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GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)

Summary information about events attended by
GEC members, Experts or Secretariat members

December 2016 – April 2017

Event: Round-table on women refugees, migrants and asylum seekers
 Date & place: 25 November, Lisbon
 Participant: Carolina Lasén Diaz

Report

This event, organised by the Council of Europe North-South Centre had around 200 participants. The Head of the Gender Equality Unit presented an overview of the Council of Europe standards and instruments for the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker women and girls. The aim was to increase the knowledge and visibility about such standards, including the Istanbul Convention. There was a lot of interest from participants in Council of Europe standards for the protection of migrant and refugee women.

Event: Ad hoc Working Group CPP-ESA
 Date & place: 1-2 December, Strasbourg
 Participant: Eva Fehringer

Oral Report

Event: Balance in Sport: a stepping-stone event to making the difference
 Date & place: 5-6 December, Strasbourg
 Participant: Alexandra Adriaenssens and Cécile Gréboval

Report

This event was the closing event of the Balance in Sport project, which aimed at identifying and testing gender equality indicators in sports, in order to have a uniform approach when collecting relevant data on gender equality and sport. The Gender Equality Unit supported the project throughout its implementation in 2016.

Event: Paths Programme Module 3 – Human Rights in practice
 Date & place: 6-9 December, Venice
 Participant: Cécile Gréboval

Report

Two training sessions (1.5 hours each) were delivered on gender equality issues to the 25 participants (from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and representing ministries, academia, equality bodies and civil society).

Event: Equinet conference "Diverse, Inclusive and Equal - Innovating at the intersections of gender equality"
Date & place: 7 December, Brussels
Participant: Carolina Lasén Diaz

Report

The Conference was hosted by the Belgian Institute for Equality between Women and Men with around 100 registered participants, mostly from equality bodies, EU institutions (FRA, European Commission, EIGE), academics and civil society. The Conference was very useful to learn more about intersectionality from a gender equality perspective, with a view to including it in the next Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy. The Conference included the presentation of a new report by Equinet: "Innovating at the intersections: equality bodies tackling intersectional discrimination", addressing the main issues and challenges related to intersectionality.

Event: EC Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men
Date & place: 8 December, Brussels
Participant: Carolina Lasén Diaz

Report

The Council of Europe is an observer in the Advisory Committee. There were around 40 participants at this meeting, including representatives of EU member states, EC officials from DG Justice, representatives of non-EU countries, IGOs, EU's social partners and NGOs. I informed the Advisory Committee about the current status of signatures and ratifications of the Istanbul Convention, including recent GREVIO country visits and those planned for spring 2017, as well as the scheduled timeframe for the first GREVIO reports to be published in 2017. During discussions on the gender pay gap, I informed the Committee about the first complaints on this topic registered by the secretariat of the European Committee of Social Rights for alleged violation of the equal pay provisions of the European Social Charter (the complaints concern 14 EU member states and Norway). Two of the advisory opinions adopted include relevant references to Council of Europe standards and tools: one on "Gender mainstreaming in refugee's reception and integration measures and another one on "Combating female genital mutilation (FGM) and other harmful practices". The Advisory Committee will prepare two Opinions in 2017: one on "Gender balance in decision-making in politics: challenges and ways forward" and another one on "Closing the gender pay gap". The Council of Europe will participate in the working group preparing the first one.

Event: Advancing the gender equality agenda in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Date & place: 12 -13 December, Budva, Montenegro

Participant: Elena Grozdanova

Report

The Conference on Advancing the Gender Equality Agenda in the Western Balkans and Turkey was held in Budva, Montenegro on 12 and 13 December 2016. It presented highlights of the views expressed by participants over two days of plenary sessions and smaller group discussions. The conference was organised in partnership between UNDP, UN Women, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the EU Delegation in Montenegro, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, in co-operation with civil society networks "I Sign", the Central and Eastern European Network for Gender Issues and Women's Safe House in Montenegro.

It sought to stimulate joint action and peer support to ensure that national standards on gender equality are aligned with targets outlined in the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and those of the European Union (EU).

The conference concluded with an agreement among the participants to strengthen co-operation within and among countries, including through a regional platform for gender equality. The platform would work to promote EU best practices in achieving gender equality and support the institutions, organisations, and legal instruments responsible of enforcing the gender equality *acquis*. In addition, the platform would help develop gender equality targets as outlined in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, the SDGs, and the Istanbul Convention, and help provide access to resources and know-how to all partners involved.

The discussions during the two-day conference were framed around women's political participation and violence against women. Increasing the presence of women in parliaments, governments and the judiciary remains a priority in the region. Even though Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" have higher levels of participation of women in parliament at 34% and 33% respectively, the regional average for women parliamentarians stands at 24.5%.

At the same time, violence against women continues at alarmingly high rates in the region. According to UNFPA, one in four women face physical or sexual violence from a current or former intimate partner, despite changes in legislation and international commitments that call for immediate action.

The two-day conference concluded with participants highlighting a number of recommendations for collaborative actions among parliamentarians, national gender equality mechanisms, CSOs, and international organisations that could be facilitated through a regional platform for gender equality.

The next steps

- A follow-up workshop will be organised to explore opportunities for co-operation and the modus operandi of the regional platform for gender equality, addressing how it can work and what priority issues can be addressed jointly.
- The workshop aims to involve national representatives from participating countries: one representative each of governmental gender mechanisms, parliamentary gender mechanisms, and CSOs, and representatives of UNDP, UN Women, EIGE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the CEE Network for Gender Issues and other regional civil society networks, and the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX).
- All participants will be mandated by their institutions to suggest, contribute to and adopt recommendations to set up the regional platform for gender equality.
- The Department for Gender Equality in the Government of Montenegro with support from TAIEX and UNDP Montenegro will host the two-day workshop in Podgorica. The first day will be dedicated to discussions on the proposed mandate, scope, and composition of the platform, while the second day will focus on agreeing on a work-plan on specific priority areas of work.

Event: Meeting on “Improving women’s access to justice in Eastern Partnership countries”
 Date & place: 9 February 2017, Strasbourg
 Participant: Carolina Lasén Diaz, Antonina Vikhrest

Report

The Council of Europe Department on Justice and Legal Co-operation (DGI) organised a one-day event to learn about our project on “Improving women’s access to justice in Eastern Partnership countries”. DGI colleagues invited participants from their co-operation project “Regional Dialogue on Judicial Reforms in the Eastern Partnership Countries” so that legal professionals in PCF countries involved in DGI’s project would be acquainted with ongoing work in their countries to improve women’s access to justice, including the preparation of a training manual for judges and prosecutors on gender equality.

Event: OECD meeting “Towards Gender Equality before the Law”
 Date & place: 10 March 2017, Paris
 Participant: Carolina Lasén Diaz

Report

The event was organised by the OECD as part of their “8th March activities” (see meeting website: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/towards-gender-equality-before-the-law.htm>). I gave an overview of the Council of Europe’s work to improve women’s access to justice, including relevant standards and activities. The OECD organises regular round tables on access to justice, but this is the first time they addressed the topic from a gender equality perspective. Debates were of a quite general nature (Council of Europe’s work on this topic is far more advanced). OECD colleagues were very interested in the measurement framework on access to justice prepared by UN Women, in co-operation with the Council of Europe.

Event: Sexist Hate Speech – a violation of women’s human rights: A side event at CSW61 organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the United Nations

Date & place: 14 March 2017, New York

Participants: Eva Fehringer, Liri Kopaçi-Di Michele

Oral Report