COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 24 February 2021 GEC (2021) Bureau 1 Report

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
5th Bureau meeting
1 February 2021

Report

1. **19th GEC meeting** (14-15 April 2021)

Since the last meeting of the Bureau (26 November 2020), the Council of Europe has decided that all meetings will be held online until the end of June 2021. As a result, the draft agenda was revised to take into account the reduced duration of the GEC meeting in April.

The Bureau discussed two items in particular – the preparation of the draft terms of reference of the GEC and its working methods.

- *Terms of reference 2022-2025*

With regard to the terms of reference, the Secretariat explained that the Council of Europe was moving towards a four-year cycle for future terms of reference of all intergovernmental committees. As it would not be possible to develop the same level of detail in the terms of reference for such a long period of time, the GEC has been asked to indicate the main priorities over the four years (2022-2025) by May 2021, it being understood that some sort of mid-term review will take place in 2023. The GEC is asked to put forward its proposals for main priorities and activities. The terms of reference of all intergovernmental committees will be adopted by the Committee of Ministers in November 2021.

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau about the last year's reply from the GEC Chair to the Secretary General's questionnaire concerning the four-year strategic framework reflecting the priorities for the Council of Europe's longer-term mission, which could be used as the basis for the discussion on future priorities and tasks at April's GEC meeting.

Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine) pointed out that while the four-year period will include the preparation of the new gender equality strategy, which could include new topics, it was important to take into account the ongoing implementation of the current Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023).

The Secretariat said that this was indeed a factor to be considered and that a final report of the current gender equality strategy will be prepared, which will also serve as a basis for developing the new strategy to be applied from 2024 onwards. The terms of reference of the GEC for 2022-2025 can indeed include specific activities and plans in addition to taking stock of the current gender equality strategy and preparing the next one.

- *GEC working methods*

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that this item had been placed on the GEC draft agenda in order to get opinions and comments from the GEC members about the working methods. The GEC is regularly asked to comment on documents such as draft recommendations, PACE recommendations and resolutions, etc. and there is not always an opportunity for the GEC to discuss the documents and propose changes in plenary meetings because of deadlines. This would be a chance to discuss working methods with the GEC members and get their feedback as they have received some requests recently. Also, following one year of having a Bureau in place, this could become a wider discussion on how the GEC works.

2. **Conference "Gender Equality and the Istanbul Convention: A decade of action",** (Berlin, 11 May 2021)

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the German authorities had decided to change the format and duration of the conference on "Gender Equality and the Istanbul Convention: A decade of action" to an online event, lasting one day on 11 May 2021. The morning session would be dedicated to a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Istanbul Convention. While the conference would be online, the possibility to have the high level speakers and panellists present in person in Berlin, in order to have a "talk show" format discussion, is still open.

The Bureau said it would be good to make available the Q&A on the Istanbul Convention to the conference participants.

The afternoon session of the conference will concentrate on sexism. Here there will be a role for the GEC, experiences from the sexism project which was implemented by the European Women's Lobby, as well as an inspirational guest speaker and conclusions. More information will be available at the April meeting of the GEC.

3. **Any other business**

Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair) informed the participants about the plans for the Portuguese EU Presidency to mark the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention. An online event will be organised on 6 April 2021 with a focus on the European Union measures to combat violence against women and domestic violence. The Council of Europe will be invited to participate and more information about the level of participation will be forthcoming shortly. The President of GREVIO will also be invited to make a presentation.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the preparations for the 3rd meeting of the GEC-MIG which will take place on 2 and 3 March 2021. Members of the drafting committee have been asked to send comments on the draft recommendation and a consolidated document with all the amendments submitted would be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.

4. Date of the next Bureau meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting in the last week of March (following the CSW), on either 29 or 30 March 2021 (tbc).

Participants:

Bureau: *Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair), Basim Al-Alousi (the Netherlands), Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine)*

Secretariat*: Daniele Cangemi, Caterina Bolognese, Carolina Lasén Diaz, Cécile Gréboval, Adrienne Looby, Evrydiki Tseliou*