



Strasbourg, 29 October 2012

GEC(2012)10

**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)**

**CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS
"MEDIA AND THE IMAGE OF WOMEN"**

DRAFT CONCEPT PAPER

1. Background of the Conference

For the Council of Europe, gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference. Unfortunately, on a daily basis, and the world over, the visibility given to women in mass media, including electronic media, public and private television and radio stations, influence their audiences' ideas of what it means to be masculine and feminine – of what is acceptable behaviour for men and for women.

Despite progress achieved, the media continue to produce stereotypes of women, and the advent of new technologies has in no way changed this. This asymmetrical perception of women and men has an influence on the attitudes of women and men through imitation of these so called “*role models*”, thereby perpetuating gender stereotypes. Numerous gender stereotypes present serious obstacles in the process of achieving real gender equality and feed into gender discrimination which is one of the root cause of violence against women and girls.

International organisations at world and European level have often highlighted the role and responsibility of the media in promoting social change to achieve equality between women and men and have put forward guidelines and strategies to this effect.

As an Organisation set up to protect and promote democracy and human rights, the Council of Europe started to work on media and equality in the 80s. Its recommendations and activities have focused on “*the important role that the media play in forming social attitudes and values and their potential as instruments of social change*”¹

Participants in the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for equality between women and men², with the theme “Gender equality: bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality”, emphasised that the media must recognise that they have a responsibility for upholding and applying the principle of equality between women and men as an integral part of human rights in the way they operate and in the content of their messages. The plan of action “*Taking up the challenge of the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality*” adopted by the Conference, agreed that the Council of Europe should:

1. draft a handbook on strategies to combat gender stereotypes in the media;
2. identify and disseminate good practice in relation to codes of conduct adopted by the media to address gender stereotypes;

¹ Recommendation No R (84) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on equality between women and men in the media

² Baku, 24-25 May 2010

Within the transversal programme on gender equality set up in 2012 to support the implementation of the Council of Europe standards within the Organisation and in member states, a new structure was established - the [Gender Equality Commission](#) (GEC). One of the priorities identified by the GEC is to tackle the issue of “women and media” on the basis of the measures contained in *Recommendation No R (84) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on equality between women and men in the media* and examine the follow-up to be given to these measures. Members of the GEC agreed that the first annual meeting of the network of National Gender Equality Focal Points (13-14 June 2013, to be confirmed) should be devoted to this issue.

2. Aims of the Conference

The main aims of the Conference:

- Raise awareness of the media and the general public on gender equality issues in the media;
- Discuss the challenges posed by reconciling the media’s freedom of expression and upholding the principle of gender equality;
- Encourage a gender sensitive approach in the media environment and industry;
- Discuss and exchange good practices on effective strategies for combating gender stereotypes;
- Present to the participants the Council of Europe Handbook “Women and Journalists” and its toolkit on how to combat gender stereotypes in the media.

3. Participants

Targeted participants include:

- National gender equality focal points;
- Representatives of gender equality mechanisms;
- Representatives of national media regulatory authorities in the Council of Europe member states;
- Representatives of media (press, radio, cinema, TV, ITC)
- Representatives of marketing and advertising companies;
- Journalists and representatives of their associations;
- the gender equality Rapporteurs;
- Representatives of NGOs working in the field of women and the media;
- Representatives of the Committee of Ministers, including the Thematic Co-ordinator for gender equality and trafficking of the Committee of Ministers
- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- representatives of the Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights;
- the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- Representatives of the Conference of INGOs;
- International intergovernmental organisations, in particular UN Women, European Union and the OSCE.

Gender Equality Conference

Theme: “Media and the Image of Women” [tbc]

With the participation of the Council of Europe
Gender Equality Focal Points

[Venue and date TBC], 13-14 June 2013

Draft Programme³

³ Content of the Programme to be discussed with the host country and co-organisers.

DAY 1 [Date TBC]	
8.00 – 8.45 am	Registration of participants
Opening Session	
9.00 am	<p>Opening remarks by :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Chairperson of the GEC – Carlien Sheele ➤ Representative of the host country ➤ Secretary General of the Council of Europe ➤ President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ➤ Other high level representatives
Session 1 - Women and the media	
9.30 – 10.15 am	<p>Keynote speaker: Council of Europe expert [tbc] (20 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Representative from [tbc] ➤ Representative from [tbc] ➤ Representative from [tbc] <p><i>Discussion</i></p>
10.15 – 10.30 am	<p>Presentation of the Handbook ‘Women and Journalists first’ Speaker: Ms Joke Hermes, Council of Europe Expert</p>
10.45 – 11.00 am	Coffee
Session 2- Presentations of National Experiences	
11.00 – 12.30 am	<p>Keynote speaker: Council of Europe expert [tbc] (20 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Representative from [tbc] ➤ Representative from [tbc] ➤ Representative from [tbc] <p><i>Discussion</i></p>
12.30 – 2.30 pm	Lunch

Session 3 - Gender equality and freedom of expression: incompatible principles?	
2.30 – 3.45 pm	Keynote speaker: Council of Europe expert/Rapporteur [tbc] (20 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) <i>Discussion</i>
3.45 – 4.00 pm	Coffee
Session 4 - Abolishing gender stereotypes in the media: a lost cause or a new challenge?	
4.00 pm – 5.15 pm	Keynote speaker: Council of Europe expert/Rapporteur [tbc] (20 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) Representative from [tbc] (10 mins) <i>Discussion</i>
5.30 – 6.00 pm	Dinner offered by Host (tbc)
DAY 2 [Date TBC] Conclusions	
9.00 – 10.00 am	Presentation of Concluding Remarks by the General Rapporteur and follow-up to the Conference
10.00 – 11.00 am	<i>Discussion</i>
11.00 – 11.30 am	Coffee
Closing Session	
11.30 – 12.00 am	Closing remarks by Host Representative Closing remarks by CoE Representative
12.00	Press Conference (tbc)