three questions above.

As a **place of employment**, the Assembly should be a role model in best practice across Northern Ireland, these islands, and beyond. Designing and implementing positive policies and codes of conduct on workplace issues such as promotion, sexual harassment, maternal/parental leave, and work-life reconciliation policies for MLAs would make an important contribution to creating a gender-sensitive culture in the Assembly.

There is scope for **gender mainstreaming Committee business**, so that outputs are gender-sensitive. As the evidence shows, women's cross-parliamentary networks – of which supportive parliamentary men can be members should the women members wish – serve as a vehicle for advancing representation, and gender-related issues. A **network of MLAs committed to advancing gender equality**, and equal opportunities, would have a significant role in raising awareness among MLAs and parliamentary staff of the importance of considering the gendered nature and effects of public policy.

The **Assembly's support service** can play an important role in developing this capacity to evaluate public policy along gender dimensions. This can be done as part of the **induction of new MLAs, and as ongoing development and capacity-building programmes**. One specific policy arena for this focus could be on raising MLA and parliamentary support staff awareness of the gendered nature of all political business, and including policy development. There is also scope for skill development, such as capacity to provide and appreciate a gendered evaluation of the budget. There is expertise in the women's sector on this issue through the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group that could assist the Assembly's support service in providing capacity-building for MLAs in applying gender-sensitive analysis to the budget. There are also lessons to be learned from the experience of gender budgeting in Scotland.[45]

In addition, the Assembly Education and Outreach Service can intensify its comprehensive work programme with a specific focus on raising the interest and engagement of women and girls in politics. This can be done through an **active promotion of women politicians as role models**, and through the development of a **mentoring scheme for women and girls with political ambitions**.

Finally, **the Assembly should consider how it can support parties in giving strong effect to the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act, and the provisions it contains for gender-balancing candidates so that the voters are given gender as well as party choices.** This also applies to local council elections, and consideration should be given there to the introduction of **candidate gender balance provisions**, legislation for which is in the remit of the Assembly. Additionally, Assembly consideration of this matter could include examining the options of inserting a gender equality clause in the Northern Ireland Act in relation to elections to the Assembly. The experience of the operation of the relatively new candidate gender balance law in Ireland and that of other countries with candidate gender balance laws could provide useful information.

Adopting these, or similar, measures will enhance the participation of women in the work of the Assembly, will support the Assembly and Executive's responsiveness to gender equality as a public policy issue, will raise the profile of the Assembly among the public on gender and

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[45] Angela O'Hagan, Gender budgeting in Europe: A sustainable route to policy change?, Paper for PSA Northern Postgraduate Conference, 6 June 2008

politics matters, and will contribute to making the Assembly a more attractive place for women and men to pursue careers as elected representatives and parliamentary staff.

Section 5

Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk   **Tel:** 028 90521787 or
Assembly and Executive Review Committee   028 90521928
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Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3XX

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission