

Strasbourg, 23 July 2013

NFP (2013) RAP 1

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (NFP)

1st MEETING OF GENDER EQUALITY NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

REPORT OF THE MEETING

1. Introduction and welcome address by the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Commission

The Chairperson of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), Carlien Scheele, welcomed participants to the first meeting of the National Focal Points (NFP) and invited NFPs, GEC elected members and members of the Secretariat to briefly introduce themselves. The Agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix I to this report. The list of participants appears in Appendix II.

The Chair underlined the main objectives of the meeting:

- ➤ Provide an opportunity for NFPs, members of the GEC and the Secretariat to get to know each other;
- Take stock of progress achieved and challenges faced during the first year of the transversal programme on gender equality;
- > Discuss and identify ways to strengthen working relations between the various structures;
- ➤ Discuss work in progress and possible future activities.

Ambassador Tatiana Parvu, Committee of Ministers Thematic Co-ordinator on Equality and Trafficking, greeted the NFPs and highlighted the importance that the Committee of Ministers attaches to gender equality and its support of the new Transversal Programme. She also stressed her personal commitment to the advancement of the gender equality agenda.

2. Reflection on one year of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Programme: input from National Focal Points and the Gender Equality Commission

The Chair presented on-going work in the area of gender equality, with particular focus on the results achieved and challenges faced during the first year of the Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality. She highlighted the main objective of the Transversal Programme which aims to bridge the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality, and to implement Council of Europe and other relevant international standards in the area of gender equality. The Programme also aims to integrate a gender equality perspective into the Council of Europe's various decision-making, advisory and monitoring bodies. The Programme builds on the standards and *acquis* of the Council of Europe and on its support structures: the GEC, the NFPs, the Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) and the Inter-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team (GMT) as well as on partnerships with other international and regional organisations.

Main structures in brief:

Gender Equality Commission - under the supervision of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), the GEC conducts intergovernmental work in the field of gender equality assigned to it by the Committee of Ministers.

- National Focal Points appointed by the authorities of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, NFPs provide the link between the Council of Europe Transversal Programme and the actors and mechanisms that are responsible for gender equality at national level.
- ➤ Gender Equality Rapporteurs appointed by Council of Europe Steering Committees and other intergovernmental and monitoring bodies, to encourage the integration of a gender perspective into the work and activities of their respective structures.
- ➤ The Committee of Ministers <u>Thematic Co-ordinator</u> on Equality and Trafficking
- ➤ The Council of Europe <u>Inter-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team</u> to ensure cooperation and synergies of action to achieve gender equality within the organisation.

The Chair outlined the three priority areas identified by the GEC and carried out by the various structures of the Transversal Programme:

- Media and the image of women;
- Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice;
- Preventing and combatting violence against women.

Some of the results achieved during the first year of the existence of the Transversal Programme include:

- Preparation and launch of the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality;
- Preparation and organisation of three meetings of the GEC (including identifying and developing the work programme for the three priority areas);
- Preparation of a preliminary study on equal access of women to justice;
- > Organisation of a first exchange of views between the GEC and the GERs in November 2012;
- ➤ Preparation and the launch of the 4th round of monitoring of the CM Recommendation (2002)5 on the protection of women from violence;
- ➤ Preparation and organisation of the first NFP meeting and the conference on "Media and the image of women";
- > Preparation of the draft strategy of the Council of Europe on Gender Equality 2014-2017.

The Chair praised the contribution of the NFPs to all the work undertaken by the Transversal Programme. She highlighted the importance of continued dialogue and exchange of information, in particular with regard to the implementation of work in the three current priority areas and the adoption and implementation of the future Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy.

In the discussions that followed, NFPs presented an overview of activities in the area of gender equality in their countries, with a particular focus on on-going work and progress in the three priority areas. The discussions and presentations can be summed up as follows:

- New policies, structures and legislation on gender equality (national action plans, setting up new gender equality structures, updating legislation on equality and providing remedies in cases of infringement): **Armenia**, **France**, **Georgia**, **Greece**, **Slovenia**.
- Violence against women and domestic violence, in particular adoption of national action plans and policies, and preparation of signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention (setting up shelters, studies on the cost of violence, phone lines in several languages, bringing legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention): Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Montenegro, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland.
- Access to justice (studies and activities related to integrating inter-sectorial factors, providing free access to justice for women victims of violence, facilitating direct access to lawyer's associations): Denmark, Greece, Switzerland.
- Gender mainstreaming (gender budgeting, gender impact assessment): Armenia, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia.
- ➤ LGBT (dissemination of CoE Recommendation <u>CM/Rec(2010)5</u> on Measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity support to LGBTs victims of violence): **Greece, Portugal**.
- ➤ Media (reform of codes of publicity/advertisement, co-operation with regulatory bodies, awards for journalists, studies on good practices in the media, self-assessment of media agencies, data collection, thematic conferences): **Greece, Ireland, Moldova, Switzerland**.
- Access of women to political and public decision making (national action plan, reform of GE structures, support for NGOs, reform of domestic legislation, financial sanctions to political parties, mentoring programmes, quotas): Armenia, France, Ireland, Malta, Montenegro.
- ➤ The role of women in post conflict societies (implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building): Georgia.
- Equality in the economic sector (law on equal pay, free of charge database and information on equal pay, report on gender pension gap): France, Montenegro, Switzerland.

➤ Inter-sectorial factors of discrimination (recognition by legislation, specific studies on justice, gender budgeting programme for migrant women): **Greece, Slovenia, Switzerland.**

- ➤ Involving men to achieve gender equality (joint meeting between men and women organisations in favour of gender equality): **Switzerland.**
- Quotas (research, legislation on quotas in boards of public bodies and private sector): Malta, France.
- ➤ The impact of the economic crisis on women (events on the impact of recent legislative changes and cuts in services for gender equality): **Greece, Slovenia.**

At the end of discussions, it was agreed that:

➤ NFPs will send to the Secretariat documents and information relevant for the work of the Transversal Programme and the other NFPs, in particular studies related to the cost of violence, access to justice for women, proceedings of events organised, as well as good practices which exist in their countries.

3. National Focal Points: role and working methods

The Chairperson recalled the key functions and the role of NFPs

At national level:

- ➤ Link between CoE transversal programme and actors and mechanisms responsible for gender equality at national level (government, parliament, local and regional authorities, civil society and private sector);
- Promoting international standards at national level.

At international level:

- Source of inspiration and expertise for the co-operation programme of the Council of Europe on gender equality;
- ➤ Provide advice and expertise expected input on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy and the work and activities of the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality. This is in particular important in view of the limited presentation of member states to the elected membership of the Gender Equality Commission.

The Chair recalled that despite some difficulties which are understandable when a new transversal programme is set up, much progress has been achieved. The role of the various elements of the Transversal Programme is being further designed and consolidated and the working methods developed and adapted to ensure efficient co-ordination and synergies, in particular between the three key pillars of the transversal programme: the GEC, NFPs and GERs.

NFPs reported about their experience during this first year of the existence and activities of the Programme. Several NFPs shared the feeling that they did not have ownership over the process of setting priorities or taking decisions. While they may participate through sending written contributions, information and comments to the different processes, activities and the work of the Programme, it was ultimately the elected GEC members that discussed and decided. Even if they are fully informed of new developments, it is difficult to influence the way of deciding and implementing priorities without attending and actively participating in the meetings of the GEC.

The Chair explained that all member states are entitled to attend and contribute to the meetings of the GEC. NFPs pointed out that one of the main reasons they cannot attend GEC meetings is lack of funding, but also because of other duties and responsibilities back in their national structures. There was general agreement to invest time and effort, and if resources are available, to attend and to contribute to the meetings of the GEC. Enlarged participation and attendance of GEC meetings will enable members to maintain the networking opportunities and the "spirit of community" NFPs developed throughout the years in the former CDEG and under the new structures.

The Chair pointed out that NFPs are and will continue to be supported by the GEC through the organisation of the annual conference. Furthermore, both the GEC and the Secretariat are exploring other opportunities to facilitate co-operation with and between NFPs, the GEC and GERs, including through attendance and contributions to events relevant to their work and areas of interest (e.g. access to justice for women victims of violence, gender dimension of corruption, etc.). Regional events bringing together NFPs around themes linked to the strategy could also be organised either in Strasbourg, or in one of the member states (subject to funding). Such events can provide NFPs with opportunities to debate and exchange information and experience on the strategy and the priority themes. A questionnaire in this respect has been sent to all NFPs to define their areas of competence. The Secretariat has received answers from most of the NFPs and the information would enable contacts for future work and activities and facilitate the establishment of contacts with the GERs.

Several NFPs stressed that the first conference was very inspiring and that examples provided by speakers on media and the image of women will be taken on board at domestic level. The first meeting of the NFPs reassured them of efforts to closely associate the NFPs in the work and activities of the Transversal Programme and expressed hope that this will strengthen the sense of ownership. They reiterated their commitment to advancing the agenda of gender equality and continue supporting the Transversal Programme with their experience and expertise. NFPs discussed ideas how to increase the role of NFPs including regular exchange of information through electronic and other means as well as continued involvement of NFPs in preparation of documents, setting of priorities, organisation of activities and events. One NFP who regularly attends meetings of the GEC at the expense of her own authorities, pointed out the importance of liaising and developing co-operation with colleagues from other ministries involved in Council of Europe steering committees, in particular the government representative to the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH). She encouraged her colleagues to establish contacts and influence processes through regular consultations and discussions with colleagues from other steering committees. Setting up a shared space was also discussed as a possibility to increase internal communication between GEC and NFPs.

Following the discussions, the NFPs agreed that:

Organising a meeting for NPFs on the occasion of the annual Conference of the NFPs should be maintained and is considered important to take stock of on-going work, discuss priority areas and future work and facilitate contacts among NFPs and between NFPs and the GEC;

- ➤ NFPs (supported by the Secretariat if needed) should establish contacts with colleagues from their national authorities attending the different Council of Europe steering committee meetings, in particular, representatives to the CDDH;
- ➤ Ideas to raise the profile of NFPs should be proposed and explored. The Secretariat was invited to prepare a factsheet on NFPs, explore the possibility of setting up a shared space and regularly update the website of gender equality with information about ongoing work and activities;
- ➤ NFPs should regularly consult the gender equality website and contribute information they may find useful or relevant to share with other colleagues and partners.

4. Council of Europe Strategy for Gender Equality

The Secretariat briefly presented the draft Strategy which builds upon the vast legal and policy *acquis* of the Council of Europe as regards gender equality and upon the results of the last Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for equality between women and men in 2010¹. The Strategy outlines the goals and priorities of the Council of Europe Programme on Gender Equality for the years 2014-2017, identifies the working methods and the main partners as well as the measures required to increase the visibility of the results. Consultations with NFPs and their contributions during the drafting process are of particular importance to obtain a result that responds to their needs and in view of their role in the implementation process.

In the discussions that ensued, NFPs highlighted the importance of the Strategy as a document that will guide them in their work and activities. The first annual conference of NFPs was devoted to one of the objectives outlined in the draft Strategy (strategic objective one: combating gender stereotyping) and thus a direct contribution to bring the Strategy to life. NFPs wish to continue to be closely involved in the work and activities around the strategic goals of the Strategy.

17th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Equality between women and men, Baku, 24 - 25 May 2010 http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/05conferences/ministerial-conferences/7th-

Ministerial%20Conference/index_en.asp

Following the discussions, the NFPs agreed that:

NFPs should support the process of adopting the Council of Europe draft Strategy on Gender Equality, notably through contacts and discussions with their counterpart in the CDDH;

- ➤ NFPs should continue to play an active role in implementing the Strategy at national level through the integration of standards and the strategic objectives into national action plans and policies;
- ➤ The future annual NFP conferences should contribute to meet one of the draft Strategy's five strategic objectives (combating stereotypes, access to justice, combating violence against women, equality in public life and decision making, gender mainstreaming) and action at national level to implement the strategy.

5. Discussion on future activities

The Chair drew attention to the two possible themes for the second thematic conference of the NFPs. Both themes result from the last Ministerial meeting in Baku (June 2010) and are parts of the strategic objectives of the draft Strategy:

- 1. Stereotyping in education;
- 2. The role of men in achieving gender equality.

In the discussions that followed, NFPs agreed that both suggested themes are very topical and relevant to the work and activities carried out by the Council of Europe and in line with the proposed draft strategy and its goals. The "Role of men in achieving gender equality" is an important topic dealt with by both the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe in the 1990s and by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2008², as well as by the EU in particular EIGE, which has compiled a study Report on "The involvement of Men in Gender Equality Initiatives in the European Union" and has set up a database with information, contact details and materials from more than 300 organisations and individuals, who are involved in work on men and gender equality in the 27 EU member states.

However, participants agreed that work around education policies was particularly important to advance gender equality and suggested to focus their next meeting on this topic. Issues mentioned included combating stereotyping in and through education (including the drop-out of boys), introducing gender budgeting in education, gender and gender equality in the curricula, awareness-raising on gender equality in schools and initiatives to recruit more men in

http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta08/EREC1853.htm

² see Recommendation 1853 (2008)

³ Involvement of men in gender equality within EIGE's working areas - http://eige.europa.eu/internal/csr/search

the educational sector. A new round of monitoring of the Recommendation on Gender mainstreaming in education⁴) would be particularly welcome.

Following the discussions, the NFPs agreed that:

- Gender Stereotypes in Education will be the main theme of the second Conference of NFPs;
- ➤ NFPs should inform the Secretariat of their country's eventual willingness to host the conference next year;
- ➤ The Secretariat should send NFPs the report of the first monitoring round on the recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education;
- ➤ The Secretariat should contact the education sector with a view to prepare an updated version of the questionnaire to monitoring the implementation of the recommendation and agree on the next steps.

6. Any other business

Partial renewal of the Gender Equality Commission

The Secretariat informed participants about the partial renewal of the GEC elected members by the CDDH at its November 2013 meeting. The CDDH will proceed to the appointment of 8 new members of the GEC who will participate in its work at the expense of the Council of Europe's budget, for a non-renewable term of office of 2 years as from 1 January 2014. The CDDH will launch the procedure on 15 September 2013 by a letter from the CDDH Chairman to the 30 member states entitled to propose candidates. The Secretariat recalled that according to the rules of procedure adopted by the CDDH in February 2012, the elected members of GEC are not eligible for election for a second consecutive term of office. Countries having a member who has participated in the work of the GEC at the expense of the Council of Europe may not present a new candidate at the next following elections but can obviously continue participating in the work, at the government's expenses.

In the discussions that ensued, NFPs recalled the importance of the criteria that should guide the CDDH when electing the GEC members whose participation is covered by the Council of Europe budget. These include a balanced geographical representation, experience and expertise, availability for all meetings and willingness to actively contribute to the work. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair of GEC highlighted the fact that according to the Terms of Reference of the GEC, all 47 member states are represented on an equal footing in the GEC, the only difference being 16 elected members are paid by the ordinary budget. All member states can send representatives to the GEC meetings at their own cost. Their representatives to the GEC have exactly the same

 $\underline{https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1194631\&Site=CM\&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3\&BackColorIntranet=EDB021\&BackColorLogged=F5D383}$

⁴ Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming on education

rights as paid members of the GEC, including voting rights. NFPs were encouraged to contact and co-ordinate with the representative of their countries to the CDDH in view of the forthcoming elections.

Forthcoming events

The Secretariat informed participants that subject to funding, NFPs may be invited to attend forthcoming events which may be of interest to their on-going work and activities:

- 1. "Access to Justice for women victims of violence" (Paris, December 2013);
- 2. "The gender dimension of corruption", (Strasbourg or Prague December 2013)

Subject to funding and resources the possibility to organise smaller scale events for NFPs will be explored.

NFPs are invited to bring to the attention of the GEC and the Secretariat any information relevant to the above events.

Date of the next Conference and meeting of NFPs

The Secretariat will keep participants informed about the date and venue of the second conference and meeting of the NFPs.

Concluding remarks:

The Chair highlighted the importance of both the Conference and the meeting as an opportunity to network, exchange ideas and experiences, and further strengthen the working relationship between the GEC and NFPs. She encouraged colleagues to feed in the exchange of information and to make proposals for future activities and improved working methods. The Chair thanked all participants for their input throughout the process of organising and during the Conference which had greatly contributed to its success. She thanked her colleagues, members of the GEC, who moderated the different sessions in the workshops for having skilfully steered discussions and identified ideas for future work. The Chair also thanked the Secretariat for its continued professionalism in supporting the structures of the Transversal Programme and the preparation of the Conference. She hoped the contacts established by the participants, the good or bad practices, and the subjects debated during the Conference will provide them with useful ideas and resources for their work back home.

NFPs and GEC members thanked the Chair and asked her to convey their thanks to the Dutch authorities for the excellent organisation of the Conference and the hospitality. The format of the Conference including Talks, Workshops and Open Space provided a dynamic setting for discussions and exchange and facilitated contacts between participants, including expert speakers and organisations that presented their work in the Open Space. The keynote speakers (most of them identified and proposed by GEC members and NFPs) brought in a lot of expertise and ideas to the discussions which the Council of Europe will no doubt exploit in its future communication and activities.

APPENDIX I: AGENDA

1st Meeting of Gender Equality National Focal Points

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 5 July 2013 12.30 – 4 pm

Agenda

- 1. Working Lunch
- Introduction and welcome address by:
 Chairperson of the GEC Carlien Scheele
- 3. Reflection on one year of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Programme: input from NFPs and GEC
 - CoE Transversal Programme on Gender Equality (Structures, components, progress achieved, the future)
- 4. The National Focal Points: role and working methods
 - The role of NFP
 - o At national level
 - o At international level
 - Working methods
 - o The annual conference
 - Co-operation with and between the different components (Gender Equality Commission, Gender Equality Rapporteurs, the Secretariat)
 - Communication and Contacts
- 5. Council of Europe Strategy for Gender Equality
 - Presentation of the draft strategy
 - The Role of NFPs in implementing and assessing the impact of the strategy
- 6. Discussion on future activities
 - 2nd thematic conference
 - Other activities
- 7. Any other Business

APPENDIX II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

Armenia/Arménie Ms Astghik MIRZAKHANYAN

Head of Social Affairs Department, The Prime Minister's Office

Belgium/Belgique

Mme Alexandra ADRIAENSSENS

Directrice chargée de mission, Direction de l'Égalité des Chances, Ministère de la Communauté française

Bosnia and Herzegovina/Bosnie-Herzégovine Ms Marina MARKOTIC Agency for Gender Equality

Croatia/Croatie

Ms Matea SEDMAK

Government Office for Gender Equality

Czech Republic/République Tchèque

Mr Radan ŠAFAŘÍK (GEC member/Membre du GEC)

Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Denmark/Danemark

Ms Kira APPEL

Chief Adviser, Ministry of Gender Equality and Ecclesiastical Affairs

Estonia/Estonie

Ms Käthlin SANDER

Adviser, Gender Equality Department, Ministry of Social Affairs

Finland/Finlande

Ms Päivi YLI-PIETILA (GEC member/Membre du GEC)

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France

Mme Geneviève ZDROJEWSKI

Adjointe au chef de bureau, Bureau des Affaires Européennes et Internationales, Direction Générale de la Cohésion Sociale, Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Santé, Ministère des Droits des Femmes

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Mr Beka DZAMASHVILI

Deputy Head of the Public International Law Department, Ministry of Justice

Germany/Allemagne

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European and International Gender Equality Policy, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Greece/Grèce

Ms Ifigenia KATSARIDOU

Senior Official, General Secretariat for Gender Equality

Hungary/Hongrie

Mr György CIRÁKI

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Ireland/Irlande

Ms Pauline MOREAU (GEC member/Membre du GEC)

Director, Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality

Italy/Italie

Mr Michele PALMA (GEC member/Membre du GEC)

Director General, Department of Equal Opportunities

Latvia/Lettonie

Ms Agnese GAILE

Senior Expert, Department of Social Policy Planning and Development

Liechtenstein

Ms Karin LINGG

Counsellor, Office for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania/Lituanie

Ms Lina PIVORAITE

Chief Specialist, Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Malta/Malte

Ms Romina BARTOLO

Executive Director, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Republic of Moldova/République de Moldova

Ms Lilia PASCAL

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Conseiller Technique, Département des Relations Extérieures, Ministère d'Etat

Montenegro/Monténégro

Ms Irena BOSKOVIC

Head of Department for Gender Equality, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

Netherlands/Pays Bas

Ms Carlien SCHEELE (Chairperson of the GEC/Présidente de la GEC)

Director for Gender and LGBT Equality

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Poland/Pologne

Ms Maria PAWLOWSKA

Governmental Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment

Portugal

Ms Andreia Lourenço MARQUES

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Switzerland/Suisse

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Directrice, Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes

Turkey/Turquie

Ms Dr Goknur AKCADAG

Head of R&D and Project Department, General Directorate on the Status of Women

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION MEMBERS

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Ms Willy Visser

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