

# Gender stereotypes and sexism – Root causes of discrimination and violence against women

**A side event at the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (9-20 March 2015), co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations**

**Monday 9 March 2015 (6:30 - 7:45 p.m.)**

Conference Room 11 – GA Building, United Nations, New York

Gender stereotypes and overtly sexualised images of women feed into violence against women. They present a serious – and increasingly acute – obstacle to the achievement of real gender equality. The widespread sexualisation of women's bodies suggesting their permanent sexual availability and gender-biased customs and traditions contribute to treating women as subordinate members of the family or society. They also affect how women are treated and perceived by public institutions and societal structures. Abolishing negative gender stereotypes and sexism is therefore essential to achieving *de facto* gender equality. Committed to addressing the root causes of violence against women and to promoting greater equality between women and men, the **Council of Europe Istanbul Convention** aims at changing attitudes and eliminating stereotypes not only at the level of individuals, but also at the level of institutions. **Media and education** are key agents for making this change.

This side event will highlight the work of the Council of Europe in combating gender stereotypes and sexism and present the Council of Europe standards in this area: the **Istanbul Convention**, the Committee of Ministers recommendations on **gender equality and media** and **gender mainstreaming in education**, as well as good practices identified in the member states on this subject.

## Keynote speakers

- ▶ **Sergiy Kyslytsya, Chairperson**, Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe; Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine
- ▶ **Isabelle Simonis, Minister** of Adult Learning, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, French Community of Belgium
- ▶ **Nanette Braun, Chief**, Communications and Advocacy, UN Women
- ▶ **Ted Bunch, Co-founder and Co-director** of "A CALL TO MEN"
- ▶ **Moderator: Marja Ruotanen, Director**, Human Dignity and Equality, Council of Europe



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**The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention)** entered into force on 1 August 2014. The convention has become a global reference to combat gender-based violence and has received two prestigious awards. It breaks new ground by requesting states to criminalise the various forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. Building on the jurisprudence of the European and Inter-American Courts of Human Rights, the Istanbul Convention integrates the “due diligence” standard and defines it as the obligation of states to “prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for acts of violence perpetrated by non-state actors”. Of particular relevance in the international context, the Istanbul Convention explicitly states that it shall apply in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict.

**The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender equality and media (CM/Rec(2013)1)** recommends that the governments of member states adopt adequate policies to create the appropriate conditions under which the media can promote gender equality as a fundamental principle of their activities and institutional organisation in the new multi-dimensional media environment. The recommendation contains 16 measures for implementation calling for action in six main areas:

- ▶ 1. gender equality policy and legislation;
- ▶ 2. adoption and implementation of national indicators;
- ▶ 3. provision of information and promotion of good practices;
- ▶ 4. accountability channels;
- ▶ 5. research and publication;
- ▶ 6. media literacy and active citizenship.

**The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education (CM/Rec(2007)13)** puts forward a set of comprehensive measures for member states to put in place to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in education. They cover legal frameworks, school governance and school organisation, initial and in-service education and training for teachers and trainers, course programmes, school curricula, subjects and examinations, teaching materials, teaching methods and practices, education for democratic citizenship and human rights, educational and career guidance, preventing and combating sexist violence, vulnerable groups, media, and research on gender and education issues. The recommendation also calls for regular monitoring of the implementation of the above measures.

*Achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law and economic growth and competitiveness”*

Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017