GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)

9th meeting
27-29 April 2016

REPORT
I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to the first meeting of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) in its new composition under its Terms of Reference for 2016-2017, with all 47 member states having their costs covered by the Council of Europe. The GEC adopted the agenda as set out in Appendix I to this report. The list of participants is attached at Appendix II.

The Secretariat explained that, as the GEC was now a steering committee, an abridged report of the meeting would need to be adopted at the end of each meeting with the main topics discussed and decisions taken. The abridged report would then be forwarded to the Committee of Ministers.

II. Exchange of views with Guido Bellatti Ceccoli, Chairperson of the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H)

The Chairperson introduced Ambassador Guido Bellatti Ceccoli and welcomed him to his first exchange of views with the GEC. During the exchange which followed, Ambassador Bellatti Ceccoli noted the lead role the Council of Europe has taken in the field of gender equality as a result of the expertise and work of the GEC. He also mentioned the advances which had been made on each of the five objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy. The GEC took note of the support of the GR-H to the on-going work to implement the Council of Europe’s Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 and welcomed continued co-operation with the GR-H on gender equality matters, including the preparation of the future strategy on gender equality. Ambassador Bellatti Ceccoli’s presentation is available on the GEC website.

III. Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality

1. Draft work plan of the Gender Equality Commission 2016-2017

The Secretariat introduced the item and the document as it appears in document GEC(2016)1. During the ensuing discussion, members of the GEC expressed their appreciation for the document, put forward proposals and welcomed plans for a newsletter.

- The GEC took note of the document, instructed the Secretariat to review and update it regularly and agreed to make it available on the GEC website.
2. Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality (NFPs)

The Chairperson introduced the item on National Focal Points on Gender Equality (NFPs). The discussions were placed in the context of the new GEC composition and terms of reference for 2016-2017. In the discussions that followed, it was agreed that, in light of the new terms of reference for the GEC, there is no longer justification to maintain the NFP Network.

- The GEC took note of the discontinuation of the Network of National Focal Points for Gender Equality.


a. Objective 1 - Combating gender stereotypes and sexism

- Seminar on “Combating Sexist Hate Speech” organised by the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign in co-operation with the Gender Equality Unit (Strasbourg, 10-12 February 2016)

The Vice-Chairperson introduced the item and encouraged the participants to read the very informative report of the Seminar on “Combating Sexist Hate Speech”. The Secretariat reported to the GEC about the event with particular focus on the seminar’s findings and the set of proposals for follow-up action to combat sexist hate speech. The Austrian GEC member, who participated in the Seminar, expressed her support of the proposed activities regarding the preparation of a recommendation to combat sexism. In the discussion that followed, members agreed on the gap of legislative measure in this area and expressed support for the GEC to undertake further action and make specific proposals to the Committee of Ministers in this regard.

- The GEC agreed to prepare a draft recommendation on combating sexism for consideration by the Committee of Ministers and instructed the Secretariat to take the necessary action towards its preparation, including the consideration of relevant expertise in member states and involving other sectors of the Council of Europe.

b. Objective 2 - Preventing and combating violence against women

- Exchange of views with Feride Acar, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) (baseline questionnaire for the 1st round of monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention)

An exchange of views was held with Feride Acar who provided information about the adoption of the baseline questionnaire and the launch of the evaluation procedure in March 2016. GEC members were invited to provide GREVIO with relevant information for the evaluation of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (IC) by parties.
In answer to questions, the GREVIO President informed the participants that the dissemination of information was crucial for assisting member states to implement the IC. Access to resources and legislation could be facilitated through the GREVIO website for example. She also suggested that the baseline questionnaire could be helpful for those states which have not yet ratified the IC as the questions could be a useful guide for steering the process towards ratification. The GREVIO President also said that GREVIO will contact civil society organisations at the national and the European level as they play a key role in preventing and combating violence against women.

➢ The GREVIO President and GEC members agreed to continue close dialogue and cooperation on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Secretariat presented two new papers on the IC - Article 11 “Ensuring Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic violence” and Article 17 “Encouraging the participation of the private sector and the media”. Both papers are available on the GEC and the Violence Against Women websites. Participants were also informed that work is underway for the preparation of two additional papers on Articles 8 and 9 (support to NGOs and civil society in combating violence against women and domestic violence) and Article 52 (emergency barring orders) of the IC. GEC members were encouraged to make use and disseminate such resources as appropriate.

c. Objective 3 - Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice

- Follow-up to the Conference on “Towards guaranteeing equal access of women to justice” (Bern, 15-16 October 2016)

The Secretariat informed the participants about the follow-up action to the conference “Towards guaranteeing equal access of women to justice” (Bern, 15-16 October 2015) which had taken place since the last GEC meeting. This included the launch of the conference video, an updated factsheet on Guaranteeing Equal Access of Women to Justice which would be published shortly and the publication of a factsheet prepared by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) with case-law on gender equality.

➢ The GEC agreed that access to legal aid was an important element of women’s access to justice and agreed to co-operate with other bodies of the Council of Europe for further work on this issue.

The GEC took note with interest of the new Council of Europe Action Plan on Strengthening Judicial Independence and Impartiality, and its specific actions to promote a gender balance in the composition of the judiciary at all levels, to fight gender stereotyping within the judiciary, and to work towards the mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective into all reforms aimed at strengthening judicial independence and impartiality.
The Secretariat presented the latest information concerning progress with the implementation of the Regional Project on “Improving women’s access to justice in five EAP countries”. The Secretariat informed participants about the closing conference which will take place in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, on 24-25 October 2016, at which a training manual for legal professionals on ensuring access to justice for women would be launched.

-The GEC members were also asked to send their comments and feedback to the Gender Equality Unit on the document “Review of International Good practices in Training on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality for Legal Professionals”.

d. Objective 4 - Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

- Third round of monitoring the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

The Vice-Chairperson introduced the item and announced that only three member states had started to fill in the questionnaire. The Vice-Chairperson encouraged the members to complete the questionnaire by the deadline of 15 July 2016 so as not to delay the expert evaluation. Anyone experiencing problems with the questionnaire should contact the Secretariat.

- Presentation by Ajla van Heel, Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the compendium of good practices for advancing women’s political participation in the OSCE region

The Vice-Chairperson welcomed Ajla van Heel who presented the compendium of good practices for advancing women’s political participation in the OSCE region looking at barrier, political parties, elections, local politics and parliaments (presentation available on the GEC website). The Secretariat recalled that a former GEC member (Portugal) had participated in the discussions leading to the preparation of the compendium. In reply to questions and comments from GEC members, Ms van Heel confirmed that the OSCE was not only working with its 57 member states, but also with partners in the South. She pointed out that while there have been successful independent women candidates, OSCE research has shown that political parties are still the main entrance point for potential candidates. The members noted with interest the gender audits of political parties carried out by OSCE/ODHIR and the guide for political parties to develop gender equality action plans.

-The GEC agreed to continue its co-operation with OSCE/ODHIR in the field of women’s participation in political and public decision-making.

e. Objective 5 - Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures
- Follow-up to training on gender mainstreaming for Gender Equality Rapporteurs

The Secretariat informed the members that following the training on gender mainstreaming for Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) which took place in November 2015, an evaluation took place on the basis of feedback from more than 20 GERs who had attended. Overall, the evaluation was very positive in particular with regard to the content of the training and expertise of the trainers. The main challenge faced in organising such training is to address in a training session the many different areas in which GERs work. The Swedish member of the GEC, who was one of the trainers in the November session, agreed that the training was positively received. She highlighted challenges related to the different level of knowledge among participants and perceptions about gender mainstreaming which is frequently seen as a goal in itself.

The Secretariat presented an updated version of the document “Gender Mainstreaming: Policy Briefs and Council of Europe Activities”, which would be updated at regular intervals during the year, as well as the factsheet on gender mainstreaming.

- The GEC welcomed these materials as practical reference tools for gender mainstreaming work and activities.
- The GEC agreed on the positive impact and the importance of continued training on gender mainstreaming for GERs and secretariat members.

- Presentation by Regina Jensdóttir, Head of Division and Programme Coordinator of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)

The Chair welcomed Regina Jensdóttir who presented the new Strategy for the rights of the child to the members, and in particular its gender-related elements (violence against girls, sex-based discrimination, gender stereotypes, over-sexualisation of children). This presentation is available on the GEC website. During the discussion which followed, the GEC members expressed their appreciation for the strategy.

- The GEC agreed to consider areas of future co-operation and synergies in the framework of the implementation of activities of the CoE strategies on gender equality and children rights.
The Chair introduced Robert Rustem who gave a presentation about the Council of Europe Thematic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers (2016-2019). The GEC expressed its support for a new three-year project “Enhancing Romani Women’s access to justice” to enhance the access to justice by Roma women in a number of selected countries, which links with its own work and activities to implement Objective 3 of the CoE Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 on ensuring equal access of women to justice. The presentation is available on the GEC website.

- The GEC agreed to keep in contact with the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues about its on-going activities in this field, as well as about the work of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) on gender equality for Roma and Traveller women.


The Secretariat introduced the revised draft concept paper and the draft programme for the conference “Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring action – the Council of Europe Gender Equality strategy 2014-2017” which will take place in Tallinn from 30 June to 1 July 2016. The Secretariat outlined the format of the conference and the role of the moderators in leading the discussions in each panel. The draft programme of the Conference would be made available on the Council of Europe’s website.

- The GEC took note of the revised draft concept note and programme of the Tallinn Conference.
- The GEC agreed that the Secretariat, in co-operation with the GEC members and the Estonian authorities, would finalise the programme and publish it on the website.

5. Co-operation with other sectors of the Council of Europe

- Exchange of views with Elena Centemero, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Rapporteur on assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation

The Vice-Chairperson introduced Elena Centemero. In her presentation, which is available on the GEC website, Ms Centemero informed the GEC that the Resolution “Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation”, had been adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly with an overwhelming majority at its Session on 21 April 2016. Ms Centemero said that the Resolution, which calls upon member states to move beyond quotas

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1 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.
and to ensure the introduction of the principle of parity in the constitution or in electoral legislation in order to move towards real equality, showed the strong support and awareness that existed for this issue.

In the exchange of views that followed, the members of the GEC expressed their appreciation for the Resolution.

- The GEC agreed to continue co-operation in areas of common interest, including the preparation of reports on gender equality issues currently under consideration by the PACE Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee.

- Presentation by Alessandra Siino, Project Officer (Strasbourg) - “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Ukraine”

The Chairperson introduced Alessandra Siino who updated the members about the current activities related to the project in Ukraine. The GEC expressed its hope that the Istanbul Convention will be ratified by Ukraine in the near future.

IV. Co-operation with international/regional organisations

- Exchange of views with Ingibjorg Gisladottir, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia and Representative to Turkey of UN Women

The Chairperson introduced Ingibjorg Gisladottir who presented their activities to promote gender equality in the region and beyond. In her presentation, which is available on the GEC website, Ms Gisladottir mentioned complimentary areas for co-operation with the CoE, in particular women in decision-making, violence against women, and the implementation of gender equality instruments, as well as the importance of creating the political will to make the changes that can enhance gender equality and women’s empowerment.

- The GEC took note of the synergies between the strategic priorities of UN Women and the Council of Europe in the field of gender equality and further noted the important role for the Council of Europe in addressing the human rights of women migrants and asylum seekers.

- The GEC agreed to continue the close co-operation with UN Women in areas of common interest.

- Presentation by Anastasia Divinskaya, Gender Advisor, UN Women, Ukraine

The Chairperson introduced Anastasia Divinskaya. In her presentation, which is available on the GEC website, Ms Divinskaya presented the key priorities and challenges for the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights in Ukraine and the work undertaken by UN Women, including in relation to humanitarian action, social services and peace building and legal reform.
In response to a question about the major gender stereotypes in Ukraine and the role of UN women in fighting them, Ms Divinskaya said that there has been progress at the national level, for example regarding certain positions prohibited to women, however patriarchal and traditionalist views remain strong. UN Women was carrying out a gender review of legislation, to be concluded by May 2016, which would include recommendations for Ukraine’s labour legislation.

- Exchange of views with Gesa Böckermann, Unit on Gender Equality, Directorate-General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission

The Chairperson introduced Gesa Böckermann who presented the new “Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019” of the European Commission, which is available on the GEC website. The Strategic Engagement focuses on the same five priorities as the previous Strategy for equality between women and men for 2010-2015. It contains 33 key actions as well as objectives to be achieved and indicators to measure progress.

- The GEC agreed to continue co-operating with the Gender Equality Unit of the European Commission in areas of common interest.

- European Union gender equality agenda:
  - The Dutch Presidency (January – June 2016)

  The representative of the Netherlands reported back about the current Dutch presidency of the European Union including the Ministerial meeting at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on violence against women, and women and girls and the gender dimension of the refugee crisis.

  - The Slovak Presidency (July – December 2016)

  The representative of the Slovak Republic informed the members that EIGE had been asked to focus on women and poverty during the Slovak EU Presidency, including the most disadvantaged groups among women and looking at the links between intersectionality and poverty. There will be a conference in September in Bratislava about the reconciliation between family and working life.

  The Chairperson said that EIGE should be more open to non-member states that would benefit from having more access to information and the results and findings of EIGE’s work.

V. Report of events attended by GEC members, National Focal Points and the Secretariat

The Vice-Chairperson invited the participants to consult document GEC(2016)3 which contained reports about many of the events in which the GEC or the Secretariat had participated. The Secretariat reported back to the members about the participation in the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (Geneva, December 2015), the meeting with the International Olympic Committee (Lausanne, January 2016), as well as the two Council of Europe Side Events at the 60th Session of the CSW: one co-organised with the Permanent
Mission of Bulgaria to the UN on Protecting the human rights of women refugees and asylum seekers, and the second (co-organised with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Republic of Malta) on Multiple Discrimination – A Single Response - Combating stereotypes and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

- The GEC decided to invite the chair of the International Olympic Committee to an exchange of views at one of its forthcoming meetings.

VI. Current and future activities at national level and at international level

- Estonian Chairmanship (May – November 2016)

The representative from Estonia informed the members about the upcoming Estonian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. As well as the Tallinn conference on 30 June – 1 July, a UNICEF side event is planned about children in the migration crisis. She also informed the members that Estonia plans to ratify the Lanzarote convention and launch awareness-raising activities around 18 November (European day on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse).

VII. Other business

The representative from Switzerland announced an international workshop in 2017 about Logib, a statistical tool developed by the Federal Office for Gender Equality using a self-assessment pay calculator which allows checking whether or not a company is implementing equal pay for equal work between women and men. Members will be informed as soon as possible about the date for this workshop. She also informed the participants about a public conference which took place in February 2016 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Swiss federal gender equality law. A scientific publication was edited with presentations, and high-level judges and experts outlined some obstacles in the application of the federal law. Copies of the publication are available upon request.

The representative from Luxembourg informed the participants about the Conference “Who cares? Who shares? Men as actors and beneficiaries in Gender Equality Policies”, organised by the Luxembourg Ministry of Equal Opportunities with the support of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of the Federal Republic of Germany, in Luxembourg on 17-18 October 2016. He also extended an invitation to the GEC to send a representative to participate as a speaker.

The representative from Poland informed the participants about the Global Summit for Women to be held in Warsaw on 9-11 June 2016 under the theme “Women: Building an inclusive economy in the digital age”. She was encouraged to send the information to the Secretariat so that it can include in the website about activities in member states, as well as in the calendar of events of the future newsletter.
VIII. Date and place of next meetings:

The Chairperson confirmed that the date of the next meeting had already been agreed and it would take place on 16-18 November in Strasbourg.

Calendar of forthcoming events and meetings:

Council of Europe
Annual Conference, Tallinn, Estonia (30 June – 1 July 2016)
Regional Conference in the framework of the project Improving Women’s Access to Justice in Five Eastern Partnership Countries, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (24-25 October 2016)

Other organisations
APPENDIX I

AGENDA

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda
   - Draft Agenda

II. Exchange of views with Guido Bellatti Ceccoli, Chairperson of the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H)

III. Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality

1. Draft work plan of the Gender Equality Commission 2016-2017
2. Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality (NFPs)
   a. Objective 1 - Combating gender stereotypes and sexism
      - Seminar on “Combating Sexist Hate Speech” organised by the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign in co-operation with the Gender Equality Unit (Strasbourg, 10-12 February 2016)
         - Report of the seminar
         - Follow-up action to seminar
         - ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech
   b. Objective 2 - Preventing and combating violence against women
      - Exchange of views with Feride Acar, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) (baseline questionnaire for the 1st round of monitoring)
      - Latest publications
         - Paper on Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention
         - Paper on Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention
c. Objective 3 - Guarteed equal access of women to justice

- Follow-up to Bern Conference Oral presentation
- Video of Bern Conference Video

- Latest publications/documents
  o Council of Europe Plan of Action on “Strengthening Judicial Independence and Impartiality” CM(2016)36 final
  o Factsheet on Gender equality prepared by the European Court of Human Rights Factsheet

- Regional Project on “Improving women’s access to justice in five EAP countries” Oral presentation
  o Review of international good practices on women’s rights training for legal professionals GEC(2016)2

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d. Objective 4 - Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

- Third round of monitoring the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making Oral presentation

- Presentation by Ajla van Heel, Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the compendium of good practices for advancing women’s political participation in the OSCE region Compendium

- Latest documents
  o “Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation” PACE report

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e. Objective 5 - Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures

- Follow-up to training on gender mainstreaming for Gender Equality Rapporteurs Oral presentation

- Presentation by Regina Jensdóttir, Head of Division and Programme co-ordinator, of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) Oral presentation Strategy

- Presentation by Robert Rustem, Support Team to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues, of the Thematic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) Oral Presentation
Action Plan

- Latest publications/documents
  - Gender mainstreaming policy briefs and CoE activities, 2nd Edition
    March 2016 Publication
  - Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection and promotion of human rights in culturally diverse societies CM Document


Oral presentation

- Draft Programme GEC(2016)4
- Draft Concept Note GEC(2015)12 Rev

5. Co-operation with other sectors of the Council of Europe

- Exchange of views with Elena Centemero, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Rapporteur on assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation

- Presentation by Alessandra Siino, Project Officer (Strasbourg) - “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Ukraine”

IV. Co-operation with international/regional organisations

- Exchange of views with Ingibjorg Gisladottir, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia and Representative to Turkey of UN Women

- Presentation by Anastasia Divinskaya, Gender Advisor, of UN Women’s perspectives on the key priorities, challenges and ways ahead for the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights in Ukraine

- Exchange of views with Gesa Böckermann, Unit on Gender Equality, Directorate-General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019

- European Union gender equality agenda:
  - Netherlands Presidency (January – June 2016)
  - Slovakian Presidency (July – December 2016)

V. Report of events attended by GEC members, National Focal Points and the Secretariat GEC(2016)3

CSW60 Agreed Conclusions
VI. Current and future activities at national level and at international level

- Council of Europe gender equality agenda:
  - Bulgarian Chairmanship (November 2015 – May 2016)
  - Estonian Chairmanship (May – November 2016)

VII. Other business

VIII. Date and place of next meetings

GEC - 10th meeting: Strasbourg, 16 –18 November 2016

Calendar of forthcoming events and meetings:

Council of Europe
Annual Conference, Tallinn, Estonia (30 June – 1 July 2016)
Regional Conference in the framework of the project Improving Women’s Access to Justice in Five Eastern Partnership Countries, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (24-25 October 2016)

Other organisations

IX Adoption of abridged report
APPENDIX II

PARTICIPANTS LIST/ LISTE DES PARTICIPANT-E-S

Representatives / Représentant-e-s

**Albania / Albanie**
Etleva SHESHI
Head of Gender Equality Sector
Department of Social Inclusion and
Gender Equality
Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

**Andorra / Andorre**
Mireia V. PORRAS GARCÍA
Éducatrice sociale dans l’équipe de prise en charge intégrale de la femme victime de violences liées au genre (EAID)
Ministère d’Affaires Sociales, Justice et Intérieur

**Armenia / Arménie**
Karine SUJAYAN
Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Division
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

**Austria / Autriche**
Eva FEHRINGER
Deputy Head International and European Social Policy and Labour Law

**Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan**
Elgun SAFAROV
Head of Information and Analytic Research Department
The State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Issues

**Belgium / Belgique**
Alexandra ADRIAENSENS
Directrice Direction de l'Egalité des Chances

**Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bosnie-Herzégovine**
Samra FILIPOVIĆ HADŽIABDIĆ
Director
Agency for Gender Equality

**Croatia / Croatie**
Helena STIMIC RADIN
Director
Office for Gender Equality

**Czech Republic / République tchèque**
Radan ŠAFARÍK
Gender Equality Unit
Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

**Cyprus / Chypre**
Eleni LOIZIDOU
Attorney of the Republic

**Denmark / Danemark**
Kira APPEL
Vice-Chairperson of the GEC / Vice-Présidente de la GEC
Deputy Head of Department
Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality

**Estonia / Estonie**
Käthlin SANDER
Head of Gender Equality Policy
Department of Equality Policies
Ministry of Social Affairs

**Finland / Finlande**
Päivi YLI-PIETILÄ
Ministerial Adviser
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
Gender Equality Unit
France
Fanny BENEDETTI
Chargée de mission droits des femmes et à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes
Bureau des affaires européennes et internationales
Direction générale de la cohésion sociale

Germany / Allemagne
Nicole HERZOG
Division 404 - European and international gender equality policy
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Greece / Grèce [Apologised/Excusée]
Georgia PAPAGEORGIOU
Ministry of Interior & Administrative Reconstruction
General Secretariat for Gender Equality
Directorate of Services to Citizens & Institutions
European & International Cooperation Department

Hungary / Hongrie [Apologised/Excusée]
Zsuzsanna KORMOSNÉ DEBRECENI
Deputy Head of Department
Ministry of Human Capacities
Ministry of State for Family and Youth Affairs
Department for Family Policy and Demography

Iceland / Islande
Rósa Guðrún ERLINGSDÓTTIR
Special Advisor
Ministry of Welfare

Italy / Italie
Michele PALMA
Gender Director of International and Communitarian Affairs Office
Department for Equal Opportunities
Presidency of the Council
Ministry for Rights and Equal Opportunities

Latvia / Lettonie
Agnese GAILE
Senior Expert
Department of Social Policy Planning and Development
Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia

Lithuania / Lituanie
Rita ZEMAITYTE-TACK
Head of Unit for Equality between Women and Men
Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Luxembourg
Ralph KASS
Conseiller de Direction 1e Classe
Ministère de l’Égalité des chances

Malta
Renee LAIVIERA (NAZZARENA)
Commissioner
National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Republic of Moldova / République de Moldova
Lilia PASCAL
Head of Division
Policy for ensuring equality between women and men
Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family

Monaco
Rémi MORTIER
Ambassadeur
Représentation Permanente de Monaco auprès du Conseil de l'Europe,
Gabriel REVEL
Troisième Secrétaire
Représentation Permanente de Monaco auprès du Conseil de l'Europe,
**Montenegro/Monténégro** [Apologised /Excusée]
Biljana PEJOVIĆ
Head of Department for Gender Equality
Ministry for Human and Minority Rights

**Netherlands / Pays-Bas**
Charles DE VRIES
Senior Policy Advisor
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Gender Equality and LGBT Equality Department

**Norway / Norvège**
Elin GROTNES
Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs
Department for Equality

**Poland / Pologne**
Anna GREDZINSKA
Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy
Department of Economic Analyses and Forecasts
Unit on Equality between Women and Men in the Labour Market

**Portugal**
Marina BIRRENTO
Núcleo de Promoção para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género
Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género
Presidência do Conselho de Ministros

**Russian Federation/Fédération de la Russie**
Olga OPANASENKO
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**San Marino / Saint-Marin**
Sylvie BOLLINI
First Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs

**Serbia / Serbie**
Dragan KNEZEVIC
Gender Equality Department
Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs

**Slovak Republic / République slovaque**
Olga PIETRUCHOVÁ
Director
Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

**Slovenia / Slovénie**
Sara SLANA
Senior Advisor
Equal Opportunities Department
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

**Spain / Espagne**
Ana ARRILLAGA ALDAMA
Director Support Unit
Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities
Ministry of Health, Social services and Equality

**Sweden / Suède**
Lillemor DAHLGREN
Head of Operations for Gender Equality
Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research

**Switzerland / Suisse**
Isabelle ERNST-PAUCHARD
Département fédéral de l’Intérieur DFI
Bureau fédéral de l’égalité entre femmes et hommes BFEG
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”/ "L’ex-République yougoslave de Macédoine"
Elena GROZDANOVA
State Counselor for Equal opportunity
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

Turkey/Turquie
Banu TUNCAY YILDIZ
Acting Deputy Director General
Directorate General on the Status of
Women
Ministry of Family and Social Policies

Ukraine
Sergiy KYSLYTSYA
Chair of GEC / Président de la GEC
Vice Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Kateryna LEVCHENKO
Public Scientific Consultant
Committee on Legislative Support of Law
Enforcement Bodies

Oleksandra POPESKU
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the
Council of Europe

United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni
Charles RAMSDEN
Head of EU and International Policy
Government Equalities Office

Permanent Representative of San Marino
to the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly / Assemblée parlementaire
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination / Commission sur l’Égalité et la Non-Discrimination
Elena CENTEMERO
Chairperson

Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe / Conférence des Organisations internationales non-gouvernementales du Conseil de l’Europe
Anne NEGRE
Gender Equality Expert / Experte égalité entre les femmes et les hommes
University Women of Europe

Anje WIERSINGA
International Alliance of Women (IAW)

Observer States/États Observateurs

Holy See/Saint Siège
Catherine VIERLING

Non-member States / États non Membres

Morocco / Maroc
Mohammed EL BOUAZAOUI
Chef de Division de l’Autonomisation de la Femme au Ministère de la Solidarité de la Femme de la Famille et du Développement Social

Naoual JOUIHRI
Consulat Général du Royaume du Maroc
Tunisia / Tunisie
Samia DOULA
Chargée de mission
Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille et de l’Enfance

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INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS / ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES

European Commission / Commission Européenne
Gesa BÖCKERMANN
Unit on Gender Equality
Directorate-General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission

European Institute for Gender Equality / Institut européen pour l’égalité entre les hommes et les femmes (EIGE)
Christian VESKE
Stakeholders Relations Coordinator for EU Member States and International Organisations
Knowledge Management Unit

UN Women
Ingibjorg GISLADOTTIR
Director
Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Anastasia DIVINSKAYA
Gender Advisor
UN Women, Ukraine

OSCE/ODIHR
Ajla VAN HEEL
Gender Adviser
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OTHER PARTICIPANTS / AUTRE PARTICIPANT-E-S

Feride ACAR
President

Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

SECRETARIAT/SECRETARIAT

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF DEMOCRACY / DIRECTION GENERALE DE LA DEMOCRATIE (DGII)
Gianluca ESPOSITO
Head of Equality and Human Dignity Department
Chef du Service de la dignité humaine et de l’égalité

Equality Division
Liri KOPAÇI-DI MICHELE
Head of Equality Division / Cheffe de la Division de l’Égalité
Tel: +33 3 88 41 22 58
E-mail: liri.kopaci-dimichele@coe.int

Carolina LASÉN DIAZ
Secretary of the GEC / Secrétaire de la GEC
Head of Gender Equality Unit
Tel: +33 3 90 21 56 79
E-mail: Carolina.LASEN-DIAZ@coe.int

Adrienne INGLEDO W
Co-Secretary GEC / Co-Sécrétaire de la GEC
Gender Equality Unit / Unité d’Égalité de genre
Tel: +33 3 88 41 20 63
E-mail: adrienne.ingledow@coe.int

Raluca Maria POPA
Senior Project Officer/Responsable principale de projets
Gender Equality Unit / Unité d’Égalité de genre
Tel: +33 3 90 21 44 30
E-mail: raluca.popa@coe.int
Cécile GREBOVAL
Programme Advisor/Conseillère de programme
Gender Equality Unit / Unité d’Égalité de genre
Tel : +33 3 90 21 6306
E-mail : cecile.greboval@coe.int

Tikli OIKARINEN
Policy Advisor
Sexual orientation and gender identity unit
Equality Division / Division de l’Égalité

Paula HINCHY
Administrative Assistant / Assistante administrative
Gender Equality Unit / Unité d’Égalité de genre
Tel: +33 3 88 41 37 36
E-mail: paula.hinchy@coe.int

Alicia PERARO
Project Assistant / Assistante de projets
Gender Equality Unit / Unité d’Égalité de genre
Tel : +33 3 88 41 30 51
E-mail: Alicia.PERARO@coe.int

Emmanuel BARON
Senior Project Officer/Responsable principal de projets
Equality Division / Division de l’Égalité

Violence against Women / Violence à l’égard des femmes (GREVIO)
Bridget O’LOUGHLIN
Head of Division
Violence against Women (GREVIO)

Alessandra SIINO
Project Officer (Strasbourg)
Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Ukraine

Children’s Rights / Droits des enfants
Regina JENSDOTTIR
Head of Division and Programme Co-ordinator
Children’s Rights

Support Team to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
Robert RUSTEM

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW/DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DES DROITS DE L’HOMME ET ETAT DE DROIT
Sonja AGUSTSDOTTIR
CDCJ Secretariat

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS / COMITÉ DES MINISTRES
Francine ARNOLD-PAULI

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION/ COMMISSION SUR L’ÉGALITÉ ET SUR LA NON-DISCRIMINATION
Elise CORNU
Head of Secretariat

Interpreters / Interprètes
Derrick WORSdale
Martine CARALY
Jean-Jacques PEDUSSAUD