



THE GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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**The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy:
Current Progress and Hopes for the Future**

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Overview

* As result of the Transversal Program on Gender Equality in 2012, the CoE adopted own Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 unanimously by the CM in Nov.2013

* **The Overall Goal** is to achieve the advancement and empowering of women and hence the realization of gender equality in CoE Member States by supporting the implementation of existing standards

* The Strategy promotes a holistic and integrated approach to gender equality and provides policy guidance and support to CoE Member States as well as internally

* **The Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe** was established to help and ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality into all CoE policies and to bridge the gap between commitments made at international level and the reality of women in Europe. The Commission, whose members are appointed by all Member States, provides advice and support to other CoE bodies and to member states, guides CoE's intergovernmental work on gender equality and oversees the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, which includes but is not limited to gender mainstreaming. It has regular meetings twice a year and also thematic conferences and supported by its Secretariat in Strasbourg.

* **Conference “Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring action – the CoE Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017”** which took place in Tallinn, Estonia on 30 June and 1 July. The aims were to discuss the implementation of the Strategy’s five objectives, highlight progress and impact, and exchange ideas for the future.



1. Combating gender stereotypes and sexism:

- * promoting Gender Equality Awareness, in particular through the development of training and communication initiatives
- * disseminating education syllabuses and teaching practices which are free from explicit and implicit gender stereotypes
- * combating sexism as a form of hate speech and integrating this dimension into Council of Europe action
- * identifying practical measures to:
 - promote a positive and non- stereotyped image of women and men in the media
 - abolish women's image of inferiority and submission as well as stereotypes about men's masculinity
 - further balanced participation of women and men in decision-making positions in the media
- * promoting the role of men in achieving gender equality

- evidence that stereotypes and sexism persist in the press and are rampant online
- freedom of expression limits the possibility of governments forcing media to be more gender balanced
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- **further actions should be taken by governments, media and sectoral professionals**
- **engage men in the topic**
- **CoE can continue to play an influential role in combating gender stereotypes and sexism**



2. Preventing and combating violence against women:

- * support member States to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention
- * enhance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention by involving all relevant bodies and entities of the Council of Europe
- * collect and disseminate information on legal and other measures taken at national level to prevent and combat violence against women
- * promote the Istanbul Convention beyond the European Continent

- violence against women is persistent problem
- endemic violence suffered by migrant and asylum seeking women
- women as victims of trafficking, FGM, sexualisation at a young age
- resources for provision of support services
- gender neutral policies leading to fewer and less specialised services
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- **further ratification of Istanbul Convention**
- **enhance implementation of the Convention by involving all relevant bodies and entities of the CoE**
- **essential that GREVIO is adequately resourced**
- **ongoing programs working with men to protect women's rights and dignity**
- **governments need to fund service providers and NGOs not just for service provision but also for prevention**
- **need to prioritise provision of services for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers**



3. Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice:

* analyse national and international frameworks with a view to gathering data and identifying the obstacles women encounter in gaining access to the national courts and to international justice

* identify, collect and disseminate any existing remedies and good practices aiming at facilitating access of women to justice, including out-of-court and quasi-legal stages of protection of women's rights (inter alia through Ombudspersons and other human rights institutions)

* make recommendations to improve the situation

- lack of awareness of procedures and the financial resources to access them

- cultural barriers (including fear and shame)

- pressure to opt for mediation

- gender neutral legislation and gender bias in the courts process

- **endorsement entirely implementation of existing national legislation and international human rights treaties and standards**

- **ensure women's access to free legal aid**

- **address power dynamic between women and men in alternative dispute resolution processes**



4. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making:

* achieve balanced participation of women and men in political or public life in any decision-making body (the representation of either women or men should not fall below 40%)

* monitor progress on women's participation in decision-making, ensure the visibility of data and good practices in member States. This will be done in particular through the collection and dissemination of information on the implementation of the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation

* identify measures aiming to empower candidate and elected women, to facilitate and encourage their participation in elections at the national, regional and local levels. This would include measures which relate to electoral systems, parity thresholds, public funding of political parties and working conditions of elected representatives, while also encouraging women to participate in the electoral process by voting

* balanced participation in Council of Europe bodies, institutions and decision-making processes as well as in senior and middle management functions

- reforms of private law – equal right to property, inheritance marriage and citizenship

- wide variety of factors impact on women's advancement in politics (family duties), economic (pay gap/access to promotion) and cultural (media)

- **quotas need to be ambitious – parity not 40%, and need to be coupled with sanctions, which need to be enforced**



5. Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures:

* its various policy areas, in particular the areas of justice, law enforcement, local government, media, culture, education, minorities, migration, Roma people, children's rights, bioethics, social cohesion, youth and sports, fight against corruption, trafficking in human beings and drug abuse

* the development and implementation of cooperation programmes, projects and activities

* the policy processes and functioning of the various bodies and institutions, in particular through the mobilisation and contribution of:

- the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner of Human Rights

- the steering committees and other intergovernmental bodies

- the monitoring mechanisms

* the Council of Europe staff policies

- gender mainstreaming grounds policies in concrete situations and the needs of people resulting in better informed policies and legislation

- brings the interests of women into government as a social force

- creates awareness across board in organisations, which might otherwise be gender blind

- **gender mainstreaming is a gender equality tool not and objective**

- **it cannot work as a time bound project – it is 'eternal'**

- **it must be strategic and specific**

- **largely embraced in fields identified as 'social'(education and health) rather than 'technical' (trade, industry)**



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Gender Equality – The Way Forward

- gap between standards and their implementation and legislation and in all areas under the Beijing Platform for Action
- growing threats to women's human rights
- reduced resources and weakening of national gender equality mechanism
- restrictions of support for civil society organizations
- gender blindness/lack of gender equality awareness among young people, both girls and boys
- inclusion of gender equality as specific goal in “Transforming our World the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
- further develop role of men and also consider focusing on inequality experienced by men (consider how to engage men)
- Technically:
 - continue to develop tools to support member states
 - increase visibility of standards
 - exchange good practices
 - linkages with the key goals of the Council and with other sections within the CoE
- Possible areas for future work: 1) migrant women, 2) education of girls and boys in gender equality issues, and 3) intersectionality

The GEC will discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the Tallinn Conference at its next meeting in November, and also in the future regarding preparations of the next Strategy



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Thank you!

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