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Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality

Gender equality rapporteurs and their role

Information note prepared by the Gender Equality team,
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Introduction – the transversal programme

1. The Transversal Programme on Gender Equality has been launched by the Secretary General to improve the visibility and impact of the Council of Europe's work on gender equality in the member states ; to move from legal equality to real equality as member states were called upon to do by the Committee of Ministers in its Declaration, « [Making Gender Equality a Reality](#) »¹.
2. The programme has several objectives, including the mainstreaming of gender equality at the level of policy and practice in the member states and within the Council of Europe. In this context, the programme will seek to mobilise all Council of Europe bodies (including the intergovernmental structures) and its external partners.
3. To this end, the programme is composed of several inter-dependent elements, namely :
 - A Gender Equality Commission, composed of 16 members appointed by member states²
 - A network of national focal points in each member State,

¹ 119th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Madrid 12 May 2009. The declaration was circulated to committees in accordance with the decision of the Committee of Ministers taken at the 1057th meeting of their deputies.

² Open to participation by all member states in accordance with Resolution CM\Res(2011)24.

- Gender equality rapporteurs appointed within the membership of the steering committees and other intergovernmental structures of the Council of Europe,
- The Committee of Ministers Thematic Co-ordinator on Equality and Trafficking,
- An Inter Secretariat gender equality mainstreaming team/network.

Since the beginning of 2012, steps have been taken to progressively put in place these various elements. The process is still on-going. The Gender equality team within the Gender Equality and Human Dignity Department of DGI provides the secretariat for the programme.

Contributing to gender equality by integrating a gender perspective into a committee's activities

4. Most, if not all, Council of Europe committees can contribute to gender equality in member states by ensuring that their activities integrate a gender perspective. This does not imply additional tasks or a requirement to embark on new additional activities. It does, however, imply a change of approach. Essentially, it requires committees to consider proposals for new activities from a gender perspective before finalising them and to adapt or formulate activities as a result of such an analysis ; i.e. by taking account of the likely impact of a proposed activity on women and men.

5. Integrating a gender perspective into a committee's activities is a practical follow-up to the Madrid Declaration.³ A few committees are already explicitly required to integrate a gender perspective into their activities. Appointing a gender equality rapporteur will facilitate this objective.

6. The majority of intergovernmental structures are required in their current terms of reference to appoint a gender equality rapporteur from amongst their members. Of course, other committees and structures are free to appoint a gender equality rapporteur should they so wish and they are encouraged to do so. In principal, convention committees should also be able to appoint a gender equality rapporteur within the framework of their internal rules.

³ The origins of the gender equality rapporteur lie in an initiative of the former CDMM to appoint such a person as part of its follow-up to the Madrid Declaration and as a means of ensuring that it integrated a gender perspective into its work.

Role of the gender equality rapporteur

7. The person appointed as a gender equality rapporteur will not be required to make reports. Although s/he will be invited, along with the committee secretary, to liaise with the Gender Equality Commission (see below) and will be in contact with gender equality rapporteurs from other committees.

8. Essentially, the gender equality rapporteur should watch over the programming process of his or her committee (i.e. the process of identifying priorities, preparing activity proposals, setting-up and implementing the activities, and evaluating the results) in order to ensure that a gender perspective is properly integrated. The person appointed as the committee's gender equality rapporteur should not be expected to do this alone. It should be the responsibility of the committee as a whole. In this sense, the appointment of a gender equality rapporteur is a minimum, to ensure that there is at least one member taking responsibility ; but ideally this should be shared by all the members.

9. It is recognised that committees have increasingly heavy agendas and, in some cases, meet less frequently than in the past. Consequently, the bureaux have an increasingly important role in identifying activities and preparing, reviewing and evaluating their implementation. For this reason, it is recommended that the gender equality rapporteur be appointed from amongst the members of the bureau ; although this is not essential, provided s/he is involved in the Bureau's discussions on the programme of activities.

10. Finally, it should be noted that this is a new initiative and necessarily the precise tasks of the gender equality rapporteur will be further refined with time and in the light of experience.

Support to gender equality rapporteurs

11. A training programme has been put in place to ensure that all committee secretaries have the necessary knowledge and skills to assist the gender equality rapporteur and the committee as a whole in integrating a gender perspective into their programme of activities. An information session for gender equality rapporteurs will also be organised in Strasbourg during the second half of 2012 in order to familiarise them with their role and the basic notions of gender mainstreaming.

12. Also, with a view to providing support to the committees in integrating a gender perspective, the Gender Equality Commission is required to maintain close links with the other elements of the transversal programme and, in particular, engage in regular exchanges of views with the gender equality rapporteurs. These exchanges will most likely be organised on either a collective or thematic basis. This will involve travelling to a meeting, at least in the early stages. With time, hopefully it will be possible to introduce video or telephone conferencing. In any event, members of the Gender Equality Commission will attend the information session for gender equality rapporteurs mentioned above.

13. The Gender Equality team of the Secretariat in DGI is available to provide advice and information to committees and their gender equality rapporteurs if required. Moreover, the team welcomes feedback on the experience of appointing the rapporteurs and their functioning in order that this initiative can be improved and developed.