COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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THE GENDER EQUALITY RAPPORTEUR

A VITAL ASSET IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TRANSVERSAL PROGRAMME ON GENDER EQUALITY

Information note updated by the Gender Equality Unit, Equality Division,
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I. THE TRANSVERSAL PROGRAMME: CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER EQUALITY BY INTEGRATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S ACTIVITIES

1. In early 2012, the Council of Europe introduced the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality which was launched by the Secretary General to improve the visibility and impact of the Organisation's gender equality activities in member states and within the Organisation itself.

2. The aim of the Programme is 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". In order to do so it is necessary to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy at legislative and political level in member states and in Council of Europe activities. The Programme therefore seeks to mobilise all of the Council of Europe's bodies, in particular intergovernmental structures, and its external partners.

3. Several interdependent structures are responsible for implementing the Programme to achieve this aim, i.e.

- A Gender Equality Commission (GEC), composed of a representative from each member state;
- Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GER), appointed from among the members of the steering committees and other intergovernmental structures of the Council of Europe;
- An inter-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team (GMT).

4. The Gender Equality Unit, part of the Equality Division within the Equality and Human Dignity Department of DGII, provides the secretariat for the Programme.

II – THE ROLE OF GENDER EQUALITY RAPPORTEURS

5. Most, if not all, Council of Europe committees and monitoring mechanisms can contribute to gender equality in member states by ensuring that their activities integrate a gender perspective. This does not entail additional tasks or mean that it is necessary to embark on new activities. It does, however, require a change of approach. Essentially, committees are required 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 both women and men.

6. A few committees were already explicitly required to integrate a gender perspective into their activities. All intergovernmental structures are now required in accordance with their terms of reference, to appoint a GER from amongst their members. Other committees and structures are encouraged to also appoint a GER. In principal, convention committees should also be able to appoint a GER within the framework of their internal rules. To date all the intergovernmental structures invited to appoint a GER have done so. Furthermore, seven monitoring mechanisms have also appointed a GER.

7. The person appointed as GER will not be required to write reports, but will be invited, along with the committee secretary, to liaise with the GEC (see below) and will be in contact with GERs from other committees. This role is therefore essential in ensuring that everyone understands the gender mainstreaming strategy in the same way and in providing the impetus needed for its appropriate and effective application.

8. With this in mind, GERs should ensure that a gender perspective is properly integrated during the programming process of their respective committees (i.e. the process of identifying priorities, preparing activity proposals, setting up and implementing the activities, and evaluating the results). In the long term, the person appointed as the committee's GER should not be expected to do this alone. It should become the responsibility of the committee as a whole.

9. It is also important, where possible, that the GER is a member of the Bureau of his or her committee. Given the reduction in the number of meetings, the committees have increasingly heavy agendas, and as a result the Bureaux play an increasingly important role in identifying, preparing and examining activities and in assessing their implementation. It is vital for rapporteurs to be able to intervene as soon as the Bureau begins preparing the programme of activities as this would lend more weight to their role. It is therefore strongly recommended that the GER be appointed from among the Bureau members – or at least to involve the GER closely in the Bureau's discussions on the programme of activities.

III – CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH GENDER EQUALITY RAPPORTEURS

10. The GEC maintains close links with all partners of the Transversal Programme and creates opportunities to communicate with the other elements, in particular GERs, and to support their work. Regular exchanges of views are held with the GERs to ensure that gender mainstreaming is taken into account within their committee on a long-term basis, improve co-operation with the different partners and, where appropriate, devise joint activities.

11. It is also important to ensure that the role of the rapporteur is preserved within each committee, as a change of expert all too often leads to the abandonment of his or her area of competence. It is therefore important that the GEC not only assists the rapporteurs themselves but also meets the committee as a whole at regular intervals to arouse the interest of its members, improve their knowledge of gender mainstreaming and encourage them to adhere to the strategy, so that if a rapporteur resigns, his or her role can be immediately taken over by another member of the committee.

12. The GEC can help the rapporteurs to carry out their task by giving them examples of gender impact or of methods for incorporating gender issues in policies.

13. When specialised ministerial conferences are being organised, the Chair of the GEC could also send a message to the GERs to remind them of the need to take account of gender equality in the declarations and action plans to be adopted by the ministers and heads of delegation, and thus draw everyone's attention to the need for gender mainstreaming in their forthcoming activities.

14. At the first meeting of the GEC and the GERs, which took place in November 2012, proposals were made for identifying more precisely the role of the rapporteurs, working methods and the methods of intervention and co-operation between the members of the GEC and GERs were discussed. (Report)

15. In November 2013, the first training session for GERs took place from which a training Manual was produced. A second training took place in November 2015 and a third one is organised on 21 November 2016.

16. Committees, their secretaries and rapporteurs, should not hesitate to contact the Gender Equality Unit at the Equality Division of DGII for any help, advice or information they might need.