

MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY

The things you really need
to know, but have been
afraid to ask...



Comisiwn Cyfle Cyfartal
Menywod. Dynion. Gwahanol. Cydradd.

Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

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Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction to gender mainstreaming	2
Where does gender mainstreaming come from?	3
Gender mainstreaming: a definition	4
Examples of gender mainstreaming in practice	5
The principles of gender mainstreaming	6
Regarding the individual as a whole person	6
Democracy and empowerment	7
Fairness, justice and equality	8
Gender mainstreaming in action: the tools of change	9
Gender disaggregated statistics	9
Gender impact assessments	10
Equality indicators	10
Monitoring, evaluating and auditing	11
Gender balance in decision making	11
Engendering budgets	12
'Visioning'	12
Select bibliography	13
Useful websites	14

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Equal Opportunities Commission

Foreword

Mainstreaming is a new approach to equality policy making and practice.

Mainstreaming aims to build equality considerations into plans right from the outset, rather than bolting them on when it is far too late and all the important decisions have already been taken.

Mainstreaming challenges assumptions and raises difficult questions, its “tools” ensure that policy making is based on evidence rather than anecdote or expediency.

Mainstreaming measures results and outcomes, allowing policy makers to check whether their aims have been achieved, and to make adjustments where necessary.

Mainstreaming requires teamwork drawing together policy specialists, equality experts and those who can effect change.

Mainstreaming has been adopted by the United Nations, European Commission, UK Government and the Welsh Assembly.

Yet mainstreaming is not well understood. Organisations talk about putting mainstreaming at the heart of their policy development, without really knowing what this entails, or how to get started.

To begin to fill this gap, the Equal Opportunities Commission is publishing this introduction to gender mainstreaming. The questions we are attempting to answer include:

- What is gender mainstreaming?
- How does mainstreaming apply to the other equality strands?
- Where has the concept come from?
- What are its principles and tools?
- How do you do it?
- Where can more guidance be found?

The EOC is extremely grateful to Professor Teresa Rees and Alison Parken of Cardiff University for preparing this guidance for us. We are working with the National Assembly for Wales to increase understanding of mainstreaming and to integrate the principles of equality into policy making and service delivery.

If you would like to know more, or would like us to work with you, please contact us.

Neil Wooding
Equal Opportunities Commissioner for Wales

Introduction to gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a modern and challenging approach to putting equality into practice. It has been adopted by organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and European Commission (EC) during the last decade. It is an ambitious approach to equality policy and practice which is in the process of evolution and application.

This introduction outlines the gender mainstreaming approach and signposts to further information sources. Hyperlinks to other sources of information and useful websites are provided throughout. A select bibliography is provided at the end of the document.

Equality practitioners and policy-makers involved in gender mainstreaming continually learn from their experience of applying the approach. This introduction cannot make you a 'gender mainstreaming expert', or provide a comprehensive 'how to' guide - that would be like attempting to teach the principles and practice of management accounting in an outline. However, the brief history of gender mainstreaming policy given here, followed by a definition and simple examples of its application, will be a good starting point. In addition, the principles and tools of gender mainstreaming are also introduced.

These have been developed to enable service providers, policy-makers and private organisations to address gender inequalities in policy, service provision and employment.

The examples provided of gender mainstreaming in practice often refer to public policy but this approach is also applicable to both the internal and external focus of all organisations. The principles and tools facilitate understanding of the ways that gender makes a difference to the lives of employees and customers. Applying such knowledge will ensure accurate targeting of policy and resources.

The gender mainstreaming tools described below may vary when addressing inequalities of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability but the principles of putting equality into practice remain the same. Indeed, gender mainstreaming aims to encompass men and women of varying age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital and family status, and ability.

Where does gender mainstreaming come from?

The concept of gender mainstreaming first arose in the context of international development at the United Nations Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985). There was concern that the roles and importance of women in developing economies were not being addressed. As a result of these discussions, and consequent strategy decisions, it was decided that all UN work and that of affiliated agencies, must account for the differences that gender makes to the lives of women and men. Specifically, the position of women must be made visible, as it would no longer be acceptable to take men's lives and experiences as representative of all.

At the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) gender mainstreaming was adopted as strategy in the Platform for Action. This calls for the promotion of gender mainstreaming policy by stating that: ...governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively (Verloo et al 1998).

Subsequently, many countries have adopted the gender mainstreaming approach and are working to create models for its delivery. The United Kingdom Government is signed up to the principles of gender mainstreaming and is involved in developing some tools. For example, see the Guide to Gender Impact Assessments produced by the Women's and Equality Unit of the Cabinet Office at: www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/gender_impact_assesment/equal.htm

In the devolved parliament of Scotland and the National Assembly of Wales gender mainstreaming has been adopted and the strategy is being moved into equalities practice. A recent report 'An Absolute Duty' evaluating the impact of gender mainstreaming, in combination with the statutory duty to promote equality, in the policy of the Assembly of Wales can be obtained from EOC Wales or viewed at www.eoc.org.uk. A review of gender mainstreaming policy in Scotland can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/government/devolution/meo-05.asp>

Gender mainstreaming: a definition

The processes of gender mainstreaming have been adopted and adapted by a variety of institutions and organisations concerned to deliver equality, from the United Nations to local government. There are, therefore, a number of definitions in circulation. A clear definition, commonly used because it is explanatory as well as describing the aims of gender mainstreaming, is that of the European Commission. The EC communication on gender mainstreaming states that all actors and levels of governance should be involved in:

“...mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women (the gender perspective)”

COM (96) 67 final from 21/2/96

Gender mainstreaming policy and practices intends to go beyond mere basic legislation on the equal treatment of women and men. It acknowledges that treating them the same may not lead to equal outcomes. Men and women often have different access or approaches to economic and social resources, time and space. Treating men and women differently may lead to fairer outcomes.

Indeed, the EC acknowledges the need for positive action measures to supplement mainstreaming initiatives. European Union member states (as signatories of the Treaty of Amsterdam 1997)* are committed to mainstreaming equality between women and men in all their policies. Positive action and gender mainstreaming already inform EC policy on the European Structural funds, community initiatives such as EQUAL, and national employment plans.

The mainstreaming approach to putting equality into practice facilitates the identification of needs and how to address them through specific, targeted measures. Further examples of applying a gender mainstreaming approach are given in ‘Examples of gender mainstreaming’ on the following page.

*Article 2 and 3 of this Treaty contain the European Union’s commitment to promote equality and undertake mainstreaming actions.

Examples of gender mainstreaming in practice

The EOC webpage on good equal opportunities practice in the delivery of goods and services gives an example of indirect discrimination (http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/advice/service_delivery.asp)

This occurs when a condition or requirement that isn't strictly necessary is applied equally to both men and women but in practice it adversely affects more women than men (or more men than women, gender mainstreaming applies equally to men and women). The example given is a mortgage provider who will only lend to full time workers. Many more women than men work part time but not all of them are on the low wages typically associated with women's part time work. Some will be in well-paid secure jobs, so it may be unreasonable to have a blanket ban on part time workers.

Similarly, some men in employment may want flexible working arrangements and this should be accommodated where possible. However, this shouldn't mean that flexible working for men is always organised through overtime and shift working within full time contracts, whilst for women it is achieved through part time working where lower salaries, promotion prospects or other benefits are likely to accrue.*

Additionally, staying with the part time working example, women in 'top' jobs should be able to do those jobs on a part time basis when they have caring responsibilities (as should men in this situation), these jobs should not be defined as full time simply because men have traditionally done them.

Simply, the gender mainstreaming approach means challenging our assumptions and stereotypes about men and women, and their roles in society and the economy. It means making evidence-based policy. This is simply good sense. Well targeted policy which takes account of the different ways men and women may organise their time, or relate to goods and services, means better use of resources and better outcomes in terms of achieving policy objectives. In the process social and economic inequalities will be challenged.

An example of this evidence-based approach to policy making comes from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. When they began developing mainstreaming methods (they recognise this is an on-going process), they reviewed whether the services they were providing met the needs of both women and men. They compared travel patterns of men and women and found that public transport provision was based much more upon men's use of it:

“...the problem is that it is mostly women who use public transport. So public transport answers to the needs of those who do not use it”
(Helen Lundkvist 1998: 33).

The principles of gender mainstreaming

The gender mainstreaming approach facilitates the challenging of assumptions which have been imported into policy-making, employment practice or customer services. A number of 'principles' and 'tools' have been developed to do this. In particular, the principles of gender mainstreaming explain the rationale to the approach and outline the kinds of changes it could bring about.

The tools for gender mainstreaming are designed to help gather the information required to 'vision' how this approach to putting equality into practice can bring about real change in gender relations.

*Work/life balance research demonstrates that fathers would prefer compressed or annual hours which do not involve a reduction in pay, whilst mothers opt for term-time only working a reduced hours. However, such policies would not address the unequal division of labour between men and women.

Gender mainstreaming philosophy may vary but three basic principles underlie most versions:

1) Regarding the individual as a whole person:

This principle means questioning assumptions when making policy or putting equality measures into practice. For example the idea that men are the household breadwinners, and that women's commitment to the labour market is marginal, implicitly underpins a whole range of policy areas. This is difficult to see on the surface because it involves a whole raft of policies which look like common sense but actually disguise the perpetuation of inequalities in pay, promotion and the way that individuals are valued and rewarded by organisations. We often hear that fathers feel that their working hours are not conducive to playing a full part in family life. Family friendly and work-life balance policies must be inclusive and not implicitly aimed at women. One way of doing this is to make explicit reference to men and women, and mothers and fathers, in work-life balance policies. Using the term 'parents' is insufficient since this is often interpreted to mean mothers and men may feel that policies are not intended for them.

The principles of gender mainstreaming

Similarly, service providers and employers should not assume that all households consist of heterosexual couples, or that single people may not also have caring responsibilities. An assumption that mothers (in lesbian or heterosexual households), are only interested in flexible working to undertake childcare, can lead to their implicit exclusion from study leave or flexible working arrangements which facilitate participation in local government or trade union activities.

Creating policy which regards the individual as a whole person is a two step process. It means 'visioning' a person's different needs based on gender, parental role or single household status but then also seeing each individual as more than those differences. This avoids importing a new set of stereotypes into policy.

Treating the individual as a whole person extends to issues of dignity at work. 'Values' statements can outline the ideal of equal status for men and women, and detail how this will be translated into everyday action. Such an ideal can be useful in establishing benchmarks for equal pay, on the basis of equal pay for equal work. For examples of how government and private business has 'discovered' gendered assumptions implicit in pay structures and amended pay and promotion systems as a result of revaluing women's work, see the report of the Equal Pay Task Force Just Pay.

The principle of treating the individual as a whole person extends to codes of conduct for employers, service providers and employees. These help to bring the organisational values to life in everyday interaction and can be instrumental in achieving real change where bullying or harassment may, or could become, part of the organisational culture. Too often, perpetrators see their behaviour as part of normal working life and getting the job done. Respect for the individual also allows for a comprehensive policy on sexual and racial harassment, and covers discrimination on these grounds and disability.

Adhering to the principle of treating employees or service users (and customers) as individuals, means challenging assumptions. It also means that difference should be respected and that treatment of individuals should not be based upon stereotypical views about their sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or physical or mental ability. This may sound impossible but it is common sense. The more closely targeted the resulting policy is, the more successful it will be.

2) Democracy and empowerment:

The second principle underlying most versions of gender mainstreaming is democracy. This means extending participation in the policy making process. For example, the National Assembly of Wales is consulting its constituents about policy-making. It has the catalyst for the formation of a coalition of women's groups and an all-Wales lesbian, gay, bi-sexual forum through provision of financial support. These groups will carry out consultations and put forward a 'needs based' agenda for change in these communities.

The principles of gender mainstreaming

To achieve increased civic participation, it is vital to consult and communicate with all groups in society who have found it difficult to voice their needs. Those individuals who are the targeted beneficiaries of a particular policy or programme should be actively involved at all stages of decision-making processes and in the management structures. The principle of democracy places the onus on policy-makers and employers to discover needs and devise services or policies which reflect different approaches, or uses of time, space, energy and resources. It is no longer acceptable to revert to a 'default human experience' or one laced with assumptions about gender roles and behaviours.

3) Fairness, justice and equality:

Here the social justice ideal, which marks out gender mainstreaming as different to the Human Resource practice of 'managing diversity', is evident. Gender mainstreaming does not wish to 'manage' diversity, it aims to enable diversity to significantly change the operation of governments and the policy-making process. Whilst gender mainstreaming argues for respect for the individual, it does not reduce difference entirely to the individual level as 'managing diversity' can do. Group characteristics that have been used to produce social and economic disadvantage (sex, 'race', ethnicity, disability, sexuality) are to be challenged whilst the needs of the individuals who form part of these groups are to be given voice through the mainstreaming approach.

The effects of this are far reaching, for example a gender perspective must be applied to economic development strategy. Gender mainstreaming in European funding proposals is now a significant parameter in achieving a successful bid. It is essential for the European Union to make the most of women's skills and knowledge if it is to compete globally. A recent conference in Swansea brought together economic actors and partnerships from Ireland, Sweden and the UK to share best practice in gender mainstreaming in economic development. A copy of the conference report can be downloaded from the Welsh European Funding Office website: <http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk> (Select Objective One, the report will be next to Equal Opportunities guidelines).

The tools for putting gender mainstreaming into practice are outlined below. These are the action points for making evidence-based policy capable of addressing gender inequalities. They will help overcome resistance to change. To be able to 'see' our assumptions and stereotypes (and that includes those of 'new' populations to be served by forthcoming legislation), we need detailed information about the difference that gender makes to the living and working conditions of men and women. Evidence-based policy enables the meeting of actual needs. Targeted policy will be more effective and challenge inequalities.

Gender mainstreaming in action: the tools of change

The tools of gender mainstreaming are designed to provide the information necessary to make evidence-based policy. This is not an exhaustive list, and new approaches are constantly being developed. Gender mainstreaming is not a static process.

Successful gender mainstreaming involves bringing together a mixture of actors with varied expertise, skills and knowledge. Policy-makers need to work with experts on gender issues, and together they must consult the service users, constituents or employees who should benefit from the policy. The tools outlined here will enable new information, including the valuable tacit knowledge of those currently ill served by systems and policies, to be gathered and applied to the policy-making process.

Gender disaggregated statistics:

Gender disaggregated statistics are a vital management tool for understanding the often different situations of women and men. All too often such data is not collected or collated.

All organisations could benefit from collecting this data and using it to examine the effectiveness of policy, to establish patterns in the allocation of resources, or to monitor performance, whether or not they are committed to gender mainstreaming. Public sector authorities have a duty to know who benefits from their services and who does not. Software packages are used in Sweden (in combination with gender mainstreaming experts who can apply the data within a gender frame) to assess who benefits from

services on a regular basis. It can often be entirely acceptable that one sex rather than another should benefit more from specific services or budgets, so long as this reflects evidence-based need, rather than being simply demand-led or worse, the consequence of chance or indirect discrimination.

In Canada and many EU Member States annual booklets of gender-disaggregated statistics are published and disseminated widely to the general public. For an example of the how the European Commission's statistical bureau (Eurostat) is working towards harmonizing data collection across Europe, including a gendered analysis visit: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat>

By contrast, many UK public bodies are unable to provide a gender breakdown of who benefits from their services. Such figures should be used as a management tool for targeting. For example, it is clear that unemployed mature-aged* women are far more likely to take up opportunities for adult education. To encourage more unemployed mature-aged men to take up such services may require different styles of marketing or delivery.

*This term is used by Higher Education Institution (HEI's) to refer to students who haven't been through the usual matriculation route but are accepted for higher education on the basis of relevant life or work experience.

Gender mainstreaming in action: the tools of change

Gender impact assessments

A gender impact assessment is made before policy (or legislation) is implemented. It is designed to help policy makers understand the relative impact of the policy or practice upon men and women respectively, and address any adverse effects. Gender impact assessments are routinely used in some Nordic countries where the approach has been described as wearing a 'gender lens' or having a 'gender reflex'.

For example, Lindsten (2000) describes the 'gender reflex' as focusing on answering three questions (called the three 'Rs') in relation to any proposed policy:

- representation (what is the gender distribution of relevant decision-making bodies?)
- resources (what is the distribution of/access to resources for men and women?) and
- reality (do men and women profit from the measure? Who gets what, why and on what conditions?)

There is an EC guide to gender impact assessments (EC 1998b) and useful information can be found at this site:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/index_en.htm

Further information can be found at:

http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/gender_impact_assesment/equal.htm
Women and Equality Unit, Cabinet Office

[www.http://mainstreaming.it](http://www.mainstreaming.it)
EU report on different mainstreaming techniques

http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/about_genmain/about_genmain.html
Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - guide to mainstreaming equality

Equality indicators:

Raw data, even when disaggregated by gender, are limited in what they show without baseline statistics to set and measure performance targets. Equality indicators need to be developed for benchmarking purposes so that comparisons can be made over time or space. The identification of equality indicators should be an on-going process with new information about how gender inequalities are maintained enabling the development of new indicators and the refining of existing ones.

This is a tool which is being developed, see particularly the work being undertaken on equality indicators in employment in Ireland:
http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/about_genmain/about_genmain.html Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - guide to mainstreaming equality.

Further information will be monitored and posted to this site as it arises. See also the section on Monitoring, evaluating and auditing below.

Gender mainstreaming in action: the tools of change

Monitoring, evaluating, auditing

Gender equality needs to be regarded as a performance indicator, and treated the same way for evaluation purposes as, say, balancing the books. It is thus essential to monitor the effectiveness of policy.

For example, gender auditing of pay has led to some significant changes described in the the Equal Pay Task Force report, Just Pay.

A striking example of the effectiveness of auditing is the recent pay review undertaken by The National Assembly for Wales. It carried out a pay audit of its own civil service and as a result of the gender pay gap revealed, 22% was added to the pay bill!

This illustrates the extent to which women workers had hitherto been undervalued and underpaid. In Northern Ireland, considerable work is being developed on statistical monitoring on a range of equality indicators in employment.

See:

[www.http://mainstreaming.it](http://www.mainstreaming.it)

EU report on different mainstreaming techniques

[http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/](http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/about_genmain/about_genmain.html)

[about_genmain/about_genmain.html](http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/about_genmain/about_genmain.html)

Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - guide to mainstreaming equality.

Gender balance in decision-making

A gender balance in decision-making is needed to address the democratic principle of gender mainstreaming. In the Research Directorate of the EC, there is a rule that all the scientific committees of the Directorate must have at least 40% of both genders.

This has substantially altered the gender make up on the committees that decide what science should be funded as well as those that monitor and evaluate successful projects in the EC's Framework Programmes. What different perspectives could women bring to the board rooms of the UK?

Further information on creating a gender balance in decision making is available on the EOC site, or in the EOC report 'A Checklist for Gender Proofing Research' (2000) Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Gender mainstreaming in action: the tools of change

Engendering budgets

Budgets can, and indeed, need to be 'engendered'. It is legitimate to ask what proportion of public budgets in all areas, are spent on men and women, and girls and boys respectively.

For example, one country has found that ambulances are disproportionately used by men. It may be that this is an appropriate imbalance in use of resource, but equally, it might be that the gender difference in who calls an ambulance, when and why, needs to be investigated further. Above all, it is essential to have that data as a management tool to ensure resources are directed strategically and equitably.

Gender budgeting was one of the topics at a recent conference convened to discuss gender mainstreaming in the use of European Union structural funds, see:

<http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk>

Information detailing the Canadian experience can be found at:

<http://www.americascanada.org/about/menu-e.asp>

'Visioning'

Finally, 'visioning' which is probably the most difficult but vital element of mainstreaming. Through it, we seek to understand and address how existing practice and institutional arrangements, however inadvertently, however subconsciously, disadvantage more women than men (or indeed, vice versa).

Visioning is at the heart of mainstreaming and requires the imaginative reconsideration of the use of resources, time, or public space, in gendered terms. The tools outlined are designed to help with this process.

Putting equality into practice through the principles of gender mainstreaming is challenging and exciting. Even more so when considering how it can be applied to challenging inequalities based upon ethnicity, sexuality and age.

The gender mainstreaming approach is in continual development. There are no gender mainstreaming experts, only interested practitioners, policy-makers, academic and employers working together towards addressing gender inequalities and learning as they go. This introduction could not describe the whole approach and offer a comprehensive 'how to', it would be a little like trying to teach the principles and practice of management accounting in an outline. However, we hope the introduction has been useful and that these further sources of information will help you to put equality into practice through gender mainstreaming.

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Conference Report of the Gender Mainstreaming in UK and Ireland Structural Funds Conference, 13th May 2002,
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Equal Opportunities Commission

Useful Websites

UK

<http://www.eoc.org.uk>

Great Britain Equal Opportunities Commission

<http://www.thewnc.org.uk>

Women's National Commission

http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/gender_impact_assesment/equal.htm

Women and Equality Unit, Cabinet Office

<http://www.set4women.gov.uk>

Women in science, engineering and technology, UK Government, Department of Trade and Industry, Office of Science and Technology

<http://www.equalitydirect.org.uk>

Advisory service on equality issues

Ireland

http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/about_genmain/about_genmain.html

Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - guide to mainstreaming equality

Commonwealth Secretariat

<http://www.thecommonwealth.org.gender>

Series of guides on gender mainstreaming

European Union

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/index_en.htm

gender equality documents of the European Commission

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ-opp/news/report_en.html

annual reports on equal opportunities in the European Union

www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/women

European Commission's Women's Information Web site

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/employment_social/pubs-en.cfm

publications from the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate-General, including information on equal opportunities

http://cordis.lu/science_society/women/ht

Women and Science Unit, Research Directorate-General, EC

<http://www.cordis.lu/improving/women/documents.html>

Women and Science Unit, Research Directorate-General, EC, documents

<http://www.humanrights.coe.int/equality>

Council of Europe, Director General of Human Rights, Equality between men and women

<http://www.womenlobby.org/html>

European Women's Lobby

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat)

Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat

The European Commission's Statistical Bureau - for data of women and men in the labour market

<http://coe.int.html>

Council Of Europe

United Nations

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>

United Nations womenwatch page, including information on Beijing plus 5

<http://www.undp.org.in/report/gstrat/strat-11.html>

Checklist of actions for gender mainstreaming

Beijing Platform for Action

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform>

America/Canada

<http://www.americascanada.org/about/menu-e.asp>

Hemisphere Summit Office (HSO):

Task force of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade