



MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES

*Conference co-organised by the Council of Europe
and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland
Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers*

Strasbourg, 27-28 April 2023
Room 1 - Palais Building
Council of Europe

Concept Note

■ The annual conference of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) will be held in Strasbourg on 27 and 28 April 2023 in the framework of the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The conference will focus on **the role of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women**. The Icelandic Barbershop method, a tool to get men involved in the discussion about gender equality, will be the format of the first part of the event.

■ The Icelandic Barbershop concept looks at innovative ways for men to mobilise and motivate other men to address discriminatory stereotypes of masculinity. Barbershop events provide a setting to discuss and reflect about men's behaviours, privileges, and roles creating barriers for women's empowerment and how men can instead become agents of change in promoting gender equality.

■ Gender equality is central to the fulfilment of the Council of Europe's mission: safeguarding human rights, upholding democracy, and preserving the rule of law. The Organisation has developed standards which help to advance the discussion about the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality.

■ From mental health and well-being, achievement and education to equal participation in the family and gendered segregation in the labour market, the role of men and boys in issues relating to gender equality has long been a subject for debate. The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss and promote strategies on the role and place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women.

■ Throughout education, the workplace, the wider economy, in the public space, in social media as well as in personal relationships, gender stereotypes are persistent. Male gender stereotypes need to be overcome to free men and boys from the pressures of stereotyped expectations they face.

■ The #MeToo movement has presented opportunities for men to acknowledge the prevalence of unwanted advances. Taking stock of the movement's progress, the challenges ahead present an opportunity to look at activities, policies, and programmes to combat sexual harassment and bullying.

■ In the interest of addressing the causes of gender inequality, education is crucial for providing boys and men with the knowledge and skills to challenge their peers safely and effectively. Education is imperative to increase the understanding of key issues related to consent and the boundaries surrounding bodily autonomy and which determine sexual assault, harassment, rape and abusive relationships.

■ Anti-rights movements, together with regressive ideologies that oppose or challenge gender equality, are a growing concern. Measures to counter this resistance and limit the impact of such reactionary movements will also be discussed during this event.

■ Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights violations in European societies. Questioning harmful aspects of traditional norms of masculinity, while recognising that masculinity takes many forms, offers an opportunity to implement sustainable violence prevention initiatives and interventions.

■ The conference will therefore focus on the following themes:

- ▶ *Men and boys as agents of change*
- ▶ *Negative impacts of social norms and gender stereotypes*
- ▶ *Men and gender equality in care*
- ▶ *Role of men and boys in combating violence*

Targeted participants:

- ▶ Members of the Gender Equality Commission;
- ▶ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE);
- ▶ High-level decision makers from Council of Europe member states;
- ▶ Representatives of relevant Council of Europe intergovernmental committees and other entities;
- ▶ High-level decision makers and policy makers/officials from international organisations;
- ▶ Civil society organisations, equality bodies, women's rights organisations, journalists and other relevant stakeholders.

Duration:

- ▶ 1.5 days

Format - Four sessions:

- ▶ One session on Day 1 (27 April 2023) – Barbershop event;
- ▶ Three sessions on Day 2 (28 April 2023).