



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Gender Equality Expert

ACTIVITY REPORT 2017

The outlook of the world in which European men and women currently live is still, as ever, exclusively masculine.

No single European country meets the requirements of the Social Charter, particularly those relating to equal pay for women and men for equal, similar or comparable work and to proper representation of women in decision-making posts, giving rise to colossal losses of billions of euros of receipts for the economies of the Council of Europe member states.

In 2017, the average pay gap for a woman employee was the equivalent of her wages from 3 November to 31 December, with the ever serious impact that this has on the empowerment of women, on the upbringing of children and on these despoiled women's living standards and pensions. Femicide – the scourge of murders of women in the privacy of their own families – ravages our countries, engendering major costs for states.

States tell women that they have all the rights that they need but they refuse to defend them in court so it is their fault if their pay is lower than their male counterparts. This is a ruthless syllogism. However, women refuse to be treated as victims. It is for states to create the conditions in which women can enjoy their equal rights in law and in daily practice in all the spheres of life in the community for the sake of all human beings.

Having adopted a gender equality strategy for the period 2014 to 2017 with the unanimous support of its 47 member states, the Council of Europe is currently working on a new strategy to be implemented from 2018. This major focus for the Council of Europe entails the participation of the Gender Equality Expert in the work of various decision-making and discussion bodies on this subject. The Council and its member states are confronted with challenges following the influx of displaced persons, and equality issues are key in looking after these refugees. The rise of populism in various member states is inimical to human rights and gender equality. The Council is active in its own sphere but civil society must also act in its field for women's fundamental rights to be respected.

1. Representation of the Conference of INGOs on Council of Europe commissions and committees or in follow-up activities

1.1. Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe

This Commission is mainly composed of members appointed by states and was chaired until 31 December 2017 by Ms Eva Fehringer, Austria. It was set up in 2012 to help to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in Council of Europe member states and to honour international commitments in the interests of European women and men, because everyone benefits from measures to promote equality. Genuine equality cannot come about in any other way. States take stock of the progress of their legislation and public policies and work has been done in various areas: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/genderequality>; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality>.

The Gender Equality Commission's various publications draw on the subjects that have been studied and followed up including gender equality, combating gender stereotypes and sexism, combating and preventing violence against women, guaranteeing women's access to justice, balanced participation in decision-making, and gender mainstreaming. There is also a glossary. <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/genderequality/publications>
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/publications>

At its 11th meeting, at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 5 to 7 April 2017, it discussed the gender equality strategy for 2014-2017 and its implementation, along with co-operation with international organisations: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>

At its 12th meeting, in Prague from 14 to 16 November 2017, discussions focused on:

. A Conference on "Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Precondition for Efficient Policy" held by the Czech authorities. States have recently conducted surveys to calculate the costs of violence against women, which are very high. These data are crucial to enable policies to create the optimum conditions for this type of violence to be stopped, along with education from the earliest age in equality and respect for women, empowerment of women, immediate care for victims and appropriate penalties for perpetrators.

. The finalisation of the equality strategy to be applied from 2018 onwards: After validation by the Committee of Ministers, it will be launched under the Danish Chairmanship, in Copenhagen in March 2018.

. Violence against women: presentations on individual countries were made, some of which included assessments of the cost of such violence (Czech Republic, France, Serbia) and others of which focused on the impact of such violence on society (Spain, Norway):

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/prague-conference-14-november-2017>

- **Recommendation on the fight against sexism:** Objective 1 of the gender equality strategy is to combat sexism and stereotypes. Accordingly, the Committee of Ministers asked for a recommendation to be drawn up, which it expected to be specific, practical and workable and to make a real contribution to the fight against sexism, and a working group was set up, in which the Equality Expert was invited to participate. After the specialists had made their statements, the

Equality Expert was asked to question the INGOs of the Conference on the subject and she presented a summary of their answers at the working group meeting in June 2017. Other focuses of the group's work were to discuss the gaps to be filled in various Council documents in terms of gender mainstreaming, to understand the origins of sexism and its impact in the public and private spheres, to look into sexist language, to consider how to deal with this matter without differentiating between ordinary sexism and violent sexism, to identify good practices in the member states and to investigate intersectionality and the links between sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Two highly productive meetings were held:

- 2 and 3 March 2017, Council of Europe, Paris;
- 22 and 23 June 2017, Council of Europe, Paris.

1.2. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly

Regular reports are drawn up based on visits to the countries concerned and the input of external contributors. However, nobody other than parliamentarians is authorised to speak. The Italian member of parliament, Elena Centemero, was the chair of the Committee in 2017.

The various texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly are as follows:

- **Recommendations** contain proposals addressed to the Committee of Ministers, the implementation of which is within the competence of governments.
- **Resolutions** embody decisions by the Assembly on questions, which it is empowered to put into effect, or expressions of view, for which it alone is responsible.
- **Opinions** are expressed by the Assembly on questions put to it by the Committee of Ministers, such as the admission of new member States to the Council of Europe, draft conventions, or the budget of the Organisation.

The Assembly's various Committees propose reports approved by their members for discussion by the Assembly. In 2017, the main reports discussed by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination were as follows:

- Protecting refugee women from gender-based violence
- Women's empowerment in the economy
- Migrations in a gender perspective: empowering women for their role as key-actors for integration
- Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers
- Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space
- Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate
- Detainees with severe disabilities in Europe
- Women in the economy
- Forced marriage in Europe
- Promoting the human rights of and eliminating discrimination against intersex people

Speakers often shed light on the subjects being discussed at meetings held:

- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg on 23-26 January 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 20 March 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 24 April 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 26-28 June 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 18 September 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 9 October 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 7 December 2017.

<http://website-pace.net/fr/web/as-ega/main>

http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/as-ega/main

With this Committee, the Gender Equality Expert took part in the campaign against breast cancer in October 2017.

1.3. The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention

The Committee of the Parties, on which the Gender Equality Expert represents the Conference of INGOs, did not meet in 2017. The next meeting will be in January 2018. Ratifications continued, including the much anticipated ratification by the European Union.

Feride Acar was re-elected President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women, GREVIO.

A questionnaire was addressed to states but was also very useful for NGOs wishing to contribute to the shadow report that they could draw up when their country was assessed. The next countries due for assessment are Finland, France and Italy. These alternative reports by associations were much anticipated by GREVIO.

1.4. The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), with Jean-Bernard Marie

A questionnaire on genital mutilation and forced marriages drawn up by the CDDH was sent out in 2016 and passed onto the INGOs by the Gender Equality Expert. The Expert also participated in a drafting group responsible for drawing up a best practices tool for states to combat female genital mutilation and forced marriages, chaired by Rob Linham, United Kingdom, which met from September 2016 and held the following meetings in 2017:

- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25-27 January 2017
- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 28 and 29 March 2017

On 13 July 2017 the Committee of Ministers adopted this best practices tool, which makes it possible to gain an overview of the legislation in force and the measures to combat and eradicate these practices:

<https://rm.coe.int/steering-committee-for-human-rights-cddh-guide-to-good-and-promising-p/168073418d>

The following resolutions also provide useful information:

[Resolution 2135\(2016\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Female genital mutilation in Europe”](#)

[Resolution 1468\(2005\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Forced marriages and child marriages”](#)

[Resolution 69/150 of the United Nations General Assembly on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations](#)

[Resolution 69/156 on child, early and forced marriage](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2014 on the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation’](#)

1.5. Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape

Eurimages has set up an ad hoc working group to draw up a recommendation on the presence of women in the audiovisual industry. The first meeting was held on 1 and 2 December 2016 at the OECD in Paris with a mixed panel of female directors, video games specialists and journalists. The Equality Expert represented the Conference of INGOs at this meeting and at the following working meetings in 2017:

- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 30 and 31 March 2017
- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 8 April 2017

On 27 September 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted its recommendation on gender equality in the audiovisual sector:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509e6

It recommended that the governments of member States:

- “1. adopt policies to promote gender equality in the audiovisual sector as a fundamental principle of its activities and in those of its institutional organisations, duly taking into account the guidelines as provided in Appendix I;
2. encourage European, national and regional film funds, public and commercial broadcasters and other key stakeholders in the audiovisual sector to monitor the situation with regards to gender equality, drawing on monitoring methods and performance indicators such as those proposed in Appendix II;
3. encourage European supranational film and audiovisual funds, such as Eurimages and Creative Europe, as well as broadcasters and other key audiovisual sector stakeholders, to address gender equality issues in all their policies, measures and support programmes, such as training, production, distribution, festivals and media literacy initiatives;
4. encourage the relevant audiovisual sector organisations (including public and private financing bodies, sectoral employers, trade unions and professional organisations, training and education providers and industry professionals, as well as the relevant regulatory authorities) to prepare, or revise, regulatory and self-regulatory strategies, collective bargaining agreements and

codes of conduct or other frameworks for implementation, taking into account a gender equality perspective;

5. disseminate this recommendation together with its appendices and raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders and those active in the audiovisual sector, in particular about the central role of gender equality as an enabling factor for fully-functioning democracy and the full enjoyment of human rights;

6. monitor and evaluate progress in achieving gender equality in the audiovisual sector, and report on a five-year basis to the Committee of Ministers on the measures taken and progress made in implementing this recommendation”.

2. Active participation in the work of the Conference of INGOs

The Gender Equality Expert attended all of the meetings of the Conference of INGOs in 2017 and the Standing Committee meetings.

- 27 June 2017 Side event, Palais, “Women’s mobilisation in Europe in 2016 and its impact on policies?”. Recent cases of women’s mobilisation in Europe have been very powerful when what they regard as their fundamental rights have been challenged. These peaceful activities have met with genuine success and had an immediate impact on government decisions in various areas. In the four selected countries, a representative of an association was asked to outline the views of the women concerned while a member of parliament was asked to describe the government’s reaction. Elena Centemero, Chair of the PACE’s Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, opened the extremely interesting discussion on the following movements:

1. “Czarny Protest” – Poland

Barbara Nowacka, Isabela Jurga Nowacka Foundation

Agnieszka Pomaska Polish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE, Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

2. “Repeal the 8th” - Ireland

Ailbhe Smyth Organiser, Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment

Maura Hopkins Irish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE, Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

3. Protecting girls from forced marriages - Turkey

Irem Mirzai Turkish Association of University Women

Gülsün Bilgehan Turkish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society, member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, of which she was the chairperson until January 2016

4. Women’s march for equal pay - Iceland

Dagný Ósk Aradóttir Pind Women’s Rights Association of Iceland

Pórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir Member of Icelandic Parliament, Chairperson of Icelandic Delegation to PACE

- 29 June 2017, Training session on “INGO support for parity between women and men” with the Council of Europe secretariat, Carlien Scheele, Gender Equality Adviser, Carolina Lasen Diaz, Head of the Gender Equality Unit, Cécile Gréboval, Programme Adviser
- Participation in the assessment of the activities of the Conference
- Various contacts were established with the Congress
- Participation in the working group chaired by Anje Wiersinga

4. Representation, lobbying activities

Various representative assignments including:

- 8-10 May 2017, invitation and contribution to the conference held by the Institut Français in Skopje on gender equality from the Council of Europe’s viewpoint
- 21 and 27 May 2017, Ecoles de Commerce, Paris
- 31 October to 3 November 2017, invitation and contribution to the conference for women of the French-speaking countries (La Francophonie), in Bucharest, 16 years after the first conference.

The importance of the conference’s work was highlighted by Mr Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and by Ms Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of la Francophonie, <https://www.francophonie.org/conference-des-femmes-bucarest>

The three main themes of the Conference were:

- . women’s rights and access to the labour market: women’s empowerment begins with the establishment of a legal environment furthering gender equality, the promotion of women’s rights and access to the labour market, along with a decent wage, equal to that of men for equal work, and the same rights as men to economic resources and credit;
- . women’s innovation and entrepreneurship: the capacity to innovate and invest in businesses is a major asset for women wishing to gain the economic empowerment which is indissociable from innovation and entrepreneurship, the aim being to improve competitiveness and galvanise economic activity by opening new growth prospects to women;
- . Women’s leadership in economic governance: the economic empowerment of women is dependent on equal access for women to decision-making posts. Participation in economic governance can have an influence on local, national and global development.

The Conference resulted in the Bucharest Women’s Appeal https://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/appel_de_bucarest_final.pdf

Various lobbying or human rights activities including work:

- on the Istanbul Convention;
- on the presence of women on boards;
- on surrogacy;

- in connection with COP 22;
- on the term “Droits Humains” (as opposed to “Droits de l’Homme”);
- on the CEDAW;
- on equal pay for women and men;
- on the treatment of LGBTI people in Turkey with Anne Rurka and Simon Matthijssen;
- interviews with various media outlets;
- etc.

Many meetings to raise awareness of the Conference and its work on equality: I would like to thank all the member INGOs of the Conference and all those which are in the process of joining us, the leading figures in the Conference and its President, the members of its committees and working groups, the various Council of Europe departments and INGO Service and all those who contribute to our campaigns such as Marion Minis, Edith Lommerse, Renée Gérard, Sonia Bressler, the philosopher who runs my blog, Anje Wiersinga, and the members of her group, and all my fellow campaigners in the French Association of Women Graduates, AFFDU, which is the French branch of University Women of Europe and Graduate Women International, for their indispensable help and support.

Dr Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert