

Strasbourg, 4 October 2017

GEC (2017)7

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

2nd meeting of the Drafting Committee to prepare a draft Committee of Ministers recommendation to prevent and combat sexism (GEC-DC Sexism)

Paris, 22-23 June 2017

REPORT

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Chairperson (Charles Ramsden, United Kingdom) opened the meeting and welcomed participants.

The Drafting Committee adopted its agenda as set out in Appendix II to the present report.

2. Civil society input: presentation by Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert of the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe

Anne Nègre presented the feedback received from a number of NGOs in response to a questionnaire circulated on this issue. Respondents were federations or networks including a number of organisations at national or international level. The civil society organisations suggested sectors which they consider should be covered by the draft recommendation: the family, society at large, religions, education and training, language, decision-making, public spaces (such as sport grounds, hospitals), peace negotiation processes, the justice systems, the business world, the armed forces, the media and the workplace. The groups to be targeted should include the NGO sector, the rural world and the different religions.

Among the measures put forward by NGOs, the Drafting Committee is encouraged to consider: legislation and a systematic review of all laws, while taking account of good practices at the national level; awareness-raising and training to counter sexism, including online; review law and policy texts to eliminate sexist language, including in the Council of Europe's own instruments; balanced participation of women and men in the media; improve work-life balance; address sexist hate speech and related cyber-criminality. NGOs also proposed to include good practices in the recommendation, including the tools already available online; as well as arguments and counter-narratives against sexism; consider the possibility of making short films to raise awareness about sexism, and creating University Chairs (such as UNESCO's) to promote research in this field. Finally, the NGO sector agreed that the recommendation should include a definition of sexism, linking gender stereotypes to sexism and sex-based discrimination, and not differentiate between types of sexism.

- > The Secretariat informed the Drafting Committee that all input submitted by NGOs will be compiled in an information document and posted in the Council of Europe website alongside all documents of the second meeting of the Drafting Committee
- 3. Presentation of a study and recommendations on cyber-sexism and young people, as well as awareness-raising tools by Aurélie Latoures of the Centre Hubertine Auclert (proposed by Belgium)

Aurélie Latoures <u>presented</u> the activities of the Centre Hubertine Auclert, including their online tools, series of conferences and expertise in the fields of education for gender equality and combating violence against women and girls. In her presentation she focused on the results of a

recent survey of 1200 students between 11 and 15 years of age, on cyber-violence of sexual and sexist nature. The survey revealed specific forms of sexist cyber-violence targeting girls which is not a new phenomenon but which gets a wider visibility and impact through online media. The survey also showed close links between online and offline violence and the limited response provided so far by the education sector. The behaviour of girls is assessed differently from that of boys, as girls experience more control over their appearance and sexuality and are believed to bear a bigger responsibility in cases of "revenge porn". The survey led to a number of recommendations, including the need to: encourage member States to take responsibility for cyber-sexism (understood as cyber-violence of sexist nature); carry out institutional awarenessraising and information campaigns about cyber-sexism; provide advice to those who suffer cyber-sexism, with a focus on the individual responsibility to combat sexism (including those that contribute to the dissemination of cyber-sexism); tailored training on gender equality and women's rights addressed to and involving young people, education and media professionals. Other recommendations target the need for legislative measures to criminalise the nonconsensual sharing of sexual images online (as done in France last October), even if the images were taken in public places and by the person who did not consent to their distribution; training the police to combat cyber-sexism; support associations that work with victims after their complaints are refused by the police; publish a legal quide against cyber-sexism; address the role of private online operators as regards the need for clear and accessible alert procedures about cyber-sexist content. The Centre Hubertine Auclert is preparing a new website collecting all online tools available to alert about sexism in social media.

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The discussion that ensued focused on the need to co-operate more closely with the Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) as regards children victims of sexism online and the important role of parents. The Centre Hubertine Auclert is developing a resource website for parents, with videos and good practices which will give them the tools to deconstruct certain representations, including the fact that young people reject their online experience of sexism as a form of violence and blame girls for the photos that circulate online. The Centre is currently preparing a new survey on domestic violence and cyber-violence, including the control of partners through online tools. Members of the Drafting Committed agreed that the results of the survey presented by the Centre Hubertine Auclert would be very similar as regards cyber-sexism among adults.

4. Nordic Council's regional study on sexist hate speech - presentation by Kira Appel (Denmark)

Kira Appel gave an overview of a <u>new regional study on online hate speech</u> commissioned by the Nordic Council and presented the day before at an event in Norway. The new report focuses on rights and legislation on sexist hate speech. The study gathers and analyses from a gender equality perspective all relevant information about legislation to combat online hate speech in Nordic countries. It draws attention to the fact that laws to combat hate speech in Nordic countries do not cover sexist hate speech. The new study also addresses the impact of hate speech on individuals, groups (such as journalists and politicians) and society at large. The study shows that online hate speech targets both women and men, but while men are mostly

attacked with threats of violence and references to their profession and competence, women are more likely to experience sexist and sexually charged attacks. Women's experience of online hate speech is largely gender-based and therefore sexist. The study puts forward several proposals, including the need to: (i) prepare legislative changes (including adding gender to hate crime legislation and reviewing the responsibility of providers of online communication platforms); (ii) review law enforcement procedures for handling reports of online hate speech; (iii) educate police officers and prosecutors about online hate speech, threats and other forms of harassment and hate crimes; (iv) consider developing ethical codes of conduct for media providers and users; (v) undertake Nordic co-operation across policy areas and organisations to prevent online hate speech; (vi) address the challenges derived from the transnational nature of online crimes and gender-based online hate speech; (vii) undertake Nordic comparative research focusing on victims and perpetrators, and the consequences of online hate speech for women and men; and (viii) conduct research on this topic from an intersectional perspective.

As a follow up to the study, the Nordic Council will prepare information tools (in all Nordic languages) for young people about their rights regarding online hate speech.

5. The links between sexist stereotypes and sexism - presentation by Karen Ross, Professor of Gender and Media, Newcastle University (proposed by the United Kingdom)

Professor Ross gave an overview of the origin, purpose and impact of gender stereotypes and how sexism operates at the individual, institutional and structural levels. She illustrated her-presentation with examples, including campaigns by NGOs, initiatives taken by UK academia to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women (the Athena-SWAN Charter), the <a href="https://examples.com/BBC's media training for women, a data base of women experts ("The Women's Room"), and also examples from the private sector and local authorities. Professor Ross put forward a number of issues that need to be taken into account to prevent and combat sexism, including legislation and/or guidelines; resources and commitment to ensure implementation by all relevant actors; the possible use of sanctions and/or rewards; the use of good practice examples; and the need to address intersectionality in relation to sexism.

She further informed the Drafting Committee about a new research project funded by the EU: "Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries – AGEMI", carried out by the Universities of Newcastle (UK), Padova (Italy) and Gothenburg (Sweden), the European Federation of Journalists and the Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (February 2017 to July 2019). The project will bring journalism, media and communication students together with media professionals to foster a gender equality perspective within both journalism and media education, and professional journalism practice. The project will develop a web-platform with a resources bank of existing materials on gender equality and media (guidelines, toolkits, reports, analyses); examples of good practices from media organisations; teaching and learning materials (including video clips, interviews and activities); and digital tools (including a web-based application).

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6. Discussion paper: elements for a draft recommendation

The Secretariat presented the <u>discussion document</u> with elements for the preparation of the draft recommendation, based and building on the <u>results of the first meeting of the Drafting</u> Committee.

- > The Drafting Committee agreed with the proposed structure for the draft recommendation and decided that guidelines with specific measures to prevent and combat sexism should be appended to the draft recommendation.
- 7. Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (*Preambular paragraphs*)

The Drafting Committee discussed and reviewed the draft preamble included in the discussion document.

- The Drafting Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of the preambular paragraphs in line with the discussions and proposals made by members.
- 8. Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (elements for a possible definition of sexism).

The Drafting Committee discussed and reviewed the draft elements for a possible definition of sexism included in the discussion document. There was agreement to include the definition of sexism in the operative paragraphs of the draft recommendation and to add a reference to the definition in the preamble.

- The Drafting Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of the elements for a definition of sexism in line with the discussions and proposals made by members.
- 9. Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (*Operative paragraphs*)

The Drafting Committee discussed and reviewed the draft operative paragraphs included in the discussion document. There was agreement to keep the reference to "private life" in brackets, for the time being; and keep the focus on monitoring, rather than evaluating, future progress in the implementation of the recommendation.

- ➤ The Drafting Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of the operative paragraphs in line with the discussions and proposals made by members.
- 10. Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (structure of the appendix guidelines)

The Drafting Committee discussed and reviewed the structure of the guidelines as included in the discussion document. There was agreement to expand each section, including the GEC(2017)7

"Rationale" and the measures and tools to be recommended for preventing and combating sexism. The Drafting Committee agreed to include examples of good practices from member States, international organisations and institutions, as well as civil society, to illustrate measures and tools to be covered by the guidelines.

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The Drafting Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a complete draft of the guidelines to prevent and combat sexism, in line with the discussions and proposals made by members.

11. Next steps and timelines

Members of the Drafting Committee are encouraged to send their written input to the Secretariat by the end of July 2017.

In September 2017, the Secretariat will send to the Drafting Committee a revised version of the document including preamble and operative paragraphs and the draft definition of sexism (see Appendix I to this report). This appendix, together with the report of the 2nd meeting of the Drafting Committee, will be submitted to the GEC meeting in November 2017 to ensure that the GEC is fully informed of the work of the Drafting Committee and progress made.

In early 2018, the Secretariat will circulate to the Drafting Committee a full draft of the guidelines to prevent and combat sexism.

The dates of the 3rd meeting of the Drafting Committee are 1-2 March 2018 in Paris (to be confirmed).

Members of the Drafting Committee are reminded and encouraged to put forward proposals for experts to be invited to the 3rd meeting, in particular on topics that the Drafting Committee considers that it needs further information.

Appendix I

PREAMBLE:

- [1] The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe;
- [2] Recalling that gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy and good governance, respect for the rule of law, and the promotion of well-being for all; and that discrimination on the grounds of sex and gender constitutes a violation of human rights and an impediment to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms:
- [3] Recalling that sexism is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which has led to discrimination and prevents the full advancement of women in society;
- [4] Affirming that sexism is a consequence of prevailing gender stereotypes (i.e. preconceived ideas whereby men and women are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex), runs counter to achieving gender equality, and is widespread in all societies;
- [5] Noting that sexism constitutes a barrier to the empowerment of women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by sexist behaviours; and further noting that gender stereotypes and biases also shape the behaviour and expectations of men and boys, and therefore lie behind men's and boy's sexist actions;
- [6] Concerned that sexism is linked to gender-based violence against women and girls, whereby acts of "everyday sexism" are part of a continuum of violence which creates a climate of fear, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom;
- [7] Noting that women and girls can be subject to multiple and intersectional discrimination and may face sexism combined with other forms of discriminatory, hateful or harmful behaviour;
- [8] Aware that sexism/sexist behaviours are perpetrated at the individual, institutional and structural levels and experienced with detrimental effect at all three levels; and therefore measures to prevent and combat sexism should also be taken at all three levels;
- [9] Having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), which requires States Parties to take all appropriate measures "... to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are

based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women";

- [10] Bearing in mind the objectives set forward in the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and in particular the regional review for Europe carried out by UNECE in 2014 which indicated that discriminatory stereotypes remain widespread, preventing women and men from making non-traditional choices and affecting women's education and participation in the economy and in public life;
- [11] Bearing in mind Sustainable Development Goal 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and Sustainable Development Goal 16 ("Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels") of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are of universal application;
- [12] Recalling that combating gender stereotypes and sexism and ensuring the integration of a gender equality perspective in all policies and measures are two priority objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023;
- [13] Recalling that the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence requires Parties "... to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men"; as well as the criminalisation of online and offline sexual harassment and stalking;
- [14] Taking account of the European Social Charter and its provisions on equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the right to dignity at work;
- [15] Recalling that the European Court of Human Rights has reiterated that "... the advancement of gender equality is today a major goal in the member states of the Council of Europe", and "... references to traditions, general assumptions or prevailing social attitudes ... are insufficient justification for a difference in treatment on grounds of sex". Furthermore, the Court stated that "... gender stereotypes, such as the perception of women as primary child-carers and men as primary breadwinners, cannot, by themselves, be considered to amount to sufficient justification for a difference in treatment ...";
- [16] Recalling Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education;
- [17] Recalling Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms;

- [18] Recalling Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality and media;
- [19] Referring to General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech, adopted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in December 2015, which includes sexist hate speech;
- [20] Taking account of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), which includes as one of its priority areas to fight discrimination on the grounds of gender and to promote equality between girls and boys including by continuing to address stereotypes and sexism, notably in the media and education, as well as over-sexualisation;
- [21] Taking account of the Council of Europe Strategy on Internet Governance 2016-2019 and its call for monitoring action to be taken to protect everyone, in particular women and children, from online abuse, such as cyber-stalking, sexism and threats of sexual violence;
- [22] Recalling Resolutions 2144 (2017) and 2177 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on "Ending cyber-discrimination and online hate" and "Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space", respectively;
- [23] Drawing on the outcomes of implementing the above-mentioned standards at the international, regional and national levels, including achievements and challenges;
- [24] Mindful that, despite the existence of standards at national, regional and international levels guaranteeing the principle of gender equality, a gap still persists between standards and practice, between *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality;
- [25] Acknowledging that the prevalence of different manifestations of sexism is closely linked to the persistent difficulties to achieving gender equality, and desirous to tackle sexism as a critical cause and consequence of gender inequality;
- [26] Aspiring to create a Europe free from sexism and its manifestations.

[The Committee of Ministers]

- I. Recommends that the governments of member States:
- 1. Take measures to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in [private and] public life and encourage relevant stakeholders to implement relevant policies and programmes drawing on the guidelines appended to this Recommendation.
- 2. Review and update Recommendation No. R (90)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the elimination of sexism from language.
- 3. Monitor progress in the implementation of this Recommendation and inform the competent steering committee/s of the measures undertaken and the progress achieved in this field.
- 4. Ensure that this Recommendation, including its appendix, is translated and disseminated (in accessible formats) to relevant authorities and stakeholders.
- II. Calls on the Secretary General to transmit this Recommendation to relevant intergovernmental organisations.

For the purpose of this Recommendation, sexism means any act, gesture, oral or written wording, practice or behaviour:

- a) related to the sex of a person or a group of persons,
 - i) considering that person or group of persons as inferior or essentially reduced to their sexual dimension, or
 - ii) based on gender stereotypes.
- b) committed in [a public or private] [any] place, online or offline,
- c) with the effect or purpose of:
 - i) violating the inherent dignity and rights of a person or group of persons, or
 - ii) constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons, or

resulting in [physical, psychological or socio-economic] harm or suffering to the person or group of persons, or

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- iv) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, or
- v) reinforcing gender stereotypes.1

¹ "Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Sex stereotypes can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, their educational and professional experiences as well as life opportunities in general. Stereotypes about women both result from and are the cause of deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices against women. They are used to justify and maintain the historical relations of power of men over women as well as sexist attitudes which are holding back the advancement of women." (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017)

Appendix II

AGENDA

Thursday 22 June 2017		
2.30 pm	1.	Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda
2.45 pm	2.	Civil society input: presentation by Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert of the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe - followed by a discussion
3.30-3.45 pm Coffee break		
3.45 pm	3.	Presentation of a study and recommendations on cybersexism and young people, as well as awareness-raising tools by Aurélie Latoures of the Centre Hubertine Auclert (proposed by Belgium) - followed by a discussion
4.30 pm	4.	Nordic Council's regional study on sexist hate speech - presentation by Kira Appel (Denmark) - followed by a discussion
		5.30 pm – Close of day 1
<u>Friday 23 June 2017</u>		
9.30 am	5.	The links between sexist stereotypes and sexism - presentation by Karen Ross, Professor of Gender and Media, Newcastle University (proposed by the United Kingdom) - followed by a discussion
10.15 am	6.	Discussion paper: elements for a draft recommendation
10.30 am	7.	Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (<i>Preambular paragraphs</i>)
		11.00-11.15 am Coffee break
11.15 am	8.	Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (<i>Preambular paragraphs and elements for a possible definition of sexism</i>).
		1.00 – 2.30 pm Lunch break
2.30 pm	9.	Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (<i>Operative paragraphs</i>)
4.00 - 4.15 pm Coffee break		
4.15 pm	10.	Discussion on the preparation of the draft recommendation (structure of the appendix - guidelines)
5.30 pm	11.	Next steps

Close of meeting

Appendix III

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