

GENDER EQUALITY. BALANCED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION



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Gender Equality. Balanced Political Participation and Representation

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This compendium was done by the Division of Elections and Civil Society of the Council of Europe within the framework of the Council of Europe project on “Supporting the transparency, inclusiveness and integrity of electoral practice in Ukraine”.

The compendium is aimed at increasing public awareness about standards and policies of the Council of Europe in the respective field. The compendium is not exhaustive and for information purposes only. For professional or legal advice, please, consult a qualified professional.

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INTRODUCTION

Achieving gender equality and a balanced political participation of women and men in political and public decision-making processes is of paramount importance for the full enjoyment of human rights. It is also one of the strategic objectives guiding Council of Europe activities. Equal sharing of decision-making power between women and men from different backgrounds and varying ages strengthens and enriches democracy.

According to Council of Europe standards, and in particular those stated in Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 2003(3) on "balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making", the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political and public life should not fall below 40%. Despite the work already achieved with the legislative and practical changes as well as measures adopted, the political participation and representation of women is still a challenging issue in many countries, including in some Council of Europe member States.

There are still many different aspects which hamper women's political participation. Among those, some aspects related to electoral systems and the functioning of political parties, gender stereotypes and sexism, social and private division of work and duties, and/or roles and values promoted by some family models. Gender balanced political participation of women and men implies not only statistics of women and men on parties' lists and amounts of mandates received, but also the existence of an equal playing field and opportunities to campaign freely and safely during elections, as well as a safe environment, free of sexism and gender stereotypes during the execution of the mandate after elections. A political environment free of sexism, harassment, and violence, both online and offline, including political institutions, – is a pre-requisite for a free, inclusive and level playing field for democratic elections.

Therefore, the Council of Europe's actions are aimed at enhancing women's political participation in order to support its member States in achieving gender balance in decision making, combatting gender stereotypes and sexism as well as improving the gender sensitivity of decision-making environments.

Why this compendium? The Council of Europe has worked on gender equality and balanced political participation for decades. The first recommendations on legal protection against sex discrimination and elimination of sexism from language date back to the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

This publication represents the Council of Europe gender equality *acquis* which concerns balanced political participation and representation of women and men. It aims to raise awareness of electoral and political stakeholders in the Council of Europe member states about existing standards and recommendations by providing a list of resolutions and recommendations issued by the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on actions and measures to be taken in order to ensure a safe political environment and to achieve gender equality and balanced participation of women and men which is fundamental for sustainable development.

Contents

▶ Committee of Ministers	7
Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023	9
Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making	45
Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on preventing and combating sexism	51
▶ Parliamentary Assembly	67
Resolution 1489 (2006) Mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision making	69
Recommendation 1898 (2010) Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member States	73
Recommendation 1899 (2010) Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system	75
Resolution 1706 (2010) Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system	77
Resolution 1751 (2010) Combating sexist stereotypes in the media	79
Resolution 1898 (2012) Political parties and women's political representation	81
Resolution 2111 (2016) Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation	85
Resolution 2222 (2018) Promoting diversity and equality in politics	89
Recommendation 2152 (2019) Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment	91
Resolution 2274 (2019) Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment	93
Resolution 2275 (2019) The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance	97
Resolution 2339 (2020) Upholding human rights in times of crisis and pandemics: gender, equality and non-discrimination	101
▶ Congress of Local and Regional Authorities	107
Recommendation 288 (2010) Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life	109
Resolution 303(2010) Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life	111
Recommendation 390 (2016) Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels	115
Resolution 404 (2016) Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels	117
Report CG-FORUM(2020)02-04final Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level	121



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Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

**Adopted by the Committee of Ministers
on 7 March 2018 at the 1309th meeting
of the Ministers' Deputies**

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION: THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND GENDER EQUALITY	11
Council of Europe Legal Instruments	12
The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017	13
The new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023	13
Council of Europe in the global context: UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	15
GOAL AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	17
Strategic objective 1: Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism	18
Strategic objective 2: Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence	21
Strategic objective 3: Ensure the equal access of women to justice	24
Strategic objective 4: Achieve balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making	26
Strategic objective 5: Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls	28
Strategic objective 6: Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures	30
INSTITUTIONAL SETTING, RESOURCES AND WORKING METHODS	33
PARTNERSHIPS	34
COMMUNICATION	35
APPENDIX I – RISK MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION	36
APPENDIX II – LIST OF ACRONYMS	43

INTRODUCTION: THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND GENDER EQUALITY

1. Achieving 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.
2. *Gender equality entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation, in all spheres of public and private life.* It also implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men.
3. Even if progress is visible and the legal status of women in Europe has undoubtedly improved during recent decades, effective equality between women and men is far from being a reality. Gender gaps and structural barriers persist in many areas, which limit women and men to their traditional roles, and constrain women's opportunities to benefit from their fundamental rights. Regular monitoring and research show that progress is very slow as regards women's political participation, access to justice and the elimination of harmful gender stereotypes and sexism. Violence against women remains one of the most pronounced expressions of the unequal power relations between women and men. It is both a violation of the human rights of women and a major obstacle to gender equality.

” Even if progress is visible, effective equality between women and men is far from being a reality.

4. In the current context of growing economic difficulties and subsequent austerity policies and measures, political uncertainties and raising inequalities at all levels of the society, it is important to recognise the essential contribution of women to communities, societies and economies, and address the high cost of gender inequalities. Factors such as rising nationalism and populism and their attacks on women's rights, the inflow of migrants and refugees, the decrease in resources for gender equality mechanisms and policies, and failure to implement agreed standards, have created new challenges and exacerbated some of the problems that persist in society's journey towards full respect for equal rights for women and men and gender equality. It is also the case that it is necessary to pay due attention to the establishment of social and economic conditions for the exercise of equal rights by women and men, including by the wider involvement of women in the economy and developing opportunities for them to raise their economic independence.
5. The Council of Europe's pioneering work in the fields of human rights and gender equality has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework. Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Organisation, which remains fully committed to addressing both current and emerging challenges and to removing barriers in order to achieve substantive and full gender equality.
6. In doing so, the Council of Europe will adopt a dual-track approach including:
 - ▶ specific policies and actions, including positive action when appropriate, in critical areas for the advancement of women for the realisation of *de facto* gender equality, and
 - ▶ the promotion, monitoring, co-ordination and evaluation of the process of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes,¹ whereby gender mainstreaming refers to the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective

1. Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality standards and mechanisms.

is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making.²

7. Historically unequal power relations between women and men have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men, and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. However, both women and men are victims of stereotypes restricting their full capabilities.

8. The involvement of men and boys is critical to the achievement of gender equality. Policies should also address gender-related inequalities that affect men and boys.

” The involvement of men and boys is critical to the achievement of gender equality.

Council of Europe Legal Instruments

9. The Council of Europe’s work in the fields of human rights and gender equality has resulted in comprehensive legal instruments³ and policy guidance⁴ aimed at achieving the advancement and empowerment of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in member States and beyond.

10. An impressive number of conventions and recommendations have been adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, guiding and influencing gender equality developments in Europe and worldwide.

11. The [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (the Convention) is Europe’s core human rights treaty: Article 1 of the Convention guarantees the rights and freedoms it includes to everyone in the jurisdiction of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe. The principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex is guaranteed by both Article 14 and Protocol 12 to the Convention. In addition, the [European Social Charter](#) establishes enjoyment of economic and social rights without discrimination. The Council of Europe [Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (Istanbul Convention) is widely recognised as the most comprehensive international instrument to tackle violence against women and domestic violence in its many forms. Furthermore, the Council of Europe [Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) aims at preventing and combating trafficking in women, men and children for the purpose of sexual, labour or other types of exploitation, and the Council of Europe [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (Lanzarote Convention), is the first treaty to criminalise all forms of sexual offences against children.

12. The Committee of Ministers Recommendations and Parliamentary Assembly Resolutions⁵ related to gender equality cover a diversity of issues, including combating sex-based discrimination, eliminating sexist language, protecting women against violence, achieving a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, mainstreaming gender in education, in sport, in the media and in the audiovisual sector, providing gender equality standards and mechanisms, protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities, ensuring gender equality in the media. They provide member States with crucial standards to develop legislation and put in place policies at the national level that comply with internationally agreed standards in the area of gender equality.

2. Council of Europe Group of Specialists in Gender Mainstreaming, 1998.

3. References in this strategy to international treaties and other instruments should not be considered as a commitment of member States, who supported this strategy, to implement the mentioned treaties unless they are parties to such treaties in accordance with international law.

4. The Resolution and Action Plan adopted at the [7th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Equality between Women and Men](#), “Bridging the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality to achieve real gender equality” (25 May 2010, Baku, Azerbaijan); and the [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers](#) “Making gender equality a reality”, adopted in Madrid, Spain, on 12 May 2009.

5. See at: <https://pace.coe.int/en>.

The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017

13. The Council of Europe launched its first Transversal Programme on Gender Equality in 2012 with the aim of increasing the impact and visibility of gender equality instruments and supporting their implementation in member States and within the Organisation itself. The Programme mobilises all of the Council of Europe's institutions, sectors, intergovernmental structures, monitoring mechanisms and partial agreements as well as its external partners, and thus brings resources together for greater impact, energy and focus. The Council of Europe [Gender Equality Commission](#) (GEC) is at the centre of this effort.

14. The most tangible result of the Transversal Programme was the first [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017](#) (the Strategy) which was unanimously adopted by the Committee of Ministers in November 2013. The Strategy built upon the strengths, specificities and added value of the Council of Europe and set the vision and a framework for the Council of Europe's role and action in the area of gender equality. The Strategy promotes a holistic and integrated approach to gender equality and provides policy guidance and support to Council of Europe member States, as well as internal institutional bodies and mechanisms to tackle old and new challenges in implementing standards in the area of gender equality.

15. The Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 set five priority areas:

- 1 combating gender stereotypes and sexism;
- 2 preventing and combating violence against women;
- 3 guaranteeing equal access of women to justice;
- 4 achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
- 5 achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

16. In the process of implementing the Strategy, the Council of Europe has engaged in the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of standards – in order to identify gaps and obstacles to their implementation – as well as in the development of activities, tools and co-operation programmes to address such gaps and support member States to apply relevant instruments. Another important element of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 was to build and strengthen strategic partnerships with other regional and international organisations, as well as with civil society, aimed at ensuring synergies, strengthening impact and increasing effectiveness, outreach and visibility.

17. Annual reports by the GEC to the Committee of Ministers on the implementation of the Strategy have confirmed the leading role of the Council of Europe in the area of gender equality and its increasing authority both at European and global level. Gender equality remains a priority area for successive Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers. Regular reporting and monitoring have also confirmed that member States engage in a proactive way in activities related to all five objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, and that national efforts have benefited from the initiatives and tools developed under the guidance of the GEC. Co-operation with member States is vital and has enabled the Strategy to harness the Council of Europe standards with innovative initiatives and lessons learnt from experience at the national level.

The new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

18. The new Strategy builds upon the vast legal and policy *acquis* of the Council of Europe as regards gender equality, as well as the achievements of the first Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017. It links them to both the current economic context and the political leverage within the Council of Europe, including the overarching priorities of the Organisation. The new Strategy outlines the goals and priorities of the Council of Europe on gender equality for the years 2018-2023, identifying working methods and main partners, as well as the measures required to increase the visibility of results.

19. The challenges faced by the Council of Europe member States in the implementation of the Strategy 2014-2017 are related to developments in the wider global and regional context, including a backlash against the human rights of women, unequal power structures, the persistence of gender-based violence, threats to women's rights defenders, limited participation of women in political and decision-making processes, gender bias and stereotypes, sexism and discrimination against women including sexist hate speech online and offline, and in the political discourse, access to quality employment and financial resources, lack of

social and economic infrastructure for the exercise of equal rights by men and women (such as available childcare facilities, sufficiently paid parental leave, parental payments, etc.). Last but not least, budgetary cuts and austerity measures applied to gender equality authorities and bodies. The implementation of gender equality laws and policies goes hand in hand with the financial and human resources dedicated to that task. The strengthening of institutional mechanisms for gender equality, at the national and local level, and the availability of resources at all levels, are therefore critical and will determine future progress to improve gender equality on the ground.

20. The Conference “Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring action – the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017”⁶ took stock of the implementation of the Strategy, and put forward a number of recommendations for the preparation of the next Council of Europe gender equality strategy, including the need to take account of progress and achievements, as well as of emerging issues – such as migration and refugee flows.

21. Women in particular and also men are often subjected to discrimination on several of the grounds listed in Article 14 of the European Convention for Human Rights and expanded through related case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. All forms of discrimination and identities need to be taken into account so that both gender equality policies and “generic policies” are fully effective for all: women and men, girls and boys, in their diversity. The new Strategy recognises the important challenge of ensuring that all women benefit from gender equality policies and the protection provided by relevant instruments, including disadvantaged groups of women (such as Roma women, women with disabilities, migrant and refugee women)⁷. To that end, the new Strategy also pays due attention to intersecting grounds of discrimination, which reflects a shift in the debate from focus on multiple discrimination⁸ towards including multiple identities and intersectionality.⁹ Intersectional discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, among others, disproportionately marginalises particular groups of women. Therefore, intersectionality is addressed as a transversal issue across the priority objectives of the new Strategy.

” The strengthening of institutional mechanisms for gender equality will determine future progress to improve gender equality.

22. Furthermore, discrimination on the ground of sex has a structural and horizontal character that pervades all cultures and communities, at all levels. Gender inequalities also “add up” during the course of a life, so that certain disadvantages experienced in younger years accumulate throughout the life cycle and can cause subsequent difficulties later in life. A life cycle approach to gender equality policies is therefore necessary to capture this reality.

” Intersectionality is addressed as a transversal issue across the priority objectives of the new Strategy.

23. The importance of addressing persistent gender gaps in employment, pay, poverty, pensions and unbalanced share of household and care responsibilities between women and men is recognised as a key factor towards women’s economic independence in the new Strategy. Women’s economic independence and

6. 30 June – 1 July 2016 in Tallinn (Estonia) <http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/tallinn-conference>.

7. Member States may identify at national level any further disadvantaged and specific groups of women which require targeted policies and measures.

8. “Certain groups of women, due to the combination of their sex with other factors, such as their race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, are in an especially vulnerable position. In addition to discrimination on the grounds of sex, these women are often subjected simultaneously to one or several other types of discrimination” (paragraph 59 of Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)17 on gender equality standards and mechanisms).

9. “Multiple identity emphasises the existence of intersectional groups of people and the importance of responding to their specific situation, experience and identity” *Innovating at the Intersections. Equality bodies tackling Intersectional Discrimination*, Equinet, November 2016.

empowerment are prerequisites for gender equality and for equitable and sustainable societies. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, services, property and skills and as a result, their contribution to economic development and growth. Sustained policies and political commitment are crucial to advance women's economic opportunities and rights in accordance with the European Social Charter.

24. The new Strategy also addresses the implications of equality between women and men as regards dignity and rights, in public, private and family life. The social significance of maternity and paternity leave and the role of both parents in the upbringing of children and as carers of adult dependents must be taken into consideration to ensure that both women's and men's human rights are fully and equally respected. The equal sharing of unpaid household and care work should be promoted to break down gender stereotypes, ensure women's and men's work/life balance, and get closer to real gender equality.

25. The role of men, in both the public and private spheres, is critical to make progress towards real gender equality. Men's and boys' participation and responsibility as actors of change for gender equality are very important. Male gender stereotypes need to be overcome in order to free men and boys from the pressures of stereotyped expectations they face. As gender stereotypes are pervasive and operate throughout time, a life-cycle approach is needed to address the socialisation of men and boys in a wide range of social contexts: at home, throughout the education system, in the workplace and the wider economy, in the public space, in social media and networks, as well as in personal relationships. The inclusion of men is needed both as active partners in the promotion of the human rights of women, as well as beneficiaries of gender equality policies.

26. A strong commitment to *de facto* equality between women and men at all levels and in all areas, alongside women's empowerment and the elimination of sexism and gender stereotypes, will benefit future generations and society as a whole. Moving towards substantive gender equality also requires a change in the roles of both women and men, including equal sharing of household and care responsibilities.

27. The new Strategy will be implemented in a co-ordinated way with other Council of Europe strategies and action plans, in particular in the fields of children's rights, internet governance, rights of persons with disabilities, the inclusion of Roma and Travellers, and the protection of refugee and migrant children in Europe.

28. A biennial table indicating current, future and proposed activities (in line with the budget cycle of the Council of Europe) will be attached to the new Strategy to show the immediate link between the strategic objectives and the specific measures and means used to achieve them.

Council of Europe in the global context: UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

29. The Council of Europe comprehensive and extensive body of instruments and work provides important input towards the efforts of the member States to achieve the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDGs). The Council of Europe contributes to achieving the goals set in relevant international instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

30. The Council of Europe has three ground-breaking, unique and comprehensive conventions in the area of human dignity that are all of relevance to the SDGs:

- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention);
- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;
- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention).

31. These conventions have a global outreach. They were drafted with the understanding that measures to address the global problems related to gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of children should not be limited to a particular geographic area. Their provisions inspire normative and policy changes in all regions of the world and all States can become parties to these conventions. For non-state parties, they provide a comprehensive blueprint for action at both global and national level. They can be used as reference frameworks and provide platforms for international co-operation, review and exchange

of experiences that offer unique guidance in the design of national policies and legislation. Through them, the Council of Europe and its member States can support and contribute to the implementation of Goal 5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”) and Goal 16 (“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”).

32. The 14 indicators agreed upon at UN level to measure the implementation of the nine targets included in Goal 5 (gender equality) cover priority areas of the Council of Europe work to achieve gender equality. The Council of Europe’s Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 and the new Strategy directly address many of the targets of Goal 5, including human dignity and the fight against gender inequality; the promotion of the full participation of women in society; the need to guarantee access to fair justice systems for all and to work in partnerships.

33. Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) is also relevant to the Council of Europe’s work on gender equality as it refers to providing “access to justice for all”. The Council of Europe addresses this through its work to guarantee women’s equal access to justice. Furthermore, Goal 16 includes targets to reduce physical, psychological and sexual violence and related deaths, and to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against girls and boys – areas covered by Council of Europe conventions and addressed through activities and co-operation with the 47 member States and the South-Mediterranean countries.

34. Finally, gender equality-related targets under other SDGs are also relevant for the new Strategy, in particular SDGs 1,¹⁰ 3,¹¹ 4¹² and 8.¹³

10. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

11. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

12. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

13. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

GOAL AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

35. The overall goal of the new Strategy is to achieve the effective realisation of gender equality and to empower women and men in the Council of Europe member States, by supporting the implementation of existing instruments and strengthening the Council of Europe *acquis* in the field of gender equality, under the guidance of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC). The focus for the period 2018-2023 will be on six strategic areas:

- 1 Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism.
- 2 Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.
- 3 Ensure the equal access of women to justice.
- 4 Achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.
- 5 Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.
- 6 Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

36. These priority areas build on and further develop the existing body of work carried out by the Council of Europe and the member States, bringing added value to actions taken by other regional and international organisations. In addition, they will sustain the Council of Europe and member States' activities in the field of gender equality in order to achieve tangible results during the period covered by the new Strategy.

37. The beneficiaries of the new Strategy are women and men, girls and boys, living in the 47 Council of Europe member States and society as a whole. The governments of member States drive the implementation of the new Strategy at national and local levels, in close co-operation with gender equality institutions, equality bodies and civil society.



Strategic objective 1: Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism

38. Gender stereotypes are preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Gender stereotyping presents a serious obstacle to the achievement of real gender equality and feeds into gender discrimination. Such stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of girls and boys, women and men, their educational and professional preferences and experiences, as well as life opportunities in general.

39. Gender stereotypes both result from and are the cause of deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices. They are used to justify and maintain the historical power relations of men over women, as well as sexist attitudes which are holding back the advancement of gender equality.

40. Violent and degrading online content, including in pornography, normalisation of sexual violence, including rape, reinforce the idea of women's submissive role and contribute to treating women as subordinate members of the family and society. They feed into violence against women, sexist hate speech targeting women, particularly feminists, and contribute to maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes and sexism.

41. Gender stereotypes and patriarchy negatively affect men and boys too. Stereotypes about men and boys also result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices. Hegemonic masculinities are a contributing factor to maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes, which in turn contribute to sexist hate speech and prejudice against men and boys who deviate from the predominant concepts of masculinity. Societal perceptions and media portrayal can feed into gender stereotypes. This includes perceptions about what both women and men should look like, how they should behave, what careers they should pursue and what household tasks they should take on.

” Both women and men are victims of stereotypes restricting their full capabilities.

42. Structural inequalities and persisting gender stereotypes affecting women and men, girls and boys continue to be present in the education and childcare system and extend all the way to the labour market. Horizontal segregation is evident in the labour market: certain occupations and fields of economic activity have a strong male presence (e.g. science and technology, heavy industry, construction, the army). Similarly,

other areas of activity have a predominantly female workforce (e.g. care services, education, secretarial or office work, nursing or human resources – often with lower pay); a situation which does not appear to be changing. Occupational choices of women, often an extension of their traditional role as caretakers, can be influenced through incentives and positive policy and legislative measures such as paternal leave, thus creating opportunities for men to be (come) role models for other men regarding “traditional” female occupations. Vertical segregation in the labour market is also apparent. Within the same sector, even those dominated by women, usually the higher positions in terms of salary and hierarchy are occupied by men, while lower jobs on the hierarchical and salary scale are mostly fulfilled by women (e.g. education, retail industry). This is to a large extent due to the effects of the disproportionate weight of household and care responsibilities on women, gender biases and stereotypes about education and career choices, affecting both women and men.

43. Gender stereotypes perpetuate women’s economic and social marginalisation. They are disproportionately affected by unpaid household and care responsibilities and low paid or informal work. Furthermore, women’s average higher level of education in Europe, does not automatically translate into equal pay and pensions, high-quality employment and equal access to leading positions. Some groups of women (notably women with low levels of qualifications, single mothers, migrant, Roma and ethnic minority women, women with disabilities) face particular challenges, including enhanced difficulty to join the labour market, higher levels of precariousness and related risks of poverty and social exclusion. Women’s economic empowerment requires measures that support equal opportunities, equal pay for work of equal value, abolition of discriminatory legislation and economic disincentives for women to work, paid maternity and paternity leave, paid parental leave for women and men, access to quality and affordable child care and other social services and a change in the male-dominated working culture, attitudes and practices influenced by gender stereotypes.

44. Media and social media play an important role in our lives, particularly when used to share information and expand awareness of a wide range of issues. However, evidence also shows that social media in particular are subject to abusive use, and that women and girls are often confronted with violent and sexualised threats online. Particular platforms acting as conveyers of sexist hate speech include social media or video games. Freedom of expression is often abused as an excuse to cover unacceptable and offensive behaviour. In the same way as with other forms of violence against women, sexist hate speech remains under-reported, but its impact on women, whether emotional, psychological and/or physical can be devastating, especially for young girls and women. The same occurs with sexism.

45. Council of Europe action in this area will seek to:

- ▶ promote the implementation of Council of Europe instruments and recommendations that target the eradication of prejudices, customs, traditions based on stereotyped gender roles; develop tools to support member States in implementing relevant instruments, including the Istanbul Convention;
- ▶ promote the implementation of recommendations from the Helsinki Conference (2014) on “Combating Gender Stereotypes in and through Education”;
- ▶ promote the implementation of recommendations from the Amsterdam Conference (2013) on “Media and the Image of Women”;
- ▶ identify, compile and disseminate good practices to eradicate gender stereotypes for girls and boys, women and men in the education system, the labour market, family life – including equal sharing of household and care responsibilities between women and men – leave schemes and all areas in which women and men are under-represented;
- ▶ support data collection and research on sexism, gender stereotypes and sex-based discrimination;
- ▶ build partnerships with relevant stakeholders to curb violent and degrading internet pornography, given its negative influence on gender relations, harmful sexual practices and coercion;
- ▶ review the implementation of existing instruments by member States;
- ▶ strive to remove gender stereotypes affecting one or more particular group(s) of women (such as Roma women, women with disabilities, migrant and refugee women) in co-operation with relevant sectors and organisations;
- ▶ address gender stereotypes affecting men and boys by engaging them and working in specific sectors such as education, media and the private sector;

- ▶ continue to address sexist hate speech as a form of sexism, analyse and monitor its impact, in co-operation with other relevant sectors of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ prepare a draft recommendation to prevent and combat sexism, including guidelines to prevent and combat it online and offline, covering new forms of sexism affecting women and men in private and public spaces, and addressing sexist language ([Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R \(90\) 4 on the elimination of sexism from language](#)), sexist hate speech, sexism in media and in advertising;
- ▶ review the implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (96) 51 on reconciling work and family life, and consider updating it;
- ▶ support actions to promote equal economic independence for women and men and remove obstacles to women's labour market participation; encourage more men to take on caring responsibilities and to make use of flexible working arrangements and other family friendly measures.





Strategic objective 2: Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence

46. Violence against women and domestic violence remains widespread in all member States of the Council of Europe, with devastating consequences for women, societies and economies. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is widely recognised as the most comprehensive international treaty to tackle this serious violation of the human rights of women. Important safeguards are also set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and related case-law, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

” The Istanbul Convention has led to positive changes in legislation and in the development of strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in many member States.

47. The Istanbul Convention has led to positive changes in legislation and in the development of strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in many member States. However, a number of significant challenges persist in developing policies and actions to address violence against women and girls, including the limited resources available to provide specialist and dedicated support services to all women victims of violence.¹⁴ In addition, the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women such as women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, women drug users, women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, Roma women¹⁵ require targeted policies and activities to address the violence they are confronted with.

14. See “Analytical study of the results of the 4th round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe member States” (March 2014).

15. Member States may identify at national level any further disadvantaged and specific groups of women which require targeted policies and measures.

” Significant challenges persist to properly address this violence.

48. Violence often has devastating short- and long-term mental and physical health consequences, at times persisting across generations. The Istanbul Convention defines “domestic violence” as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim. Domestic violence affects women disproportionately, but also touches other victims, therefore the Istanbul Convention encourages parties to apply its provisions to all victims of domestic violence, including women and girls, men and boys and the elderly.

49. Violence against girls and boys constitutes a violation of their rights, compromising their social development and affecting the enjoyment of their other rights. Ending violence against children is therefore a legal, ethical and economic imperative. The gendered nature of risk and vulnerability among children at risk of violence needs to be acknowledged and addressed.¹⁶

50. Violence and sexual harassment of women in public space are strongly condemned by the Istanbul Convention. Violence in crowds represents another dimension of violence against women and is a wide-spread problem. The feeling of fear and insecurity in public spaces, as well as in public transport, has severe impacts on the daily lives of women. Often women do not dare to lodge a complaint for fear of the incident being trivialised. The tacit approval of sexual violence and harassment of women in public space restricts women’s freedom and contributes to perpetuating the attackers’ impunity. Therefore, attacks on women in public space should be reported and call for a comprehensive response.

51. Council of Europe action in this area will seek to:

- ▶ support member States to implement relevant international instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), taking into account the General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, as well as SDGs 5 and 16;
- ▶ support member States that request it in their preparation for signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul, Anti-Trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions, including through the provision of technical and legal expertise;
- ▶ develop tools to promote the knowledge of the Istanbul, Anti-Trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions among non-state actors in order to encourage their contribution to its implementation, highlighting the link between violence against women and the historic unequal power relations between women and men in society;
- ▶ in line with the Istanbul Convention, take action to:
 - address sexual violence and harassment of women in public space;
 - support member States to take measures that address all forms of violence;
 - address the ability of victims of domestic violence to seek shelter and housing as a protection measure;
 - support the development of data collection on violence against women and domestic violence;
 - support the setting up and development of co-ordinating bodies at the national level, and promote and support the development of national strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence;
 - address violence against elderly women and men;
 - develop tools to address the need to prevent and combat domestic violence against men and boys;
 - address the role of men as perpetrators of gender-based violence and develop information tools on the role of men in preventing violence against women and girls;

16. Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021).

- ▶ gather information and build knowledge about the specific forms of violence faced by certain groups of women in vulnerable situations (such as older women, women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, marginalised women, migrant women, women with disabilities, young women and girls, homeless women, women drug users, or victims of human trafficking) through cooperation and exchange of information with relevant bodies and entities of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ develop activities to prevent and combat additional forms of violence against women such as political violence and social violence;
- ▶ promote the Istanbul, Anti-Trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions beyond the European continent, making available expertise and sharing good practices in the context of co-operation with non-member States and other regional and international organisations.





Strategic objective 3: Ensure the equal access of women to justice

52. Access to justice is a human right and an integral element of promoting the rule of law and a well-functioning democracy. Respect for and protection of human rights can only be guaranteed by the availability of effective remedies (including the right to a fair trial), adequate reparation and/or compensation. While accessing justice may be difficult for everyone, it is even more so for women, due to gender inequality in society and in the justice system. Persistent economic and social inequalities between women and men, gender bias and gender stereotypes result in unequal access of women and men to justice. Evidence also points to the existence of a glass ceiling in the judiciary.¹⁷

” Respect for and protection of human rights can only be guaranteed by the availability of effective remedies.

53. Equal access to justice implies the right to an effective remedy, the right to a fair trial, the right to equal access to the courts, and the right to legal aid and legal representation. There are a multitude of obstacles that prevent women from having equal access to justice: taboos, prejudices, gender stereotypes, customs, poverty, lack of information, gaps in legislation and in their implementation, and sometimes even the laws themselves. This is particularly true for some groups of women, notably victims of gender-based violence, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, ethnic minority women, Roma women, women with disabilities and elderly women.

” Equal access to justice is fundamental to ensuring real equality between women and men.

54. Cultural barriers, fear and shame also impact women’s access to justice, as do discriminatory attitudes and the stereotypical roles of women as carers and men as providers, which still persist in civil and family law in many jurisdictions. These barriers may persist during investigations and trials, especially in cases of gender-based violence, and lead to high levels of attrition and even under-reporting. Their impact is even more significant on women exposed to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination.

17. Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice, “European Judicial Systems – Efficiency and quality of justice” CEPEJ Studies No. 23, Edition 2016 (2014 data).

55. Taken together, all these barriers are pieces in a ‘justice jigsaw’ that exclude women. It is urgent that this gender imbalance is addressed, as equal access to justice is fundamental to ensuring real equality between women and men.

56. Council of Europe action in this area will seek to:

- ▶ support member States to implement Council of Europe and other relevant instruments, including SDG 16 and taking into account CEDAW’s General Recommendation No. 33 on women’s access to justice (2015);
- ▶ promote and support the implementation of the recommendations from the Bern Conference (2016) “Towards guaranteeing equal access of women to justice”;
- ▶ identify, compile and disseminate good practices from member States to reduce obstacles and facilitate women’s access to justice;
- ▶ encourage research and standardised data collection to tackle gaps and lack of data disaggregated by sex concerning women’s access to justice, including women’s participation in the judiciary;
- ▶ continue to address the harmful impact of gender stereotyping on judicial decision-making, in accordance with the Council of Europe Action Plan on Judicial Independence and Impartiality for 2016-2021 (Action 2.4) – through research, monitoring, training, education, capacity building and the promotion of good practices at the national level, in line with the instruments of the Council of Europe and international law, and in co-operation with other regional and international organisations;
- ▶ develop and disseminate training tools and materials on gender equality issues and the human rights of women, in the context of international conventions and legal frameworks including CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention and tailored to the needs of justice professionals and members of law enforcement bodies;
- ▶ monitor and follow up court decisions to raise awareness and ensure a better understanding among legal professionals of issues related to women’s access to justice, including judicial stereotypes and the protection against gender-based violence and discrimination;
- ▶ promote the work and the strengthening of national equality bodies to combat sex-based discrimination and promote gender equality, including through litigation;
- ▶ identify and disseminate existing victim support tools and good practices to empower women in the process of accessing justice;
- ▶ develop information tools about the main Council of Europe instruments to promote women’s access to justice taking into account the needs of women in particularly vulnerable situations, such as survivors of violence, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, targets of sexist hate speech, and Roma women.





Strategic objective 4: Achieve balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

57. Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making is essential for a well-functioning democracy. Despite the adoption of new laws and policies in many member States and examples of good practice and supportive measures in some of the member States, women's under-representation in public and political life remains a critical issue which undermines the full functioning of democratic institutions and processes. Political activities and public decision-making remain male-dominated areas. Men set political priorities, and political culture continues to be structured around male behaviour and life experience.

58. A number of obstacles make it difficult for women to enter and ensure sustainability of their participation in the area of political and public decision-making. These include electoral systems, the functioning of political parties, gender stereotypes, roles and values conveyed by some family models, and the social and private division of work which leaves little space for the participation of women in the public arena. In most member States, the full and equal participation of women in political and public life, in legislative, executive, judicial, diplomatic and administrative bodies at the local, regional and national level is still below the Council of Europe agreed standards and the governments' commitment for a "Planet 50-50 by 2030".¹⁸

” Women's under-representation in public and political life undermines the functioning of democratic institutions and processes.

59. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, culture and stereotypes can refrain women from having full and equal access to all levels of management and decision-making processes, including corporate boards. The gender imbalance in economic decision-making both within the public and the private sectors is an obstacle to women's empowerment and a barrier for economic growth and sustainable development.

60. Women should have equal power and influence over the formulation of political agendas and priorities. To achieve the full participation of women in public, private and political life requires fundamental changes, policies, measures and targeted actions to remove both societal and structural obstacles.

18. "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality" was launched by the United Nations on the occasion of International Women's Day 2015. It showcases national actions pledged to achieve gender equality by 2030. See at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up>.

” Full participation of women in public, private and political life requires fundamental changes.

61. Council of Europe action in this area will seek to:
- ▶ support member States in achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making including through the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies and policies;
 - ▶ review the effectiveness of Recommendation [Rec\(2003\)3](#) of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
 - ▶ continue the regular monitoring of the implementation by member States of Recommendation [Rec\(2003\)3](#) of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, and ensure the visibility and dissemination of data and good practices in member States;
 - ▶ encourage and support actions to facilitate women’s participation in elections at the national, regional and local levels as well as actions to empower both women candidates and elected officials – including women from marginalised groups – in co-operation with relevant bodies of the Council of Europe;
 - ▶ identify and support measures and good practices that promote gender equality in relation to: electoral systems, training of decision makers in both public institutions and political parties, gender-sensitive functioning of decision-making bodies, setting parity thresholds, adoption of effective quota laws and voluntary party quotas, and the regulation of political parties including public funding, in co-operation with relevant bodies of the Council of Europe and with a view to achieving gender balance in decision making, combating gender stereotypes and to improve the gender-sensitiveness of decision-making environments;
 - ▶ achieve a balanced participation of women and men in all Council of Europe bodies, institutions and decision-making processes.



Strategic objective 5: Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

62. The growing number of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, and the precarious situation in which they are, raise concerns about their personal, physical and sexual safety and security – especially when they travel on their own, are pregnant, with small children, or are subject to intersectional discrimination. Many migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls have been exposed to various forms of gender-based violence, either in their country of origin, during the journey to Europe, or upon arrival. Due consideration should be given to their needs and circumstances and gender-responsive measures should be adopted to prevent discrimination, violence, harassment, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse – including in times of crisis and natural disasters. In addition, measures need to be taken to ensure that migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women have access to their human and social rights in relation to individual freedom, employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare where applicable; and access to information about their rights and the services available.

63. Victims of trafficking and gender-based violence among migrant, refugee and asylum-seekers need to be promptly identified as such and provided with adequate and gender-sensitive protection, treatment and care. Particular attention needs to be provided to girls and boys in this context.

64. Council of Europe and other international instruments should serve as a blueprint for all efforts and measures undertaken by the member States to protect the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. In particular, the Istanbul Convention, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Lanzarote Convention, and the 1951 International Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as relevant resolutions and reports of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence and migration from a gender equality perspective, should be at the heart of efforts to protect and promote the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, girls and boys, including ensuring that culture, custom, tradition or so called ‘honour’ are not considered as justification for any acts of violence, negative social control, or any violation of their human rights, as provided by these conventions.

” Due consideration should be given to the needs and circumstances migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.

65. It is highly important to mainstream gender equality in all integration measures, so that both migrant women and men are aware of the need to respect and uphold gender equality law and policy, even if they do not correspond to the situation in their countries of origin. This would foster integration in European societies and labour markets and benefit all women and men, girls and boys. This work should be part of a general effort to make gender equality a norm accepted by both women and men in every society.

66. Council of Europe action in this area will seek to:

- ▶ support member States to implement Council of Europe and other relevant instruments, including the Organisation's Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe, taking into account CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, and the SDGs;
- ▶ support the systematic integration of a gender equality dimension in policies and measures regarding migration, asylum and integration, in order to secure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, men and boys, regardless of traditional or cultural attitudes;
- ▶ support the implementation of existing standards aimed at preventing migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and children from falling victim to gender-based violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, exploitation and negative social control, including by addressing these risks through adequate identification, reporting and referral mechanisms at the national level. The vulnerability of women accompanying minors should be acknowledged to ensure that appropriate care and support are available to these women and children;
- ▶ develop tools to support the appropriate treatment of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and children victims of violence, having regard to the measures included in the Istanbul, Anti-Trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions;
- ▶ encourage the economic empowerment and respect for the social rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, in particular with regards to employment, health, housing and education and address the multiple discrimination that they may be confronted with;
- ▶ update Recommendation No. R (79) 10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning women migrants, and regularly review its implementation;
- ▶ support member States in the preparation and dissemination of information documents in different languages (such as factsheets) on the main Council of Europe instruments to protect the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and men, including information on the support structures, services, NGOs and legal aid available in their residing country. Specific factsheets should be prepared for women victims of violence;
- ▶ encourage independent Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms to address the gender-specific needs of migrant, refugee and asylum-seekers, including girls and boys, into their monitoring work, where applicable, and to make recommendations in this regard;
- ▶ promote actions targeting men and boys in order to change stereotypical norms and practices for the advancement of gender equality benefiting both women and men.



Strategic objective 6: Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures

67. Council of Europe instruments on gender mainstreaming laid the foundations for important work in this area in Europe and beyond, including the reference definition of the term. The Committee of Ministers has adopted a number of recommendations on gender mainstreaming in different fields, including education, the media, sport and the audiovisual sector.¹⁹ By adopting a gender mainstreaming approach in all policies and measures, alongside specific policies for the advancement of women, the Council of Europe will ensure that new initiatives and standards are gender sensitive, and therefore result in better informed policy-making, better allocation of resources and better governance and ultimately contribute to the realisation of gender equality.

68. Many member States are also actively promoting the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their national policies and measures through action plans and institutional structures to co-ordinate gender mainstreaming efforts, gender budgeting policies, and relevant training for government officials. An evaluation of the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities should be carried out on a regular basis at national level, to assess the remaining challenges in this area. Where available, ensure co-operation with Council of Europe country offices which play an important role in providing gender analysis and mainstreaming gender equality in the development of co-operation programmes, projects and activities.

” Gender mainstreaming leads to better informed policy-making, better allocation of resources and better governance.

69. In 2014-2017, co-operation and synergies were reinforced in the various Council of Europe institutions, steering committees, monitoring mechanisms and partial agreements to introduce a gender equality perspective in many Council of Europe policies and at all levels. Over 50 Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) have been appointed in steering committees, other institutional bodies, as well as monitoring mechanisms. They lead efforts to integrate a gender equality dimension into their work and activities.

70. The Council of Europe will continue to strive to achieve gender mainstreaming in all its policy areas:

- ▶ the development, implementation and evaluation of co-operation activities, based on country specific and thematic action plans and other co-operation documents, and, taking into account the

19. Recommendation No. R(98)14 on gender mainstreaming; Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education; Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy; Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media; Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 on gender mainstreaming in sport; and Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)9 on gender equality in the audiovisual sector.

recommendations of the evaluation on gender mainstreaming in co-operation undertaken by the Directorate of Internal Oversight;

- ▶ the policy, programming and budgetary processes and the functioning of the various bodies and institutions, in particular through the mobilisation and contribution of:
 - the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Conference of INGOs;
 - the steering committees and other intergovernmental bodies;
 - the monitoring mechanisms;
 - partial agreements.

by:

- ▶ supporting policy analysis that are grounded on the particular situation of different groups of women and men, girls and boys, and their gender specific needs, as well as on the estimated impact of new policies and measures on them, and taking account of the findings in policy making;

” The Council of Europe will continue to strive to achieve gender mainstreaming in all its policy areas.

- ▶ providing targeted training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming and producing related materials and tools, in particular by providing Council of Europe staff with guidance and tools on how to mainstream gender equality in their work and activities, including in the development, implementation and evaluation of co-operation activities;
- ▶ encouraging the different Council of Europe sectors to address the need for sex-disaggregated data in standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation activities;
- ▶ taking due care to involve all relevant actors, including gender equality experts and civil society, as appropriate;



- ▶ compiling and reviewing information on national gender equality mechanisms and other institutional frameworks for gender mainstreaming;
- ▶ identifying and disseminating good practices from the member States, Council of Europe and other regional or international organisations, on gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting.

71. Training and support for GERs and Secretariat members working with them will be continued, as well as the production of supporting policy tools, the development of indicators to assess progress, the provision of expertise, facilitating networking and the exchange of information and good practice both within the Organisation and with relevant national and international partners.

72. The Council of Europe will also continue to actively promote strong and efficient gender equality mechanisms and gender mainstreaming in member States through the promotion of existing standards, and by gathering information and disseminating good practices from member States.

73. The Council of Europe will continue its work to mainstream gender equality in its staff policies, including tools and indicators to measure and assess progress.

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING, RESOURCES AND WORKING METHODS

74. The transversal nature of the gender equality programme presupposes that all Council of Europe institutions (the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights), decision-making, advisory and monitoring bodies, as well as human resources policies, should support and actively contribute to the achievement of the goal and strategic objectives of the new gender equality Strategy. They are invited to take initiatives within their respective mandates and resources. To stimulate and facilitate this process, the following elements complete the Council of Europe institutional setting for gender equality:

75. The **Gender Equality Commission (GEC)** is a Council of Europe Steering Committee composed of representatives of the 47 member States. The mission of the GEC is to steer the Gender Equality Transversal Programme, advise and involve its various components, as well as liaise with relevant intergovernmental bodies, providing expertise and a forum for exchange on good practices and issues of concern.

76. The **Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs)** appointed within intergovernmental bodies and other Council of Europe structures (see above) work to identify ways to integrate a gender equality perspective in the functioning, policies, programmes and activities of their respective body or structure. In co-operation with the GEC, they identify opportunities to develop new measures and activities to promote gender equality.

77. The **Gender Mainstreaming Team (GMT)** is a group of Council of Europe staff members serving in the various sectors and bodies of the Organisation. Its task is to share information and expertise, provide visibility to results, identify opportunities for joint action and make proposals to facilitate the implementation of the Gender Equality Transversal Programme, including the new Strategy. The Gender Equality Unit convenes and chairs the meetings of the GMT.

78. In order to assess progress in the implementation of the Strategy, the GEC regularly takes stock of results achieved and prepares an **annual report** on its implementation, which is submitted to the Committee of Ministers. A final review of the implementation of the Strategy will be undertaken to assess its impact.

PARTNERSHIPS

79. The Council of Europe places great importance in maintaining strategic partnerships with other regional and international organisations and civil society working for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. All the main international partners of the Council of Europe (United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS)) have adopted Gender Equality Strategies or Action Plans. This provides a sound basis for partnerships and institutionalised co-operation, enabling the identification of opportunities for joint action, complementarity and synergy.

80. The Council of Europe has a number of institutional agreements with other international organisations, including the EU,²⁰ the OSCE,²¹ UN Women,²² the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),²³ the OAS,²⁴ and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).²⁵ They are therefore invited to contribute to the implementation of this new Strategy, as appropriate, in particular by holding regular consultations with the Council of Europe, participating in meetings and events and co-operating in joint initiatives. The Council of Europe will seek to reinforce its co-operation with other UN agencies and bodies (in particular the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW), UN Global Compact, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) and other international organisations (such as the World Bank and the International Organisation of La Francophonie). Co-operation will in particular seek to support member States and the international community at large in their efforts to implement both the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

81. The Gender Equality Transversal Programme also seeks to involve, engage and use the experience and expertise of civil society organisations, in particular those specialising in women's rights and gender equality issues, in the development, implementation and assessment of policies, programmes and activities.

82. Other natural partners in the implementation of the gender equality Strategy include:

- ▶ parliaments;
- ▶ national governments;
- ▶ local and regional authorities and their associations;
- ▶ gender equality bodies;
- ▶ human rights institutions;

20. Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union (May 2007).

21. Declaration on Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (May 2005).

22. Exchange of letters between the Council of Europe and UN Women on the promotion of implementation of international standards on gender equality and violence against women (February 2012).

23. Joint Declaration on the Reinforcement of Co-operation between the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (September 2013).

24. Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (September 2011).

25. Arrangement between the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, concluded by exchange of letters (September 1961 and January 1962).

- ▶ professional networks (in particular in the fields of justice, journalism, education, health and social services);
- ▶ trade unions and employers' associations;
- ▶ the media;
- ▶ the private sector.

COMMUNICATION

83. Work in this area will continue to seek to:

- ▶ increase the visibility of Council of Europe standards, studies, guidelines, projects, events and their results in the area of gender equality;
- ▶ raise awareness on gender equality issues and contribute towards changing attitudes, mentalities and behaviours;
- ▶ facilitate the exchange of information between the various components of the programme and with partners;
- ▶ give visibility to good practices and data collected at national, regional and local level.

APPENDIX I – RISK MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Numerous general challenges and barriers will continue to affect the realisation of *de facto* equality between women and men. Those are due to the current economic and political context, structural historically grounded barriers related to the unequal division of power and resources between women and men and persisting gender stereotypes embedded in the functioning of most public and private institutions, legal frameworks and mentalities. The lack of political commitment leading, *inter alia*, to the weak implementation of existing standards and to insufficient financial and human resources, is another general risk factor that applies to all priority areas.

In the 2018-2023 Strategy document, each priority area has a **risk analysis table** attached to it. The table states the **expected impact** or ultimate goal at beneficiary level for each priority area. This can be reached in many different ways, in accordance with developments and structures at national and local levels.

The risk analysis tables present **some general examples** of possible:

- ▶ **risk factors** that could negatively affect the achievement of the outcomes at the level of the member States,
- ▶ **mitigating actions** to counter such risk factors,
- ▶ **outcomes** as steps towards the expected impact.

The examples are indicative and do not cover all possible options available at national and local levels. Other examples, as well as specific actions and activities (**outputs**) will be examined in detail during the implementation of the Strategy **at national and local levels** on the basis of **strategies, action plans, indicators and other relevant policy documents and standards**.

In addition to the activities undertaken at national and local levels by the member States and other stakeholders, a **biennial work plan** with a selection of actions and activities (outputs) to be undertaken by the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the member States, will be prepared.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 1 Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism		
Expected Impact Gender stereotypes and sexism are eliminated in all areas of life		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
Gender stereotypes and sexism prevail and are reinforced by the current backlash on women's rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong positioning and networking towards the implementation of Council of Europe standards. - Adoption and dissemination of new standards to prevent and combat sexism. - Awareness raising on existing standards and on the situation regarding gender equality in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition by all member States and relevant actors of the need and benefits to achieve <i>de facto</i> gender equality. - Full implementation of relevant standards in member States. - Changes in legislation and policies to implement relevant standards in member States.
Gender stereotypes and sexism are reinforced by the inadequate portrayal of women in media, by the negative role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and by lack of action regarding education policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeting relevant actors, including the private sector for awareness raising activities. - Promotion of relevant standards regarding gender stereotypes in the media and in education. - Identification and promotion of good practices regarding the media, ICTs and education policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation and policies are changed to eliminate gender stereotypes and sexism in the education, media and ICT sectors. - Realistic portrayal of women and men in the media, including social media, in member States. - The media and ICTs contribute to gender equality outcomes and women and girls are empowered to make use of the full potential of these sectors.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 2 Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence		
Expected Impact Women are free from violence, exploitation and abuse; women have full access to appropriate prevention, protection, prosecution and support services		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
Violence against women and domestic violence remain invisible, taboo and under-reported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising and training on recognising, preventing and reporting different forms of violence against women and domestic violence. - Dissemination of information regarding the scale of the phenomena. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention by member States. - Member States revise policies and practices to fully comply with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. - Relevant actors are sensitised and contribute to the elimination of violence against women and domestic violence (media, private sector, education sector, justice sector). - Member States ratify and implement the Council of Europe Anti-trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions
Claims of violence against women and domestic violence are not taken seriously or understood by law enforcement authorities, the media and family members and victims are not protected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender-sensitive awareness raising activities on prevention and protection. - Preparation and dissemination of training tools targeted at relevant stakeholders. - Training of relevant stakeholders - Dissemination of information regarding good and promising practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant stakeholders are aware of obstacles, processes and legislation related to violence against women and domestic violence and able to act accordingly to protect. - Adequate support services, protection and redress are guaranteed to women confronted with violence in member States.
Some groups confronted with gender-based violence, such as for example, older women or men, migrant women and girls, men and boys, persons with disabilities, are not duly taken into account in relevant policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising about the specific forms of violence by which different groups are confronted. - Development of specific tools, training and policy documents adapted to the needs of different groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced protection from violence for groups of women and girls in vulnerable situations, and for men and boys. - Uniform enjoyment of rights guaranteed by the Istanbul Convention.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 3 Ensure the equal access of women to justice		
Expected Impact Women enjoy equal access to justice		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
Lack of knowledge and resistance to action on the issue of women's access to justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising on the importance of ensuring equal access of women to justice to promote human rights and the rule of law. - Encouraging the collection and dissemination of data and of information regarding women's access to justice and women in the judiciary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better knowledge of the situation regarding women's access to justice, including for groups of women in vulnerable situations. - Changes in legislation and practices in member States to better respond to women's needs and situations.
Persistence of discrimination against women and of gender stereotypes in the justice system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation and dissemination of training tools regarding women's access to justice adapted to the needs of relevant stakeholders. - Identification and dissemination of good practice and promising policies on women's equal access to justice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's rights to equal access to justice and to a fair trial are ensured, including for groups of women in vulnerable situations. - Legislation, policies and practices are changed in member States to ensure gender friendly justice systems. - Justice systems in member States are free from gender bias and from judicial stereotyping.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 4 Achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making		
Expected Impact Women and men participate equally in political and public decision-making		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
Insufficient steps are taken to move beyond the current level of progress in the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of existing standards and monitoring their implementation. - Awareness raising and information campaigns about successful policies and implementation of standards. - Identification and dissemination of good and promising practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted measures are taken in member States to address particular levels or areas where progress is slow. - Relevant standards are implemented in member States. - Stronger legislation and policies are implemented in member States aiming at achieving parity.
Resistance to change prevents progress towards the gender sensitiveness of institutions and decision-making bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising and information activities regarding the need for and benefits of gender balance in decision-making. - Promotion of measures targeting different actors who play a role in promoting gender balance in decision making in different areas (the judiciary, political parties, training men). - Stronger focus on supporting measures related to balance in decision-making (e.g. conciliation of family and working life, role of media). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steps are taken to better integrate the issue of balanced participation of women and men in all aspects of policies related to democratic governance in member States. - A comprehensive approach combining policy and legislative measures with data collection, awareness raising, good practice examples and education, to facilitate gender balance in decision making is implemented in member States.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 5 Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls		
Expected Impact The rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls are protected		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
<p>Policies related to migration, integration and asylum continue to be gender blind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and improve standards related to the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women. - Provide advice regarding the definition and implementation of gender-sensitive migration, integration and asylum. - Identify and disseminate good and promising practices regarding the integration and economic empowerment of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in legislation and policies to include the needs and situation of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women are made in member States. - Processes and policies pertaining to migration, integration and asylum include a gender equality perspective in member States. - Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women are economically independent in member States and fully enjoy their social rights.
<p>Lack of adequate and effective means of protection and assistance for migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls confronted with different forms of violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop tools (such as guidelines) to ensure appropriate protection of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls victims of violence. - Develop awareness- raising tools (such as factsheets) on the standards promoting the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant instruments in particular the Istanbul Convention as well as the Anti-trafficking and Lanzarote Conventions are ratified and implemented by member States. - Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls confronted with violence have access to appropriate prevention, protection, prosecution and support services.

Risk Analysis		
Strategic Objective 6 Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures		
Expected Impact A gender equality perspective is integrated in all policies and measures		
Risks	Mitigating Actions	Outcome
Lack of full understanding and knowledge of gender mainstreaming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dissemination of information and of training tools on gender mainstreaming. - Provision of training on gender mainstreaming. - Identification of good and promising practices regarding gender mainstreaming. - Encouraging and supporting networking between relevant actors working in different sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant policy makers in member States possess the knowledge and expertise to mainstream gender equality in their work. - Gender equality aspects become part of day-to-day policy making in member States and at the level of the Council of Europe.
Insufficient steps are taken by stakeholders to mainstream gender equality in their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide advice to different sectors in order to support gender mainstreaming, including in relation to standard setting and implementation. - Support targeted policy analysis to facilitate gender mainstreaming in different policy areas. - Encourage and support gender equality-related research and sex-disaggregated data collection in different policy areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A wide spectrum of policy areas fully integrate a gender equality perspective and therefore fit better to the needs of all citizens in member States. - Improved gender specific knowledge and improved availability of data allows for a systematic use of gender analysis in all policy areas in member States.

APPENDIX II – LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
(The) Convention	European Convention on Human Rights
CSW	Commission for the Status of Women
EU	European Union
GEC	Gender Equality Commission
GER	Gender Equality Rapporteur
GMT	Gender Mainstreaming Team
INGO	International non-governmental organisations
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
Lanzarote Convention	Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Strategy	Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Recommendation Rec(2003)3

of the Committee of Ministers to member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making

**Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 March 2003
at the 831st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,
Bearing in mind that women make up more than half of the population and the electorate in its member States, but continue to be seriously under-represented in political and public decision making in a large part of its member States;

Bearing in mind that, in spite of the existence of *de jure* equality, the distribution of power, responsibilities and access to economic, social and cultural resources between women and men is still very unequal due to the persistence of prevailing traditional gender roles;

Mindful that the functioning of electoral systems and political institutions, including political parties, may hamper women's participation in political and public life;

Considering that balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making is a matter of the full enjoyment of human rights, of social justice and a necessary condition for the better functioning of a democratic society;

Considering that the realisation of balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making would lead to better and more efficient policy making through the redefinition of political priorities and the placing of new issues on the political agenda as well as to the improvement of quality of life for all;

Considering that balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making is needed for the development and construction of a Europe based on equality, social cohesion, solidarity and respect for human rights;

Recalling the declaration adopted at the 2nd Summit of the Council of Europe (October 1997) at which the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe stressed "the importance of a more balanced representation of men and women in all sectors of society, including political life", and called for "continued progress with a view to achieving effective equality of opportunities between women and men";

Bearing in mind the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) and its Protocols;

Bearing in mind the European Social Charter (1961), the revised European Social Charter (1996) and the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter providing for a System of Collective Complaints (1995);

Bearing in mind the texts adopted at the European Ministerial Conference on Human Rights held in Rome in 2000;

Bearing in mind the following Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States of the Council of Europe: Recommendation No. R(85)2 on legal protection against sex discrimination; Recommendation No. R(96)5 on reconciling work and family life and Recommendation No. R(98)14 on gender mainstreaming;

Bearing in mind the following texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly: Recommendation 1229 (1994) on equality of rights between women and men; Recommendation 1269 (1995) on achieving real progress in women's rights as from 1995 and Recommendation 1413 (1999) on equal representation in political life;

Bearing in mind the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Recalling the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), especially its Articles 7 and 8;

Recalling also the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action as well as in the Agreed Conclusions of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2000 (Beijing +5);

Considering that democracy can no longer afford to ignore the competence, skills and creativity of women but must become gender sensitive and include women with different backgrounds and of different age groups in political and public decision making at all levels;

Mindful of the high priority the Council of Europe gives to the promotion of democracy and human rights,

Recommends that the governments of member States:

- I.** commit themselves to promote balanced representation of women and men by recognising publicly that the equal sharing of decision-making power between women and men of different background and ages strengthens and enriches democracy;
- II.** protect and promote the equal civil and political rights of women and men, including running for office and freedom of association;
- III.** ensure that women and men can exercise their individual voting rights and, to this end, take all the necessary measures to eliminate the practice of family voting;
- IV.** review their legislation and practice, with the aim of ensuring that the strategies and measures described in this recommendation are applied and implemented;
- V.** promote and encourage special measures to stimulate and support women's will to participate in political and public decision-making;
- VI.** consider setting targets linked to a time scale with a view to reaching balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
- VII.** ensure that this recommendation is brought to the attention of all relevant political institutions and to public and private bodies, in particular national parliaments, local and regional authorities, political parties, civil service, public and semi-public organisations, enterprises, trade unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations;
- VIII.** monitor and evaluate progress in achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, and report regularly to the Committee of Ministers on the measures taken and progress made in this field.

APPENDIX

to Recommendation Rec(2003)3

For the purpose of this recommendation, balanced participation of women and men is taken to mean that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%.

On this basis, the governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

A. Legislative and administrative measures

Member States should:

1. consider possible constitutional and/or legislative changes, including positive action measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
2. adopt administrative measures so that official language reflects a balanced sharing of power between women and men;
3. consider adopting legislative reforms to introduce parity thresholds for candidates in elections at local, regional, national and supra-national levels. Where proportional lists exist, consider the introduction of zipper systems;
4. consider action through the public funding of political parties in order to encourage them to promote gender equality;
5. where electoral systems are shown to have a negative impact on the political representation of women in elected bodies, adjust or reform those systems to promote gender-balanced representation;
6. consider adopting appropriate legislative measures aimed at restricting the concurrent holding of several elected political offices simultaneously;
7. adopt appropriate legislation and/or administrative measures to improve the working conditions of elected representatives at the local, regional, national and supra-national levels to ensure more democratic access to elected bodies;
8. adopt appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to support elected representatives in the reconciliation of their family and public responsibilities and, in particular, encourage parliaments and local and regional authorities to ensure that their timetables and working methods enable elected representatives of both sexes to reconcile their work and family life;
9. consider adopting appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to ensure that there is gender-balanced representation in all appointments made by a minister or government to public committees;
10. ensure that there is a gender-balanced representation in posts or functions whose holders are nominated by government and other public authorities;
11. ensure that the selection, recruitment and appointment processes for leading positions in public decision-making are gender sensitive and transparent;
12. make the public administration exemplary both in terms of a gender-balanced distribution of decision-making positions and in equal career development for women and men;

13. consider adopting appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to ensure that there is gender-balanced representation in all national delegations to international organisations and fora;
14. take due account of gender balance when appointing representatives to international mediation and negotiating committees, particularly in the peace process or the settlement of conflicts;
15. consider taking legislative and/or administrative measures aiming at encouraging and supporting employers to allow those participating in political and public decision-making to have the right to take time off from their employment without being penalised;
16. set up, where necessary, support and strengthen the work of the national equality machinery in bringing about balanced participation in political and public life;
17. encourage parliaments at all levels to set up parliamentary committees or delegations for women's rights and equal opportunities and to implement gender mainstreaming in all their work;

B. Supportive measures

Member States should:

18. support, by all appropriate measures, programmes aimed at stimulating a gender balance in political life and public decision-making initiated by women's organisations and all organisations working for gender equality;
19. consider the setting up of a data bank of women willing to serve in political and public decision-making positions;
20. support and develop women's political action by providing the opportunity for women elected representatives to network at the local, regional, national and international levels;
21. develop and support mentoring/work-shadowing programmes, confidence building, leadership and media training for women considering entering political and public decision-making;
22. encourage training for women candidates and elected representatives in the use of information and communication technologies;
23. incorporate into school curricula education and training activities aimed at sensitising young people about gender equality and preparing them for democratic citizenship;
24. promote the participation of young people, especially young women, in associations to enable them to acquire experience, knowledge and capacities which are transferable to the field of institutional, and especially political, participation;
25. encourage youth organisations to ensure a balanced participation of women and men in their decision-making structures;
26. encourage greater involvement of ethnic and cultural minorities, and especially women from these minorities, in decision-making at all levels;
27. inform political parties of the different strategies used in the various countries to promote the balanced participation of women and men in elected assemblies; encourage them to implement one or more of these strategies and to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of decision-making within the party structures;
28. support programmes initiated by the social partners (employers' and workers' organisations) to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of responsibility and decision-making, within their own ranks and in the context of collective bargaining;
29. encourage enterprises and associations to ensure balanced representation of women and men in their decision-making bodies, in particular those subsidised for providing public services or implementing public policies;

30. promote campaigns aimed at the general public in order to raise its awareness of the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision-making as a prerequisite for genuine democracy;
31. promote campaigns aimed at encouraging the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the private sphere;
32. promote campaigns aimed at specific groups, in particular politicians, social partners and those who recruit and nominate political and public decision makers, in order to raise their awareness of the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision-making;
33. organise interactive seminars on gender equality for key people in society, such as leaders and top officials, to make them aware of the importance of the balanced participation of women and men in all levels of decision-making;
34. support non-governmental organisations and research institutes that conduct studies on women's participation in and impact on decision-making and the decision-making environment;
35. carry out research on the distribution of votes according to opinion polls in order to determine the voting patterns of women and men;
36. promote research on the obstacles which prevent women's access to political and public decision-making at the different levels and publish the results;
37. promote research on women's participation in social and voluntary sector decision-making;
38. promote gender-sensitive research on the roles, functions, status and working conditions of elected representatives at all levels;
39. promote balanced participation in decision-making positions in the media, including management, programming, education, training, research and regulatory bodies;
40. support training and awareness-raising for students of journalism and media professionals on questions linked to gender equality and how to avoid sexist stereotypes and sexism;
41. encourage media professionals to ensure that women and men candidates and elected representatives receive equal visibility in the media, especially during election periods.

C. Monitoring

Member States should:

42. consider establishing independent bodies, such as a parity observatory or a special independent mediation body, with a view to following governmental policy in the field of balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, or entrust national equality machineries with this task;
43. consider setting up and applying indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making on the basis of internationally comparable gender segregated data;
44. consider adopting the following indicators for measuring progress in the field of political and public decision-making:
 - I. the percentage of women and men elected representatives in parliaments (supra-national/national/federal/regional) and local assemblies according to political party;
 - II. the percentage of women and men elected representatives in parliaments (supra-national/national) compared to the number of candidates according to political party (the success rate);
 - III. the percentage of women and men in national delegations to nominated assemblies such as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and to international organisations and fora;
 - IV. the percentage of women and men in national, federal and regional governments;

- V.** the number of women and men senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolios/ ministries) of the national, federal and regional governments of the member States;
 - VI.** the percentage of the highest ranking women and men civil servants and their distribution in different fields of action;
 - VII.** the percentage of women and men judges in the supreme court;
 - VIII.** the percentage of women and men in bodies appointed by the government;
 - IX.** the percentage of women and men in the decision-making bodies of political parties at national level;
 - X.** the percentage of women and men members of employer, labour and professional organisations and the percentage of women and men in their decision-making bodies at national level;
45. submit, every other year, reports to their national parliaments on the measures taken and progress made according to the indicators listed above;
46. publish, every other year, reports on the measures taken and progress made in women's involvement in decision-making and disseminate these reports widely;
47. publish and make readily accessible, statistics on candidates for political office and on elected representatives containing information on sex, age, occupation, occupational sector (private/public), education;
48. encourage the regular analysis of the visibility and portrayal of women and men in national news and current affairs programmes, especially during election campaigns.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1

of the Committee of Ministers to member States on preventing and combating sexism¹

**Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 March 2019
at the 1342nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Recalling that gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy and good governance, respect for the rule of law and the promotion of well-being for all, that it entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation in all spheres of public and private life, and that it implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men, as set out in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023;

Recalling that discrimination on the grounds of sex and/or gender constitutes a violation of human rights and an impediment to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as recognised by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its General Recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

Recalling that sexism is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which leads to discrimination and prevents the full advancement of women in society;

Noting that sexism is widespread and prevalent in all sectors and all societies;

Affirming that sexism is reinforced by gender stereotypes affecting women and men, girls and boys, and runs counter to achieving gender equality and inclusive societies;

Noting that sexism constitutes a barrier to the empowerment of women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by sexist behaviour; and further noting that gender stereotypes and inherent biases shape the norms, behaviour and expectations of men and boys, and therefore lead to sexist acts;

Concerned that sexism is linked to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of "everyday" sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom;

1. When this Recommendation was adopted and in application of Article 10.2c of the Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the Ministers' Deputies, the Representative of the Russian Federation reserved the right of his government to comply or not with the Recommendation, in particular paragraph 3 of the Preamble, rejecting the use of the term "gender", as the Russian legislation does not contain the concept of "gender" and in view of the fact that there is no commonly accepted definition of the term "gender" on the international level. Furthermore, the Russian Federation considers that intersex and trans persons do not fall under the scope of the Recommendation.

Noting that women and girls can be subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and may face sexism combined with other norms or behaviour which are discriminatory, hateful or harmful;

Aware that sexism and sexist behaviour are perpetrated at the individual, institutional and structural levels, and experienced with detrimental effect at all three levels, and that measures to prevent and combat sexism should therefore be taken at all levels;

Recalling the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which requires States parties to take all appropriate measures “to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women”;

Bearing in mind the objectives set forward in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and in particular the Report of the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting for Europe, organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in 2014, which indicated that “discriminatory stereotypes remain widespread, and affect women’s education and participation in the economy and in public life”;

Bearing in mind the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”), Sustainable Development Goal 16 (“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”), which are of universal application;

Taking account of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its prohibition of discrimination based on the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s sex;

Recalling the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5) and its prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights;

Recalling that combating gender stereotypes and sexism and ensuring the integration of a gender equality perspective in all policies and measures are priority objectives in the Council of Europe gender equality strategy documents and recommendations;

Recalling that the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, Istanbul Convention) requires parties “to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men”, and that the Istanbul Convention also requires that parties criminalise stalking and take the necessary measures to ensure that sexual harassment is subject to criminal or other legal sanctions;

Taking account of the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35, ETS No. 163 [revised]) and its provisions on equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the right to dignity at work;

Recalling that the European Court of Human Rights in its case law has reiterated that the advancement of gender equality is today a major goal in the member States of the Council of Europe and that reference to traditions, general assumptions or prevailing social attitudes are insufficient justification for a difference in treatment on grounds of sex. Furthermore, the Court has indicated that gender stereotypes, such as the perception of women as primary child-carers and men as primary breadwinners, cannot of themselves justify a difference in treatment;

Recalling the following recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States: [CM/Rec\(2007\)13](#) on gender mainstreaming in education; [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms; [CM/Rec\(2013\)1](#) on gender equality and media; and [CM/Rec\(2017\)9](#) on gender equality in the audiovisual sector;

Referring to General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech, adopted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in December 2015, which includes sexist hate speech;

Taking account of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), which stresses the need to fight discrimination and violence, particularly sexual violence and the need to promote equality between girls and boys including by continuing to address stereotypes, sexism and over-sexualisation, notably in the media and education;

Taking account of the Council of Europe Internet Governance Strategy 2016-2019 and its call for monitoring action to protect everyone, in particular women and children, from online abuse, including cyberstalking, sexism and threats of sexual violence;

Recalling Resolutions 2119 (2016), 2144 (2017) and 2177 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, respectively on “Fighting the over-sexualisation of children”, “Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate” and “Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space”;

Drawing on the outcomes of implementing the above-mentioned instruments and documents at international, national, regional and local levels, including achievements and challenges;

Mindful that, despite the existence of standards at international, national and regional levels guaranteeing the principle of gender equality, a gap still persists between standards and practice, between *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality;

Acknowledging that the prevalence of different manifestations of sexism is closely linked to the persistent difficulties in achieving gender equality, and desirous to tackle sexism as a critical cause and consequence of gender inequality;

Noting the lack of an internationally agreed definition of “sexism” and of a dedicated legal instrument to tackle it;

Aspiring to create a Europe free from sexism and its manifestations,

Recommends that the governments of member States:

1. Take measures to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in the public and private spheres, and encourage relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate legislation, policies and programmes, drawing on the definition and guidelines appended to this Recommendation;
2. Monitor progress in the implementation of this Recommendation and inform the competent Council of Europe steering committee(s) of the measures undertaken and the progress achieved in this field;
3. Ensure that this Recommendation, including its appendix, is translated and disseminated (in accessible formats) to relevant authorities and stakeholders.

APPENDIX

to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1

Guidelines for preventing and combating sexism: measures for implementation

Definition

For the purpose of this Recommendation, sexism is:

Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of:

- I. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or
- II. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or
- III. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or
- IV. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or
- V. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.²

Context

The need to tackle sexism, sexist norms and behaviour and sexist speech is implicit in a number of international and regional instruments. Both the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, Istanbul Convention) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recognise a continuum between gender stereotypes, gender inequality, sexism and violence against women and girls. In this way, acts of “everyday” sexism in the form of apparently inconsequential or minor sexist behaviour, comments and jokes are at one end of the continuum. However, these acts are often humiliating and contribute to a social climate where women are demeaned, their self-regard lowered and their activities and choices restricted, including at work, in the private, public or online sphere. Sexist behaviour such as, in particular, sexist hate speech, may escalate to or incite overtly offensive and threatening acts, including sexual abuse or violence, rape or potentially lethal action. Other consequences may include loss of resources, self-harm or suicide. Tackling sexism is thus part of States’ positive obligation to guarantee human rights, gender equality and to prevent violence against women and girls in accordance with international human rights law and, for States Parties, the Istanbul Convention.

2. “Gender stereotypes are preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Gender stereotyping presents a serious obstacle to the achievement of real gender equality and feeds into gender discrimination. Such stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of girls and boys, women and men, their educational and professional preferences and experiences, as well as life opportunities in general.” (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, Strategic objective 1).

Sexism and sexist behaviour result in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm and impact different sectors of the population differently. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by such behaviour. Sexism and sexist behaviour constitute a barrier to the empowerment and advancement of women and girls; the elimination of sexism and sexist behaviour would benefit everyone: women, girls, men and boys.

Sexism and sexist behaviour occur across the full range of human activity, including in cyberspace (internet and social media). They can be experienced individually or collectively by a person or a group of persons, even if neither the individual nor the group has been directly targeted, for example through sexist advertising, or posting of pictures of naked women in the workplace. The three levels of perpetuating and experiencing sexism are: individual, institutional (for example family, work or education environment), and structural (for example through societal gender inequalities, social norms and behaviour). Sexism is silencing when individuals and groups fail to report or complain about sexist behaviour for fear of not being taken seriously, of being ostracised or even held responsible.

The internet has provided a new dimension for the expression and transmission of sexism, especially of sexist hate speech, to a large audience, even though the roots of sexism do not lie in technology but in persistent gender inequalities. Additionally, social phenomena such as the #MeToo campaign and the series of actions and policy measures that it has triggered in different parts of the world (from 2017 onwards), including in Council of Europe member States, have helped shed light on the ubiquity of sexism and on the need for stronger measures to combat it.

Sexism and sexist behaviour are rooted in and reinforce gender stereotypes. The European Court of Human Rights has considered that “the issue with stereotyping of a certain group in society lies in the fact that it prohibits the individualised evaluation of their capacity and needs”³. Gender stereotypes reinforce unequal social power structures and impact resource allocation between women and men negatively. The persistent gender pay gap and the pension gap in member States are cases in point. Gender stereotypes are thus social constructions of the “appropriate” roles for women and men, which are determined by cultural prejudices, customs, traditions, and in many instances, interpretations of religious beliefs and practices. Women who challenge or deviate from what is regarded as their “proper” place in society can be confronted with sexism and misogyny and men who challenge dominant perceptions of masculinity may be confronted with sexism.

Intersectionality, situational vulnerabilities and aggravating circumstances

Women and men may be confronted with different and intersecting forms of sexism, based on a range of other factors including but not limited to ethnicity, minority or indigenous status, age, religion, refugee or migrant status, disability, marital status, social origin, gender identity, sexual orientation or sexuality. They may be in more vulnerable situations or be targeted by different acts of sexism in different settings, such as young women and women active in predominantly male environments, for instance business, finance, the military or politics. Women in positions of power or authority, including public figures, are also particular targets for sexism as they are perceived to have deviated from social gender norms that exclude women from public spaces or authority. Intersex and trans persons also face additional and/or enhanced challenges with regard to sexism.

Some circumstances can add to the seriousness or impact of sexist behaviour, or can affect the capacity of the victim to react. Such aggravating circumstances exist where sexist acts or words take place within a hierarchical or dependent relationship, in particular at work, in an educational or medical setting, in the framework of (public) services, or within commercial relationships. Sexism is especially damaging when the author is in a position of power, authority or influence such as a politician, an opinion maker or a business leader. Another aggravating factor is where the reach, or potential reach, of the sexist words or acts is extensive, including the means of transmission, use of social or mainstream media and the degree of repetition.

I. General tools and measures for addressing sexism

The primary purpose of measures to prevent and combat sexism is to induce behavioural and cultural change at individual, institutional and structural levels.

3. *Carvalho Pinto de Sousa Morais v. Portugal*, application No. 17484/15, judgment of 25 July 2017 of the European Court of Human Rights, paragraph 46.

Tools to prevent and combat sexism can include legislative, executive, administrative, budgetary and regulatory instruments, in addition to plans, policies and programmes. States should choose the tools best suited to their own context and the objective of the particular action. Different tools are needed to address, on the one hand, unconscious bias and, on the other, deliberate sexist behaviour. The former may be addressed through awareness raising, training and education, while stronger measures are needed to eliminate deliberate and persistent sexist behaviour and sexist hate speech. Legislation addressing sexism, including definitions; a user guide; and an indication of the avenues of recourse and reparation for victims, and of the risks and ramifications for perpetrators, are important options to be considered.⁴

States should draw upon existing tools and ensure their effective implementation or make new tools available to prevent and protect against sexist behaviour, where appropriate, to prosecute and punish offenders and to provide reparation to victims.

The governments of member States are invited to examine the following measures to support the implementation of this Recommendation.

I.A. Legislation and policies

- I.A.1. Consider legislative reform that condemns sexism and that defines and criminalises sexist hate speech.
- I.A.2. Intersecting factors, differences between women, situational vulnerabilities and aggravating circumstances need to be recognised and taken into account when devising legislation and policies to combat sexism.
- I.A.3. Develop and invest in a comprehensive public infrastructure that serves as a platform for women's empowerment and gender equality and develop a policy framework on the elimination of sexism and gender discriminatory stereotypes, with targeted objectives, benchmarks, timelines, progress and results indicators, and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the impact of the steps taken.
- I.A.4. Encourage the participation of civil society, in particular women's non-governmental organisations, religious and community leaders, lawyers' and judges' professional bodies and labour unions, in the design of policy and legal frameworks aimed at combating sexism, in order to promote collaboration and to ensure their engagement in the implementation of these measures.
- I.A.5. Recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant civil society organisations, in particular women's non-governmental organisations, active in combating sexism in all areas (in particular those covered in Section III below) and establish effective co-operation with these organisations.
- I.A.6. Encourage relevant public bodies and services, for instance ombudspersons, equality commissions, legislative assemblies, national human rights institutions, public enterprises and complaints bodies, to draw up and implement codes of conduct or guidelines on sexism, in accordance with a comprehensive policy on the elimination of sexism, and provide such activities with adequate resources.
- I.A.7. Consider designating a gender equality body or other official institution with the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating policies and measures for the elimination of sexism in public and private life. Such a body should be afforded the necessary authority and resources to pursue these tasks.
- I.A.8. Provide for appropriate remedies for victims of sexist behaviour.
- I.A.9. Put in place training programmes for those working with victims and perpetrators of gender-related and sexual crimes.
- I.A.10. Consider the imposition of non-criminal penalties, for example the withdrawal of financial and other forms of support from public bodies or other organisations that fail to denounce sexism and sexist behaviour, especially sexist hate speech.

I.B. Awareness-raising measures

- I.B.1. Encourage speedy reactions by public figures, in particular politicians, religious, economic and community leaders, and others in a position to shape public opinion, to condemn sexism and sexist behaviour and to positively reinforce the values of gender equality.
- I.B.2. Initiate, support and fund research, including collaborative research across member States, that provides systematic and sex- and age-disaggregated data on the incidence and negative impact of sexism

4. For example, "Anti-Sexisme – Mode d'emploi", Institut pour l'égalité de femmes et des hommes, Belgium, available in French at http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/79%20-%20Anti-sexisme%20mode%20emploi_FR.pdf.

and its manifestations, including on sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace, sexist hate speech, targets, perpetrators, the means of transmission, media and public response. Disseminate widely such data on a regular basis to the relevant public authorities, education establishments and the public.

- I.B.3. Allocate resources to finance effective communication and awareness-raising campaigns on the links between sexism and violence against women and girls, and fund organisations that support victims.
- I.B.4. Design, implement and promote regular national awareness-raising initiatives at all levels and through diverse forms of media (for example the production of handbooks, guidelines, video clips available on the internet and in mainstream media, the introduction of a national day against sexism, the setting up of museums to celebrate gender equality and women's rights). These initiatives should aim to increase awareness and understanding among the general population, especially parents, of different forms of sexism, including phenomena such as "mansplaining"⁵, of how to prevent and respond to them, and of the harm they generate for individuals and society, including girls and boys.
- I.B.5. Ensure the design and implementation of tailored, ongoing education and training for educators in all spheres and at all levels of education, including in education establishments, for human resources personnel in the public and private sectors and in professional training institutions (for example the media, the military, medical and legal professionals, and accountancy, management and business schools) on gender equality, the meaning of gender stereotypes, how to recognise and address sexism, prejudices and biases, and how to challenge stereotypes.
- I.B.6. Ensure the assessment of textbooks, training materials and teaching methods used by/for pupils of all age groups and in all forms of education and training (starting with preschool education) for sexist language, illustrations and gender stereotypes, and revise them so that they actively promote gender equality.⁶
- I.B.7. Promote a gender equality perspective, as well as the development of critical thinking for the countering of sexism in the content, language and illustrations of toys, comics, books, television, video and other games, online content and films, including pornography, which shape the attitudes, behaviour and identity of girls and boys.
- I.B.8. Promote and conduct regular awareness-raising campaigns on the construction of femininities and masculinities and what it means to be a woman/girl and a man/boy in contemporary society, for example through media, free public lectures and discussions.
- I.B.9. Encourage collaboration between professionals (for example journalists, educators, law-enforcement agents) and civil society organisations to determine and share good practices on preventing and combating sexism.
- I.B.10. Establish structures accessible to all, especially young people, to provide them with expert advice on how to prevent, combat and respond to sexism.

II. Specific tools and measures for addressing sexism and sexist behaviour in targeted areas

Some fields of activity are especially prone to acts of sexism and/or to specific forms of sexist behaviour; it is therefore critical to take targeted action to prevent and combat sexism in these areas, in addition to the generally applicable recommended measures and tools listed in the previous section.

II.A. Language and communications

Language and communication are essential components of gender equality and "must not consecrate the hegemony of the masculine model".⁷ Non-stereotypical communication is a good way to educate, raise awareness and prevent sexist behaviour. It encompasses eliminating sexist expressions, using the feminine and masculine or gender-neutral forms of titles, using the feminine and masculine or gender-neutral forms when

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- 5. Mansplain (verb, informal): (of a man) to explain something to a woman in a manner regarded as condescending, patronising, overconfident, oversimplified, or which assumes the interlocutor has no knowledge of the topic.
 - 6. CEDAW, Article 10.c requires the elimination of "any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education ... in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods".
 - 7. Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, Explanatory Memorandum.

addressing a group, diversifying the representation of women and men, and ensuring equality of both in visual and other representations.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.A.1. Reaffirm and implement relevant existing recommendations of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member States, including Recommendation No R (90) 4 on the elimination of sexism from language, and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms, which underlines that “actions of member States must be targeted at the promotion of the use of non-sexist language in all sectors, particularly in the public sector”.
- II.A.2. Undertake a systematic review of all laws, regulations, policies, etc., for sexist language and reliance on gendered assumptions and stereotypes with a view to replacing them with gender-sensitive terminology. Good practice includes the preparation of practical guides for language and communication that are non-sexist and without gender stereotypes for use in public administration documents.

II.B. Internet, social media and online sexist hate speech

Online sexism is rampant throughout Europe, with women disproportionately affected – especially young women and girls, women journalists, politicians, public figures and women’s human rights defenders. One aspect of online sexism is adversely commenting on expressed views or opinions. While attacks on men are more often based on their professional opinions or competence, women are more likely to be subject to sexist and sexualised abuse and invective, the extremity of which may be magnified by the anonymity offered by the internet. Online attacks not only affect women’s dignity but may also prevent women, including in the workplace, from expressing opinions and result in pushing them out of online spaces, undermining the right to free speech and opinion in a democratic society, limiting professional opportunities and reinforcing the gendered democratic deficit. Another aspect is that the digital age has deepened the scrutiny to which women’s bodies, speech and activism are subjected. In addition, sexist misuse of social media – such as posting of intimate visual material without the consent of those depicted – is a form of violence that needs to be addressed.

The internet and social media are both vehicles for freedom of expression and promoting gender equality, but they also allow perpetrators to express their abusive thoughts and engage in abusive behaviour. While racist hate speech is recognised as contrary to European and international human rights standards, the same is not always true of sexist or misogynist hate speech, and current policies and legislation at all levels have not been able to adequately address the issue. Therefore, States are encouraged to take responsibility for combating hate speech and ensuring that the same rules apply to sexist hate speech as those developed for racist hate speech when it comes to the use of criminal law sanctions.

In addition, artificial intelligence poses specific challenges in relation to gender equality and gender stereotypes. The use of algorithms can transmit and strengthen existing gender stereotypes and therefore may contribute to the perpetuation of sexism.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures.

- II.B.1. Implement legislative measures that define and criminalise incidents of sexist hate speech and are applicable to all media, as well as reporting procedures and appropriate sanctions. More proactive detecting and reporting procedures for sexist hate speech should also be encouraged in respect of all media, including the internet and new media.
- II.B.2. Establish and promote programmes (including software) for children, young people, parents and educators to assist in advising children on media literacy for a safe and critical use of digital media and appropriate digital behaviour. This should be done through school curricula and through the production of handbooks and factsheets on what constitutes sexist behaviour, unwanted sharing of material on the internet, and appropriate responses, including gender-sensitive information about online safety. Ensure the wide dissemination of such materials.
- II.B.3. Develop information and campaigns to raise awareness about sexist misuse of social media, threats in the internet environment and the situations children and young people face (for example blackmail, requests for money or unwanted posting of intimate pictures) with practical assistance about how to prevent and respond to such situations.
- II.B.4. Undertake campaigns directed at the wider public on the dangers, opportunities, rights and responsibilities related to the use of new media.

- II.B.5. Establish online resources providing expert advice on how to deal with online sexism, including procedures for swiftly reporting/removing harmful or unwanted material.
- II.B.6. Undertake regular studies and gather sex- and age-disaggregated data on cybersexism and cyberviolence and share outcomes as appropriate.
- II.B.7. Integrate a gender equality perspective in all policies, programmes and research in relation to artificial intelligence to avoid the potential risks of technology perpetuating sexism and gender stereotypes and examine how artificial intelligence could help to close gender gaps and eliminate sexism. This includes measures to increase the participation of women and girls in the information and technology area as students, professionals and decision makers. Design of data-driven instruments and algorithms should factor in gender-based dynamics. Transparency around these issues should be improved and awareness raised about the potential gender bias in big data; solutions to improve accountability should be offered.

II.C. Media, advertising and other communication products and services

Sexism in the media – electronic, print, visual and audio – contributes to an environment that tolerates and trivialises “everyday” sexism. It is manifested through:

- sexual, sexualised and racialised depictions and objectification of women, men, girls and boys, including in advertising, films, television, video games and pornographic material;
- derogatory or trivialising reporting about women’s appearance, dress and behaviour rather than balanced and informed discussion of their views and opinions;
- reporting and imaging women and men in stereotypical roles within the family and community;
- reproducing and perpetuating gender stereotypes with respect to victims of gender-based violence;
- unbalanced representation and the lack of meaningful participation of women in diverse professional and informative roles (experts, commentators), especially with respect to minority women.⁸

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.C.1. Introduce legislation banning sexism in media and advertising and encourage the monitoring and enforcement of such measures.
- II.C.2. Promote the inclusion of expressions of sexism in defamation laws.
- II.C.3. Urge and provide support for the participation of the information and communication technology, media and advertising sectors in the drafting, adoption and implementation of self-regulatory policies and mechanisms for the elimination of sexism, including sexist hate speech within each sector.
- II.C.4. Promote the role of media watch and advertising organisations in addressing sexism.
- II.C.5. Encourage the establishment of an institution that is competent to receive, analyse and review complaints in relation to sexism in the media and in advertising, and has the authority to require that sexist content or advertisements be withdrawn or modified.
- II.C.6. Encourage relevant bodies, such as gender equality commissions or national human rights institutions, to introduce education and training strategies, and tools for journalists and other media and communication professionals on the recognition of sexism, on how to promote positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of women and men in the media and in advertising, and on how to promote gender-sensitive communication. These additional activities should be adequately resourced.
- II.C.7. Support research on the prevalence and impact of sexist portrayals of women and girls in the media and in pornographic material, the extent to which they exacerbate gender inequalities and violence against women and girls, and also on their impact on women’s physical, sexual and psychological health. Allocate resources to finance effective communication and awareness-raising campaigns on the links between sexism, lack of gender equality and violence against women and girls; and promote positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of women and men in the media and in advertising.
- II.C.8. Encourage the equal participation of women and men in media decision-making positions and in content, and the establishment of databases of women experts on all subjects.

8. See findings and recommendations of the Council of Europe Conference Media and the Image of Women (Amsterdam, 4-5 July 2013). See conference report at <https://rm.coe.int/1680590fb8>.

- II.C.9. Adopt positive measures for excellence and leadership in promoting balanced gender representation, such as a points-based system that allocates additional funding to media outlets for the production of gender-sensitive content.
- II.C.10. Encourage the promotion of positive images of women as active participants in social, economic and political life, and of positive images of men in non-traditional roles such as carers. Provide incentives or rewards for good practice, for instance through public funding.
- II.C.11. Support and promote good practice through dialogue and the development of networks and partnerships between media stakeholders to further combat sexism and gender stereotypes within the sector.
- II.C.12. Support projects addressing the multiple and intersecting discrimination of women in vulnerable situations. Introduce incentives for the media to promote positive images of women of ethnic minority and/or migrant background.

II.D. Workplace

Workplace sexism takes many forms and is present in the public and the private sector. It manifests itself through sexist comments, and behaviour aimed at an employee or group of employees. Sexism in the workplace includes, among others, derogatory comments, objectification, sexist humour or jokes, over-familiar remarks, silencing or ignoring people, gratuitous comments about dress and physical appearance, sexist body language, lack of respect and masculine practices which intimidate or exclude women and favour fellow men.⁹ It impinges upon equality and dignity at work.¹⁰

Sexist assumptions based on traditional gender roles may result in the belief that women, as mothers or would-be mothers or carers, are less reliable colleagues and employees. Conversely, there may be hostility towards mothers who do not stay at home or, alternatively, they may be excluded from important opportunities to advance their careers and, as a consequence, their professional lives. This contributes to the glass ceiling that limits women's promotion opportunities. Such assumptions can also result in sexist remarks towards men who take up caring responsibilities.

Some workplace environments are especially male-dominated, with a high risk of fostering a culture of sexism. In addition, women occupying decision-making positions or those perceived as challenging the institutional male-dominated hierarchy may be especially subject to sexism. Similarly, men may experience sexism in female-dominated workplaces, or for being employed in typically "female" work.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.D.1. Review labour legislation to prohibit sexism and sexist acts at work, and promote good practices such as risk analysis, mitigation and management measures, complaints mechanisms, remedies for victims and disciplinary action through civil or administrative law processes.
- II.D.2. Encourage and provide support for the systematic review of rules, policies and regulations within both public- and private-sector establishments with a view to the adoption of appropriate codes of behaviour that incorporate complaints mechanisms and disciplinary measures in relation to sexism and sexist acts. This should also include intersecting forms of sexism, for instance, concerning migrant status or disability.
- II.D.3. Encourage independent professions, professional organisations and trade unions to embrace the fight against sexism within their organisations, including in their internal rules.
- II.D.4. Devise and make widely available a toolkit for combating sexism, including relevant legislative provisions and explanations as to the institutional benefits of eliminating sexism, and examples of sexist acts and of good practices for the elimination of sexism. Employers and managers, union representatives and other relevant personnel should be reminded of their obligation to eliminate workplace sexism and of the remedial action available for victims.
- II.D.5. Urge commitment from the highest level (in the public and private sectors) for the promotion of an institutional culture that rejects sexism within the workplace, for instance through the drawing up of

9. Higher Council for professional equality between men and women (2016), "Kit to act against sexism – Three tools for the world of work", available at <https://rm.coe.int/16806fbc1e>.

10. Article 26.2 of the European Social Charter (revised) requires parties "to promote awareness, information and prevention of recurrent reprehensible or distinctly negative and offensive actions directed against individual workers in the workplace or in relation to work and to take all appropriate measures to protect workers from such conduct".

equality policies, internal guidelines and campaigns on different forms of sexism and deconstruction of stereotypes, increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and breaking the glass ceiling, including through temporary special measures such as targets and quotas.

II.D.6. Urge commitment from the highest level (in the public and private sectors) to promote awareness, information and prevention as regards sexist behaviour and to take all appropriate measures to protect workers from such conduct.

II.E. Public sector

Sexism in the public sector and reliance on gender stereotypes can result in the refusal of public services and unequal access to resources. At the same time, women working in the public sector, including those elected or members of decision-making bodies, at all levels, frequently face challenges to their dignity, legitimacy and authority owing to sexism and sexist behaviour.¹¹

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.E.1. Include provisions against sexism and sexist behaviour and language in internal codes of conduct and regulations, with appropriate sanctions for those working in the public sector, including elected assemblies.
- II.E.2. Support initiatives and investigations undertaken by parliamentarians, civil society organisations, trade unions or activists to address sexism in the public sphere.
- II.E.3. Promote the inclusion of gender equality provisions within the applicable legal framework as good public tender/procurement practice.
- II.E.4. Ensure training of public sector employees on the importance of non-sexist behaviour in working with the public, as well as with workplace colleagues. Such training should include the definition of sexism, its different manifestations, ways to deconstruct gender stereotypes and biases, and how to respond to them.
- II.E.5. Inform recipients of public services about their rights as regards non-sexist behaviour through, for example, awareness-raising campaigns and specific reporting schemes to identify and mediate possible problems.
- II.E.6. Promote the strengthening and implementation of internal disciplinary measures for sexism in the public sector and in all decision-making and political bodies, for instance through cutting or suspending responsibilities and funds, or through financial penalties.

II.F. Justice sector

Sexism and gender stereotyping within the civil, administrative and criminal justice and law-enforcement systems are barriers to the administration of justice. It can result in decision makers making misinformed or discriminatory judgments based on preconceived beliefs and inherent biases rather than on relevant facts.¹²

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.F.1. With due regard for the independence of the judiciary, ensure regular and adequate training for all judges and magistrates on human rights and gender equality, and the harm caused by gender bias and gender stereotyping and the use of sexist language, especially in cases involving violence against women and girls.¹³

11. For example, according to a 2018 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 85% of respondent women parliamentarians have suffered from psychological violence in parliament; women parliamentarians under 40 were more likely to be harassed; women parliamentary staff endured more sexual violence than women parliamentarians; and the majority of parliaments did not have mechanisms to enable women to speak out. Inter-Parliamentary Union and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (2018), "Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe", available at www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe.

12. "Council of Europe Plan of Action on Strengthening Judicial Independence and Impartiality" (CM(2016)36-final), "all efforts should be undertaken to fight gender stereotyping within the judiciary itself" (Action 2.4); OHCHR, "Eliminating judicial stereotyping – Equal access to justice for women in gender-based violence cases", 9 June 2014.

13. See Council of Europe (2017), "Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women's Access to Justice", available at <https://rm.coe.int/training-manual-women-access-to-justice/16808d78c5>.

- II.F.2. Provide for training of all law-enforcement personnel on sexism, cybersexism, sexist hate speech and violence against women; facilitate the reporting to police of such behaviour; and enhance police powers to seize and secure evidence of online abuse.
- II.F.3. Encourage national and international courts and tribunals to be receptive to third-party interventions and expert opinions on unfamiliar topics, such as sexism and gender stereotyping.
- II.F.4. Ensure that systems for reporting violations and access to law enforcement are secure, available and appropriate; alleviate financial charges or other deterrents that prevent victims from reporting or pursuing cases in the appropriate forum. Take steps to address the risk of revictimisation.
- II.F.5. Encourage legal professional bodies to organise public lectures and other events to raise awareness among legal professionals and other relevant stakeholders on sexism and gender stereotyping in the justice system.

II.G. Education institutions

Sexist messages shape our society and are imbued with and reproduced by education systems, where they should be challenged. Children and young people assimilate gender stereotypes through curricula, teaching materials, behaviour and language.¹⁴ Sexism may be embedded in the culture of education establishments at all levels from preschool to tertiary institutions. It can take many forms, for example: tolerance for and trivialisation of sexist imagery, language and expressions; intolerance of non-conforming gender behaviour; not addressing unconscious biases by staff and students; absent or inappropriate complaint and recording mechanisms; lack of sanctions for sexual harassment, including by other students. These embedded forms of sexism may influence subsequent education, career and lifestyle choices. States also bear responsibility for ensuring the accountability of private institutions for their actions, and there should be no exclusions for religious education institutions.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.G.1. Fully implement the provisions of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)13](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender mainstreaming in education.
- II.G.2. Ensure the inclusion of gender equality and non-discrimination and the elimination of sexism and sexist behaviour throughout all aspects of the educational process, including mechanisms and guidelines for reporting, responding to and recording incidents.
- II.G.3. Implement and/or support prevention campaigns regarding sexism and sexist behaviour in education establishments and ensure zero tolerance for such phenomena, including gender stereotyping and bullying, cyberbullying, sexist insults and gender-based violence.
- II.G.4. Organise events, including through State bodies, that address gender equality issues and ways of preventing and combating sexism, gender stereotypes and unconscious gender bias in all education establishments.
- II.G.5. Integrate a gender equality perspective in all aspects of teacher pre-service and in-service training courses, and in school management personnel courses.

With regards to teaching methodology, tools and curricula:

- II.G.6. Produce guidelines to ensure the integration of gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights teaching methodologies and tools into curricula at all levels of education, both public and private, from early childhood. This includes education for private life, in order to encourage children to be self-reliant and enhance responsibility in their relationships and behaviour – including consent and personal boundaries. Curricula should contain age-appropriate, evidence-based and scientifically accurate and comprehensive sex and sexuality education for girls and boys. The curricula should also cover intersecting forms of sexism, based for example on migrant status or disability.
- II.G.7. Encourage the development of a website with resources, good practices and teaching/learning materials, and a manual to help detect and eliminate gender stereotypes in educational materials for trainers, teachers and inspectors.

14. See conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe Conference “Combating gender stereotypes in and through education” (Helsinki, 9-10 October 2014). See conference report at <https://rm.coe.int/1680590f0>.

II.G.8. Promote special programmes and career counselling which support students in making study and career choices that are not based on gender stereotypes, including training for staff on gender stereotypes and unconscious biases.

II.H. Culture and sport

Sexism is manifest in many aspects of cultural life, especially through the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes. According to the United Nations International Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, cultural life encompasses ways of life, language, oral and written literature, music and song, non-verbal communication, religion or belief systems, rites and ceremonies, sport and games, methods of production or technology, natural and man-made environments, food, clothing and shelter, art, customs and traditions. Art and culture are essential shapers of attitudes and gender roles and it is therefore crucial to address sexism in these areas. In addition, according to the Istanbul Convention, culture, religion, custom or tradition, shall not be considered as justification for acts of violence against women and girls.

Issues that need to be addressed in sporting life include: the sexist attitudes of the media, sport organisations, coaches, sport leaders, athletes, etc.; sexist portrayals of women in sport, trivialising women's sporting achievements by depicting them in stereotypical roles or demeaning their sports; and sexism and sexist hate speech in sporting events.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.H.1. Produce and promote tools for combating sexism in the cultural and sport sectors, such as training material or tools on gender-sensitive language and communication.
- II.H.2. Reaffirm and implement Recommendations [CM/Rec\(2015\)2](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender mainstreaming in sport and [CM/Rec\(2017\)9](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality in the audiovisual sector.
- II.H.3. Encourage leading cultural and sporting figures to correct sexist assumptions or denounce sexist hate speech.
- II.H.4. Urge sport federations and associations and cultural institutions at all levels to prepare codes of conduct to prevent sexism and sexist behaviour which should include provisions for disciplinary action. Foster zero tolerance towards sexism and sexist hate speech in cultural and sporting events.
- II.H.5. Urge sports and cultural sectors at all levels to take concrete actions to promote gender equality and the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and men, girls and boys.
- II.H.6. Promote the broadcasting and coverage by the media, especially public media, of women's cultural and sports events on an equal footing as men's, and publicly celebrate women's achievements.¹⁵ Give visibility and promote positive role models of women and men, girls and boys, who participate in sports where they are under-represented.

II.I. Private sphere

Sexism within the family can contribute to reinforcing stereotypical roles, women's disempowerment, low self-esteem and the cycle of violence against women and girls. It can also influence life and career choices. Although traditional gender roles within the family (men as breadwinners, women performing household tasks) have generally shifted as more women have entered the paid workforce, factors contributing to change across families and States vary greatly. Sexist behaviour remains widespread in interpersonal relations and women continue to perform much more unpaid work in the home than men.

CEDAW Article 16 requires States parties to take appropriate measures to ensure equality between women and men within the family.¹⁶ The link between sexism and prevention of violence against women and girls reinforces the need to take action in the private sphere.

The recommended measures above, in particular those with respect to language and awareness raising, as well as those regarding the media, education and cultural sectors, are especially relevant to addressing sexism in the private sphere.

15. Such as the site "This Girl Can", which is a celebration of active women (www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/).

16. In addition, CEDAW Article 2.e requires States to undertake "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise".

However, sanctions for sexism within the family are inappropriate, unless behaviour reaches the threshold of criminality such as physical, psychological or economic violence against women.

The governments of member States are invited to consider the following measures:

- II.I.1. Introduce measures in relation to the conciliation between private and working life, including paid maternity and paternity leave, paid parental leave for women and men, universal access to quality and affordable childcare and other social services, and flexible working arrangements for both women and men. Improve access to services for the care of the elderly and other dependants. Organise campaigns to encourage the equal sharing of household and care responsibilities between women and men.
- II.I.2. Promote policies and measures supporting positive parenting which guarantee equal opportunities for children irrespective of their sex, status, abilities or family situation. Positive parenting refers to parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child that is nurturing, free of gender stereotyping, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves the setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child.
- II.I.3. Introduce measures and tools enhancing the skills of parents to deal with cybersexism and internet pornography.
- II.I.4. Promote training in recognising and addressing sexism and sexist behaviour as part of professional courses for those dealing with family and interpersonal relationships, for example, social services personnel including maternity welfare and childcare centres.

III. Reporting and evaluation

This Recommendation asks member States to monitor progress in its implementation and to inform the competent steering committee(s) of the measures taken and progress achieved.

Reporting should be regular and include information on:

- legal and policy frameworks, measures and best practices that address sexism, sexist behaviour, gender stereotyping and sexist hate speech, in particular in public spaces, the internet and media, the workplace, the public sector, the justice, education, sport and cultural sectors, and in the private sphere, including tools for reporting sexist behaviour, as well as disciplinary processes and sanctions;
- any comprehensive policy, or policy within the framework of a national strategy on gender equality, adopted to eliminate sexism and sexist behaviour, including definitions, indicators, national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- the work of any co-ordinating body established or designated to monitor implementation at the national level;
- research undertaken and supported to provide data on the incidence and consequences of sexism and sexist behaviour in the targeted areas, as well as the outcomes of any such research;
- national awareness-raising measures and campaigns undertaken at all levels, including on the media through which they were conducted.



Parliamentary Assembly





Resolution 1489 (2006)¹

Mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision making

1. In spite of the progress being made in Europe in terms of improving equal opportunities and rights for women and men, the Parliamentary Assembly notes a persistently low level of participation by women in decision-making processes. Women remain under-represented in Europe in national and regional parliaments, municipal councils, governments and posts of responsibility in political parties, the civil service and industry.
2. The Assembly considers that balanced participation by women and men in decision making is a precondition for improving the functioning of democracy and society, as are respect for women's rights, their financial autonomy and their education, in a context of shared responsibilities between women and men. Ongoing under-representation of women in political and economic decision making reflects a basic democratic deficit in both the member States of the Council of Europe and the broader international context.
3. The adoption of legislation or action plans or the introduction of institutional mechanisms aimed at equal opportunities between women and men seldom result in any real increase in female participation at the highest national and international decision-making levels. Many European countries fail to prioritise gender equality and even where the prohibition of discrimination against women is enshrined in legislation it is not always implemented in practice. This means that legislation on equality or gender balance has only very seldom achieved the anticipated results.
4. Persisting stereotypes and traditions or discrimination in terms of access to the labour market or political life – and “career progression” within one's chosen profession – are so many obstacles to female participation in the decision-making process. Few member States have achieved the objective set out in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation by women and men in political and public decision making, namely that “the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%”.
5. The Assembly is now convinced of the need to make up for lost time. In view of the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies, it is a matter of urgency to promote positive measures because those adopted hitherto to promote women's participation in decision making have had but limited impact. The Council of Europe and its member States must therefore identify the requisite mechanisms and good practices to promote the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2003)3 and alert the European decision-making bodies and public to the need for female participation in decision making.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee acting on behalf of the Assembly on 17 March 2006 (see [Doc.10743](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Cliveti).

6. The Assembly therefore invites Council of Europe member and observer States to:

- 6.1. Set the objective of achieving a gender balance in decision-making processes, with the initial target of a critical mass of at least 40% women in all governmental and elected bodies;
- 6.2. with this in mind, prioritise the implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3, which cannot be successfully put into practice without creating or reinforcing national and international mechanisms for promoting balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making processes and making this a priority in all ministries by implementing gender mainstreaming;
- 6.3. ensure gender-balanced participation in international delegations;
- 6.4. monitor and assess progress by regularly collecting, analysing and disseminating quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in the various public and private sector decision-making posts, and making public the number of women and men employed at the various civil service levels on an annual basis;
- 6.5. raise the awareness of the media on the issue of gender equality in order to prepare them for the role which they play in forming public opinion of the place of women in society and the impact of the media image of women on their level of participation in public and political life;
- 6.6. associate non-governmental organisations with the implementation of these information campaigns;
- 6.7. encourage access by women to decision making in all spheres of public life by smashing the “glass ceiling”;
- 6.8. reinforce institutional mechanisms;
- 6.9. revise the rules, procedures and, if necessary the electoral systems, in order to include the gender equality dimension with a view to achieving, by 2020, a minimum 40% representation of women in parliaments and other elected assemblies by urging early preparation of the charter for electoral equality proposed by the Assembly in its [Recommendation 1676 \(2004\)](#) on women’s participation in elections;
- 6.10. give financial incentives to those political parties which achieve the aim of a minimum 40% representation of women in the party’s decision-making bodies and amongst candidates elected;
- 6.11. take account of the equality dimension when adopting national, regional and local budgets;
- 6.12. ensure the appropriate implementation of existing legislation on gender mainstreaming strategy;
- 6.13. adopt a framework law and a governmental programme on gender equality and introduce machinery to assess the implementation of the law and the programme and provide for their decentralised implementation;
- 6.14. appoint a specialist on gender equality issues to any existing mediation bodies;
- 6.15. ensure that public institutions set the reasonable objective of ensuring a proportional number of 40% of women in top posts in order to remedy any imbalance in representation of women and men;
- 6.16. promote participation by representatives of civil society, particularly by those who show a keen interest in gender equality issues, in all political debate, thus creating a “bridge” for women between civil society and political life.

The Assembly invites all national and regional parliamentary assemblies to set up committees on equality between women and men.

7. The Assembly decides to ensure full implementation of the principle of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making processes in the Council of Europe and its organs and bodies, and therefore decides to:

- 7.1. reaffirm its Resolutions 1366 (2004) and 1426 (2005) on candidates for the European Court of Human Rights, in which it decided not to take account of lists of candidates that do not include at least one candidate of each sex, except where the candidates belong to the sex under-represented in the Court, that is, representing less than 40% of the total number of judges;
- 7.2. prepare a report, in consultation with those involved in the respective election procedures, on how the representation of both sexes can be realised for candidates to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the posts of Human Rights Commissioner, Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Secretary General of the Assembly;

- 7.3. continue implementing [Resolution 1348 \(2003\)](#) on gender-balanced representation in the Parliamentary Assembly and reinforce it with binding provisions, amending the Assembly Rules of Procedure if necessary;
- 7.4. encourage female parliamentarians to work together, above and beyond any national and political divisions, within the informal group of female Assembly members, in order to increase their representation in such posts of responsibility as committee, sub-committee and national delegation chairs and encourage them to put their names forward for rapporteurships and to add their names to lists of speakers;
- 7.5. invite the Bureau of the Assembly to propose solutions to problems identified by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, notably the under-representation of women in the bureaux of political groups, national delegations and committees, and the shortage of female rapporteurs;
- 7.6. encourage its political groups to take account of the gender equality principle in appointing the members of committee bureaux and speakers taking the floor on their behalf during debates;
- 7.7. encourage the national delegations to appoint more female Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and chairs of the national delegations themselves;
- 7.8. encourage the committees to appoint more female rapporteurs.



Recommendation 1898 (2010)¹

Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member States

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 1705 \(2010\)](#) on thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member States. It also recalls its previous resolutions and recommendations addressing different aspects of the electoral process.
2. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the governments of member States to give appropriate follow-up to the issues raised in [Resolution 1705 \(2010\)](#).
3. It recommends that the Committee of Ministers, taking advantage of its unique position as a forum for pan-European co-operation, contribute to the establishment of a common understanding of principles which qualify elections as “free and fair” in compliance with democratic standards, irrespective of the type of electoral system, and to ensuring their implementation in all elections throughout the Council of Europe area, thus establishing the world’s largest “free and fair election zone”.
4. Furthermore, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 4.1. initiate further reflection and work on the regulatory framework and specific regulations governing the electoral process in Council of Europe member States, in particular in respect to:
 - 4.1.1. electoral commissions;
 - 4.1.2. thresholds and any matters that could disadvantage minor parties and independent candidates from access to elected bodies;
 - 4.1.3. the impact of electoral systems on women’s access to elected bodies;
 - 4.1.4. equal access to elected bodies for persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups;
 - 4.1.5. the financing of electoral campaigns;
 - 4.1.6. voting procedures;
 - 4.1.7. election observation;
 - 4.2. consider the elaboration of a consolidated version of the principles governing electoral process.

1. *Assembly debate* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12107](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Daems). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting).



Recommendation 1899 (2010)¹

Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its [Resolution 1706 \(2010\)](#) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system, welcomes the Committee of Ministers' commitment to making equal participation of women and men in political life and in decision making in all spheres a reality, as evidenced by its Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, and its Declaration: Making gender equality a reality, of 12 May 2009.
2. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to continue its work in this field, and to encourage the member States of the Council of Europe to take the necessary measures in order to increase women's representation in politics by:
 - 2.1. reforming their electoral system to one more favourable to women's representation:
 - 2.1.1. in countries with a proportional representation list system, consider introducing a mandatory quota which provides not only for a high proportion of female candidates (ideally at least 40%), but also for strict rank-order rule (for example, a "zipper" system of alternating male/ female candidates), and effective sanctions (preferably not financial, but rather the non-acceptance of candidatures/candidate lists) for non-compliance, ideally in combination with closed lists in a large constituency and/or a nationwide district;
 - 2.1.2. in countries with majority or plurality systems, consider introducing the principle of each party choosing a candidate amongst at least one female and one male nominee in each party district, or find other ways of ensuring increased representation of women in politics, such as applying innovative mandatory gender quotas within political parties, or "all-women shortlists" or "twinned" constituencies, again accompanied by effective sanctions for non-compliance;
 - 2.2. associating the gender equality and anti-discrimination provisions in their constitutions and their electoral laws with the necessary exception allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex, if they have not already done so;
 - 2.3. accompanying these changes with measures such as gender-sensitive civic education and the elimination of gender stereotypes and "built-in" bias against women candidates, in particular within political parties, but also the media.
3. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct the competent committee to consider drafting an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) in order to enshrine the right to equality for women and men therein, as well as the necessary exception allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex.

1. *Assembly debate* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12097](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Err). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting).



Resolution 1706 (2010)¹

Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system

1. Equal participation of women and men in political life is one of the foundations of democracy and one of the goals of the Council of Europe, reaffirmed by the Organisation's Committee of Ministers as recently as May 2009.
2. Unfortunately, nearly thirty-five years after the first United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico City, and nearly fifteen years after the fourth in Beijing, women remain grievously under-represented in politics. Women still hold less than 20% of parliamentary seats and ministerial portfolios worldwide, and less than 5% of heads of state are women. This under-representation constitutes a waste of talent, and also weakens democracy and human rights.
3. There are many factors which lead to women's under-representation in politics. The most important factor is probably the decade-old backlash against women's rights. In Europe, societies remain characterised by attitudes, customs and behaviour which disempower women in public life, discriminate against them, and hold them hostage to prescribed role-models and stereotypes according to which women are "not suited" to decision making and politics. Unsocial meeting hours and a lack of child-care facilities for politicians can further deter women candidates – politics is tailored to fit men who do not bear even a minimum share of family responsibilities and who rely on their wives to keep the household running.
4. The attitudes, customs and behaviour described above influence a country's institutional, party and electoral landscape; but conversely, a change in that landscape can also impact on society's attitudes. Changing the electoral system to one more favourable to women's representation in politics, in particular by adopting gender quotas, can lead to more gender-balanced, and thus more legitimate, political and public decision making. This was already recognised by the Committee of Ministers in its Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, and reaffirmed by the Parliamentary Assembly on several occasions – most recently when awarding its first Gender Equality Prize in September 2009.
5. However, changing the electoral system is not enough: to be really effective, this change must be accompanied by measures such as gender-sensitive civic education and the elimination of gender stereotypes and "built-in" bias against women candidates, in particular within political parties, but also within the media. In some Council of Europe member States, constitutions also need to be changed in order to accompany gender equality and anti-discrimination provisions with the necessary exception allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex, without them being considered a violation of the equality principle.

1. *Assembly debate* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12097](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Err). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 January 2010 (6th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 1899 \(2010\)](#).

6. The Assembly considers that the lack of equal representation of women and men in political and public decision making is a threat to the legitimacy of democracies and a violation of the basic human right of gender equality, and thus recommends that member States rectify this situation as a priority by:
 - 6.1. associating the gender equality and anti-discrimination provisions in their constitutions and their electoral laws with the necessary exception allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex, if they have not done so already, as a precondition recognised by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe;
 - 6.2. fully implementing the recommendations contained in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3, in Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1676 \(2004\)](#) on women's participation in elections and [Resolution 1489 \(2006\)](#) on mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision making, and in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe's [Recommendation 273 \(2009\)](#) on equal access to local and regional elections, in particular as concerns changing electoral systems and introducing gender quotas;
 - 6.3. reforming their electoral system to one more favourable to women's representation in parliament:
 - 6.3.1. in countries with a proportional representation list system, consider introducing a legal quota which provides not only for a high proportion of female candidates (ideally at least 40%), but also for a strict rank-order rule (for example, a "zipper" system of alternating male and female candidates), and effective sanctions (preferably not financial, but rather the non-acceptance of candidacies/candidate lists) for non-compliance, ideally in combination with closed lists in a large constituency and/or a nation-wide district;
 - 6.3.2. in countries with majority or plurality systems, consider introducing the principle of each party choosing a candidate amongst at least one female and one male nominee in each party district, or find other ways of ensuring increased representation of women in politics, such as, for example, applying innovative mandatory gender quotas within political parties, or "all-women shortlists" or "twinned" constituencies, again accompanied by effective sanctions for non-compliance;
 - 6.4. limiting by law the number of political posts (at local, regional, national or European level) which can be held simultaneously;
 - 6.5. encouraging political parties to voluntarily adopt gender quotas and to take other positive action measures, also within their own decision-making structures, and especially in the party structure responsible for nomination of candidates for elections;
 - 6.6. accompanying these changes with measures such as gender-sensitive civic education and the elimination of gender stereotypes and "built-in" bias against women candidates, in particular within political parties, but also within the media and trade unions.

Resolution 1751 (2010)¹

Combating sexist stereotypes in the media

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes and deplors the fact that women are the victims of sexist stereotypes in the media. On the one hand, they are under-represented, if not invisible, in the media. On the other hand, the persistence of sexist stereotypes in the media – confining women and men to the roles traditionally assigned by society, that is, women at home, men in the professional and political world, women as victims or as sexual objects, men as competent and powerful leaders or as sexually driven – is a barrier to gender equality.
2. The sexist stereotypes conveyed vary from humour and clichés in the traditional media to incitement to gender-based hatred and violence on the Internet. Sexist stereotypes are too frequently trivialised and tolerated under the banner of freedom of expression. Furthermore, these stereotypes are often subtly conveyed by the media which reproduce the attitudes and opinions seen as the norm in societies where gender equality is far from reality. Accordingly, all too often, court action cannot be taken against sexist stereotypes nor can they be penalised by regulatory or self-regulatory authorities, except in cases of the most serious violations of human dignity.
3. Nonetheless, the impact of sexist stereotypes in the media on the formation of public opinion, especially among young people, is disastrous: these stereotypes perpetuate a simplistic, immutable and caricatured image of women and men, legitimising everyday sexism and discriminatory practices, and they may facilitate or legitimise the use of gender-based violence. As such, sexist stereotypes are a means of discrimination.
4. The media, a vital constituent of democracy, have a particular responsibility in this field to promote respect for human dignity, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and equality between women and men. Sexism, like racism and other forms of discrimination, has no place in the media. The Assembly reasserts its commitment to upholding the principles of human dignity and non-discrimination guaranteed in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). It further highlights the positive role that the media can play in promoting gender equality, referring in this connection to Recommendation No. R (84) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on equality between women and men in the media.
5. Moreover, education and training are absolutely essential in order to learn how to recognise, be aware of and overcome stereotypes. It is therefore crucial to inform children, from an early age, about combating discrimination and promoting gender equality.
6. The Assembly calls on member States to strengthen training and education activities and to:
 - 6.1. promote and launch awareness-raising campaigns;
 - 6.2. include, in gender equality legislation, provisions aimed at combating sexist stereotypes;

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2010 (27th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12267](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Stump). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2010 (27th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 1931 \(2010\)](#).

- 6.3. promote the introduction and/or effective functioning of regulatory or self-regulatory media authorities to guarantee respect for human dignity, to contribute to the fight against discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, and to promote not only diversity but also equality between women and men;
- 6.4. define, in dialogue and consultation with public and private partners in the profession, codes of good practice which proscribe sexist practices and images, promote the balanced presence of women and men in the media and include the gender perspective;
- 6.5. introduce quotas or other positive measures in the public media, together with objectives to improve the participation and representation of women;
- 6.6. put in place structures to monitor and/or strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms for reporting on stereotyped portrayals, drawing, where they prove effective, on the mechanisms for denouncing sexist advertising;
- 6.7. promote the introduction of a European system of monitoring and exchange of best practices;
- 6.8. place an emphasis on programmes aimed at young people to combat the stereotyped images of women and men and the sexist attitudes found in society;
- 6.9. promote, in schools, teaching that enables students to interpret the media and decode sexist stereotypes, and education concerning gender equality, in line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender mainstreaming in education and the Assembly's Resolutions 1557 (2007) on the image of women in advertising and 1669 (2009) on the rights of today's girls: the rights of tomorrow's women.
7. The Assembly furthermore calls on national parliaments to:
 - 7.1. combat sexist stereotypes in the media by adopting legal measures to penalise sexist remarks or insults, incitement to gender-based hatred or violence and defamation of an individual or group of individuals on the grounds of their sex;
 - 7.2. enable individual victims of gender-based discrimination, and also non-governmental organisations active in the field of gender-based violence and discrimination, to seize the courts or competent regulatory and self-regulatory authorities in order to challenge incitement to gender-based hatred or violence and defamation of an individual or group of individuals on the grounds of their sex;
 - 7.3. enable the public prosecution service to take action, ex officio, against incitement to gender-based hatred or violence and defamation of an individual or group of individuals on the grounds of their sex;
 - 7.4. encourage members of parliament to adopt non-sexist language and not to resort to sexist stereotypes in the course of their parliamentary activities;
 - 7.5. urge members of parliament to demand that female candidates and elected representatives have the same access to the media as their male counterparts.
8. The Assembly calls on member States to encourage measures to promote the visibility and importance of women in the media, including:
 - 8.1. the systematic analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, of the status and role of women in the media;
 - 8.2. the establishment of lists of female experts and consultants who could be called on by the media;
 - 8.3. the creation of competitions and prizes to reward those media which promote the balanced representation and participation of women and men;
 - 8.4. the setting up of think-tanks focusing on the promotion of equality between women and men, whose activities may be taken into account by media regulation bodies.
9. The Assembly calls on the media to:
 - 9.1. raise journalists' awareness and train them to include the gender equality dimension in journalism and in the media;
 - 9.2. promote the gender equality dimension in regulatory and self-regulatory authorities and, where appropriate, implement the recommendations contained in codes of good practice;
 - 9.3. favour a more balanced representation of women in the media and a non-stereotyped representation of women and men, thereby helping to overcome obstacles to gender equality.

Resolution 1898 (2012)¹

Political parties and women's political representation

1. In Council of Europe member States, women represent approximately 51% of the population and yet only approximately 23% of members of national parliaments are women. This average figure hides a huge gap between a handful of countries in which women's representation in parliament exceeds 40% (Andorra, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden) and many more countries in which it is under 20% (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey), or in some cases even under 10% (Georgia, Hungary, Malta, Russian Federation, Ukraine).
2. Although it is widely acknowledged that the low proportion of women in parliament affects its representativeness, introducing and implementing effective measures to redress this imbalance has proved to be a major challenge.
3. Thirteen member States have tried to tackle it by introducing in their electoral legislation the obligation for electoral lists to include a minimum proportion of women (legislated quotas), a measure that has been repeatedly supported by the Parliamentary Assembly in numerous texts, including [Resolution 1706 \(2010\)](#) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system.
4. In addition, many political parties from approximately 30 member States have voluntarily introduced gender quotas in order to promote women's chances of being elected, or other equivalent tools such as "all-women lists". Political parties have also resorted to a wealth of other measures to ensure women's active participation in their internal structures, place them in positions of visibility and responsibility and support their development.
5. The Assembly believes that, as key protagonists in pluralist democracies, political parties have a decisive role to play in enhancing women's political representation: in addition to ensuring strict compliance with electoral legislation, including on legislated quotas, and introducing voluntary measures, they are well placed to promote a change of culture conducive to gender equality in politics and in society at large.
6. On the basis of the positive experience of some of them, the Assembly recommends the following good practices to political parties in Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as partners for democracy:
 - 6.1. introducing a formal commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming in their statute;
 - 6.2. organising campaigns and activities to attract women's membership;

1. *Assembly debate* on 2 October 2012 (31st Sitting) (see [Doc. 13022](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Stavrositu). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 3 October 2012 (32nd Sitting).

- 6.3. setting up women-only structures and allocating them with adequate funding, and giving them control over how to spend it;
 - 6.4. ensuring that party structures which select candidates to stand for election are fully representative of society, and therefore include a proportional presence of women;
 - 6.5. ensuring maximum transparency in the procedure for the selection of candidates to stand for election;
 - 6.6. introducing a minimum quota of 40% of the under-represented sex in their executive decision-making bodies at all levels;
 - 6.7. in the case of proportional electoral systems, introducing a minimum quota of 40% of the under-represented sex in the electoral lists, accompanied by special gender safeguards as regards the ranking order and the positions at the top of the list, preferably through a zipper-system;
 - 6.8. in the case of majoritarian electoral systems, encouraging the shortlisting of candidates of the under-represented gender, if appropriate through “all-women shortlists” or priority lists with an equal number of people of either sex;
 - 6.9. setting up mentoring and training programmes to enhance the capacity of talented women to take up positions of political responsibility;
 - 6.10. setting up training programmes to strengthen women’s media skills and ensure that women members are given a fair chance to speak on behalf of the party on a broad range of issues;
 - 6.11. ensuring that, during electoral campaigns, the broadcasting time allocated to the party is proportionally shared by women and men candidates;
 - 6.12. setting up measures to enable members to reconcile political engagement and family commitments, for instance by providing free childcare during important party events or during electoral campaigns, and avoiding in so far as possible that party meetings take place at unsociable hours;
 - 6.13. setting up systems to regularly assess and discuss gender distribution in political party structures and party mandates, for instance by foreseeing that the party leader reports on this matter on an annual basis;
 - 6.14. trying to reach cross-party agreement on the need and ways to enhance women’s participation and representation in politics.
7. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 7.1. introduce legislation which makes it possible for parties to resort to positive action in support of the under-represented sex, also in the electoral field;
 - 7.2. set up special financial allocations for political parties which take positive action to promote women’s representation or participation, such as the introduction of gender quotas;
 - 7.3. introduce and consistently implement an effective system of sanctions against political parties which do not comply with gender-related legal obligations;
 - 7.4. conduct an audit to assess to what extent the electoral system is geared towards achieving gender equality;
 - 7.5. widely publicise the “Guidelines on political party regulations”, published in 2010 by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), which include examples of good practice while reviewing the main human rights instruments relevant for the issue of women’s political representation.
8. Recalling that women represent only 31% of its members and that they are under-represented in all the main positions of responsibility in the Assembly and its structures, the Assembly calls on its political groups to:
 - 8.1. take into account gender distribution in the context of the negotiations for the allocation of seats in committees’ bureaux and the appointment of candidates to be put forward by the groups, so as to ensure that the overall gender breakdown of committees’ bureaux includes 40% of the under-represented sex, both among committee chairs and vice-chairs;

- 8.2. pay increased attention to gender distribution in relation to all appointments/elections which take place within the groups, for group, Assembly and committee positions, with a view to achieving equal representation between women and men in all key positions of responsibility;
 - 8.3. ensure that the gender dimension is taken into account in all group discussions (gender mainstreaming);
 - 8.4. if they have not already done so, consider setting up an all-women structure;
 - 8.5. hold regular discussions on how to improve women's participation and representation in the work of the Assembly and its structures.
9. Finally, recalling its [Resolution 1781 \(2010\)](#) on a minimum of 30% of representatives of the under-represented sex in Assembly national delegations, in which it decided "to strengthen its dialogue with national parliaments on this question" and considered that "awareness-raising activities targeted at certain national delegations could also serve a useful purpose", the Assembly proposes to organise seminars on women's political representation for the parliaments of member States in which women's representation is below 10%.



Resolution 2111 (2016)¹

Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that, in spite of political commitments and legal obligations under international equality and non-discrimination standards, women are still vastly underrepresented in politics in most Council of Europe member States. In almost one third of them, the proportion of women among members of parliament does not reach 20%. Such low levels hinder the representative nature of elected bodies. It is time to step up efforts in order to address this issue. Whenever member States review their regulations governing elections, they should adopt measures to promote the participation of women that are able to have both a significant impact and be sustainable in the longer term.
2. Electoral quotas are the most effective means of achieving significant, rapid progress, provided that they are correctly designed and consistently implemented. Quotas should be adapted to the electoral system in force, set ambitious targets and be coupled with stringent sanctions for non-compliance.
3. Accompanying measures are also needed to help women overcome the hurdles they face in accessing and progressing in political life. They include training and awareness-raising activities, media time reserved for women politicians, policies to help reconcile private life and political activities and, last but not least, legislation and other measures in favour of more balanced sharing of family responsibilities between women and men.
4. Political factors determining women's participation in public life include the electoral system; political parties and their statutes; candidate selection criteria; positive measures such as quotas, whether legal or voluntary; regulations; and the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations. The most important factor is the enshrinement in the constitution of the principle of gender equality, subsequently reflected in legislation and in the action of governments and institutions.
5. Relevant social factors are the welfare system, parental leave schemes, the sharing of care and household duties, measures to balance work and family life and pension schemes.
6. Among the economic factors, the gender pay gap and access to professions and careers are particularly relevant, as is the financing of small businesses.
7. Cultural factors determine women's ability to participate in political life and in the economic and social development of a country. Education and training are crucial, as they are a precondition for acquiring the necessary skills and for eradicating the stereotypes which still prevent the achievement of full and real parity. These stereotypes are often related to a limited vision of women as mothers, with the role of homemaker.

1. *Assembly debate* on 21 April 2016 (16th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14011](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Elena Centemero). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 21 April 2016 (16th Sitting).

8. For women who are active in politics, access to the media, representation and media time allocated during electoral campaigns are crucial elements, as is campaign funding.

9. These elements should not be considered separately, as they are in fact closely intertwined. The right approach to achieving full gender equality in political life is a global, holistic one, encompassing quantitative and qualitative measures with a gender perspective in all areas of society.

10. Progress in the area of women's political representation has been achieved, in particular by means of reforms introducing equal constitutional rights such as the right to vote and to be elected, the right of access to public office and other fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right to property, inheritance, marriage, citizenship, etc. These constitutional rights are aimed at removing discrimination on grounds of gender or any other discrimination limiting equal citizenship. Provisions on political and civil rights for women in various constitutions are essential because they pave the way for gender equality and for equal citizenship and are the foundation for more specific action for equality.

11. The electoral system has an impact on women's political representation. Even if quotas are not applied, various electoral systems will in themselves work differently when it comes to the representation of women. Systems that are entirely or partially based on proportional representation appear to be more effective in promoting the election of female candidates than plurality/majority systems based entirely on single-member constituencies.

12. The Assembly reiterates that political parties have a crucial role to play in improving women's political representation. As they are in charge of submitting electoral lists and supporting the candidates, political parties are gatekeepers of elected positions and their choices determine to a large extent the final outcome of elections as concerns gender-balanced representation.

13. The media are also key players in determining the visibility of candidates and the general image of women. They should avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes, which are a barrier to the access of women to political life. They should also guarantee fair and proportionate coverage to political candidates based on gender quotas.

14. The Assembly underlines the importance of the gender dimension in election observation missions. It is committed to promoting this dimension with its international partner organisations in the framework of election observation missions both concerning the composition of missions, which should be gender balanced, and the observation reports which should systematically include a specific focus on women's participation in all stages of the electoral process.

15. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as partners for democracy, to spare no effort to increase women's political representation. Recognising the positive effect of the implementation of parity, they should, in particular:

15.1. consider introducing the principle of parity into their constitution or into their electoral legislation;

15.2. with regard to quotas and other positive measures:

15.2.1. include, if possible, in the legislation on the functioning of political parties regulations on the nomination of candidates aimed at ensuring equal gender representation;

15.2.2. introduce applicable sanctions for non-compliance with positive measures, such as the rejection of lists of candidates; ensure that independent bodies such as electoral courts or commissions supervise the implementation of quotas and other positive measures and apply sanctions; allocate adequate financial and human resources to ensure the proper functioning of relevant bodies;

15.2.3. attempt to introduce electoral legislation based on strict placement mandates or pairs of candidates of the opposite gender;

15.2.4. regularly monitor the impact of the implementation of quotas and other positive measures aimed at increasing the political representation of women and propose relevant recommendations;

15.2.5. encourage political parties to ensure transparency in procedures for the selection of candidates and enhance women's representation through gender-balanced candidate nomination boards and internal decision-making bodies at all levels;

- 15.2.6. encourage political parties to enhance women's participation, including through women's and men's associations, capacity-building efforts and mechanisms to support women in campaign financing;
- 15.3. with regard to accompanying measures:
 - 15.3.1. encourage parliaments and other elected bodies to adopt measures to reconcile their activities with the private life of members, such as compatible session and voting times, and childcare services;
 - 15.3.2. promote training and awareness-raising activities on gender equality targeting politicians irrespective of their gender; encourage political parties and other organisations to provide training for women politicians;
 - 15.3.3. consider introducing incentives to increase awareness of women in politics among the media, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to ensure fair coverage of women in politics in the media;
 - 15.3.4. ensure that part of the public funding of political parties, when applicable, is reserved for activities aimed at promoting women's participation and political representation and guarantee transparency in the use of the funds;
- 15.4. with regard to electoral management and observation:
 - 15.4.1. ensure that electoral commissions apply provisions on gender equality in the electoral process and involve them in the legislative process when reviewing electoral legislation;
 - 15.4.2. strengthen co-operation with international election observation missions as regards the participation of women in the electoral process and provide them with comprehensive information and gender-disaggregated data;
- 15.5. with regard to research and data collection:
 - 15.5.1. promote research and data collection on women's participation in political life at national, regional and local levels;
 - 15.5.2. promote the collection of gender-disaggregated statistical data by electoral management bodies and relevant administrations;
 - 15.5.3. regularly assess the impact of national legislation and policies aimed at increasing women's political participation and, when needed, propose the relevant amendments;
 - 15.5.4. collect, by means of surveys and research, data on the way in which men and women vote in order to identify, analyse and assess how men and women support candidates of their own gender;
- 15.6. with regard to civil society:
 - 15.6.1. recognise the role of civil society and involve NGOs in designing, promoting and monitoring measures to increase women's political representation, particularly as concerns awareness-raising campaigns, training activities and monitoring of the implementation of these measures;
 - 15.6.2. encourage and support NGOs involved in the area of elections to monitor and report on women's participation in the electoral processes.
16. The Assembly supports the principle of gender parity, which represents a further step beyond positive measures and the ultimate goal in political representation. Consistent enforcement of such a principle requires the State to go beyond positive measures and ensure equal representation of women and men in elected bodies and other institutions at all levels.



Resolution 2222 (2018)¹

Promoting diversity and equality in politics

1. Diversity is an inherent part of European societies and contributes to their richness. However, all too often, elected institutions fail to mirror this diversity, reinforcing the stereotype that politics is the reserve of a certain category of people, to the exclusion of others. Women, visible minorities, people with an immigration background, national minorities, young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and persons with disabilities remain under-represented in politics at local, regional, national and European level. This representation gap perpetuates the idea that politics is reserved for a select group, composed mostly of white, heterosexual men over 50.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that promoting greater representativeness of elected institutions would strengthen their democratic character, enhance the quality and legitimacy of their decision making and increase people's trust in the political system. It would also contribute to preventing and combating discrimination, sending out a powerful message in favour of equality and inclusion.
3. A wide range of measures are necessary to promote greater representativeness of the political system, some of which require legislative changes or imply the introduction of specific policies. Some could be better achieved through effective compliance with Council of Europe instruments, while others are within the remit of political parties which, to a large extent, act as gatekeepers to political institutions.
4. The Assembly has already adopted a wealth of resolutions laying down recommendations to improve the representativeness of elected bodies, focusing on aspects such as the balanced representation of women and men, the political participation and representation of national minorities, the political participation of young people, the political rights of persons with disabilities and the political participation of non-citizens.
5. This sectoral approach is important to identify specific measures targeting the situation of specific groups. However, the Assembly believes that the time has come to take a more holistic approach and look at the issue of diversity, equality and inclusion across the board, in order to ensure that parliaments and other elected institutions fully reflect the complex diversity of European societies.
6. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the member States to lay down the conditions to improve the participation and representation of people from a diverse background in the political system and, to this end, to:
 - 6.1. implement Assembly [Resolution 2111 \(2016\)](#) on assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 1 June 2018 (see [Doc. 14556](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Mr Killion Munyama).*

- 6.2. implement Assembly [Resolution 2155 \(2017\)](#) “The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue”;
 - 6.3. engage in a reflection on limiting the number of elected mandates held by one person and consider introducing an eligibility age corresponding to the age of the majority, with a view to encouraging young people to participate;
 - 6.4. sign and ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144), if they have not yet done so, and effectively implement them, as well as the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;
 - 6.5. provide civic education to all students, irrespective of the curriculum;
 - 6.6. disseminate information on participation in political life, including in the most common foreign languages;
 - 6.7. support the creation and functioning of civil society-led youth parliaments;
 - 6.8. launch awareness-raising campaigns on the benefits of diversity in politics and on deconstructing stereotypes with regard to the active participation of people from diverse backgrounds in politics.
7. The Assembly calls on national parliaments to ensure greater openness, transparency and inclusiveness in their work, while introducing internal measures to effectively tackle hate speech, and in particular to:
- 7.1. set up broad public consultations to take fully informed policy decisions;
 - 7.2. enhance co-operation and exchange of information with national equality bodies;
 - 7.3. introduce, where they do not exist, codes of conduct for members of parliament comprising effective disciplinary sanctions against hate speech, violence and incitement to violence;
 - 7.4. organise training for new members of parliament to provide guidance in their new responsibilities;
 - 7.5. set up internship programmes and ensure that their beneficiaries come from a variety of backgrounds;
 - 7.6. invite youth parliaments for regular exchanges on activities and co-operation.
8. Finally, the Assembly invites political parties to promote diversity and equality in their internal functioning and, to this end, to:
- 8.1. encourage the progression of people from diverse backgrounds within party structures;
 - 8.2. introduce mentorship programmes and ensure that the beneficiaries come from a variety of backgrounds;
 - 8.3. support the creation of group-specific fora within their ranks;
 - 8.4. ensure that equality across the board is mainstreamed in their political programmes and the public discourse of their leaders;
 - 8.5. ensure diversity across the board in the composition of their electoral lists;
 - 8.6. ensure that during electoral campaigns, candidates from diverse backgrounds are given equivalent opportunities and means for visibility and campaigning;
 - 8.7. refrain from using diversity as a tool of political instrumentalisation;
 - 8.8. set up internal mechanisms, where they do not yet exist, to prevent and sanction hate speech, incitement and recourse to violence by their members.

Recommendation 2152 (2019)¹

Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment

1. Recalling that gender-based violence affects women in all aspects of life and that the world of politics is no exception, the Parliamentary Assembly draws the attention of the Committee of Ministers to its [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment.
2. The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of gender equality, the fight against gender-based violence and the promotion of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, “Istanbul Convention”) among the priorities of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers.
3. The Assembly reiterates its unfaltering support for the Istanbul Convention and welcomes the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism. It looks forward to the organisation of a meeting bringing together the international and regional mechanisms to combat violence against women to be held in 2019 under the auspices of the Council of Europe.
4. The Assembly recalls that the 2018 World Forum for Democracy on the theme “Gender equality: whose battle?” enabled participants to discuss the links between greater gender equality, balanced representation of women and men in politics and the fight against gender-based violence.
5. As a follow-up to the World Forum for Democracy and to the regional study “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe”, which it jointly conducted with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2018, and considering that the specific issues of sexism and violence against women in politics have been largely neglected until recently, the Assembly encourages the Committee of Ministers to ensure that this issue is adequately taken into account in the context of the relevant Council of Europe intergovernmental work.
6. In order to strengthen monitoring and data collection, the Assembly:
 - 6.1. recommends that the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) address the issue of violence against women in politics in its country visits, reports and recommendations;
 - 6.2. encourages the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations to develop a model for national non-governmental organisations and civil society groups to collect data and information on violence against women in politics.

1. *Assembly debate* on 9 April 2019 (13th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14843](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 9 April 2019 (13th Sitting).

7. Likewise, with a view to enhancing knowledge, exchanging information and sharing promising practices, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to ensure that the issue of sexism and violence against women in politics is included in the dialogue between the appropriate Council of Europe bodies and other regional mechanisms to combat violence against women.

8. Finally, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to ensure that its activities in the area of electoral assistance and co-operation also cover sexism and violence against women in the context of elections.

Resolution 2274 (2019)¹

Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment

1. Gender-based violence affects women in all aspects of life. The world of politics is no exception. Sustained by the wave created by the #MeToo movement, many women politicians have started to speak up. Their individual testimonies and experiences are not isolated cases, but indicate the existence of a pattern of widespread and systematic gender-based violence against women in politics worldwide, as confirmed by the 2018 report “Violence against women in politics” by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its deepest concern at the findings of the regional study “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe”, which it jointly conducted with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2018. Based on confidential individual interviews with women parliamentarians and staff of national parliaments, this study reveals alarming levels of sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence in national parliaments, widespread under-reporting of such incidents and a lack of adequate mechanisms to report violence, protect victims and sanction perpetrators.
3. The Assembly reiterates its firm condemnation of all forms of gender-based violence against women as a human rights violation and a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. It confirms its unfaltering support to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS. No. 210, “Istanbul Convention”) as the most comprehensive international binding legal instrument in this field.
4. Sexism and violence against women in politics affect the foundations of democracy: they interfere with women’s right to fully and equally participate in political life and express their views, limit their right to vote and to run for public office, and ultimately undermine the representativeness and the legitimacy of elected institutions. Sexism and violence against women in parliament hold back women’s access to leadership positions and impair their ability to fulfil their elected mandate.
5. Despite its impact on victims, respect for fundamental rights and the good functioning of democracy, violence against women in politics as a specific phenomenon has so far received little attention. At societal level, sexism and sexual harassment are often dismissed as the price women must pay to be in politics. Both sexism and sexual harassment are so trivialised and ingrained that many women politicians are not even aware of being victims of a gender-specific form of violence. Others choose not to report acts of sexism and sexual harassment because this would undermine their political standing or harm their political parties. Overall, a culture of impunity for sexism prevails among parliamentarians.

1. *Assembly debate* on 9 April 2019 (13th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14843](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir). Text adopted by the Assembly on 9 April 2019 (13th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 2152 \(2019\)](#).

6. To redress this state of affairs, it is crucial to raise public awareness of sexism and violence against women in politics and to bring about a change of mindsets. In this context, the Assembly recalls the #NotInMyParliament initiative, which was launched by its President, Liliane Maury Pasquier, as a follow-up to the joint regional study conducted with the IPU, and gives the initiative its full support.

7. At the same time, to turn greater awareness into tangible change, the Assembly believes that a number of players in the political arena should strengthen their policies, legislation and other measures aimed at putting an end to sexism and violence against women in politics, and that data collection, monitoring and research in this area should be stepped up, at national and international level.

8. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls on the parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as on the parliaments who enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to:

- 8.1. draft, if they do not already exist, or revise the codes of conduct for their members with a view to setting out the explicit prohibition of sexist speech, sexist acts and sexual harassment and introducing sanctions for breaches of this obligation;
- 8.2. consider reviewing immunity rules which afford immunity from prosecution to members of parliament for sexual harassment and violence against women, unless this has already been done;
- 8.3. introduce complaint mechanisms to prevent and sanction sexual harassment, sexual violence and misconduct, ensuring that:
 - 8.3.1. they cover members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
 - 8.3.2. victims can report incidents in full safety and confidentiality and have fair consideration given to their case as expeditiously as possible;
 - 8.3.3. full independence of the complaint mechanism is guaranteed, free of party allegiances;
 - 8.3.4. the decisions of such complaint mechanisms can be followed by effective sanctions which are proportional to the gravity of the case;
 - 8.3.5. information about the terms of reference of complaint mechanisms, their powers and how to seize them is regularly disseminated through appropriate means to all members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
 - 8.3.6. statistics on the activities of such mechanisms are regularly published, guaranteeing confidentiality and including information on the number of cases submitted, the number of pending cases, the number of decided cases and the outcome of such cases;
- 8.4. introduce a mechanism providing confidential counselling for victims of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct, and disseminate information about it;
- 8.5. support the #NotInMyParliament initiative and replicate it at national level;
- 8.6. conduct surveys and public debates periodically to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, including in politics;
- 8.7. organise training on the issue of sexism and violence against women for members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
- 8.8. disseminate the 2018 IPU-Parliamentary Assembly regional study "Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe" among members of parliament and parliamentary staff through appropriate means, and consider translating it and carrying out a similar national study;
- 8.9. ensure that men and women parliamentarians alike are involved in efforts to prevent and respond to sexism and violence against women in politics and female parliamentary staff.

9. Furthermore, the Assembly invites the parliaments of the States Parties to the Istanbul Convention to provide the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) with information concerning violence against women in politics, including in political parties, in parliaments and in the context of the electoral process, in light of the overarching general obligations in the area of preventing violence against women set out in Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention.

10. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to:
 - 10.1. provide the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women with information on violence against women in politics, including in political parties, in parliaments and in the context of elections;
 - 10.2. support research on the links between sexism, violence against women in politics and the political representation of women;
 - 10.3. support activities, projects and observatories aimed at collecting data on sexism and violence against women in politics, including in parliaments and in the context of elections;
 - 10.4. consider introducing specific legislation on sexism and violence against women in politics.
11. The Assembly calls on political parties at national level and its political groups to commit to rejecting all forms of violence against women in politics, enshrine this commitment in their codes of conduct/statutes and set up effective disciplinary procedures against members who act in breach of this commitment.
12. As regards its own work and functioning, the Assembly recalls the applicability to its members of Rule No. 1292 of 3 September 2010 on the protection of human dignity at the Council of Europe and the relevance of the Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly, which sets out the obligation to “respect the values of the Council of Europe and the general principles of behaviour of the Assembly and not take any action which would cause damage to the reputation and integrity of the Assembly or its members”.
13. With this consideration in mind, the Assembly:
 - 13.1. asks the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to:
 - 13.1.1. regularly bring to the attention of the members of the Assembly the Council of Europe rules on the protection of dignity which are applicable to them, in writing and by organising training;
 - 13.1.2. provide additional training on the issue of sexism and violence against women for Parliamentary Assembly delegates, following the example of the European Parliament;
 - 13.2. calls on its Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to modify the Code of conduct for members of the Assembly with a view to:
 - 13.2.1. introducing the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct, as well as the obligation to take account of the Council of Europe rules on the protection of dignity and to co-operate with the relevant mechanisms and take account of the decisions that might be taken as a result of a harassment procedure;
 - 13.2.2. ensuring that the recommendations of the Commission against Harassment and/or decisions of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe resulting from the application of Rule No. 1292 can be followed up by the Assembly in the context of its Code of conduct;
 - 13.3. asks the Bureau of the Assembly to ensure that, in the context of election observation by the Assembly, the issue of violence against women, and notably sexism and sexual harassment, is systematically taken into account and is included in future revisions of the Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly.
14. The Assembly takes note of the planned revision of Rule No. 1292 with a view to enhancing its effectiveness and recalls the need for a coherent application of this rule and of the Code of conduct for members of the Assembly.



Resolution 2275 (2019)¹

The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance

1. Europe is facing an upsurge in hate speech, encompassing all forms of expression which spread, incite to, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, immigrants and people of immigrant origin, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.
2. The political arena is no exception to this worrying trend: hate speech and intolerance have become part of political discourse, where they are used not only by populist and extremist groups but increasingly by representatives of movements and parties across the political spectrum. Information technology has significantly contributed to spreading and amplifying hate speech, therefore trivialising it in the eyes of the general public.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is concerned by the threat posed by hate speech, which dehumanises the individuals and groups it targets, making them more vulnerable to stigmatisation, discrimination and violence. Hate speech erodes the social fabric and hinders peaceful living together in diversity. It produces a feeling of exclusion among minority groups and can contribute to alienation, marginalisation, the emergence of parallel societies and, ultimately, radicalisation. When used in political debate, it becomes a barrier to constructive dialogue between political forces and it undermines democratic values.
4. The Assembly considers that the most effective way of preventing hate speech is to strengthen adherence to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to promote a model of society that embraces diversity and respects human dignity. Politicians, along with other public figures, have a vital role to play in this process. Their status and visibility allow them to influence a wide audience and to define to a significant degree the themes and the tone of public discourse.
5. In fact, politicians have both a political obligation and a moral responsibility to refrain from using hate speech and stigmatising language, and to condemn promptly and unequivocally its use by others, as silence may be interpreted as approval or support. The enhanced protection of freedom of expression that they enjoy also strengthens their responsibility in this area.
6. The Assembly believes that a wide range of measures is necessary to counter hate speech, ranging from self-regulation, particularly by political movements and parties, and in the statutes and rules of procedure of national and local elected bodies, to civil, administrative and criminal legislation prohibiting and sanctioning its use, which should be considered as a last resort. Restrictions and sanctions should be proportionate and should not be misused to silence minorities or to suppress criticism.

1. *Assembly debate* on 10 April 2019 (14th and 15th Sittings) (see [Doc. 14845](#), Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Elvira Kovács). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 10 April 2019 (15th Sitting).

7. Self-regulatory instruments adopted by political parties, such as statutes and charters, are particularly effective and more likely to be respected due to their voluntary nature. The Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, drawn up in 1998 under the auspices of the European Union Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia, provides guidance for self-regulation by political parties in this area. To be relevant in the present times, however, it should be updated to take into account different forms of hatred, based on all grounds, and the technical means currently used to spread it. It should also redress one of its main weaknesses, namely the lack of measures addressing breaches of the charter.

8. The media, including social media, should play an important role in limiting the impact of hate speech by providing accurate, unbiased information and not giving excessive visibility to instances of stigmatising or abusive language, including by political leaders.

9. The Assembly refers to the exchange of letters between the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the main players in information technology to promote an open and safe internet, where human rights, democracy and the rule of law are respected in the online environment, as a useful example of dialogue and co-operation with internet intermediaries.

10. The Assembly commends the work conducted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in this area and supports, in particular, its General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on Combating Hate Speech which indicates a wealth of measures on preventing and combating hate speech, providing support for those targeted by it, and calling for self-regulation by public and private institutions, including elected bodies and political parties.

11. The Assembly recalls its No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, a network of parliamentarians who commit to taking an open, firm and proactive stand against racism, hatred and intolerance on whatever grounds and however they manifest themselves, as an example of a forum for discussion and exchange of good practices that should be replicated in national parliaments. It also recalls the No Hate Speech Movement and that, although the Council of Europe campaign came to an end in 2017, its national committees continue to be active.

12. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to:

12.1. monitor the situation as regards hate speech, including in political discourse, and collect accurate, comparable data on its nature and prevalence, disaggregated by grounds of discrimination, target groups, types of perpetrators and channels used;

12.2. implement ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 15, by adopting relevant administrative, civil and, as a last resort, criminal law provisions;

12.3. encourage political movements and parties to adopt self-regulation instruments, such as codes of conduct and ethical charters, which prohibit and sanction the use of hate speech by their members;

12.4. encourage the media to provide accurate, unbiased and responsible information in matters relevant to individuals or groups that are vulnerable to discrimination and hatred;

12.5. engage in dialogue and co-operation with internet intermediaries, in particular social media, to encourage them to adopt and apply self-regulation texts to prevent and sanction the use of hate speech and commit to removing offensive content;

12.6. promote information and awareness-raising activities addressed to politicians and elected representatives at all levels, focusing on initiatives and measures adopted to counter hate speech and intolerance, including at international level, such as the Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society and the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance;

12.7. provide public officials with training on fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination, particularly in schools and other educational institutions and in contexts where institutional discrimination may take place, including in police forces and the judiciary, the armed forces, legal services and the medical profession;

12.8. promote awareness-raising activities targeting the general public on racism and intolerance, and hate speech specifically;

12.9. support the national committees of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign;

- 12.10. encourage politicians to disseminate, including on social media, positive messages in relation to minorities in their countries.
13. The Assembly calls on the parliaments of member States, as well as the parliaments enjoying the status of observer or partner for democracy, to:
 - 13.1. provide parliamentarians and other political actors with information and training on how to prevent, identify and react to hate speech on- and offline, as well as on human rights, equality and non-discrimination, and the malignant use of social networks and other media, including disinformation;
 - 13.2. ensure that their statutes and rules of procedure contain specific provisions against hate speech and stigmatising language, sanctions for non-compliance and accessible complaints mechanisms;
 - 13.3. establish study groups with the participation of parliamentarians, experts and civil society representatives, to monitor hate speech and recommend measures to address it at national level.
14. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that the 25th anniversary of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which falls in 2019, provides a good opportunity to update the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, including measures for breaches of the charter, and to relaunch it.



Resolution 2339 (2020)¹

Upholding human rights in times of crisis and pandemics: gender, equality and non-discrimination

1. The Covid-19 pandemic is more than a global health crisis. Its impact on human lives around the world has already been devastating, with millions of people infected and hundreds of thousands dead. But its ramifications have also extended far beyond the realm of health. The pandemic has affected the functioning of our democracies and impacted human rights across the spectrum. It has inflicted severe damage on the global economy, destroying or imperilling the livelihoods of millions of people.
2. The crisis has cast a harsh spotlight on structural inequalities already present in our societies. Women, over-represented in the health and care professions, have played a disproportionate role on the medical and care frontlines, while often remaining invisible as experts in these fields and under-represented in government bodies set up to deal with the crisis and in the media. People living in institutionalised settings, including many elderly people and persons with disabilities, have been highly vulnerable to the virus. Racialised people, including people of African descent, Roma, migrants and their children, as well as LGBTI people, have been disproportionately affected due to persisting inequalities in health status and access to healthcare. These inequalities are often caused in large part by socio-economic status, racism, marginalisation and deeply ingrained discrimination in fields such as housing, employment and education.
3. The pandemic has not simply brought existing structural inequalities into the open, however, it has also exacerbated them. While government responses to the pandemic have generally been taken with the legitimate purpose of protecting public health, a one-size-fits-all approach has often been taken, with little or no consideration being given to how different groups or different situations might need to be accommodated.
4. As a result, many measures taken have aggravated inequalities, cut some people off from vital services and exposed others to new dangers. People's ability to implement preventive measures such as frequent handwashing and physical distancing depends directly on their living conditions, in particular where they lack access to running water or where several generations live together in an overcrowded space. Yet many governments failed to provide assistance to people in these situations. The linguistic needs of persons belonging to national minorities, and the need to provide information to persons with disabilities in a format accessible to them, were also rarely taken into account, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic.
5. Lockdown measures increased the risks of domestic and gender-based violence, as women were confined to their homes with their abuser. At the same time, women's shelters and other support systems and services became less accessible. In parallel, the focus on emergency responses to the pandemic left many without access to essential healthcare services, for example in the field of sexual and reproductive health

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 13 October 2020 (see [Doc. 15129](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Petra Stienen).*

rights. After years of progress towards gender equality, in many countries, women have shouldered even greater burdens during the crisis due to the combination of childcare, home schooling, unpaid care work and household tasks.

6. Lockdown enforcement measures have often targeted populations already affected by ethnic profiling, while closures of public spaces and reductions in public transport services have penalised persons in lower socio-economic categories who have no alternatives at their disposal.

7. The closure of non-essential businesses during lockdowns has, moreover, amplified structural discrimination against groups already over-represented in lower-paid and less secure jobs or working in the informal economy, including women, people of African descent, Roma and Travellers, migrants and LGBTI people, whose livelihoods have been restricted or cut off altogether, and who have been put at increased risk of poverty. Others have been forced to continue working in unsafe conditions. Young people's access to the labour market has been halted and the closure of schools hit first and hardest children with disabilities and those children who had the least access to electricity, necessary IT equipment and the internet; those who did not speak the official language of the country fluently; and those whose parents were least able to provide additional support. The socio-economic impact of the crisis risks having long-term effects.

8. The Parliamentary Assembly condemns the fact that some political and religious leaders have actively stigmatised and incited hatred against certain groups in the context of this crisis, depicting them as vectors of contagion or even as the cause of the pandemic itself. It deplores the fact that the pandemic has led to increased manifestations of racism and prejudice against many groups, including people of Asian origin, Roma and Travellers, people of African descent, migrants and LGBTI people.

9. Following the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the United States, large, peaceful protests were held in many European cities to denounce racism and police violence. Many observe a link between these demonstrations and feelings of exclusion, fear of more control by the police and increased awareness of systemic discrimination and institutional racism that were exposed during the Covid-19 crisis.

10. The Assembly underlines that it is not enough to see and understand where things have gone wrong; it is not enough to recognise the structural inequalities that have left some far more exposed than others and that have wreaked much greater havoc on livelihoods among some groups. The discriminatory effects of the pandemic will not disappear overnight. If we do not respond to the lessons we have learned, these effects will persist in the medium and longer terms, and those most harmed by the current crisis will also be the hardest hit by the next one. Governments must ask themselves: when we designed measures to respond to this crisis, who was at the table to discuss and debate decisions and emergency laws? What data did we have at our disposal? Whom and what did we miss? How can we ensure that we do not miss them again?

11. It is by no means certain when the pandemic will end. Some countries are still facing high numbers of new cases, and clusters have reappeared in countries where the situation appeared to be under control. But work must now begin to improve responses and bring about the transformation to a more inclusive society that this crisis demands.

12. In light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on all Council of Europe member States to:

12.1. sign and ratify, if they have not yet done so, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"), the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163), the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints (ETS No. 158), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148);

12.2. strengthen their efforts to implement and promote these treaties in line with the Assembly's [Resolution 2289 \(2019\)](#) "The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges", [Resolution 2262 \(2019\)](#) on promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and [Resolution 2196 \(2018\)](#) on the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe;

12.3. in the case of States already parties to the European Social Charter (revised), expand the scope of the provisions by which they undertake to consider themselves bound.

13. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as those enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly:
 - 13.1. in order to guarantee that immediate crisis responses are comprehensive and inclusive and take full account of the diversity of our societies and of the differing impacts that the same measures may have on different groups, to:
 - 13.1.1. ensure that crisis response bodies not only bring together the necessary technical expertise but are also gender-balanced and representative of the full diversity within society, and that they regularly consult equality bodies, civil society organisations and experts active in researching and promoting equality;
 - 13.1.2. base the measures taken to respond to crises on objective data, collected and disaggregated by grounds such as gender, "race", national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, disability, age and health status, while fully respecting international standards on the protection of personal data, and with full respect for the principles of confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary self-identification;
 - 13.1.3. plan, budget for and provide from the outset additional support to persons who will need it, such as speakers of minority or non-official languages and persons with disabilities, in order that they have equal access to information about measures they can take to protect themselves from the crisis and about new obligations stemming from it;
 - 13.1.4. plan, budget for and provide from the outset additional support to persons who may face particularly negative consequences due to measures taken in response to the crisis, or new barriers to accessing services on which they depend, as a result of their gender, "race", national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, disability, age and health status;
 - 13.1.5. place the safety of victims of gender-based and domestic violence at the heart of all measures and policies taken in response to crises;
 - 13.2. as regards the recovery period, to:
 - 13.2.1. ensure that teams working on recovery measures are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive, that they take an evidence-based approach and plan, budget and provide for differential measures to be taken wherever necessary to guarantee equality and non-discrimination, as outlined above with respect to immediate crisis responses;
 - 13.2.2. encourage businesses to maintain and strengthen measures in place to promote diversity and inclusion in access to employment and in the workplace, in line with the Assembly's [Resolution 2257 \(2019\)](#) on discrimination in access to employment and [Resolution 2258 \(2019\)](#) "For a disability-inclusive workforce";
 - 13.2.3. ensure that work on and investment in preparedness for future crises is comprehensive and inclusive;
 - 13.2.4. promote intergenerational and interethnic solidarity in the various fields adversely affected by this pandemic;
 - 13.3. in order to strengthen measures taken to address existing structural inequalities, to:
 - 13.3.1. ensure that equality data are regularly collected and disaggregated by grounds such as gender, "race", national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, disability, age and health status, while fully respecting the Council of Europe's data protection standards;
 - 13.3.2. mainstream equality into all aspects of their work;
 - 13.3.3. systematically use gender-sensitive and similar equality-sensitive budgeting tools to assess the impact that measures will have on different groups in the population and the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of these measures;
 - 13.3.4. strengthen national equality bodies and ensure that they have the necessary competences, resources and legal and structural guarantees to carry out their work independently.

14. The Assembly calls on all national parliaments to mainstream equality issues into the work they undertake in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and beyond it, by:
 - 14.1. ensuring that the composition of any parliamentary inquiry bodies set up to examine government and other responses to the pandemic is gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive;
 - 14.2. considering advocating for the establishment of an inquiry specifically focusing on the equality issues thrown into the spotlight by the pandemic itself, and those aggravated by government responses to it;
 - 14.3. using their role in scrutinising the work of executive authorities to question the government regularly about the inclusivity of measures taken in response to the pandemic, and the work of the bodies designing and evaluating these measures;
 - 14.4. ensuring that equality and non-discrimination issues are systematically integrated into all parliamentary work, using a holistic and intersectional approach.
15. The Assembly calls on political parties and their leaders to:
 - 15.1. ensure that their own membership and governing structures are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive up to and including the highest levels, taking full account of the recommendations made in texts it has previously adopted, and in particular its [Resolution 2111 \(2016\)](#) on assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation and [Resolution 2222 \(2018\)](#) on promoting diversity and equality in politics;
 - 15.2. condemn and work to prevent all forms of hate speech, in line with its [Resolution 2275 \(2019\)](#) on the role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance.





Congress of Local and Regional Authorities





Recommendation 288 (2010)¹

Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

1. The declarations and action plans adopted by the heads of state and government at Council of Europe summits have reminded us that equal participation by women and men is a vital part of democracy. Despite all these activities, the Council of Europe's action to promote and implement gender equality should be increased to bridge the gap between legal and actual equality, both within the Council of Europe and in individual member States.

2. Similarly, balanced participation by women and men in political decision making, which is a vital requirement for any democratic society, is not yet a reality in all the national parliaments. The average representation of women in lower or single houses of parliament in Europe is only 19.3%.² Only three Council of Europe member States³ have achieved balanced gender representation (a minimum of 40% of either sex) and seven others⁴ have attained the threshold of 30% women.⁵

3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe fully backs the recent Committee of Ministers declaration "Making gender equality a reality",⁶ and reaffirms its long-standing commitment to equality between women and men,⁷ including in the political and public administration spheres. In this connection, it welcomes the fact that, in accordance with its Charter,⁸ ever since its 15th session (May 2008), the delegations of all member States have complied with the provisions on the minimum participation of at least 30% of the under-represented sex. The Congress expresses its determination to continue along this road and it encourages the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to accede to the motion for a resolution tabled by a number of its members in June 2008,⁹ in order to guarantee a balanced representation of women and men in all national delegations.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 19 March 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(18)10, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: B.-M. Lövgren (Sweden, L, ILDG).
 2. Asia: 18.3%; Sub-Saharan Africa: 18%.
 3. Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden.
 4. Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Iceland and Norway.
 5. Inter-Parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org): conclusions of the report on the impact of electoral systems on the representation of women in politics. European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), June 2009.
 6. Committee of Ministers Declaration, Madrid, 12 May 2009.
 7. Recommendation 148 (2004) on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions.
 8. Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (adopted 2 May 2007). See appendix to the Statutory Resolution CMRes(2007)6, Article 2 paragraph 2.d.
 9. Motion for a resolution from Ms Err and others on requiring a minimum of 30% of each sex on the Assembly's national delegations: a new imperative (Doc. 11664, 25 June 2008).

4. Furthermore, now that the Council of Europe has prepared the ground by defining such concepts as “democratic parity” and by developing various strategies, the Congress welcomes the action taken by the Council of Europe administration to promote parity, and encourages the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men¹⁰ to continue its efforts to improve the balance in the representation of the Organisation’s staff at all hierarchical levels (notably the goal of achieving a 40% threshold in the higher grades).¹¹
5. Moreover, the Congress considers that governments are primarily responsible for ensuring the promotion of equality between women and men. Local and regional authorities at all levels of governance, however, are responsible and must be involved in the defence and achievement of this equality and in the process of social and cultural change that it demands.
6. Accordingly, it recommends that member States reinforce the ability of national, regional and local authorities to carry out gender equality policies, in particular by means of:
- a. legislation requiring the authorities to take the gender dimension into account in all their activities at all levels, assessing the impact and making this available to the public (equality indices);
 - b. assistance, including financial aid, to enable municipalities and regions to introduce gender mainstreaming into their departments, possibly through special programmes¹² geared to promoting a society based on sustainable gender equality via fair distribution of powers, resources and services of equal value among women and men;
 - c. incentives to women to become and remain involved in political life and accede to responsibilities, as well as measures to help them stand for election (establishing quota systems and ensuring their implementation, combined with other types of positive action);
 - d. an analysis, by the relevant bodies, of the presence of female election candidates in the media and the financing of awareness campaigns which encourage the election of women;
 - e. parity at all levels within the public administration, clear anti-discrimination messages and resources earmarked for developing specific tools and training, taking account of respect for equality in civil service careers and training civil servants responsible for preparing budgets in gender budgeting.¹³
7. It also invites the Council of Europe Development Bank to take account of the specific needs of women and men in the projects which it finances and of their gender-specific impact.
8. Lastly, the Congress welcomes the work of the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG), particularly its willingness to close the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality with positive measures, gendermainstreaming and action against stereotypes, thanks to education and the media. It invites the ministers who will be meeting in Baku on 24 and 25 May 2010 to take the local and regional level into account in addressing these matters.

10. Set up in March 2004 by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

11. Articles 3 and 13 of the Staff Regulations (non-discrimination), Article 22 of Annex II to the Staff Regulations (equal opportunities).

12. Similar to the programme for sustainable gender equality run by the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities (SALAR).

13. See Council of Europe, Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs: *Gender budgeting: practical implementation. Handbook*, April 2009.

Resolution 303 (2010)¹

Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

1. All Council of Europe member States guarantee legal equality between women and men, including the right to stand for election, to vote and to be elected. In practice, however, there are considerable restrictions on these rights.
2. In European local and regional political life, elected representatives do not always represent the diversity of the whole population.
3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe considers equality between men and women as an integral part of human rights and as a fundamental criterion for democracy. This presupposes the visibility, empowerment and equal participation of both sexes in all the fields of private and public life. Thanks to their proximity to the population, local and regional authorities can take the decisions which promote gender equality and influence citizens' everyday lives.
4. They can act in sectors of activity relating to local and regional governance, particularly in their political role and their role as employers, in the field of public procurement, service provision, sustainable development and town planning, access to municipal amenities and international co-operation.
5. In accordance with the Committee of Ministers' decisions,² the Congress undertakes to respect the principle of equality between women and men within its own institution. In this connection, it welcomes the fact that since its 15th session in May 2008, in pursuance of its Charter,³ the delegations of all member States have comprised a minimum of 30% women, taking full and substitute members together. Being resolved to continue along this same road, the Congress:
 - a. invites national delegations henceforth to apply this minimum level both to full members and to substitute members, and as far as possible to attain a level of 40% in compliance with Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;
 - b. as part of the implementation of this resolution, decides to regularly monitor the gender distribution within the Congress and to publish the data (covering full and substitute members, chairs of committees, political and working groups and rapporteurs) at each session.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 19 March 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(18)10, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: B.-M. Lövgren (Sweden, L, ILDG).

2. 1040th meeting, 5 November 2008.

3. Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (2 May 2007), Article 2, paragraph 2.d.

6. Furthermore, the Congress decides to:
 - a. ask its bodies, observers and partners, to provide for gender mainstreaming in all their activities;
 - b. include the gender dimension in the founding texts of any body set up at the initiative of the Congress and ensure that this dimension is taken into account in such body's activities;
 - c. to alert its Secretariat to gender equality and provide staff training with a view to taking account of this issue in all Congress activities.
7. Furthermore, the Congress recalls its Resolution 176 (2004) on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions, and considers that this strategy must be backed up with practical action.
8. The Congress accordingly invites local and regional authorities to give active impetus and political support by:
 - a. encouraging women to stand for elections and fulfil their mandates in order to make councils and assemblies more representative of populations (diversity of generations, origins and experiences encountered in the community) by:
 - I. ensuring the renewal of persons having political mandates;
 - II. inducing elected representatives to encourage and attract women to stand for election;
 - III. ensuring that no one has to use their own private funds because they have to campaign for or hold office;
 - b. building or developing their capacity to deliver measures and services taking account of gender differences by:
 - I. gathering information on who uses and benefits from their services and the nature of these services. broken down by gender and by other relevant categories;
 - II. designing and adopting action plans on promoting equality, involving women's organisations: setting clear goals, drawing up a timetable and establishing a monitoring system, while ensuring that the elected representatives are kept informed and that managers are held to account for the requisite progress;
 - III. providing the individuals working for local and regional authorities with the tools and support to discharge their duties effectively and equitably;
 - IV. training the elected representatives and administrative staff in the equality issue and in such tools as gender budgeting;
 - V. helping reconcile private and working life (adapting meeting timetables, supporting child care, etc.);
 - VI. helping women accede to higher-level administrative posts;
 - VII. alerting and involving trade unions for local and regional officials;
 - c. show care with their internal and external communication and that of their elected representatives by:
 - I. combating gender stereotypes;
 - II. rejecting sexist behaviour in political life, which would be unacceptable in any other context, and prohibiting discriminatory attitudes;
 - III. providing a positive image of both female and male elected representatives, and making their action more visible by means of information campaigns on the role of such representatives;
 - d. facilitating access by women, especially those standing for election or elected representatives, to the local media.
9. The Congress proposes a new approach for political parties whose involvement is vital if women are to be able to stand for election, including:
 - a. in selecting candidates, prioritise an ability to represent the concerns and experiences of the communities rather than long experience as elected representatives;

- b.** conduct positive action in order to increase the number of women selected and to publicly show their support for female candidates;
- c.** have a gender balance in the selection of executive roles rather than relying on seniority alone;
- d.** encourage the setting up of women's networks.

10. Lastly, the Congress recommends that European local and regional authorities formalise their commitment to greater equality for all by signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life initiated by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)⁴ and by implementing this charter in their respective areas on the basis of the tools (guides and indicators) proposed for evaluating progress.

4. See www.ccre.org.



Recommendation 390 (2016)¹

Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels

1. Achieving equality in political representation between men and women – who represent 50% of the world's population – is vital for the smooth functioning and quality of representative democracy and a prerequisite for fair and equitable political participation.
2. All Council of Europe member States guarantee legal equality between women and men, including the right to stand for election and to be elected. In practice, however, there are numerous factors that hamper women's opportunities to take responsibility in public life and hold elected office. Women in Europe are often discriminated against and face negative attitudes which disempower them in public and political life.
3. The Council of Europe's pioneering work in the field of human rights and gender equality has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework which can considerably advance women's rights and bring member States closer to real gender equality.
4. In 2003, the Committee of Ministers defined balanced participation in its Recommendation Rec(2003)3 to member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making as a minimum representation of 40% of both sexes in all decision-making bodies in political or public life. This requirement has been reaffirmed in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017.²
5. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ("the Congress") has based its policies on gender equality on the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3 and the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 and on Resolution 1706 (2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system, which recommended that member States associate measures pertaining to electoral systems and gender quotas with gender-sensitive civic education and action geared to the elimination of gender stereotypes.
6. In its Recommendation 273 (2009) on equal access to local and regional elections, the Congress advocated the adoption of an electoral system at local and regional level in its member States that ensures that men and women alternate on lists (the so-called "zipper system"), with financial penalties in the event of non-compliance, and that enables the under-represented sex to attain positions of responsibility within the executive bodies of municipalities and regions.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2016, 2nd sitting (see Document [CG31\(2016\)09final](#), rapporteur: Inger Linge, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE)).

2. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2229> and <http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>.

7. By revising its Charter in 2007, the Congress undertook to respect the principle of equality between women and men within its own institution and committed itself to including 30% of the under-represented sex in its delegations as of 2008. In practice, the participation of a minimum of 30% of women has been achieved since 2011.

8. In light of the above, notably the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3, and with a view to improving women's political participation and representation, the Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to encourage the governments of member States to:

- a. implement the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3, taking stock of the changes and developments that have occurred since 2003, and discuss the results in the respective steering committees;
- b. support local and regional authorities in the promotion and implementation of specific measures aimed at enhancing women's political participation in order to comply with the 40% threshold stipulated in Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3 for a minimum representation of both sexes in all decision-making bodies in political or public life;
- c. consider establishing official gender-disaggregated electoral statistics and tools in order to monitor the elections and nominations at local, regional and national levels, based on good practice already existing in several member States, and supporting the local and regional authorities in this process;
- d. encourage and support the establishment, at all levels of government, of gender equality committees, networks among NGOs and women's groups that advocate women's political participation and support women candidates;
- e. consider adopting legislative reforms in order to implement quotas for candidates in elections, with financial penalties in case of non-compliance, and, where proportional systems exist, to consider the introduction of "zipper systems";
- f. consider the revision and adjustment of their electoral systems if these systems have a negative impact on women's political participation and representation.

9. The Congress also invites the Committee of Ministers to enter into a political dialogue with the Congress, in the appropriate format, to follow up on this recommendation and the attached explanatory memorandum (CG31(2016)09final).

Resolution 404 (2016)¹

Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels

1. Achieving equality in political representation between men and women – who each represent 50% of the world's population – is vital for the smooth functioning of representative democracy and a prerequisite for political participation. All Council of Europe member States guarantee legal equality between women and men, including the right to stand for election and to be elected. In practice, however, there are numerous factors that hamper women's opportunities to take responsibility in public life and hold elected office.
2. Unequal access to education and/or employment, the political institutional system, party systems, the degree of party support and negative attitudes and stereotypes are among the most important factors that restrict women's political participation. Along with the fact that today women in Europe face difficulties in finding a balance between their private and professional lives. They are also often discriminated against and face negative attitudes which disempower them in public and political life and prevent them from becoming role models for younger generations of women.
3. The effective implementation of gender quotas, associated with an electoral system favourable to women's representation in politics, is a factor of paramount importance, which can lead to more balanced gender participation and thus to a fairer system of political and public decision making, thereby improving the quality and credibility of the political process.
4. Electoral systems and gender quotas are not the only factors that influence women's representation in politics. In order to increase representation, in principle and in practice, of women in politics effectively, a much broader and more comprehensive approach that goes beyond a simple change in electoral legislation is necessary.
5. The Council of Europe's pioneering work in the fields of human rights and gender equality has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework which can considerably advance women's rights and bring member States closer to real gender equality. In all Council of Europe bodies, there is the same demand for balanced participation, gender mainstreaming, specific action and monitoring of results.
6. In 2003, the Committee of Ministers defined balanced participation in its Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, as the minimum representation of 40% of both sexes in all decision-making bodies in

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2016, 2nd sitting (see Document [CG31\(2016\)09final](#), rapporteur: Inger Lingé, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE)).

political or public life. This requirement has been reaffirmed in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017.²

7. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in its Resolution 1706 (2010) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system, underlined that the equal participation of women and men in political life is one of the foundations of democracy and recommended that member States associate measures pertaining to electoral systems and gender quotas with gender-sensitive civic education and elimination of gender stereotypes.³

8. When carrying out its electoral observation missions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ("the Congress") uses as its reference document the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (adopted by the European Commission for Democracy through Law ("Venice Commission") of the Council of Europe in 2002), which leaves the choice of electoral system to the discretion of the respective country as long as certain principles such as equal voting rights and equal voting power are respected. Nevertheless, the Venice Commission has also stipulated that "Legal rules requiring a minimum percentage of persons of each gender among candidates should not be considered as contrary to the principle of equal suffrage if they have a constitutional basis".⁴

9. As regards quotas, by revising its Charter in 2007, the Congress undertook to respect the principle of equality between women and men within its own institution and committed itself to including 30% of the under-represented sex in its delegations as of 2008. In practice, the participation of a minimum of 30% of women has been ensured since 2011, and has proved to be a very successful initiative for women's representation, not only as members of national delegations, but also as presidents and vice-presidents of Congress bodies. There is, however, room for improvement by ensuring that representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life reaches the 40% threshold and applying this to the rules concerning representation in leadership positions in the Congress.

10. In light of the above and with a view to improving women's political participation and representation, the Congress invites local and regional authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe and their national associations to:

- a. put into practice the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, so as to ensure that the representation of the two sexes in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%;
- b. ensure, in line with Congress Resolution 393 (2015) on conditions of office of elected representatives, that the way in which political business in local and regional authorities is conducted does not deter women from standing for election, for instance by implementing family-oriented meeting hours and providing support for childcare;
- c. evaluate and report on progress made in achieving balanced participation in political and public life by developing gender-disaggregated statistics and tools for gender monitoring of nominations and elections and analysing their evolution;
- d. develop and implement specific actions with a view to enhancing women's political participation, such as capacity-building programmes, candidate training, recruitment programmes, systems for mentoring new members or training in public speaking;
- e. support the establishment of gender equality committees, networks among women's groups and other NGOs that advocate women's political participation and women candidates;
- f. integrate and apply the concept of gender budgeting into their working processes, as an instrument to help achieve gender equality through the integration of gender as a category of analysis and control in the budget;
- g. comply with quota regulations where they exist and introduce reliable monitoring mechanisms to ensure that women are included in the lists on an equal basis with men;
- h. sign and implement the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life initiated by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

2. Rec(2003)3 and <http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>.

3. <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17809&lang=en>.

4. <http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD%282002%29023rev-e>.

11. Recalling its Resolution 303 (2010) on achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life, the Congress commits itself to:

- a.** working towards compliance with Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3 so that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life does not fall below 40%;
- b.** monitoring the gender distribution within the Congress and continuing to publish the relevant data (covering full and substitute members, chairs of committees, political and working groups and rapporteurs) upon the renewal of delegations every four years;
- c.** integrating and applying the concept of gender budgeting into its work processes;
- d.** calling on political groups represented in the Congress to lobby their respective political parties (national or regional as appropriate) to adopt specific action plans for the recruitment of women based on an analysis of the causes of their under-representation, given the vital role that political parties play in the promotion of women in politics through recruitment, selection and nomination of candidates.



Report

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Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level

Current Affairs Committee

Rapporteur:¹ Jelena DRENJANIN, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE)

7 December 2020

RESOLUTION 459 (2020)	123
RECOMMENDATION 449 (2020)	126
EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM	128

1. L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress.

Summary

The report builds on previous Congress and Council of Europe texts on both women's political participation and violence against women, in order to look at the specific case of sexist violence perpetrated against women in politics at the local and regional level, when they are candidates or holding elected posts. It takes stock of the increase of incivility, insults and attacks notably via social media from both peers and citizens against women who become visible in the political arena. It also underlines how the attitudes which underline sexist violence undermine women's right to fully and equally participate in political and public life, also compromising the foundations of democracy and the exercise of democratic institutions.

The report calls on local and regional authorities to take a strong stand as political leaders against sexist attacks targeting women, introduce or revise codes of conduct explicitly prohibiting sexist behaviour and speech in their assemblies. It also invites them to be vigilant during election periods with regard to sexist attacks against women and to monitor candidate nomination procedures for inequalities. It invites the governments of the member States to provide support and resources to local and regional level authorities, in line with the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 of the Council of Europe which recognises local and regional authorities as natural partners.

RESOLUTION 459 (2020)²

1. Women are increasingly present in political life at all levels of governance, due in part to the adoption of electoral gender quotas or parity systems. But despite considerable progress made on this path, women remain under-represented in political decision-making bodies. A key obstacle for women to achieve higher representation in political bodies is sexist attitudes and violence against women.
2. The UN report on violence against women in politics defines the phenomenon as “any act of gender-based violence, or threat of such acts, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering and is directed against a woman in politics because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately.” The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on “Preventing and Combating Sexism” links sexism to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of “everyday” sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom.
3. The perception of women’s role in society, sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination in all its forms, including violence against women are repeated challenges that women face when they aspire to exercise their right to political participation. Local and regional authorities are, in many countries, the levels of governance where many women begin their political careers. Therefore, they are particularly concerned because policies and measures at these levels can be determinant in changing the prevailing political culture.
4. The proliferation of communication platforms and social media has given rise to an escalation of the number of reports concerning attacks and harassment against women politicians, both candidates for elections and elected representatives. Various testimonies of women politicians who joined the #MeToo movement in 2017 provided a worrisome picture of the issue and of its magnitude.
5. Sexist violence against women in politics violates women’s right to fully and equally participate in political and public life. By extension, the foundations of democracy and the exercise of democratic institutions are compromised as well. Thus, all efforts to fight it contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).
6. In 2011, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210), also known as the Istanbul Convention. Even though the Convention does not explicitly mention violence against women in politics, its legal framework is wide enough to cover it as gender-based violence. The Council of Europe also adopted its Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023) which recognises local and regional authorities as natural partners and the Congress as a key actor in implementing the Strategy and contributing to its achievement.
7. In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union jointly conducted a study on “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe”. Following its disconcerting results, in November 2018, PACE launched the initiative #NotInMyParliament in order to end sexist behaviours in national parliaments and adopted a report on “Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment” in 2019. The report acknowledges that despite its far-reaching consequences, violence against women in politics is often dismissed. In this regard, it recommended to raise awareness, strengthen measures, revise codes of conduct, and monitor progress by collecting data regularly.

2. Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2020\)02-04](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Jelena DRENJANIN, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE).

8. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (hereinafter “the Congress”) has several texts concerning women in the political arena and violence exercised against women, most notably Resolution 404 and Recommendation 390(2016) on women’s political participation and Resolution 303 and Recommendation 288(2010) on gender equality in politics.

9. In light of the above, and with a view to preventing and combating sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional levels, the Congress invites local and regional authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe and their national associations to:

- a. take a strong stand as political leaders against sexist attacks targeting women, and use all communication platforms including municipal and regional government websites and social media to defend these positions, sharing and disseminating good practices shown to be effective, and encourage political parties to do the same;
- b. take appropriate action to fight sexism and prejudice on sexist gender roles, including their informal norms, practices and attitudes, and fight against the atmosphere of immunity among perpetrators as well as the normalisation of sexual harassment and violence against women, developing concrete tools and guidelines for political parties, candidates for elections and for elected councillors, including mentoring programmes for newcomers;
- c. introduce or revise codes of conduct explicitly prohibiting sexist speech and sexual harassment in local and regional councils and assemblies, and organise compulsory civil training for elected representatives and local government staff, highlighting the power of by-stander interventions, and ensuring that women and men alike are involved in the efforts to fight gender-based violence;
- d. introduce or revise complaint mechanisms that cover all the staff of local and regional authorities, which must be safe and confidential, and ensure that complaints are dealt with professionally;
- e. establish effective sanction mechanisms, reviewing (when applicable) immunity rules that can afford council members immunity from prosecution for sexual harassment and violence against women;
- f. introduce confidential counselling mechanisms for victims of sexism, sexual harassment and violence against women and misconduct;
- g. introduce gender-sensitive security units that can protect women politicians from physical and psychological attacks, including those perpetrated in social media;
- h. be vigilant during election periods regarding sexist language and hate speech and monitor candidate nomination procedures for inequalities, considering that violence commonly intensifies around elections carrying elevated risks for women candidates, and that candidate nomination periods provide an important focus for discerning inequalities and intimidation against female candidates;
- i. conduct periodical surveys and studies on the issue of violence against women in politics, including attacks perpetrated in the private sphere, with a view to achieving a better understanding of the phenomenon, monitor its development and adapt complaint and sanction mechanisms to the surveys and studies mentioned above;
- j. strive for transparency regarding how gender bias is dealt with within political parties and assemblies in order to ensure accountability for sexist behaviour;
- k. co-operate with civil society organisations, academia and the private sector, in order to come up with innovative solutions to prevent and combat violence against women in politics;
- l. hold public debates regularly to raise awareness among elected representatives and local government staff and undertake educational outreach programmes aimed at citizens illustrating the negative impact of sexist descriptions, language and attacks against women politicians on the exercise of democratic rights;
- m. co-operate with other levels of governance in the organisation of initiatives, from the planning phase to implementation and evaluation;
- n. take note of the Congress guide “Preventing and combatting sexism at local level in Ukraine” as a practical tool to address sexism in local government and adapt the guide for use in their particular context.

10. The Congress asks its secretariat to further develop toolkits, guidelines and campaigns to raise awareness and support women local elected representatives and candidates to stand up against sexism and other forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, as well as to counteract sexist behaviour and violence from other politicians and the media. The development and use of toolkits, guidelines and campaigns, coupled with the measures suggested above, will provide a systematic approach to fighting sexism against women in politics at local and regional levels.

RECOMMENDATION 449 (2020)³

1. Women have made considerable progress in entering politics but remain under-represented in political decision-making bodies. Key obstacles for women to achieve higher representation in political bodies are sexist perceptions of women's role in society, sexual harassment, and violence. These repeated challenges create obstacles to women when they aspire to exercise their right to political participation.
2. Recently, sexist attacks against women politicians, both candidates in elections and elected representatives, have become more visible. From gendered slurs to sexual harassment and sexist character assassinations, violence against women in politics is a widespread phenomenon in every country. This was clearly reflected by the various testimonies of women politicians who joined the #MeToo movement in 2017, providing a worrisome picture of the issue and its magnitude.
3. Because of this violence, which obstructs their right to fully and equally participate in political and public life and by extension compromises the foundations of democracy and the exercise of democratic institutions, inequalities and bias are rooted in the pre-conditions for an equal representation between women and men in politics. In fact, it has relevant implications for public political discussion, democratic decision-making, and people's willingness to stand for office. Women have admitted to self-censoring and to exiting the political arena as a result of this type of violence.
4. In 2011, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210), also known as the Istanbul Convention. Even though the Convention does not explicitly mention violence against women in politics, its legal framework is wide enough to cover it as gender-based violence. In March 2019 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on "Preventing and Combating Sexism" which defines sexism as "any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline" and links sexism to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of "everyday" sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom.
5. In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union jointly conducted a study on "Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe". Following its disconcerting results, PACE adopted a report on "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment" in 2019. The report acknowledges that despite its far-reaching consequences, violence against women in politics is often dismissed. In this regard, it recommended to raise awareness, strengthen measures, revise codes of conduct, and monitor progress by collecting data regularly.
6. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities ("Congress") has several texts concerning women in the political arena and violence exercised against women, most notably its Resolution 404 and Recommendation 390(2016) on women's political participation and Resolution 303 and Recommendation 288(2010) on gender equality in politics.
7. In light of the above and with a view to contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), and also building upon the PACE recommendations to member States on "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment", the Congress invites the member States of the Council of Europe, to:
 - a. provide support and resources to local and regional level authorities, in line with the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 of the Council of Europe which recognises local and regional authorities as

3. See footnote 2.

natural partners and the Congress as a key actor in implementing the Strategy and contributing to its achievement, and encourage them to empower women candidates and elected officials, including women from marginalised groups, making best use of the Congress in the institutional framework of the CoE and its intergovernmental bodies in promoting, implementing and evaluating the Strategy;

- b.* assist local and regional authorities in raising awareness among elected representatives, council staff and citizens on violence against women in politics and its negative impact on the exercise of democratic rights;
- c.* introduce or revise codes of conduct in national assemblies, governmental bodies and institutions, explicitly prohibiting sexist speech and sexual harassment, introducing effective complaint and sanctions mechanisms and assist local and regional governments with the implementation of measures regarding sexist violence against women in politics;
- d.* support research, action, policy development and projects at national, regional and local levels of government with a view to achieve a better understanding of the phenomenon, monitor its development and adapt complaint and sanction mechanisms to the surveys and studies mentioned above;
- e.* encourage political parties and assemblies to aim for transparency regarding how they deal with gender bias in order to ensure accountability for sexist violence and behaviour;
- f.* conduct periodical surveys and studies and establish official statistics, at all levels of government, on the issue of violence against women in politics, including attacks perpetrated in the private sphere;
- g.* take appropriate action to fight prejudice on sexist gender roles, including informal norms, practices and attitudes, and fight against the atmosphere of immunity among perpetrators as well as the normalisation of sexual harassment and violence against women, developing concrete tools and guidelines both for candidates for elections and for those holding elected posts.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM⁴

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Women's participation in politics is on the increase at all levels, from international bodies to local authorities. The gender composition of local and regional governments and party representatives is changing across the world. This can be seen in the proportion of women in municipal councils, which has risen from 23.4% to 29% over the last ten years in Europe (2008-2018/19).⁵

2. The increased presence of women as candidates and elected representatives is mainly due to a widespread adoption of electoral gender quotas.⁶ By 2016, 76.6% of member States to the Council of Europe (CoE) had implemented some type of quota or parity system. Such mechanisms have been instrumental in building a more solid framework to promote women's presence in political decision-making bodies, although women still make up a third or more of local assemblies in only five out of 28 European Union (EU) countries.⁷

3. A key barrier to achieving higher representation levels for women is how women's roles are perceived in our societies. Sexism, harassment and violence perpetuated against women in their everyday lives find an echo in political life where women face severe obstacles if they wish to exercise their most basic right of having a say in how society is organised and who should govern.

4. Over the past few years, we have seen increasing reports of attacks on politicians, and reports of widespread sexist elements in attacks on female politicians. Gendered slurs used against female candidates, sexist character assassinations launched on women in politics and sexual harassment of female elected representatives have become well-known features of politics in any country. These phenomena create inequalities in the pre-conditions for women's and men's political representation.

5. The issue of violence against politicians, and gender differences in how and how much politicians are targeted, is highly important because of its implications for public political discussion, democratic decision-making, and people's willingness to stand for office.

6. In 2017, women politicians worldwide joined the #MeToo movement, sharing their stories on social media to denounce the sexist attacks and harassment they endure. These testimonies revealed that such experiences obstructed women's efforts to enter the political arena. Sexist violence against women in politics is a violation of fundamental rights, as it constitutes an obstacle to fully and equally participate in political and public life. By extension, it compromises the foundations of democracy and the exercise of democratic institutions.

7. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS. 210, also known as the Istanbul Convention, 2011) constitutes the leading legally binding instrument to tackle violence against women in Europe. Whereas the Convention does not specifically mention violence against women in politics, the President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has pointed out Convention articles relevant for the issue, and the group has concluded that "there was sufficient scope within international normative frameworks to cover violence

4. This explanatory memorandum is based on the document prepared by the Council of Europe consultant Sandra Håkansson, researcher at Uppsala University, Sweden. The written contribution is available from the Secretariat upon request.

5. https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_Women_in_politics_study_EN.pdf.

6. Hughes, Melanie M., Pamela Paxton, and Mona Lena Krook. 2017. 'Gender Quotas for Legislatures and Corporate Boards'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 43(1): 331–52.

7. European Commission. 2019. *2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU*. ISSN 2443-5228.

against women in politics as a form of gender-based violence, although more could be done to issue specific provisions, protocols, guidelines or recommendations to guide States and survivors.”⁸

8. The Council of Europe adopted a Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023 which recognises local and regional authorities as natural partners and the Congress as a key actor in implementing the Strategy and contributing to its achievement. In March 2019 its Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on “Preventing and Combating Sexism”⁹ which defines sexism as “any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline” and links sexism to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of “everyday” sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom.

9. In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union jointly conducted a study on “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe”. Its disconcerting results provide evidence of the unceasing sexism that women in politics endure. In November 2018, PACE launched the initiative #NotInMyParliament in order to end sexist behaviors in national parliaments and adopted a report on “Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment” in 2019. The report acknowledges that despite its far-reaching consequences, violence against women in politics is often dismissed. In this regard, it recommended to raise awareness, strengthen measures, revise codes of conduct, and monitor progress by collecting data regularly.

10. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“Congress”) has several texts concerning women in the political arena and violence exercised against women, most notably its Resolution 68(1999) on women’s participation in political life in the regions of Europe, Resolution 279 and Recommendation 260(2009) on violence against women at the domestic level, Resolution 404 and Recommendation 390(2016) on women’s political participation and Resolution 303 and Recommendation 288(2010) on gender equality in politics.

11. In 2020, a guide on “Preventing and Combatting Sexism at local level in Ukraine”¹⁰, was produced within the project ‘Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine’. The guide aims to equip local decision-makers with the knowledge necessary to address sexism in their institution, thereby enhancing women’s political participation and representation at local and regional levels. It presents concrete measures and is intended for use by local authorities and their national associations as well as possible targets of sexist violence and gender-based discrimination such as female candidates and local office holders. The guide will serve as an effective tool in the context of the 2020 local elections in Ukraine, and can be adapted for local and regional authorities in other countries.

12. Aligned with the above, the present report will focus on sexist violence against women in politics and what local and regional authorities can do and are doing in order to overcome the negative impact of this kind of violence on democratic representation in the member States of the Council of Europe. Awareness of the issue and action at the local level is essential for the promotion of women’s participation in politics, as many women start their political careers at the local level. The report is also part of the Congress’ contribution to the fulfilment of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), and to the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 of the Council of Europe mentioned above.

1.1 Concepts and definitions

13. The issue of how gender impacts on violence targeting political actors is starting to receive more and more attention among policymakers and in academia. Different actors use different concepts and definitions. Researchers and practitioners, for example, use the concept of violence against women in elections (VAWIE) or violence against women in politics (VAWIP) to centre on women’s experiences of violence related to their political activities.

8. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics; “Violence against women in politics”; UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 3.

9. <https://rm.coe.int/prems-055519-gbr-2573-cmrec-2019-1-web-a5/168093e08c>.

10. Available in English at <https://rm.coe.int/16809ee57f> and in Ukrainian at: <https://rm.coe.int/16809ee580>, the guide was produced within the project ‘Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine’, implemented by the Congress as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022.

14. Research stemming from this perspective has highlighted how perpetrators use gendered derogatory comments to denigrate women politicians, motivate their attacks on women with gendered ideologies, and deter women's political participation at large by fomenting politics as a male sphere where women are unwelcome.¹¹ Research that integrates gender into the study of political violence instead compares women's exposure to violence to men's in order to shed light on gender differences and similarities in political violence and election violence.¹² Focus on how gender matters for the forms, prevalence and impact of violence come from both lines of research.

15. The 2019 Council of Europe recommendation on preventing and combating sexism mentioned above in para. 8 defines sexism as:

"any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons, or resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm, or suffering to a person or a group of persons, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, or constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons, or maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes."

16. The recommendation also links sexism to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of "everyday" sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity which limits opportunities and freedom.

1.2 International framework and actors

1.2.1. The UN Framework

17. In a resolution on women and political participation, the General Assembly has urged all States to take action to ensure women's equal participation, among other things, by investigating allegations of violence against women elected officials and candidates.¹³ The UN Secretary General's report on women and political participation noted that "the comprehensive investigation of allegations of violence, assault, or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office is an important step in creating an environment conducive to women's political participation."¹⁴ Furthermore, the Secretary General notes that this form of violence has started to be recognised not long ago, and as a consequence "few states report systematically about such incidences."

18. The UN report mentioned above urges both state and non-state actors to take actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women in politics and elections. Recommendations include collecting data on the problem, building state capacity to ensure women's security in parliaments, and strengthening mechanisms for reporting gender-based political violence.

19. In 2017, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen) and the United National Development Programme (UNDP) published a programming guide on preventing Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE).¹⁵ The report outlines action points for mapping and measuring

11. Birolì, Flávia. 2018. 'Violence against Women and Reactions to Gender Equality in Politics'. *Politics & Gender* 14(4): 681–85; Krook, Mona Lena, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2016. 'Gender and Political Violence in Latin America. Concepts, Debates and Solutions'. *Política y gobierno* 23(1): 127–62.

12. Bardall, Gabrielle 2018. 'Violence, Politics, and Gender'. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*; Bardall, Gabrielle. 2017. 'The Role of information and communication technologies in facilitating and resisting gendered forms of political violence'. In Marie Segrave and Laura Vitis *Gender, Technology and Violence*. Routledge; Bardall, Gabrielle, Elin Bjarnegård, and Jennifer Piscopo. Forthcoming. 'Gender, Political Participation, and Political Violence: Disentangling Motives, Form, and Impact'. *Political Studies*; Bjarnegård 2018 'Making Gender Visible in Election Violence: Strategies for Data Collection'. *Politics & Gender* 14(4): 690–95; Bjarnegård, Elin, Sandra Håkansson, and Pär Zetterberg. 2019. 'Gender and Violence against Political Candidates: Lessons from Sri Lanka'. *European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Sessions*; Mons, Belgium; Piscopo, Jennifer M. 2016. 'State Capacity, Criminal Justice, and Political Rights. Rethinking Violence against Women in Politics'. *Política y gobierno* 23(2): 437–58.

13. Resolution 66/130.

14. United Nations (UN). 2013. "Measures Taken and Progress Achieved in the Promotion of Women and Political Participation: Report of the Secretary General." Report A/68/ 184, July 24. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/755820?ln=en> (accessed September 12, 2019).

15. UN Women and UNDP, 2017, "Preventing violence against women in elections: A Programming Guide", <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/preventing-vaw-in-elections-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3742> (Accessed 12 September 2019).

VAWE, how VAWE can be integrated into election monitoring, legal and policy reforms, and how to work together with parties to prevent VAWE.

1.2.2. Action by other international and non-governmental actors fighting political violence against women

20. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) has drawn up the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life.¹⁶ This charter addresses local and regional governments of Europe and signatories commit to the principle of equality of women and men, and to implementing the commitments set out in the charter within its territory. Among other things, it outlines the responsibilities of local governments as employers to ensure gender equal working conditions, combat sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and to ensure the security and safety of women and men in their territories.

21. The Asian organisation SAP International was early to document incidents and raise awareness about political attacks on women.¹⁷ Likewise, The Association of Local Councilwomen of Bolivia (Acobol) documented around 4 000 cases of political violence and harassment targeting elected women in the early 2000s.¹⁸ Their efforts became pivotal for the process towards the country becoming the first in the world to specifically criminalise Political Harassment and Violence against Women.¹⁹

22. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) wrote a ground-breaking report in 2011 where it mapped women's and men's exposure to election violence in six countries.²⁰ Their framework for assessing, monitoring, and responding to violence against women in elections ("Violence against Women in Elections Framework") suggests methods for observing and responding to VAWIE in all phases of the electoral cycle.²¹

23. A series of trainings called "People Against Violence in Elections" (PAVE) are designed to help participants identify root causes of electoral violence, develop skills to foster dialogue and cooperation on nonpartisan projects between opposing groups and diffuse tension where possible, promote social harmony and a non-violent political culture, become "peace ambassadors" who prevent, detect, deter and/or mitigate electoral violence.

24. An off-shoot programme, PAVE Youth, targets youth as voters, civic/voter educators, and peace ambassadors. Similarly, the Council of Europe publication *Bookmarks*, a manual for combating hate speech through human rights education, created to support the No Hate Speech Movement, presents activities designed for young people aged 13 to 18, but which are adaptable to other age groups.²²

25. The National Democratic Institute (NDI), headquartered in the USA, has carried out several studies on the topic of violence against women in politics and has published the "Votes without Violence" toolkit. It provides citizen observer groups with gender-sensitive assessment tools and training on how to identify and record incidents of violence against women in elections.²³ The toolkit has already been piloted in several countries.

16. See: https://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf.

17. SAP International. 2008. Combating VAWIP: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation. 2nd South Asian Regional Conference: Kathmandu: SAP International.

18. Acobol, (Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia). 2012. 'Acoso y Violencia Política En Razón de Género Afectan El Trabajo Político y Gestión Pública de Las Mujeres'. available at: <http://acobol.org.bo>.

19. Ley N°243 Contra el Acoso y Violencia Política hacia las Mujeres. See full text here: <https://www.comunicacion.gob.bo/?q=20130725/ley-n%C2%BA243-contr-a-el-acoso-y-violencia-politica-hacia-las-mujeres> (Accessed 12 September 2019).

20. Bardall, Gabrielle. 2011. Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence. Washington D.C.: IFES.

21. Huber, Jessica and Lisa Kammerud. 2017. Violence Against Women in Elections: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring, and Response. Washington D.C.: IFES.

22. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions>.

23. National Democratic Institute(NDI), 2016, "Votes without Violence: A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence against Women in Elections." <https://www.ndi.org/votes-without-violence-guide> (Accessed 12 September, 2019).



2. THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND: DATA ON SEXIST VIOLENCE

26. So far, there have been few systematic studies on the topic of gendered aspects of violence against politicians. Little is known about how much politicians are targeted with violence or harassment, and whether certain groups of politicians are attacked more than others. Furthermore, no data exists that makes cross-country comparisons possible yet. What is clear is that reports of attacks on politicians, and gendered forms of attacks especially on female politicians, come from all parts of Europe and all parts of the world.

2.1 Prevalence of sexist violence against politicians

27. There is some statistical data and information that allows us to have a picture of the situation as it is today. For example, cross-national research from the UK, Norway, New Zealand and Australia found that between 80 and 95 % of parliamentarians had experienced some form of violence from citizens at some point of their political careers.²⁴ Herrick *et al* find similar rates for US mayors, and the highest rates for female mayors.²⁵ A Norwegian study found no overall gender difference in exposure to violence among politicians, but that female politicians are significantly more exposed to sexual harassment.²⁶

28. The French Senate's Legal Committee launched a consultation survey in August 2019 on violence against mayors with the aim to reinforce their authority and improve their protection.²⁷ 3812 elected representatives replied and 92% stated to have been victim of some sort of violence ranging from uncivil behaviour to aggression. 3135 mentioned incivilities, 1775 insults, 1826 threats, 543 aggressions and 308 people had nothing to declare. Most stated not to have complained to the police. Among those who did complain, nearly 40% declared that their complaint did not lead to criminal proceedings.

24. Bjelland, Heidi Fischer, and Tore Bjørgo. 2014. *Trusler Og Trusselhendelser Mot Politikere: En Spørreundersøkelse Blant Norske Stortingsrepresentanter Og Regjeringsmedlemmer*. PHS Forskning, 2014: 4; Every-Palmer, Susanna, Justin Barry-Walsh, and Michele Pathé. 2015. 'Harassment, Stalking, Threats and Attacks Targeting New Zealand Politicians: A Mental Health Issue'. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 49(7): 634–41; James, David V. et al. 2016. 'Harassment and Stalking of Members of the United Kingdom Parliament: Associations and Consequences'. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 27(3): 309–30; Pathé, Michele, Jane Phillips, Elke Perdacher, and Ed Heffernan. 2014. 'The Harassment of Queensland Members of Parliament: A Mental Health Concern'. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 21(4): 577–84.

25. Herrick, Rebekah et al. 2019. 'Physical Violence and Psychological Abuse against Female and Male Mayors in the United States: Politics, Groups, and Identities' (In print).

26. Bjelland & Bjørgo, 2014.

27. http://www.senat.fr/fileadmin/Fichiers/Images/redaction_multimedia/2019/2019-Documents_pdf/20191002_4_Dossier_de_presse_Plan_de_securite_des_maires.pdf.

29. Unfortunately, although 21.4 % of the replies came from women, the survey was not designed for and does not provide detailed gender-disaggregated data except for noting that women were victims of insults equally as men. Of the 1439 cases concerning women, some were of a sexist nature but less so regarding physical assault (84 cases).

30. A study conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), a public body in the United Kingdom in Bosnia-Herzegovina, shows that a majority of female politicians who participated in a study viewed violence against women in politics as a normal characteristic of politics.²⁸ These women seem to view gendered violence as something they have to adapt to and handle as female politicians, partly fomented by sexist portrayals of female politicians in the media. Another study by WFD conducted in Ukraine found that 62% of women politicians and activists had been humiliated through social network and mass media, 59% had been victims of psychological violence and verbal abuses, and 47% had been sexually harassed.²⁹

31. In general, lack of over-time data makes it difficult to assess whether the problem of violence, harassment and intimidation of politicians has increased or decreased over time. What has been established, however, is that threats and harassment against candidates and elected officials on social media is increasing.³⁰

32. Similarly, it is difficult to make cross-country comparisons due to the lack of data. The few studies on violence against candidates and elected officials that do exist often use different definitions impeding comparisons. The lack of standard indicators for measuring the incidence of violence against women in politics and during elections has also been highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on all forms of violence against women.³¹

2.2 Escalated risks during election periods

33. Violence commonly intensifies around elections in contexts marked by political violence³² as well as in peaceful contexts (such as Italy³³ and Sweden³⁴). Research on election violence has concluded that such violence either can escalate before elections in order to affect the outcome,³⁵ or directly following an election – from those who do not accept the results³⁶ and those who want to condition the activities of the newly elected administration.³⁷

34. Researchers taking on a gender perspective further point out the nomination period as an important focus for discerning inequalities and intimidation against female candidates, traditionally overlooked in research on election violence.³⁸ Female candidates often challenge male incumbents and may face gendered harassment while striving to get placed on parties' ballots.

28. Miftari, Edita (2019) Violence Against Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) <https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Violence-Against-Women-in-Politics-BiH-WFD2019.pdf>.

29. <https://www.wfd.org/2018/08/06/violence-against-women-in-politics-case-study-ukraine/>.

30. Bjørge, Tore & Silkoset, Emilie. (2017). *Trusler og trusselhendelser mot politikere: En spørreundersøkelse blant norske stortingsrepresentanter og regjeringsmedlemmer*. PHS Forskning, 2017:5; Erikson, Josefine, Sandra Håkansson, and Cecilia Josefsson. 2019. 'The Downside of Social Media: Swedish MPs' Experiences of Gendered Online Abuse'. *European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Sessions: Mons, Belgium*; Gorrell, G. et al. 2018. "Twits, Twats and Twaddle: Trends in Online Abuse towards UK Politicians." *Twelfth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*. 25-28 Jun 2018, California, USA. AAAI Press, pp. 600-603.

31. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics; "Violence against women in politics".

32. Höglund, Kristine. 2009. 'Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences'. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21(3): 412–27.

33. Alesina, Alberto, Salvatore Piccolo, and Paolo Pinotti. 2016. 'Organized Crime, Violence, and Politics'. NBER Working Papers 22093; Daniele, Gianmarco, and Gemma Dipoppa. 2017. 'Mafia, Elections and Violence against Politicians'. *Journal of Public Economics* (154): 10–33.

34. Wallin, Sanna, and Carl Command. 2015. *Politikernas Trygghetsundersökning 2015: Förtroendevaldas Utsatthet under Valåret 2014*. Stockholm: Brottsförebyggande rådet. NBN:SE:BR-627.

35. Collier, Paul. 2009. *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*. New York: Harper Perennial; Dal Bó, Ernesto, Pedro Dal Bó, and Rafael Di Tella. 2006. "Plata o Plomo?" Bribe and Punishment in a Theory of Political Influence. *American Political Science Review* 100(1): 41–53.

36. Mueller, Susanne D. 2011. 'Dying to Win: Elections, Political Violence, and Institutional Decay in Kenya'. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29(1): 99–117.

37. Daniele and Dipoppa, 2017.

38. Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg, 2019.

35. One example of physical violence perpetrated publicly against women politicians took place in Greece during a TV debate just ten days before elections in 2012, when Ilias Kasidiaris, a high-profile member of Golden Dawn party, attacked two women members of parliament who were part of a seven-strong TV discussion panel.³⁹

2.3. Gendered forms of attacks

36. The often sexualised and gendered forms of attacks on political women communicate to the targeted women as well as to witnesses of the attacks, that women do not belong in politics.

37. Women are portrayed in their traditional roles as mothers and wives, and focus is brought to women's bodies, to undermine their roles as competent politicians.⁴⁰ The current mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, was told by a male local councillor that she was brainless and should be cleaning floors.⁴¹ The prestigious charity event of Germany Eiswette (Ice Bet) club refused to invite Karoline Linnert, Mayor of Bremen, because she is a woman.⁴² These acts denigrate female politicians and foment negative attitudes to women in politics as a group.⁴³

38. Researchers comparing women's and men's exposure to various forms of political violence and election violence has found that physical force is more often used against male targets (such as property damage or bodily violence), and that psychological and sexual violence is more often used against women.⁴⁴

39. Women in politics are often targeted with sexist forms of attacks, including remarks about their appearance and personal lives, physical sexual assault, and incessant threats of sexual violence. Several European parliamentarians have had pornographic images sent to them or comments that they themselves would be suited to pornography.⁴⁵ In Germany, Katharina Schulze, regional leader of the Greens in Bavaria, estimates that 20% of the messages that she receives daily are abusive.⁴⁶

40. In 2016, in Spain, the newspaper ABC -partly funded by public money-, published an article in which a male journalist repeatedly uses derogatory language and insults against left-nationalist female politicians from the Basque Country and Catalunya. He calls them "ugly, very ugly" and "rat-haired", and concludes that "it's not that they want to separate from Spain: they want us to throw them out. For being horrible and unsightly".⁴⁷

41. An example of physical sexual violence used to silence female politicians was when two Armenian city councillors were attacked during a sitting of the Yerevan city council. As these women were speaking up about a sewage leak, male opponents from the governing party surrounded and sexually assaulted them in front of the audience present at the city hall as well as live-streaming cameras.⁴⁸ Sexual violence has also been used against male politicians,⁴⁹ but seems to be far more commonly used against women targets.⁵⁰

39. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/07/golden-dawn-tv-assault-greece>.

40. Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016.

41. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/europe/spain-women-sexism.html>.

42. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-charity-event-sexism-all-male-bremen-karoline-linnert-women-controversy-a8740216.html>.

43. Biroli, Flávia. 2016. 'Political violence against women in Brazil: expressions and definitions'. *Revista Direito e Práxis* 7(15); Krook, Mona Lena. 2017. 'Violence Against Women in Politics'. *Journal of Democracy* 28(1): 74–88.

44. Bardall, 2011.; Bjarnegård, Elin. 2016. 'Gender and Election Violence - the Case of the Maldives'. *Conference Paper IPSA*, Poznan, Poland; Håkansson, Sandra. 2019. 'Do Women Pay a Higher Price for Power? Gender Bias in Political Violence in Sweden'. *Journal of Politics* Conditionally accepted.

45. Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2016. *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*. Geneva. Issues Brief.

46. <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-48871400>.

47. https://sevilla.abc.es/opinion/sevp-flequis-201601060929_noticia.html.

48. Nikoghosyan, Anna, 2018, Armenia's female councillors were abused for challenging the patriarchal political system, <https://oc-media.org/opinion-armenias-female-councillors-were-abused-for-challenging-the-patriarchal-political-system/#more-10759> [last accessed 16 September 2019].

49. See e.g. the attack on Swedish local politician Patrik Liljeglöd who was raped by political opponents: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sweden-politician-patrik-liljegl-d-raped-knifepoint-falun-left-party-democracy-a7949991.html>.

50. Bardall, 2011; Bjarnegård, 2016; Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg, 2019.

42. Rumours and commentary on female politicians are often gendered in a way that degrades women as a group. In Croatia, for example, alleged sex tapes of female politicians have figured online⁵¹ and rumours about female politicians being sexually immoral figure in a wide range of countries.⁵² Rumours about marital problems, infidelity, or bad parenting carry more weight when spread about women than men, since these rumours draw on the different moral standards for women and men.⁵³

2.4. Sexual harassment against politicians

43. A gendered form of attack on politicians that deserves special attention is sexual harassment. During the #MeToo movement in 2017, many women spoke up about their personal experiences of sexual harassment. Female politicians in several countries created hashtags where they shared their stories and spread awareness on abuse that takes place in political contexts.

44. Sexual harassment functions to diminish women's roles as competent politicians and enforce their roles as sexual objects. It draws attention to and reinforces the unequal power relations between women and men in society and limits women's effective participation in society and politics. In France, Senator Stéphane Ravier insulted Lydia Frenzel, a local elected representative, during a meeting of the Marseille City Council. He offered to meet her "at the same hotel, on the same day, at the same time", implying that she is a prostitute and has usual sexual relations with him. As a consequence, she decided to file a complaint for "sexist public insult" against him.⁵⁴

45. Based on research on sexual harassment in workplaces, it is not unexpected that such harassment takes place in political institutions. In an overview of academic research, Fitzgerald and Cortina conclude that the most severe problems of sexual harassment typically are found in organisations with a skewed gender ratio (i.e., mostly inhabited by men), roles and tasks that are historically masculine in nature, and where there is an organisational tolerance of offensive behaviour.⁵⁵ This finding is one more argument in support of measures to implement quotas for women, as they are underrepresented in many elected assemblies, governments or political parties.

46. Furthermore, the fact that relationships are currency in politics makes it a context where sexual harassment can proliferate.⁵⁶ Leaders of legislatures, or parties, may be incentivised to ignore or even retaliate against accusers in attempting to protect political allies or preserve organisational reputation.⁵⁷

47. Sexual harassment is usually understood to encompass gender harassment (e.g. expressions of degrading attitudes to women, "woman-bashing" jokes, referring to women by degraded names for female body parts), unwanted sexual attention (including sexually suggestive comments and compliments and unwanted body contact), and sexual coercion (unwanted sexual attention is combined with bribes and/or threats).⁵⁸

48. Examples of each form of sexual harassment from the realm of politics abound. An EU parliamentarian recounts that a minister said to her during a debate: 'You are so beautiful that I cannot listen to you,'⁵⁹ hence drawing attention away from her role as a policymaker by sexualising her. Women report being sexually

51. Krook, Mona Lena, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2019. 'The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians'. *Perspectives on Politics*: 1–16.

52. See for example Miftari 2019, Bardall 2013, Bjarnegård 2016, Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2016, Bjarnegård, Håkansson and Zetterberg 2019, IPU 2016, WFD 2018.

53. Bardall, Gabrielle. 2013. 'Gender-Specific Election Violence: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2(3).

54. https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/une-elue-porte-plainte-contre-stephane-ravier-pour-sexisme_2060917.html.

55. Fitzgerald, Louise F. and Lilia M. Cortina. 2018. "Sexual harassment in work organizations: A view from the 21st century." In C. B Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche (Eds.), *APA handbooks in psychology series. APA handbook of the psychology of women: Perspectives on women's private and public lives* (pp. 215-234). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.

56. Mahoney, Anna, Meghan Kearney, and Carly Shaffer. 2019. '#MeToo in the State House'. Unpublished manuscript under review.

57. Ibid.

58. Fitzgerald and Cortina, 2018.

59. Examples from IPU 2018.

blackmailed by party colleagues and having to deal with persistent unwanted sexual advances and obscene comments.⁶⁰

49. A Bosniak female politician recounts that fellow politicians from her council insisted on calling her “luv” instead of her name, and repeatedly subjected her to sexual harassment: “They would eyeball the length of my skirt, make comments about the way I dressed, and other such macho remarks. The most unpleasant incident happened the day after the elections, a group of them were sitting with a few politicians in the garden in front of a café, and they shouted, “whore” as I walked past.”⁶¹

50. In a recent study on physical and psychological violence targeting Swedish local politicians, based on statistical analyses of survey data on 8 000 municipal politicians in three waves, Håkansson⁶² finds that both female and male politicians experience far more psychological than physical violence in the Swedish context. This holds for both election years and years in-between elections. The most common form of attack in 2016 against both female and male politicians is on social media, followed by verbal threats in person, threatening emails and threats communicated on the phone.

51. According to Håkansson’s study, female politicians are targeted more than male. This is especially the case for officials highest in the political hierarchy. Among female mayors, 69% are targeted on average per year with some form of political violence, compared to 56% of male mayors.

52. Election periods tend to entail increased political violence in peaceful contexts as well as in contexts marked by violence, and in consolidated democracies as well as in transitional contexts. This is also the case in Sweden: the highest incidence of attacks on politicians during the years measured was the election year in 2014. 27% of politicians were attacked at least once during this election year. Among mayors, 65% were targeted during the election year, compared to an average of 58% in non-election years.

53. There are some differences in the forms of violence used against women and men. Whereas men are more exposed to property damage, women are more exposed to threats of different sorts. This corresponds to studies from other countries that similarly find that physical force is more commonly used against men and/or their property, whereas psychological violence is more commonly used against women. In relation to the prevalence of violence against politicians, the study concludes that women in politics are significantly more exposed than their male counterparts. A higher share of women than men are targeted, especially among mayors and chairs of committees, and they are also targeted more times than the male counterparts.

2.5 Social media as an arena for harassment and abuse

54. Social media platforms have been shown to pose specific challenges to equality in democratic discourse. Testimonies of sexist online abuse targeting politicians come from all parts of the world at all levels of government. First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has said that she probably speaks for every woman in politics when she says that women in politics have seen sexually violent commentary about themselves on social media.⁶³ Norwegian prime minister Erna Solberg has discussed the online abuse towards her as a female politician.⁶⁴

55. Analysing 70 000 tweets sent to UK MPs on Twitter, Ward and McLaughlin find that male MPs receive more abusive tweets, but that female MPs receive more hate speech.⁶⁵ Out of all tweets that contained hate speech, 86% was directed at women. The authors conclude that women MPs may not receive more abuse on Twitter than male, but that “the abuse women receive is gendered in its content.” Similarly, Erikson et al find that Swedish female parliamentarians experience more gendered and sexist abuse on social media than male

60. Chrisafis, Angelique. 2016. ‘We can no longer stay silent’: fury erupts over sexism in French politics. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/13/we-can-no-longer-stay-silent-fury-erupts-over-sexism-in-french-politics> [Accessed 17 September 2019], IPU 2018.

61. Miftari, 2019.

62. The case study summarises findings from Håkansson, Sandra. 2019. ‘Do Women Pay a Higher Price for Power? Gender Bias in Political Violence in Sweden’. *Journal of Politics* Conditionally accepted.

63. Amnesty International, 2018, Nicola Sturgeon: A Case Study in Violence Against Women Online. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/nicola-sturgeon-online-violence-against-women/>.

64. The Local (2015), “Norway pm Opens Up about Online Abuse”, available at: <http://www.thelocal.no/20151201/norway-pm-opens-up-about-onlineabuse> [Accessed on: December 2, 2015].

65. Ward, Stephen J., and Liam McLaughlin. 2017. “Turds, Traitors and Tossers : The Abuse of UK MPs via Twitter.” In *ECPR Joint Sessions 2017*, University of Nottingham: European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).

counterparts, suggesting that the main gender difference may not be the extent but the character of online abuse against MPs.⁶⁶

56. In Bavaria, Germany, an anonymous right-wing channel discussed the “dumbness” of the Bavarian politician Katharina Schulze. The first comment of the video reads “OK guys, hand on your hearts and be honest: Katharina Schulze, would bang? Yes or no?”, and one of the replies follows: “Nooo. Rather burn her”.⁶⁷

57. The Inter-Parliamentary Union marks that “social media has become the number one place in which psychological violence – particularly in the form of sexist and misogynistic remarks, humiliating images, mobbing, intimidation and threats – is perpetrated against women parliamentarians.”⁶⁸

58. The attacks against transgender women in politics have been in the news many times. One example thereof is Sue Pascoe from the United Kingdom, a trans person who is member of the Conservative Party and who ran for election in the European Parliament. She has been victim of harassment and attacks ranging from targeted harassment online to attacks on her property and death threats so that she had to be flagged as a vulnerable person by the local police.⁶⁹

59. Anonymity indubitably makes abusers’ lives easier. There have been calls for anonymity to be banned in order to discourage defamation, but some may argue that denying Internet users the ability to post anonymously is not only a breach of their privacy and freedom of expression but also would reduce online participation in general. Nonetheless, raising barriers to posting abusive comments – for example through controls by site moderators – might still be a first step in stemming the tide of anonymous online abuse, though in many cases abusers have no fear of attacking openly as noted below.

60. Various types of actors have been reported as perpetrators of violence against politicians, including state- and non-state actors, members of political parties including one’s own party, interest groups, constituents, voters, family members, religious leaders, and so on. Voters and constituents seem to be common perpetrators of violence against both male and female politicians in many European contexts.⁷⁰ However, threats against Spanish mayor Manuela Carmena containing sexist slurs were made by participants of a group chat of local police officers.⁷¹

61. Fellow party and parliamentary colleagues have been pointed out as important aggressors behind the violence and harassment faced by female politicians.⁷² Around one fifth of women in politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina report both parliamentary contexts and parties as sites where violence against women in politics is perpetrated.⁷³ While opposing parties are believed to be the most common perpetrators of VAWIP in this context by the study participants, almost half of them state that members of one’s own party are common perpetrators.⁷⁴

62. Family members have exercised violence and intimidation against women to prevent them from standing for office or participating in politics more broadly.⁷⁵ There are also cases when family members have collaborated with female politicians’ political opponents to exercise violence against them.⁷⁶ Due to patriarchal gender relations, male relatives can effectively make the lives of female candidates and officials very difficult by withholding the family’s financial resources as a punishment, or by being complicit in the spreading of degrading rumours.⁷⁷

66. Erikson, Håkansson, and Josefsson, 2019.

67. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/18/when-the-far-right-crack-rape-jokes-part-of-a-systemic-bid-to-demean>.

68. IPU, 2016.

69. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/transgender-hate-crimes-up-81-per-cent-police-data-reveals-a4177016.html>

70. E.g. Bjelland and Silokset, 2017; Every-Palmer, Barry-Walsh, and Pathé, 2015.; James et al., 2016.; Pathé, Phillips, Perdacher, and Heffernan, 2014.; Wallin and Command, 2015.

71. See <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/portada/court-to-investigate-insults-threats-madrid-mayor-in-local-police-chat/50000260-3443942> [accessed 9 September 2019].

72. Bardall, 2011; Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016.

73. Miftari, 2019.

74. Ibid.

75. E.g. Bardall, 2011.

76. Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg, 2019; Vásquez García, Verónica. 2011. *Usos y Costumbres y Cuidadanía Femenina. Hablan Las Presidentas Municipales de Oaxaca, 1996-2010*. Mexico: Cámara de Diputados, LXI Legislatura, Colegio de Postrados / Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

77. Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg, 2019; Vásquez García, 2011.



3. IMPACT OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE ON POLITICIANS

63. Political violence affects the immediate targets in various ways, and it also has implications for the political system and democracy of society in which it occurs.

3.1 Emotional and professional consequences of sexual harassment

64. Workplace sexual harassment has been consistently connected to myriad psychological consequences including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and PTSD.⁷⁸ Research on the topic has also identified a set of somatic consequences related to sexual harassment, such as exhaustion, sleep problems, gastric problems, and musculoskeletal pain.⁷⁹ Furthermore, work-related consequences of sexual harassment include work withdrawal and disengagement, and lowered productivity not just of directly affected individuals but of entire teams.⁸⁰ Importantly, all forms of sexual harassment, including gender harassment as well as physical sexual violence, are associated with these types of health and occupational outcomes.⁸¹

3.2 Political selection: drop-outs and opt outs

65. A potentially important implication of violence against politicians is that candidates and elected officials opt-out of re-running in future elections or drop out prematurely, and that potential candidates refrain from entering politics.

66. Evidence from Italy suggests that potential candidates refrain from running for mayor in municipalities affected by political violence: higher-ability individuals opt out, resulting in lower human capital among mayoral candidates in affected municipalities.⁸²

78. For an overview, see Fitzgerald and Cortina, 2018.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Daniele, Gianmarco. 2017. 'Strike One to Educate One Hundred: Organized Crime, Political Selection and Politicians' Ability'. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*; Pinotti, Paolo. 2012. *Organized Crime, Violence and the Quality of Politicians: Evidence from Southern Italy*. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. SSRN Scholarly Paper.w.

67. Swedish studies have found a low frequency of actual drop-outs, but 9% of female and 6% of male politicians report that they have considered leaving politics entirely due to own exposure to or worries about political violence.⁸³ 9% of female and 7% of male politicians report that they have considered leaving a specific assignment for the same reason.⁸⁴

68. In Norway, 11% of MPs (male and female) exposed to violence in the course of their political office report that they consider leaving politics.⁸⁵ 13 and 16% respectively worry about the safety of their families, and have increased security at home, as a consequence of facing violence as politicians.

69. Both women and men in local politics across Europe report opting out of standing for office or leaving elected office prematurely due to harassment and threats directed at them.⁸⁶ Each case of undue influence of this sort challenges the democratic functioning of politics. If women candidates or officials are targeted more frequently or exposed to attacks of a qualitatively more severe character, women may be more affected by the possibility of opt-outs and drop-outs from politics. Scottish politician Nicola Sturgeon comments on this: "What makes me angry when I read abuse about me is that I worry that it puts the next generation of young women off politics."⁸⁷

70. It is important for candidates and elected officials to be perceived as competent and capable in order to gain the confidence of voters and constituents. Publicly revealing that one is targeted with sexist attacks and harassment might put one at the risk of being portrayed as weak. Moreover, if the harasser is from the same party, there is a risk of being perceived as disloyal and unreliable. Victim blaming is a common feature of all forms of violence against women, and in the political context this can have severe consequences for political careers.⁸⁸ There are high risks that victims refrain from reporting incidents of harassment and that perpetrators remain unpunished. This contributes to a hostile working environment for politicians, which may be particularly detrimental for women's willingness to enter and remain in politics.

71. If women face gendered harassment as politicians at local and regional levels, this can impact on the selection of politicians into national level politics. Local politics constitute a common stepping stone to higher-level offices in many countries. Women are less likely to run for office than men in many contexts,⁸⁹ which can be exacerbated by gendered violence against women in politics.

3.3 Decision making

72. An implication that deserves substantial consideration is how decisions taken by politicians may be affected by political violence, and whether (groups of) women or politicians advocating certain issues are more affected than others. Research on the topic is scarce. Only one of the Norwegian parliamentarians surveyed reports that being exposed to violence has affected a decision on their behalf.⁹⁰ Among Swedish local politicians, around 2% report being affected in this way.⁹¹ It is possible that this type of consequence is more common in contexts affected by other forms of violence against politicians or by violence coming from other types of actors, but more studies are needed to assess the impact of violence, gender-based and otherwise, on political decision making.

83. Frenzel, Anna. 2017. *Politikernas Trygghetsundersökning 2017. Förtroendevaldas Utsatthet Och Oro För Trakasserier, Hot Och Våld 2016*. Stockholm: Bråttförebyggande rådet.

84. Ibid.

85. Bjørge, Tore & Silkoset, Emilie. (2017). *Trusler og trusselhendelser mot politikere: En spørreundersøkelse blant norske stortingsrepresentanter og regjeringsmedlemmer*. PHS Forskning, 2017:5.

86. See e.g. <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/bath-councillor-quits-post-claiming-2636794>; <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=161&artikel=6746402>.

87. Amnesty International, 2018, Nicola Sturgeon: A Case Study in Violence Against Women Online. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/nicola-sturgeon-online-violence-against-women/>.

88. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics; "Violence against women in politics".

89. Lawless, Jennifer L., and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes A Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

90. Bjørge, Tore & Silkoset, Emilie. (2017). *Trusler og trusselhendelser mot politikere: En spørreundersøkelse blant norske stortingsrepresentanter og regjeringsmedlemmer*. PHS Forskning, 2017:5.

91. Frenzel, 2017.

3.4 Democratic debate and public discussions

73. Decreased freedom of expression and limits on what politicians discuss in public debates has been reported as a consequence of political violence from several European countries. Around 8% of Norwegian parliamentarians report self-censorship in what they discuss publicly or what they express on certain topics as a consequence of exposure to violence.⁹² Severe attacks on women who publicly engage in debates on politically salient topics are continuously reported from many countries.⁹³ Evidence from the UK suggests that women in politics are severely abused on Twitter.⁹⁴ Being such a commonly used forum for public debate, this could have implications for women's opportunities to participate in the democratic conversation on equal terms as men. In Swedish local politics, women in politics report avoiding making public statements on certain topics as a consequence of political violence to a higher extent than male counterparts.⁹⁵

3.5 Groups of women and intersectional identities

74. It is vital to recognise that the risks differ for different groups of office holders and candidates, including different groups of women. Politicians' intersectional identities may affect how and how much they are targeted, as well as the impact for both direct targets and on-lookers. They can also affect how violence exposure is framed and managed.

75. Italy's first black minister has been repeatedly exposed to racist and sexist attacks, such as being likened to an orangutan by a former government minister, having bananas thrown at her while on a podium, mannequins with fake blood being dumped by political opponents outside a townhall where she was due to give a speech, and a local councillor of an opposing party calling for her to be raped.⁹⁶ Similarly, a billboard, paid for by far right groups, demanded that a female European politician of African origin be "whitened with bleach and burned alive."⁹⁷ Sylvana Simons, Councillor of Amsterdam, has received several death-threats on the social media, and has been victim of misogynist and racist abuse. In 2016, the violence escalated into the circulation of racist and deeply violent video of her portrayed as a lynching victim.⁹⁸

76. A recent study points out that the forms of violence politicians are targeted with is linked to the impact they have.⁹⁹ Witnessing women of colour being exposed to sexist and racialised intimidation reverberates among marginalised communities.¹⁰⁰ It creates a heightened sense of vulnerability in the communities they represent symbolically,¹⁰¹ impacts on attitudes to racialised female politicians as a group, and risks decreasing the supply of willing candidates among already politically marginalised groups.¹⁰²

92. Bjørgo and Silkoset, 2017.

93. See e.g. a Swiss case: <https://www.euronews.com/2018/09/20/swiss-politicians-online-abuse>.

94. Amnesty International. 2018. Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/>.

95. Frenzel, 2017.

96. The Guardian, 2013, Italy's first black minister: I had bananas thrown at me but I'm here to stay, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/08/cecile-kyenge-quest-for-tolerance> [Accessed 16 September 2019].

97. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016.

98. Holligan, Anna, 2016, Dutch race hate row engulfs presenter Sylvana Simons, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38089469> [last viewed September 16, 2019].

99. Kuperberg, Rebecca. 2019. 'Evidence from the Twitter "Cesspit": Antisemitic and Islamophobic VAWIP in the United Kingdom.' *European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Sessions: Mons, Belgium*.

100. Ibid.

101. Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016.

102. Kuperberg, 2019.



4. ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST POLITICIANS IN A GENDER-SENSITIVE WAY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 Responsibilities of national, regional, and local authorities

77. Different electoral systems stipulate different rules and responsibilities. Many European countries have party-centred systems which entails some form of shared responsibility between government bodies and parties for the conditions of political offices. Furthermore, the division of responsibilities between national, regional, and local authorities differs across countries. The issue of clarifying the division of responsibilities, including budgetary responsibilities, is paramount. The UK Local Government Association has pointed out that the costs for councillors' security is sometimes born by local police forces, sometimes by political parties, and sometimes by local councils.¹⁰³ As a result, councillors' effective access to security measures may vary depending on how responsibility is assigned and resources available across localities and actors within the same country.

4.2 The national level

78. National public authorities can carry out projects to capacitate local government bodies and parties in how to handle physical, psychological and sexual violence against politicians. Nationwide surveys and studies on the prevalence of the problem can enable a good fact-based assessment of the situation. Furthermore, national level institutions can collect good practices from around the country and create fora for exchanging knowledge and experiences.

79. The UK Local Government Association notes that the local police force takes the issue of intimidation seriously in some parts of the country but less so in others.¹⁰⁴ National authorities can assist local police forces as well as other actors managing politicians' security in the implementation of adequate measures to protect politicians' integrity both physically and mentally. Gender awareness is vital in this work.

103. Local Government Association. 2019. Intimidation in public life: House of Commons Briefing. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGA%20briefing%20-%20Intimidation%20in%20public%20life%20-%20HoC%20210519%20-FOR%20WEB.pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2019].

104. Ibid.

4.3 The local and regional levels

80. Local and regional authorities are closest to candidates and elected officials operating in their territories, and hence well-placed to conduct studies into their needs of support in relation to attacks on them as politicians. Policies on how to prevent and manage attacks from constituents and other external actors need to be in place, as well as internal zero-tolerance policies on harassment between politicians in the local organisation.

81. Under the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life, local and regional authorities are responsible as employers, under Article 11, to protect the right to dignity and security in the workplace as essential for gender equality. Signatories are committed to opposing sexual harassment by stating clearly that such behaviour is unacceptable, supporting victims, introducing and implementing transparent policies to deal with perpetrators, and raising awareness on the issue. Under Article 21, signatories are committed to analysing statistics on incidents affecting women and men from a gender perspective and implement adequate measures as a response. Under Article 22, signatories are committed to combating gender-based violence.

4.4 Need for understanding the needs of local and regional office holders and candidates

82. Local politicians have particular vulnerabilities in terms of the risk of being targeted with harassment coming from constituents and political adversaries. One crucial aspect is their geographical proximity to constituents and voters. Whereas national parliamentarians and candidates may largely be located in capitals and enjoy some extent of anonymity in their home communities, local and regional candidates and officeholders often live next-door to their perpetrators. Their home addresses may be well-known and accessible to perpetrators of political violence and harassment, putting them and their families at different risks than politicians at other levels.

83. It is more common for office holders at lower levels of government to carry out their political functions on their spare time or as a part-time employment.¹⁰⁵ Politicians who do not work full time as such might have a lower familiarity with e.g. who to turn to when in need of support or security measures; the responsibilities of parties and government bodies respectively; routines for handling harassment and violence; existing policies and procedures on sexual harassment; and so on. They may have smaller networks of other politicians to ask for advice and spend less time in political institutions than full-time politicians.

84. Parties and assemblies at the local and regional levels may not have the same resources as the national level to assist politicians with issues to do with security, safety and equality. This may especially apply to smaller, local parties.¹⁰⁶

85. All of these aspects create specific vulnerabilities for local level candidates and officeholders, pointing to the need to clarify the division of responsibilities for their safety and wellbeing between national and local levels of government authorities and parties.

105. Verhelst, Tom, Herwig Reynaert and Kristof Steyvers (2013) Political recruitment and career development of local councillors in Europe. In: Egner, Björn, David Sweeting D and Pieter-Jan Klok (eds) *Local Councillors in Europe*. Urban and Regional Research International, vol 14. Springer VS, Wiesbaden. Pp 27-49.

106. For an overview of diminishing role of national parties in local elections, see Razin, Eran (2013) *Councillors and their parties*. In: Egner, Björn, David Sweeting D and Pieter-Jan Klok (eds) *Local Councillors in Europe*. Urban and Regional Research International, vol 14. Springer VS, Wiesbaden pp 51-62.



5. LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES' AREAS FOR ACTION

5.1 Building knowledge, developing concrete tools

86. As noted in a UN report, solutions to gendered violence against politicians need to start with fact-based assessments, “such as vulnerability mapping or violence monitoring, which can contribute to establishing the necessary evidence base in order to promote prevention and hold perpetrators accountable.”¹⁰⁷ Mapping the situation is necessary in order to understand the scope of the problem, e.g. which politicians are affected and by what forms of violence, which can then facilitate adequate programming to tackle the issue. The UN’s Special Rapporteur on “violence against women, its causes and consequences” notes that election observation programmes offer key opportunities to collect information on the issue of violence against women in elections.¹⁰⁸

87. Building knowledge on the issue requires accurate measurements of the forms of violence politicians are exposed to in elections and as office-holders. Commonly used measurements of political violence focus on visible acts of violence, over-emphasising physical violence, and the private sphere is seldom considered.¹⁰⁹

88. They are therefore likely to fail to capture some of the types of violence women may be more likely to face. For example, these measurements overlook experiences of family members’ sometimes violent opposition towards women’s political participation. Likewise, these measurements are unlikely to capture incidents of sexual harassment between politicians. Furthermore, the over-emphasis on physical manifestations of violence risks downplaying the detrimental effects that psychological violence can have.

89. Based on information collected, a systematic approach that involves guidance, training, support, monitoring, and development, involving the development and use of toolkits and guidelines is an effective measure. In order to systematise work on the security of elected officials, the Uppsala municipality in Sweden has adopted a toolkit. It consists of guidance, training, support, monitoring, and development. The guideline for support and security measures for elected officials, adopted by the

107. United Nations (UN). 2013. “Measures Taken and Progress Achieved in the Promotion of Women and Political Participation: Report of the Secretary General.” Report A/68/ 184, July 24. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/755820?ln=en> (accessed September 12, 2019).

108. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics; “Violence against women in politics”.

109. Bjarnegård, Elin. 2017. ‘Gender and Election Violence: Advancing the Comparative Agenda’. Comparative Politics Newsletter 27(1): 11–15.

municipal board in 2017, stipulates that the municipality is responsible for the safety and security of all elected officials, not just those employed by the municipality, and clarifies the municipality's responsibility to prevent and handle threats, violence, and harassment against them. By adopting the guideline, all elected officials in the municipality have the same possibility to receive support and protection as the non-political employees of the municipality.¹¹⁰

90. The municipality has surveyed the municipal politicians in order to assess their needs. Politicians receive documents outlining relevant information about personal security, how the procedures for handling threats work, security issues related to public meetings, etc. The municipality acknowledges the importance of security measures as well as psychosocial support for all politicians and stresses that the size of the party's funds should not determine whether a politician can receive security or psychosocial support.¹¹¹ Specific guidelines exist for various forms of physical and psychological violence, detailing how to act and who to contact.¹¹²

91. In France, following the consultation on violence against mayors (see para. 24), the French Senate's Legal Committee made 12 proposals (of which 7 are legislative). A draft law on "engagement and proximity" was presented to the French Council of Ministers in July 2019 and to the Senate for a first reading in October 2019. Among almost 800 amendments proposed, at least 10 to 15 concern the issue of handling the violence against mayors and local councillors.

5.2 Adopting institutional provisions

92. National, regional, and local political institutions need effective policies and procedures in place to address violence and harassment targeting politicians, and these need to be sensitive to gender dimensions. This includes preventing and responding to the problem, as well as monitoring and building capacity.

93. Reforms may be necessary to ensure that legal action can be taken on violence, harassment, and intimidation directed at politicians, both elected and non-elected. This can entail stipulating that existing workplace legislation on anti-discrimination applies to all politicians regardless of employment arrangements, or providing specific legislation addressing violence and harassment against politicians. Difficulties of prosecuting sexual harassment due to parliamentary immunity have been raised, for example in Costa Rica, where parliamentarians introduced a bill to ensure that elected officials would not be immune to prosecution in cases of harassment.¹¹³

5.3 Taking measures against sexual harassment in local parliamentary institutions and political parties

94. Research on sexual harassment unanimously finds that addressing the organizational culture is vital in order to combat sexual harassment.¹¹⁴ Though the propensity to harass differs between individuals, organizational factors are most critical: organisational tolerance "is the single most powerful factor in determining whether sexual harassment will occur and will be damaging when it does."¹¹⁵ This is good news for political organisations, since it is within their power to address and change such factors.

110. Uppsala Municipality, <https://www.uppsala.se/organisation-och-styrning/nyheter-och-pressmeddelanden/uppsala-kommun-far-pris-for-sakerhetsarbete/> [accessed 9 September 2019].

111. Uppsala Municipality, <https://skl.se/download/18.294971d715e84cab8c784275/1505981931067/Verktyslada-trygg-saker-for-troendevald-Uppsala-kommun.pdf> [Accessed 9 September 2019].

112. Uppsala Municipality, <https://skl.se/download/18.294971d715e84cab8c783b8a/1505981107731/Rutin-hantering-hot-vald-uppsala-kommun.pdf> [Accessed 9 September 2019].

113. Palmieri, Sonia. 2011. *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. A Global Review of Good Practice*. Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union.

114. Fitzgerald and Cortina, 2018; Willness, Chelsea. R., Piers Steel & Kibeom Lee. 2007. *A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of workplace sexual harassment*. *Personnel Psychology*, 60(1), 127-162.

115. Hulin, Charles L., Louise F. Fitzgerald, and Fritz Drasgow. 1996. "Organizational Influences on Sexual Harassment." In *Women and Work: A Research and Policy Series, Vol. 5. Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Perspectives, Frontiers, and Response Strategies*, ed. Margaret S. Stockdale. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

95. Hulin et al.'s research has identified the following aspects of organisational culture as crucial to address:¹¹⁶

- ***Perceived risk for targets of sexual harassment who report harassing incidents.*** A person who reports an incident of sexual harassment needs to be sure that they will not lose their job or suffer any other reprisals for reporting. Social retaliation has been found to be highly prevalent, such as ostracism, blame, and being treated as a “trouble-maker”, and to have equivalent professional and psychological harms as professional retaliation.¹¹⁷ Leaders of political institutions should be responsible for making sure that reporters of sexual harassment do not get punished, professionally or socially, for reporting.
- ***Chances that they will be taken seriously by management.*** Those who report incidents of sexual harassment need to be sure that the leaders of the organization will not brush it off as trivial, that they will not be met with disbelief, and that reporting the incident will lead to a proper investigation. Low chances that incidents will be taken seriously by management make it easy for perpetrators to perpetrate, decreases the likelihood that victims will report, and amplifies the negative health and professional consequences for the victim.
- ***Likelihood that something will be done to the harasser.*** Measures need to be taken against harassers, and everyone in the organization needs to be aware that acts of sexual harassment will have consequences for the harasser. If the perceived costs to harass are too low, the organization shows tolerance towards sexual harassment.

96. The above aspects of organisational culture should be operationalised into policies on sexual harassment in parties and institutions of local government. Institutionalising a zero-tolerance of sexual harassment makes it less likely to occur, and communicates to members and potential future candidates that the organisation is committed to being an equally safe and unhostile environment for all.

97. Mandatory training sessions on sexual harassment have been shown to have varying results, and sometimes even be counter-productive.¹¹⁸ Workplace civility training, where focus is non respectful behaviour in general rather than specific focus on sex-based and sexually offensive behaviour, may be more geared towards successful outcomes.¹¹⁹

98. By-stander interventions have demonstrated promise: where a third party confronts harassers and supports victims. If nothing more, these interventions displace some of the responsibility commonly placed on victims themselves to handle the situation.¹²⁰

5.4 Containing harassment and intimidation from constituents and voters

99. In relation to constituents' and voters' attacks on politicians, physical as well as psychological intimidation need to be taken seriously. Security units may be more used to protecting politicians' physical than psychological integrity and may need assistance in expanding their toolbox for dealing with harassment and threats. Even threats that are unlikely to “escalate” into physical attacks can be damaging on the target's psyche and ability to continue carrying out political functions normally. Harassment that might not constitute a criminal offense can still disturb politicians in their roles as such and create inequalities in the conditions for political representation. Social media needs to be understood as the important arena for psychological violence against politicians that it is.

100. It is recommended that municipalities, regions, and all local government organisations have a security division or similar, and that these are aware of physical and psychological attacks facing office holders as well as gender dimensions to attacks. Actors responsible for politicians' security, be it party or government commissioned actors, need developed routines for handling problematic constituent contacts that go beyond assessing which individuals might contribute to physical risks.

116. Hulin, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow, 1996.

117. Fitzgerald and Cortina, 2018.

118. Bisom-Rapp, Susan. “Sex Harassment Training Must Change: The Case for Legal Incentives for Transformative Education and Prevention.” *Stan. L. Rev. Online* 71 (2018): 60; Dobbin, Frank and Alexandra Kalev. 2017. “Training Programs and Reporting Systems Won't End Sexual Harassment. Promoting More Women Will.” *Harvard Business Review* November 15.

119. Fitzgerald and Cortina, 2018.

120. Ibid.

5.5 Aiming for gender-sensitive assemblies and administrations at local and regional level

101. A gender-sensitive parliament is a parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its composition, structures, operations, methods and work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large.¹²¹ This Inter-Parliamentary Union definition is valid for assemblies of all levels of governance.

102. Recruiting more women to political positions and promoting women to leadership in politics is an important ingredient in how to alter organisational culture and make parties and parliaments more gender-sensitive. Women's numeric representation at the local and regional level differs across European countries.¹²² The formal and informal design of political institutions is a key area to work on in order to remedy women's underrepresentation in politics.

103. In a report to the UK House of Commons, Childs makes detailed recommendations on how to make parliaments inclusive, most of which are relevant to any level of government. The report is based on the notion that an "inclusive, effective and representative Parliament is about more than simply increasing the diversity of Members elected to the House; it also requires their equal and effective participation therein."¹²³ In order to make political institutions inclusive of women and minorities, written-down rules are not the sole object to be addressed. Informal norms, practices, and culture, i.e. the normal way of doing things, need an equal amount of consideration.¹²⁴

104. Building on IPU's framework, Palmieri outlines four key elements for gender-sensitive parliaments:

- a. Accepting that the responsibility to achieve gender equality, both in terms of policy outcome and process, is shared between parliaments and parties, and between women and men.
- b. Policies and laws allow parliaments to monitor, follow-up and review its gender equality achievements.
- c. Institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in representational, legislative, and oversight work to ensure that any potential gender-based discrimination is considered and counteracted.
- d. Striving towards a gender-sensitive parliamentary culture and work environment that does not sanction discriminatory, prejudicial norms and attitudes.¹²⁵

105. One practical organisational aspect that can either facilitate or impede representation of different social groups is the timing of meetings. Mothers are underrepresented in politics and social norms make it particularly difficult for women to combine caring responsibilities with political functions.¹²⁶ Taking into account that politicians may have caring responsibilities, scheduling meetings within business hours is advisable.¹²⁷

106. In order to normalise women's inclusion in political bodies, it is important to consider how gender-specific language affects perceptions of women politicians. Gendered language reproduces ideas of politics as a male sphere and women as outsiders. Hence, using terms such as "chair", rather than e.g. "chairman" is recommended.¹²⁸ Similarly, making sure not only men are featured in art work in political buildings serves the same purpose. Experiments have demonstrated that women who see pictures of female leaders give better speeches both according to external observers and the women themselves.¹²⁹ Education is a key component of the arsenal for

121. Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2012. *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*. Geneva.

122. See e.g. Alibegović, Dubravka Jurlina, Sunčana Slijepčević and Josip Šipić (2013) 'The gender gap among local representatives: A potential for local development?' In: Egner, Björn, David Sweeting D and Pieter-Jan Klok (eds) *Local Councillors in Europe. Urban and Regional Research International*, vol 14. Springer VS, Wiesbaden. Pp 181-202.

123. Childs, Sarah. 2016. *The Good Parliament*. University of Bristol.

124. Ibid.

125. Palmieri, Sonia. 2018. 'Gender-Sensitive Parliaments'. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

126. Campbell, Rosie, and Sarah Childs. 2014. 'Parents in Parliament: "Where's Mum?"' *The Political Quarterly* 85(4): 487-92.

127. Childs, 2016.

128. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012.

129. For an overview, see Bohnet, Iris. 2016. *What Works: Gender Equality by Design*. Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

implementing a non-sexist language policy in local and regional governments just as it is for developing and improving the self-esteem of girls in schools.

107. Developing codes of conduct is an effective measure to shape norms. Laws and regulations demonstrate what behaviour is acceptable and what is not, and there are myriad examples of people adapting their behaviour to and internalising regulated norms. Rankings and comparisons can serve towards the same goal of establishing norms.¹³⁰

108. Emphasising the importance of the role men can play in stepping up the fight against casual sexism or everyday sexist aggressions that feed into power imbalances between men and women is crucial as they make public spaces a hostile environment for women. It cannot be repeated enough that fighting sexism is not only women's affair.

109. Transparency on gender-sensitivity goals of political organisations and bodies, and transparency on the extent to which those goals are reached, is key for accountability. Actors that are aware that they will be held accountable for their actions towards diversity exert less bias.¹³¹ Long-term and short-term, achievable goals should be combined.

130. Bohnet, Iris. 2016. *What Works: Gender Equality by Design*. Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

131. Ibid.

Achieving gender equality and a balanced political participation of women and men in political and public decision-making processes is of paramount importance for the full enjoyment of human rights. It is also one of the strategic objectives guiding Council of Europe activities. Equal sharing of decision-making power between women and men from different backgrounds and varying ages strengthens and enriches democracy.

This publication represents the Council of Europe gender equality *acquis* which concerns balanced political participation and representation of women and men. It aims to raise awareness of electoral and political stakeholders in the Council of Europe member states about existing standards and recommendations by providing a list of resolutions and recommendations issued by the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on actions and measures to be taken in order to ensure a safe political environment and to achieve gender equality and balanced participation of women and men which is fundamental for sustainable development.

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