

European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ) and its work for mainstreaming gender equality

Few words about the CDCJ itself

- CDCJ is one of the oldest standard setting committees of the Council of Europe, this year it has celebrated its 60th anniversary
- Over the years, it has developed a large and wide-ranging number of binding and non-binding standards in the field of public and private law aimed at helping Council of Europe member states meet the challenges of rapidly evolving societies, whether they concern the courts and the judiciary, access to justice, the public administration, or private business, protection of the individual, the family, or civil society.
- While its terms of reference have evolved over time, the CDCJ is mainly tasked by the Committee of Ministers, in addition to set standards, to oversee the Council of Europe's work in the field of public and private law and to steer legal co-operation among member States in order to identify new and emerging challenges and to provide effective responses its areas of competence.

CDCJ mainstreaming the gender in the work of the Committee

- CDCJ has started its work on the issue and discussions on mainstream gender in law reforms in November 2019. The first meeting that prepared the ground for this work took place on 12 November 2019, and it aimed to identify challenges in the context of gender equality and to elaborate on mechanisms to approach gender equality-related issues.
- The participants of the meeting concluded that for awareness-raising, particularly for underlying gender inequalities behind a seemingly gender-neutral language. The need for horizontal strategies and global training for the issues at stake were reiterated several times. In this context, there was a clear wish to elaborate further on tools and techniques to approach the challenges presented in the workshop. They agreed that the topic should remain on the agenda of the CDCJ and follow-up work to this meeting should be developed.
- The issue was further discussed at its 94th meeting (13-15 November 2019), and the Committee tasked its Bureau members to prepare the proposals for relevant activities and ways of mainstreaming the gender equality in the work of the committee. This would contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, and specifically to one of the CDCJ's priority goal (achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures) as well as to overall commitment of the organisation to ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed as a transversal approach in all its work.

CDCJ tools and activities carried for mainstreaming gender equality

- In 2020 the CDCJ discussed and agreed to the Bureau proposals for ways to further mainstream gender in its work and for specific activities to be undertaken by CDCJ in 2022-2023 concerning mainstreaming equality between women and men in law reform.
- It was decided to prepare a short practical guide for the policy and decision-makers, reflecting the experience and best practices of member States on mainstreaming gender equality in (preparing) new legislation serving as a practical toolkit with a view to assist member states in implementing the issue of gender mainstreaming in legislation in practice.
- It was also decided to adapt and include a short questionnaire to be used for a pre-and post-assessment of the gender equality implications for CDCJ activities, drawing inspiration from the practice of Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH).

Checklist

- The committee has adopted the [gender equality checklist](#) in December 2021, and it now serves as a part of its working methods and which aims to ensure the integration of the gender equality dimension in the work of the CDCJ and its subordinated bodies. The checklist is used for the assessment of any work that the CDCJ decides to start taking into account its possible implications for the gender equality. The checklist is also used after the work of the committee is done on the specific issue, again ensuring that the aspects of gender equality are considered, and the work is not carried out considering the possible future impact on both women and men, boys and girls.

Practical guide for mainstreaming gender in public and private law reform processes

- The guide was prepared in collaboration with the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)
- It is a concise, step-by-step guidance for the policy makers who have no previous experience in gender equality mainstreaming and work, and to assist them in mainstreaming the gender equality aspects to help them to prepare and implement new reforms and laws.
- Although the guide contains some overview of the gender mainstreaming framework, it only provides the explanations of the most important concepts and overview of the gender theory, indicating further resources where these issues are discussed in depth.

Practical guide for mainstreaming gender in public and private law reform processes (continued)

- The guide offers a simplified process of gender responsive law reforms, that can be easily adopted by the policy makers. The process consists of five steps for the policy-makers to follow
- Offers practical examples from the member States of how they addressed the challenge of mainstreaming gender equality in their own policies and laws
- Provides tips and suggestions on to ensure that gender mainstreaming is been applied correctly in the law reform process.

The guide has been adopted by the CDCJ in June 2023, and is currently undergoing editorial revision and is being prepared for the publication at the CDCJ website . The CDCJ achieves its objectives by completing the promotion of the adopted guide among its members and the CoE member States. An additional webinar is planned for this purpose, tentatively to take place end of October/beginning of November.

