



“Advancing Gender Equality: The Role and Situation of Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Context of COVID-19”

**Online seminar organised by the
Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission in partnership
with the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe**

21 October 2020

Concept Paper

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and of gender equality are central to support public policies in this area and to ensure sustainable progress. For many years, the Council of Europe has been promoting and implementing a double approach to gender equality involving, on the one hand, specific policies and measures to promote gender equality, and on the other, a gender mainstreaming strategy.

Different standards of the Council of Europe guide work in this area, in particular the comprehensive and forward-looking [Recommendation Rec\(2007\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#). At the level of the Council of Europe, the Gender Equality Division is tasked with both developing specific gender equality standards, policies and co-operation projects, and with promoting gender mainstreaming within the Organisation as a whole.

At the level of member states, the institutional arrangements, available resources and power of gender equality mechanisms vary. With regards to violence against women, the Istanbul Convention provides a cohesive legal framework for the prevention and combating of domestic and gender-based violence, including regarding the necessary institutional arrangements in States Parties. The Istanbul Convention also offers guidance to those member states who have not as yet ratified it. However, the 2020 [Beijing+25 Review Report](#) drafted by the European Institute for Gender Equality indicates that in European Union countries, the status of governmental structures in charge of gender equality has declined from 2012 to 2018, and that gender mainstreaming efforts have also been reduced during this period.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed a new light on the need for a strong gender equality perspective in all policies, accompanied by appropriate resources, in order to mitigate the gendered impact of the crisis, including a focus on combating gender-based and domestic violence.

In addition, current challenges related to gender equality and women's rights, the tendency to merge gender equality bodies with institutions dealing with anti-discrimination, more broadly, as well as past and foreseeable future economic difficulties for national governments, may stall the positive advancement of institutional mechanisms for gender equality.

Aims of the seminar:

The seminar will:

- Take stock of current trends in relation to institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the national and international level.
- Examine the gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of institutional mechanisms to limit the negative consequences of this crisis.
- Examine the gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the existing structures dealing with the prevention of and protection against gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Look at promising practices at the national and international levels, and by civil society.
- Provide a platform to discuss solutions to strengthen institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming.

Speakers:

- GEC members.
- Representatives of international organisations.
- Civil society representatives.
- Academics.

Targeted participants:

- GEC members.
- Representatives of Greek institutions and civil society.

Date and duration:

Wednesday, 21 October 2020, 2.30 – 5.15 pm