



Strasbourg, 25 March 2013

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**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)**

**REPORT OF EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE—
CHAIR OF THE GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)
AND THE PACE COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION,
PARIS, 3 DECEMBER 2012**

The Chair of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), Carlien Scheele, informed the participants about the exchange of views which took place at the GEC meeting in November with Mr Mendes Bota, the First Vice Chair of the PACE Committee. She underlined the importance of the work and support of the PACE Committee and how co-operation and synergies between the intergovernmental bodies and the Assembly are key to achieving common goals. The Chair looked forward to continuing the exchange of information and co-operation, and strengthening contacts between members of the Committee and the Commission. She spoke about the excellent relations between the two Secretariats who ensure dissemination of information about on-going work and activities.

The Chair outlined the GEC's discussions which led to the identification of a number of topics to be of particular relevance for the Council of Europe. In the immediate future, the GEC would focus on three areas:

- Access for women to justice;
 - Gender stereotypes in the media (including leadership of women in the media, new media); and
 - Violence against women.
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- **Access for women to justice**

The Chair informed the participants about the preparation of a feasibility study on access to justice for women, the aims of which were to present an overview of international standards and legal frameworks in Council of Europe member states; draw on the findings of relevant existing studies to identify the data which needs to be gathered to produce a detailed picture of the situation and then identify the obstacles of a legal, material, cultural or other nature encountered by women in gaining access to the courts in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings; present any existing remedies and good practices in this area; make recommendations to improve the situation; and make proposals for action by the Council of Europe in this area.

The Chair informed the participants about the involvement of GEC members and National Focal Points (NFP) in the study and invited the members of the PACE Committee to contribute any useful information they may have on the subject. The study would be considered by the GEC at its next meeting in April. The Assembly would be kept informed about on-going work and possibilities for further co-operation.

- **Women and Media**

The Chair informed the participants that "Women and Media" was proposed as a topic for the first annual meeting of the Network of National Focal Points which the Council of Europe will organise in co-operation with the Dutch authorities – the host of the event in July 2013.

She outlined the main objectives of the Conference which were to: 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; and present to the participants the Council of Europe Handbook "Women and Journalists" and its toolkit on how to combat gender stereotypes in the media.

The Conference will also discuss stereotyping of women in the media, leadership of women in the media, new media. The final report of the Conference and its conclusions will provide the basis for further action and follow-up.

- **Violence against Women**

The GEC Chair thanked the Committee and, in particular, the Parliamentary Network on Violence Against Women and the General Rapporteur, Mr Bota, for their contribution to the promotion of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). She said that the recent events organised by the Network contributed to further raising the profile of the Council of Europe and the Istanbul Convention, and encouraging governments to sign and ratify the Convention. She also outlined the work the GEC in this area and informed the members that the fourth and last round of evaluation on the implementation of the Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of women against violence would be launched in March 2013.

GEC and the Council of Europe Programme for Gender Equality

Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs)

The Chair informed the participants about the first exchange between the GEC and the Gender Equality Rapporteurs of the different CoE Steering Committees.

National Focal Points (NFP)

The Chair informed the Committee about the strengthening of co-operation with National Focal Points. A half day of the NFP Conference in the Netherlands would focus on the Network's working methods and co-operation with GEC and other relevant bodies.

Gender Mainstreaming Team

The Chair informed the participants about the establishment of an Inter Secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team comprising 25 members from all sectors of the Secretariat.

Gender Equality Strategy

The Chair spoke about the first draft of a Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality for 2014-2017 which would be discussed at the GEC meeting in April 2013.
