

08.03.2026

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

English only

CCJ statement on International Women's Day

Every year on March 8th, millions of people globally celebrate the achievements in the struggle against social, economic, cultural and political inequality faced by women, while engaging in critical assessment of remaining shortcomings and barriers inhibiting action towards a more equitable society.

This year's International Women's Day (IWD) theme is "Give To Gain"¹, highlighting that through a mindset of generosity and collaboration and the power of reciprocity and support, we can strengthen the achievements of and build upon the work of civil society movements aimed at empowering women and improving women's rights in Europe.

The 2025 EU Gender Equality Index² stands at 63.4 out of 100, indicating that, without urgent action, full equality is still over 50 years away. In light of the efforts of polarising political movements and the exacerbating of extremists in our political landscape, this comes to no surprise. In the efforts to end gender-based violence against women, reduce gender gaps in the labour market including pay and pension gaps and better facilitate women participating in political processes, we still have a long way to go. Despite the achievements of trailblazers, we still face numerous challenges, including the aforementioned violence, discrimination, and hate speech, which not only threaten to undermine our achievements, but dismantle them entirely. This is especially true in the online sphere, with new cases of AI being weaponized against women increasingly emerging³.

⁴, We as the Advisory Council on Youth hope to centre women in particular who have helped shape and determine fundamental policy and access to equal rights, like Feride Acar, who was one of the key players in the drafting and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and Mary Arden the pioneer who implemented ECHR principles in the British judiciary as first female judge of the High Court of Justice Chancery Division. These are among countless groundbreakers, who gave so much for many to gain in the field of gender equality.

In affirming Article 14 of the ECHR⁵ and reflecting on the principles of CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism⁶, the Advisory Council on Youth is fully committed to furthering the strive for full gender equality and to removing all barriers for the full inclusion of women and girls in peaceful, inclusive societies. This includes empowering young women to political positions of power and public decision making, especially in law-giving bodies, as laid out in PACE Resolution 2615 on promoting inclusive participation in

¹ <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Theme>

² <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2025>

³ Confer CM/Rec(2026)1

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/coe-story/75-women-all-profiles>

⁵ <https://fra.europa.eu/en/law-reference/european-convention-human-rights-article-14>

⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/cm-rec-2019-1e-sexism/1680a217ca>

parliamentary life⁷. In our role as youth policy experts, we work extensively to furthering the strategic objectives as laid out in the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029⁸, ensuring that these efforts are aligned with and informed by the Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective. Since equality affects everyone

The Advisory Council on Youth calls on all Member States to not just strengthen and protect the promotion of gender equality, especially through supporting civil organizations in this field. In reaction to the increasingly professionalized so-called “anti-gender movement”, we also call on Member States to cease hostile activities towards civil society and non-governmental organisations, in line with CM/Rec(2018) on promoting civil society space. We also stress the profound importance of ending gender-based discrimination in the human rights discourse, in line with Article 14 of the ECHR, which explicitly prohibits discrimination in enjoying fundamental rights based on sex.

Furthermore, since women's rights do not exist in a vacuum, we call upon Member States and Council of Europe bodies to remember the importance of achieving gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach in all policies and measures. The practice of gender mainstreaming adopted in 1998 by the Council of Europe remains fundamentally relevant today and should serve as a cornerstone to effective equality policy. This includes, but is not limited to, the active consideration in policymaking of queer and LGBTI+ women, women of colour, and women from marginalised communities such as Roma and Travellers⁹.

The statements of the Advisory Council are published for the purpose of informing the public about the activities of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. The statements reflect the opinions and positions of the Advisory Council and its members. The views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.

⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/texts-adopted-by-the-assembly-since-1986-textes-adoptes-par-l-assemble/1680aa0de2>

⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/prems-073024-gbr-2573-gender-equality-strategy-2024-29-txt-web-a5-2756/1680afc66a>

⁹ The terms “Roma and Travellers” are being used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.)