

Are we there yet?

**Assessing progress, inspiring action –
the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017**

Conclusions and Recommendations

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- *Achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law and economic growth and sustainability.*

Overall Goal of CoE 2014 -2017 GE Strategy

- *To achieve the advancement and empowering of women and hence the realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe Member States by supporting the implementation of existing standards.*

Structure of this Summary

- 1. Overview of our discussion on current themes*
 - The impact of social media*
 - Gender mainstreaming from two perspectives*
- 2. Progress, challenges and impact of the objectives of 2014-2017 Gender Equality Strategy*
- 3. The way forward – a first look at ongoing and new priorities to be considered in the Council's next Strategy*
- 4. Brief conclusions and recommendations*
- 5. Full detail in written summary to follow*

Conference theme 1 – Sharing knowledge and information to foster gender equality - the impact of social media

Scope of social media

- *More than 4 billion are active on the web*
- *Over 1.3 billion use Facebook every month*

Positives

- ✓ *Excellent tool to disseminate the gender equality message*
- ✓ *Available for use by everyone not just media professionals*
- ✓ *Ideal tool to bring awareness of feminism/women's rights to younger people*

Negatives

- *Cyberviolence, in all its forms; misogyny; abuse and sexualisation of women*
- *Lack of control; anonymity; freedom of press as cloak for unacceptable behaviour*

Conference theme 1 – Sharing knowledge and information to foster gender equality - the impact of social media

Recommendations (1)

- ✓ *Use social media as awareness raising tool*
- ✓ *Foster women's confidence to make better use of it*
- *Governments need to*
 - *take legislative measures, inc cross-border provisions*
 - *to address cyberbullying in all its forms*
 - *and to outlaw sexist hate speech*
 - *ensure that police services are trained appropriately to deal with these crimes*

Conference theme 1 – Sharing knowledge and information to foster gender equality - the impact of social media

Recommendations (2)

- *Governments need to*
 - *undertake awareness raising programmes to combat cyberbullying/ sexism on line*
 - *take steps to address the culture of anonymity in the digital industry*
- *The digital industry and its social media platforms should take responsibility and steps to ensure social media is a safe resource for all users*

Conference theme 1 – Sharing knowledge and information to foster gender equality - the impact of social media

Summary

- *Social media is force for both good and evil*
- *Medium which enables us to reach out to younger generation*
- *Consider the impact of UN ambassadors for gender equality campaigns on social media*
- *Accordingly, collectively, we must use our influence to ensure that the problems are highlighted and addressed*

Conference theme 2 – Gender Mainstreaming

In international organisations

- ✓ *Very similar approaches in both UN and Council of Europe*
 - ✓ *Transversal programmes*
 - ✓ *Both supported with buy in at the highest levels and across the organisations*
- ✓ *World Bank, OSCE, UNCTAD, OECD, ITU among organisations focusing on gender*
- ✓ *New Gender Mainstreaming Platform developed by EIGE*

Member States

- ✓ *Gender mainstreaming experiences in Sweden and in France*
- ✓ *Gender budgeting experiences in Albania and in Iceland*

Conference theme 2 – Gender Mainstreaming

Positive aspects of gender mainstreaming

- *UN Women - gender mainstreaming is no longer an option; it is an imperative.*
- *GM grounds policies in concrete situations and the needs of people, resulting in better informed policies and legislation*
- *Brings the interests of women into government as a social force*
- *Has generated a cadre of gender experts and experts in both gender and a specific field*
- *Creates awareness across board in organisations which might otherwise be gender blind*

Conference theme 2 – Gender Mainstreaming

Notes of caution

- *GM is a gender equality tool not an objective*
- *It cannot work as a time bound project – it is ‘eternal’*
- *GM requires buy in at the highest levels, including political commitment*
- *It must be strategic and specific*
- *Largely embraced in fields identified as “social” (education and health) rather than “technical”(trade, industry)*
- *If it is to succeed it requires resources*

Conference theme 2 – Gender Mainstreaming

Summary

“The Council of Europe is on the same trajectory as UN Women. We are mandated and committed to supporting Member States in achieving gender equality, including through systematic gender mainstreaming.” Ms. Lakshmi Puri

Twenty one years since Beijing – new tools from EIGE to complement the Council’s tools for gender budgeting

Let’s go for it and follow the example and model of the international organisations as a model for a whole of Government approach

Challenges and recommendations – gender stereotypes and sexism

Challenges

- *Evidence that stereotypes and sexism persist in the press media and are rampant online*
- *Freedom of expression limits the possibility of governments forcing media to be more gender balanced*

Recommendations

- *Further actions should be taken by governments, media owners and by sectoral professionals*
- *Engage men in the topic*
- *CoE can continue to play an influential role in combating gender stereotypes and sexism*

Challenges and recommendations – violence against women

Challenges

- *Violence against women is a persistent problem – evidence from EU Fundamental Rights Agency for EU Member States*
- *Endemic violence suffered by migrant and asylum seeking women*
- *Women as victims of trafficking, FGM, sexualisation at a young age*
- *Gender rights being used to justify paedophilia and forced prostitution*
- *Resources for provision of support services*
- *Gender neutral policies leading to fewer and less specialised services*

Progress, challenges and recommendations – violence against women

Recommendations

- *Further ratifications of Istanbul Convention*
- *Enhance its implementation by involving all relevant bodies and entities of the CoE*
- *Essential that GREVIO is adequately resourced*
- *Ongoing programmes working with men to protect women's rights and dignity*
- *Governments need to fund service providers and NGOs not just for service provision but also for prevention*
- *Need to prioritise provision of services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, both on arrival and later in their journeys*

Challenges and recommendations – access to justice

Challenges

- *Main barriers include a lack of awareness of procedures and the financial resources to access them; cultural barriers (including fear and shame); pressure to opt for mediation, gender neutral legislation and gender bias in the courts process*

Recommendations

- *Member states should ensure full implementation of existing national legislation and international human rights treaties and standards*
- *Ensure women's access to free legal aid*
- *Address power dynamic between women and men in alternative dispute resolution processes*

Progress, Challenges and Impact – balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

Challenges

- *Reforms of private law – equal right to property; inheritance marriage and citizenship - are preconditions for an active role in society and by extension in public and political life*
- *A wide variety of factors impact on women's advancement in politics – social (family responsibilities), economic (pay gap/access to promotion) and cultural (stereotypes, mass media)*

Recommendations

- *Quotas need to be ambitious – (parity not 40%) and need to be coupled with sanctions*

Progress, Challenges and Impact – gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures

Discussed in detail already

Progress in Implementing the Strategy

Summary

- *Our excellent presentations over the past two days do not do justice to the achievements of the Gender Equality team in the Council of Europe in implementing the 2014 to 2017 Gender Equality Strategy*
- *The Annual Reports of the Gender Equality Commission offer a truer picture of the broad range of activities being undertaken by the Council of Europe team and I encourage you to read them*

Gender Equality – The Way Forward

Challenges perceived by the Council of Europe

- *The gap between standards and their implementation and legislation and its implementation in all areas under the Beijing Platform for Action*
- *Growing threats to women's human rights*
- *Reduced resources and weakening of national gender equality mechanisms*
- *Restrictions and reduction of supports for civil society organisations addressing women's rights*
- *Challenges related to intersectionality: some groups of women experience specific problems (migrant, refugee, Roma, or LBT as examples) and therefore more significant inequalities*

Gender Equality – The Way Forward

Challenges emerging since Strategy was published include

- *Inclusion of gender equality as specific goal in “Transforming our World the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” – about all corners of the globe*
- *Exponential growth in migration -*
 - *No. of asylum seekers to EU alone has increased fourfold over past four years*
 - *28 per cent were women in 2015, inferring that many families are being split up*
- *Increasing complexity of violence against women including abuse of internet/social media*
- *Gender blindness/lack of gender equality awareness among young people, both boys and girls*

The Way Forward - Proposals from the conference

Gender Equality is the major global challenge but it brings significant transformative powers

New Strategy

- *needs to be very targeted and specific*
- *needs flexibility – respond to emerging problems*
- *support member state work on ground – push agenda further*
- *ambitious with new targets*
- *help build partnerships*

The Way Forward - Proposals from the conference

Future work of Council of Europe

- *Complementarity of work 3 bodies –further develop esp in context of Agenda 2030*
- *Further develop role of men and also consider focusing on inequalities experienced by men*
- *Continue to develop tools to support member states*
- *Increase visibility of standards*
- *Exchange good practices*
- *Consider how to engage men*

Conclusions - Challenges for the CoE and the GEC

How do you add new priorities?

- *In the light of scarce resources, there is no option but to look at each existing priority and examine*
 - *Progress and achievements to date*
 - *The added value to be achieved by continuing to work on that priority*
 - *Linkages with the key goals of the Council and with other sections within the Council*
 - *Whether another section is better placed to take the work forward?*
 - *Whether less time/resources could be dedicated to this priority for a period?*

Existing priorities – some points to ponder

Looking at existing priorities

- *Paradoxically, but with the transversal programme in place, is there scope to downsize gender mainstreaming as a priority/area of work, bearing in mind that we agree it is a tool towards the longer term goal of gender equality?*
- *What added value can the GEC and the Gender Equality team bring at this stage to the priority of balanced participation – should monitoring across member states replace more concrete actions?*
- *Are there further major actions to be taken by the Gender Equality team in relation to women's access to justice?*

Conclusions - Challenges for the CoE and the GEC

How do you add new priorities?

- *Similarly for each possible new priority area of work, it is necessary to consider*
 - *the gender equality dimension to the work*
 - *the exclusive added value the CoE/gender equality team could bring*
 - *avoidance of duplication and possible collaborations internally or externally*
 - *an outline work plan*
 - *estimate of costs*

Only then can well informed decisions be taken

Possible areas for future work – some points to ponder

Migrant women

- *Very current, crucial and challenging problems affecting millions of women*
- *Some preliminary work was done through a consultative meeting under CDEG five or six years ago*
- *However that meeting illustrated the complexity of the issue – range of issues as broad as areas of concern in Beijing*
- *Need to identify specific issues on which the CoE can bring added value and avoid duplication*

Possible areas for future work – some points to ponder

Education of girls and boys in gender equality issues

- *Educational issues on gender equality and linked topics were raised by many speakers, particularly in relation to young girls and boys*
- *Possible role here for the Council to prepare materials, linking to the Charter on education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*
- *Recall that the Council prepared very good booklet of cartoon stories in relation to trafficking some time ago.*
- *A similar initiative might be a useful tool for member states to help in relation to the education and awareness raising needed to reduce misuse of internet and social media by young people*

Possible areas for future work – some points to ponder

Intersectionality issues

- **New area, not addressed to any extent – innovative and ground breaking**
- **Links therefore with the innovative approach of the Council**
- **Ideal fit with other areas of work across CoE**
- **However it is also complex and challenging due to lack of data**
- **EIGE is looking at this domain for the next iteration of the Gender Equality Index, (2017) with a possible focus on migrant background, age and disability**

Let us espouse the optimism voiced by Lakshmi

THANK YOU/MERCI