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GEC (2021) Report November

**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)**

*20th meeting
23-25 November 2021*

REPORT

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The 20th meeting of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) was opened by the Chair, Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal). Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the meeting took place in a hybrid format. A total of 46 member states were represented at the meeting, with 19 in person in Strasbourg and 27 following the meeting online. Other participants included representatives of non-member observer states, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations and international organisations. The full list of participants is attached in Appendix II to this report.
2. The Chair welcomed Roberto Olla, the new Head of the Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department, who replaced Daniele Cangemi who has moved to another post within the Organisation. Roberto Olla introduced himself, mentioning his great interest in gender equality issues. During his time as Executive Secretary of Eurimages, the cinema support fund of the Council of Europe, the gender equality dimension of the film industry had been introduced. He was looking forward to working closely with the GEC on this and all other gender equality-related issues.
3. Claudia Luciani, the Director of Human Dignity, Gender Equality and Governance, wished the GEC members well in their very ambitious agenda and said that she would be following the discussions closely.
4. The [draft agenda](#) was adopted as it appears in Appendix I to this report.
 - *The GEC adopted its agenda, as set out in Appendix I to the present report.*

II. Gender Equality Commission

- Election of Chair and two Vice-Chairs (January-December 2022)
5. The Vice-Chair, Basim Al Alousi, replaced Andreia Lourenço Marques for this item on the agenda as she was a candidate for the post of Chair. Following short presentations by the three candidates (Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal): post of Chair; Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine) and Andrii Savva (Cyprus): posts of Vice-Chairs), and in accordance with Resolution CM/Res(2011)24* on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods, the GEC elected Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) as its Chair, and Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine) and Andrii Savva (Cyprus) as its two Vice-Chairs, for a term of one year, with effect from 1 January 2022.
 - *The GEC (with Vice-Chair Basim Al Alousi in the Chair) elected Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) as Chair and Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine) and Andrii Savva (Cyprus) as Vice-Chairs of the Gender Equality Commission for a mandate of one year from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.*

* Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies replaced CM/Res(2011)24 on 1 January 2022.

➤ GEC Terms of Reference (2022-2025)

6. Caterina Bolognese, Secretary to the GEC, informed the members during the meeting that the terms of reference for the [GEC for 2022-2025](#) had been adopted by the Committee of Ministers. The terms of reference of the new body, subordinate to both the GEC and the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, the [Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination](#) (GEC/ADI-AI) for 2024-2025 had also been adopted. (See paragraph 107 of this report for future work related to the GEC/ADI-AI.)
- *The GEC took note of the information about the adoption of the GEC terms of reference for a period of four years – 2022-2025, and of the terms of reference of the subordinate body to the GEC and the CDADI, the GEC/ADI-AI, for 2024-2025.*

III. Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality

1. Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

a. Draft 2021 annual report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy

7. The Chair informed the members that the [preliminary version of the draft 2021 annual report \(GEC\(2021\)6\)](#) had been prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the activities undertaken by the GEC, the Gender Equality Division, experts and various sectors of the Council of Europe. The annual report and its appendix on the [“Activities and measures in member states towards the achievement of the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy \(GEC\(2021\)5\)”](#), which is a compilation of the contributions received from the member states, would be updated and finalised once all contributions from member states had been received. The Chair reminded the members of the deadline of 3 December 2021 for contributions and that only activities relating to 2021 should be submitted.
8. The Chair invited comments on the document from the members. Olga Opanasenko (Russian Federation) said that while the Russian Federation appreciated the work already done on the report, her delegation wished to propose certain modifications. These included a request to qualify the word “gender” with “equality” throughout the report; and to modify the reference to the cooperation project with the Russian Federation so as to dissociate it from the Istanbul Convention. Appendix V reproduces the written comments on the draft annual report provided by the Russian Federation during the meeting.
9. Olga Opanasenko continued by saying that the Gender Equality Strategy is not a legally binding document and can “provide policy guidance”, “set the vision and a framework for the Council of Europe’s role and action in the area of gender equality”, “set priority areas” or “outline the goals and priorities”, and therefore proposed that paragraph 3 of the “Introduction” to the report should replace the phrase “establish commitment” with one of these phrases.

10. As regards the Council of Europe project “Cooperation on the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)”, Olga Opanasenko requested that the Secretariat add a new paragraph after paragraph 17 of the Introduction as follows: *“Taking into account position of the Russian Federation on the Istanbul Convention, the co-operation project with the Russian Federation is based on the concept of an equal exchange of experience and best practices in two areas: women’s political participation and violence against women. When implementing the co-operation project both sides proceed from the position that programme co-operation provides an opportunity, along with others, for Russia to promote in a dialogue with European partners its vision of public issues, including the protection of women’s rights, to facilitate knowledge creation, exchange of best practices and increase the capacity of relevant stakeholders in order to advance women’s empowerment, more effectively prevent violence against women on the basis of their national legislation and commonly accepted international documents”*.
11. Olga Opanasenko also requested that the first and the second sentences of paragraph 19 be reformulated as follows: *“In 2021, many co-operation activities continued to focus to a large extent on implementation support concerning the Istanbul Convention, as it remains a high priority for the 34 member States of the Council of Europe that ratified it. Some of the member States which have not yet ratified (or signed) the Istanbul Convention are currently involved as beneficiaries in co-operation projects, including through ad hoc events...”*
12. Olga Opanasenko stated that the colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for Phase II of the Council of Europe project had informed her that discussions of the substantive part of the project were still ongoing and, therefore, it was too early to formulate the 3rd paragraph of paragraph 21. The official launching of the project is planned for December 2021. In this respect, she proposed that the last sentence of this subparagraph should be deleted, since both parties have already agreed not to include such wording in the text.
13. Olga Opanasenko also proposed to reformulate paragraph 22 as follows: *“References to Council of Europe standards and instruments – expertise and sharing of good practices with member and non-member States and other regional and international organisations increases the visibility of Council of Europe standards and instruments among its strategic partners. References continue to be made regularly to the Strategy and other Council of Europe instruments and tools in the field of gender equality, notably in European Union (EU) documents...”*
14. In addition, Olga Opanasenko proposed to substitute in paragraph 22, the words “gender pay gap” with “pay gap between men and women”. In paragraph 25, she proposed to add the words “in a number of cases” so that the paragraph ended with “in a number of cases, have a strong focus on the promotion and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.” She also proposed to replace “gender-related vulnerability of victims” with vulnerability of victims on the basis of their sex” in paragraph 38.

15. Olga Opanasenko pointed out that during the meetings of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) and the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI), the Russian experts consistently opposed the use of the word “gender” as a separate word and in all wordings as “gender-sensitive, etc.” and had asked not to use them since there is no commonly accepted definition of the word “gender” at the international level. In this respect, she requested that the Secretariat include a footnote after the first mention of the word “gender” in paragraph 47.
16. In the rationale given for some of the proposed changes, Olga Opanasenko pointed out that the Russian Federation neither supports the Istanbul Convention nor is considering signing or ratifying it. Therefore, in discussing the main directions of the co-operation project and the relevant draft action plan, it was clearly expressed by the Russian Federation that in the course of the realisation of the project, it was not considered as relevant to mention this “non-consensual document”. The co-operation project is based on the concept of an equal exchange of experience and best practices, and not on “providing the national authorities with tools and expertise to implement gender equality standards, the principles of the Istanbul Convention, etc.” as it is written in paragraph 17 of the preliminary annual report.
17. She went on to say that the Istanbul Convention has been ratified by “only 34 member states” and that “many countries have signed it but cannot ratify it because it contains some issues of concern. There are also some countries which have ratified it with reservations. Some countries are planning to withdraw from the convention or have already withdrawn.” She was of the opinion that the meaning of the document for those countries who have not yet signed nor ratified it must not be overestimated.
18. Ana Arrillaga Aldama (Spain) congratulated the Secretariat for the report and the work being undertaken by the Council of Europe, particularly on gender mainstreaming. She said it was very helpful to have the breakdown of the activities being undertaken in the member states regarding each objective. She said that the Istanbul Convention is one of the main and crucial standards of the Council of Europe and countries that have not yet signed or ratified it are in the process of modifying their legislation in order to be able to do so.
19. Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom) said that while the comments of the Russian Federation would of course be considered, he wanted to echo the point made by Spain. The United Kingdom has not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention but this was not because they had a problem with it. The United Kingdom wants to be very sure before ratifying it that they are in a position to be able to achieve its high standard.

20. Charles Ramsden also wanted to know more about the concerns of the Russian Federation about the word “gender”. He did not know that there was no accepted or understood definition of the word and the CSW used it 96 times in their agreed conclusions. He felt that all the participants must have a very good idea of its meaning, particularly as regards gender equality, as it is a very commonly understood phrase. He would be reluctant to see the word taken out of the strategy or any document produced by the Gender Equality Commission.
21. Kira Appel (Denmark) agreed with the comments of the United Kingdom regarding the word “gender” and pointed out that the name of the GEC was the Gender Equality Commission. She said that the words “women and men” were mentioned everywhere, violence against “women” was mentioned in the Istanbul Convention, and that issues that the GEC were working on were to promote gender equality focusing specifically on women. She did not want the reference removed from the report.
22. Kira Appel went on to say that while she agreed with the Russian Federation about the Gender Equality Strategy not being a legally binding one, the report that has been produced shows what has been happening and this cannot be disputed. She congratulated the Secretariat on all that had been accomplished in spite of great difficulty, and on the work planned for the future.
23. Stefano Pizzicannella (Italy) said that Italy did not have a problem with the use of the word “gender” in the report. He informed the members about the first Action Plan for Gender Equality in Italy which had recently been adopted. The plan provides for the creation of more equitable employment, supporting women’s participation, helping parents to reconcile private life/career, etc. and the budget also included finance to ensure its implementation. There is also a new Action Plan on Violence against Women which is designed to provide stable support to the anti-violence network and to help victims.
24. Karin Bengtson (Sweden) informed the members that Sweden now had a woman Prime Minister. She said that Sweden was very pleased with the extensive annual report and did not approve excluding or changing wording such as “gender” in the annual report. Sweden also could not exclude the mention of the Istanbul Convention from the report as it is a large part of the work of the GEC.
25. Olga Opanasenko (Russian Federation) said that while she understood the comments of the members regarding “gender” and the Istanbul Convention, these were very principled points for the Russian Federation. She asked that the Secretariat include all the comments concerning the Russian Federation co-operation project in the annual report. If the majority of the members did not want to qualify the word “gender” with “equality” in the annual report, she asked that the position of the Russian Federation be reflected in the meeting report.
26. The Chair pointed out to the members that the Secretariat supports the work of the GEC and it is the GEC who will give the final decision on the document.

27. Basim Al Alousi (the Netherlands/Vice Chair) said that the position of the Netherlands was the same as that of other colleagues, especially the United Kingdom, in that they accepted the use of the word “gender” and that the Istanbul Convention was a very important document. He also wished to see any changes in the report before it could be accepted and asked about the procedure for adoption of the annual report following the GEC meeting.
28. In the light of the discussions, it was agreed that changes would be made to paragraphs 7 and 21 of the draft annual report, in order to accommodate certain comments relating specifically to the cooperation project with the Russian Federation. Paragraph 7 will be simply split into two separate paragraphs, whereas in paragraph 21 the following sentence will be added to the project description : “*The project is implemented in accordance with Russian legislation and international instruments to which the Russian side has acceded.*” It was also agreed that the comments of the Russian Federation would be appended to the meeting report (see Appendix V).
29. The Secretariat confirmed that the annual report would be revised in accordance with the contributions from member states and that it would be sent to members for a factual check of their contributions before transmission to the Committee of Ministers. The annual report, as agreed (not adopted), will be sent for information, as required under the Strategy, to the Committee of Ministers. It first passes through the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights of the Committee of Ministers and this should happen in February or March 2022. When the annual report is sent to the Committee of Ministers for information, it is also sent to the GEC.

The GEC

- *instructed the Secretariat to update and finalise the draft annual report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 with contributions from the member states (deadline for receipt of contributions: 3 December 2021);*
- *in light of discussions, agreed on the text of the preliminary draft annual report; and, subject to a further verification of the factual accuracy of the revised report by written procedure, instructed the Secretariat to transmit the final revised report to the Committee of Ministers and to the GEC members at the same time.*

b. Thematic discussion/exchange of views on COVID-19: its impacts on gender equality

30. The Chair introduced the item and recalled the online seminar that took place in October 2020 on [“Advancing Gender Equality: the role and situation for gender equality mechanisms in the context of COVID-19”](#). She invited members to hold an exchange on the effects of COVID-19 on gender equality in the member States. This exchange will serve as a basis for further work on the gendered impact of COVID-19, as included in the proposed terms of reference of the GEC for 2022-2025.

31. The Secretariat recalled that the GEC terms of reference for the upcoming four years include a main task to produce a study by the end of 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 in one or more areas, such as health, disability or violence against women. Discussions at the Athens Seminar would be used, as well as any issues shared during the meeting. Members were invited to inform the Secretariat if they wished to take a more active part in the study.
32. In the discussion which followed, several member States expressed their willingness to co-operate on the future study and provided information about various activities which were being undertaken. Katarina Štrbac (Serbia) said that Serbia had carried out research about violence against women during lockdown, would continue this work and would contribute to the GEC study.
33. Karin Bengtson (Sweden) said that results from a study on the economic effects on women and men during the pandemic would be available shortly. She suggested to include this area in the study and that Sweden would be willing to contribute.
34. Ralph Kass (Luxembourg) said that Luxembourg's conclusions on a national study would be available at the end of 2021. The analysis will focus on several areas, such as the consequences of the first lockdown, the impact on women and men with regard to teleworking, education of children in the home and the distribution of domestic tasks; he thought this work could be interesting for the future GEC study. Luxembourg is also carrying out a study on mental health and COVID-19 which would see results in February 2022. The conclusions, which will be presented on International Women's Day in March 2022 could be Luxembourg's contribution to the report.
35. Ana Arrillaga Aldama (Spain) informed members that in response to the considerable impact of the pandemic on the Spanish economy, a recovery, transformation and resilience plan had been approved. The four pillars of the plan include energy transition, digital transformation, social and regional cohesion, and gender equality, with a cross-cutting dimension. Gender equality is mainstreamed into the plan in order to promote equal treatment and opportunities. Spain will share the guidelines which aim to facilitate the necessary gender mainstreaming perspective into all the activities funded by the plan.
36. Elin Grotnes (Norway) informed members that Norway had initiated a project on the consequence for gender equality, particularly in regard to working life and work/life balance and the share of household tasks and care work. This project will last until 2024 and will look into some of the long-term consequences for gender equality. Interesting findings might emerge as the project continues.

37. Farid Adilov (Azerbaijan) said the pandemic has shed a new light on the need to ensure a strong gender perspective in all policies. Azerbaijan had initiated a number of activities in order to minimise the impact of the pandemic on the population, starting with financial assistance for people in low-income groups. Other actions included analyses of risks and problems in family relations, as a result of social isolation measures during this pandemic; organising online meetings to help with psychological problems in families and how to address them; women also benefitted from support and education regarding reproductive health, pregnancy and maternity leave; and training courses for more than 400 medical workers were organised during the pandemic.
38. Ganna Zavalykut (Ukraine) said an analysis carried out on domestic cases of violence against women showed the same increase in Ukraine as indicated by the global trend. Work undertaken in order to provide assistance to victims and a subvention from the state budget was allocated to local budgets to develop shelters and support services for victims. These services were available around the clock, with social and psychological assistance also provided in the shelters.
39. Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair/Portugal), acting in her capacity as representative of Portugal, said that during its Presidency of the European Union, Portugal co-operated with the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) and produced a study on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on gender equality. The study was adopted in the conclusions of the [Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council](#) (EPSCO), the EU body where gender equality is discussed. She said this interesting study could serve as a good basis for the GEC study, at least for the 27 member States involved in it.
40. The Secretariat invited those member states who had taken the floor to forward more detailed information to the Secretariat (gender.equality@coe.int). Note was taken of the interest expressed by certain members; more information would be made available about the study, including its more precise focus, at the next GEC meeting in May 2022.
- *The GEC held an exchange of views on the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and invited members to submit information in writing to the Secretariat about activities in this respect in their countries in order to contribute to work on this file in 2022.*

c. Objective 1 – Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism

- The places of men and boys in gender equality policies – plans for future work on this topic
41. The Secretariat explained, for the benefit of the new members, that the GEC had already started to work on this issue, and that a draft study on the topic had been prepared and discussed at the last meeting in May 2021. This study was revised as a result of those discussions and individual interviews between some GEC members and the authors. The document was in the process of being finalised and would be ready in early 2022.

42. With regard to future work on this topic, the Secretariat drew the members' attention to the adopted GEC terms of reference for 2022-2025 which included a task of "drafting guidelines on the roles of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women". She informed the members that whereas combating violence against women was already included in the scope of the report, its more explicit inclusion in the GEC mandate was supported by several delegations and ultimately decided by the Committee of Ministers.
43. The Secretariat proposed that GEC members who wished to work more closely on this topic could express their interest to do so. They could form a small working group to work more closely with expert(s) who will prepare the guidelines. The work may, e.g., include receiving an advance draft of the document and submitting comments. The guidelines are expected to be finalised by December 2022.
44. In the exchange which followed, several delegations expressed their interest in working on the guidelines (Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg), with other members saying they would confirm their interest at a later date (Norway, Spain).
45. The Chair invited other members to inform the Secretariat of their interest to join the working group by 15 December 2021.

The GEC

- *took note that the study on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies would be finalised in early 2022;*
 - *members were invited to inform the Secretariat by 15 December 2021 if they wish to participate in future work on devising guidelines on the roles of men and boys.*
 - Committee of Ministers [Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism - the approach to review its implementation](#)
46. The Chair introduced the item by recalling that the GEC terms of reference for 2020-2021 asks the GEC to define an approach to review the implementation of legal instruments, notably the Recommendation (2019)¹ on preventing and combating sexism. The Secretariat document on [the approach to review the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism](#), would serve as a basis for a discussion on this topic.
 47. The Secretariat explained that the document presented two approaches to review the implementation of the sexism recommendation gradually over the coming years. The first option was to cover the whole recommendation, including all sectors mentioned in it (language and communication; internet social media and online sexist hate speech; media, advertising and other communication products and services; the workplace, the public sector, the justice sector, education institutions, culture and sport and the private sphere). The second option suggested to focus in a first phase on the areas laid out in III. Reporting and evaluation section, with the specific focus on I. General tools and measures addressing sexism. Future phases would focus on other areas, stretching the process out over time.

48. In the exchange which followed, Kira Appel (Denmark) thanked the Secretariat for the way the options were presented and said that while she was not against Option 1, she preferred Option 2 as it appeared to be more manageable for reporting purposes.
49. Andri Savva (Cyprus) informed the members that Cyprus passed a law in April 2021 on combating sexism, including online sexism, which was in line with the Recommendation.
50. Zuzana Andreska (Czech Republic) said that while they appreciated the advantages of in-depth reporting in Option 2, they had a preference for Option 1, and that it would be useful to have the report earlier than 2029.
51. Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom) took the view that undertaking an evaluation such as this would be helpful for member states to see what is going on in other countries. He said he was in favour of Option 2, but that it would take such a long time to get the final report that activities which had taken place may be outdated or no longer relevant. He proposed a modified version of Option 2, which, during each phase, could highlight an achievement or best practice, even if it did not fit the particular focus of the phase. While not being scientific, this approach could add a richness to the evaluation.
52. Ralph Kass (Luxembourg) thanked the Secretariat for the proposals and said he agreed with the United Kingdom that it was difficult to select between the two options proposed. He said that Luxembourg had deployed substantial resources on activities with regard to hate speech, for example, but the results would not be available for another year. As a result, he felt that it would be difficult to assess the implementation of the recommendation and the work at this stage. He suggested that perhaps the Secretariat should also indicate their preference, since they would have to manage the work.
53. Karen Bengtson (Sweden) said that in general a mapping exercise on best practices is sometimes useful. Although she would prefer a more in-depth study, and one even more narrow than that presented in Option 2, she would still be open to the broader approach of Option 1.
54. Ana Arrillaga Adama (Spain) said that she would prefer Option 1 because it takes the recommendation as a whole, including the appendix and the general measures regarding legislation and awareness raising. Option 2 treats each sector as individual recommendations in themselves. Option 1 may entail more work, but it would give an overview on what is being done. She proposed that a summary of the work could be provided in the interest of efficiency.
55. Thomas Thentz (Switzerland) understood that Option 2 would mean reporting on legislation policies and aware-raising measures and then afterwards specific measures relating to each of the sectors. The main measures taken could appear in the first report under awareness raising measures and then the more specific measures taken in the different sectors would be looked at afterwards. Switzerland would be in favour of this option, which would entail a more contained workload.

56. The Secretariat suggested that it was clear from the discussions that further work was needed to devise an approach combining the two options to reflect the concerns and interesting ideas expressed. A tighter timeline would be considered so that any report would not be out of date by the time a general overview was undertaken. It was proposed to come back with a revised proposal at the next GEC meeting in May 2022.

The GEC

- *discussed the options proposed in document GEC(2021)8 on the approach for reviewing the implementation of Recommendation “Rec/CM(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism”;*
- *instructed the Secretariat to devise a revised approach taking into account the discussions at the GEC meeting, for decision by the GEC at its next meeting in May 2022.*

d. Objective 2 – [Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence](#)

- High-level panel with Marija Pejčinović Burić, [Secretary General of the Council of Europe](#), Elena Bonetti, [Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities of Italy](#) and Iris Luarasi, President of the [Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (GREVIO)
57. To mark the 2021 International Day for the elimination of violence against women, a high-level panel on the subject of violence against women was organised with the participation of Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Elena Bonetti, Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities of Italy and Iris Luarasi, President of GREVIO.
58. The panel was moderated by a journalist, Robin Forestier-Walker, who asked the panellists what the day 25 November meant to each of them; how the Council of Europe, as a multilateral body, contributed to the struggle to end violence against women; and what is needed for societies to grow into spaces free from violence against women and girls. The discussion which followed highlighted the importance of the Istanbul Convention and of engagement with its standards.
- *The GEC hosted a high-level panel exchange on preventing and combating violence against women, with the participation Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Elena Bonetti, Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family of Italy, and Iris Luarasi, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.*

- Update by the Secretariat on [co-operation projects](#) undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning violence against women and domestic violence
59. Marta Becerra (Head of the [Capacity Building and Co-operation Projects Unit](#)) provided an overview of the co-operation projects, focussing on the tools produced and developments over the past year. An explanation was given of how technical co-operation works within the Council of Europe, with the “strategic triangle” of standard setting, monitoring and technical co-operation reinforcing one another. Depending on the project, technical co-operation on preventing and combating violence against women entails. can focus on identifying gaps in legal, regulatory or policy frameworks, providing advice on these structures or on tools, designing and delivering training across a variety of sectors, supporting implementation of action plans or national strategies, or supporting member States in signing, ratifying or implementing the Istanbul Convention.
 60. The Secretariat outlined the countries in which the Unit is working. Within the European Union, with funding through the [Norway Grants](#), projects are ongoing with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia.
 61. In the Eastern Partnership countries, both bilateral projects and a regional project are ongoing, which cover [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), Belarus, [Georgia](#), Republic of Moldova and [Ukraine](#). A new bilateral project is being prepared in the Republic of Moldova following the recent decision to ratify the Istanbul Convention. A [regional project](#) on women’s access to justice with all the Eastern Partnership countries is also ongoing.
 62. A new [project in the Russian Federation](#) on “Co-operation for the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women 2017-2022: applying best practices” commenced in September 2021. It covers the areas of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as women’s participation in political and public decision-making. .
 63. In the Western Balkans, a [project on violence against women](#) in Kosovo[†] is already in its third phase. One of the highlights of this project will be to conduct an expert assessment, in co-operation with GREVIO, of the alignment of Kosovo* with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. This initiative follows the National Assembly’s decision to make the Convention directly applicable.

[†] All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

64. A project in Turkey on implementing the recommendations of GREVIO was suspended following the withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention. Nevertheless, as a result of interest to continue working on gender equality, a new [project on women's access to justice](#) will look specifically at access to legal aid for women victims of violence.
65. The Unit also provides technical co-operation support to countries directly on request and when resources are available. In 2021, the Unit worked with Latvia to provide assistance with regard to specialised support services for women victims of violence, particularly relating to sexual violence. The HELP course on violence against women was also translated into Latvian.
66. The Unit has co-operated with civil society in 2021, specifically with Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) and also with UN Women, on the development of a campaign methodology for NGOs which was piloted in the Czech Republic, Latvia and Poland. The main aims were to promote the Istanbul Convention and to dispel misinformation about it.
67. A new module of the HELP course on violence against women will be finalised in December. The existing HELP course on violence against women targets legal professionals, but it was felt that there was a gap as regards tools for law enforcement and police forces. New modules were therefore developed targeting those professionals who deal with violence against women. The general violence against women course is now available in 20 languages, and a second HELP course, developed by the Gender Equality Division, on women's access to justice, is available in five languages. For more information, please see Marta Becerra's [presentation](#) and [information document](#) which are available on the website. More information on the HELP courses can also be found on the [website](#).
68. The Secretariat explained the clear link between the co-operation activities and projects and the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy. The importance was stressed of translating and adapting tools and resources in national languages for member States to be able to use them. Member States were invited to contact the Secretariat if they were interested in contributing funding or resources which could enable more activities to be undertaken.
69. Olga Opanasenko (Russian Federation) clarified that the co-operation programme with the Russian Federation had not yet been officially launched. This was foreseen in December 2021.
70. The Secretariat explained that the project was approved and has indeed been running since 18 September 2021. Meetings have already taken place with the Russian partners and donors, and work is ongoing. The formal launch of the project, gathering high-level authorities, would occur later.

71. The Secretariat also confirmed that the paragraph in the annual report referring to this project would be reformulated in agreement with the Russian Federation, and that the remarks of the Russian Federation would also be appended to this meeting report (see appendix V). More detailed information about any project such as the one discussed could be developed in the relevant national contribution that is compiled and appended to the annual report.
72. Olga Opanasenko (Russian Federation) insisted on reserving the right to amend paragraph 21.3 of the annual report after the official launch of the project. She thanked everyone for their understanding and for the agreement to attach the comments on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy to the GEC meeting report.
73. The Secretary to the GEC pointed out that projects are undertaken on the basis of requests and wishes of partners. The concerns of the Russian Federation were duly noted by the GEC. The Secretariat also indicated how interesting and important the project is, as it also addresses the issue of balanced participation of women and men in decision making; any tools resulting from this component of the project could be developed for use more broadly elsewhere.
- *The GEC took note of the information presented by the Secretariat about the ongoing co-operation projects in the member States, in the area of violence against women and domestic violence.*

e. Objective 3 – Ensure the equal access of women to justice

- Update by the Secretariat on [co-operation projects](#) undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning equal access of women to justice
74. The Secretariat (Anca Sandescu) updated the members about [co-operation projects in the member States](#) in the area of equal access of women to justice. Whereas the projects being implemented are rooted in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, they also feature in the Action Plan on strengthening judicial independence and impartiality as well as the relevant countries' Action Plans on cooperation with the Council of Europe.
75. The Secretariat presented two projects in detail. The first project on [delivering on the Istanbul Convention and other European gender equality standards](#) had been extended until August 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a Partnership for Good Governance (PGG) regional project run jointly with the European Union. The objectives are to identify and remove obstacles to women's access to justice in the Eastern Partnership countries, improve gender-responsiveness of the justice systems, increase application of Council of Europe standards among justice sector professionals, contribute towards the Eastern Partnership countries' ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and enhance regional dialogue and exchange among national authorities.

76. Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, it had been possible to organise successful online events during the year. One of these was the international conference on "[Women's Access to Justice: moving closer to full ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention](#)", which took place on 7 and 8 October 2021. The project [presentation](#) (available on the GEC website and containing links to all the reports mentioned), includes illustrations prepared specifically for this conference. The EU Commissioner for Equality and the Council of Europe Secretary General both took part, highlighting the importance of giving visibility to this issue of common concern.
77. Other events included the regional launch of the national HELP courses on Access to Justice for Women, the finalisation of a report of the round table on the "Framework to measure access to justice including specific challenges facing women" and training courses for legal aid lawyers on women's access to justice. Future work planned for 2022 includes training for mentors which should take place in a physical setting rather than online. This is planned for February 2022, in Budapest. Research on the impact of COVID-19 on Women's Access to Justice will take place and awareness raising and dissemination of related tools and products will continue.
78. The second project that the Secretariat focused on was "Fostering Women's Access to Justice", which had just started in Turkey. The project's objectives were to improve the gender responsiveness of legal aid and victim support services, enhance legal aid access and increase legal literacy and awareness among women. The project expected to produce research on barriers to women's access to justice, checklists and guidance for lawyers, and capacity-building programmes for legal aid lawyers and judicial support officers, as well as targeted outreach and awareness raising. More information will be available at the next GEC meeting.
79. The Chair congratulated the Secretariat on the achievements in spite of the restrictions which arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She asked for more information about the HELP courses and how they can be followed. The Secretariat explained that the women's access to justice course is available for self-learning online to anyone wishing to follow it. The methodology is developed generally and then tailor-made for particular roll-out, either at the national level or at the regional level, and targeted to specific groups of legal professionals. One curious upshot of pandemic restrictions was that children of legal professionals taking the course at home were also following the course and were submitting interesting comments about it.
- *The GEC took note of the information provided by the Secretariat about the conference on "Women's Access to Justice: moving closer to full ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention" which took place on 7 and 8 October 2021 and the updates about ongoing co-operation projects in the member States on the topic of equal access to justice for women.*

f. Objective 4 - [Achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making](#)

- Update by the Secretariat on a [co-operation project](#) undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

80. The Secretariat (Marta Becerra), informed the members about a new [project in the Russian Federation](#) on “Co-operation for the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women 2017-2022: applying best practices”. One of its components covers women’s participation in political and public decision-making (see also paragraphs 69 - 73 above).

- *The GEC took note of the information presented by the Secretariat about the ongoing co-operation in the member States in the area of balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.*

g. Objective 5 - Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

- Preparation of a draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

81. The Chair recalled that the task was assigned to the GEC to prepare a [draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls GEC\(2021\)9](#). A draft was prepared by the GEC-MIG, a subordinate committee of the GEC. GEC-MIG submitted regular updates to the GEC on their progress and on the directions which the drafting committee had opted for over the course of two years, and on which the GEC had also agreed. In this respect, the Chair drew the members’ attention to the [4th \(April 2021\)](#) and [5th \(September 2021\)](#) GEC-MIG meeting reports as well as the relevant GEC plenary meeting reports.

82. The Chair welcomed Vera Eloi da Fonseca, the Chair of the GEC-MIG and Louise Hooper, the expert who supported the work of the drafting committee. She invited the Secretariat to inform the members about the process.

➤ Presentation by the Secretariat of the GEC-MIG process

83. Cécile Gréboval (Secretary to the GEC-MIG) explained the mandate of the GEC-MIG and its working methods. Several internal and external consultations had taken place with member States, observers to the GEC, stakeholders and partners. A large number of draft amendments and comments were collected at various stages of the drafting process. In preparation for the 5th and final meeting of the GEC-MIG (end of September 2021), the Chair of the GEC-MIG, assisted by the Secretariat, proposed a compromise document for discussion and agreement. The result of discussions and amendments to this document at GEC-MIG5 was the document (GEC(2021)9) presented for discussion and agreement by the GEC. (For more information about the process please see the [presentation](#), available on the GEC website.)

➤ Presentation of the text of the draft recommendation by Vera Eloi da Fonseca, Chair of the Drafting Committee on migrant women (GEC-MIG)

84. Vera Eloi da Fonseca, Chair of the GEC-MIG, thanked all the member States and stakeholders who had participated in the drafting process. In her [presentation](#) (available on the website), she explained the structure and content of the draft Recommendation.

➤ Discussion and adoption of the text of the Draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

85. The Chair of the GEC proposed that the GEC first of all hold a general discussion on the main issues which had raised questions during the GEC-MIG, in order to reach agreement on some of the fundamental issues, before looking at the text in detail. These issues included the scope of the recommendation, i.e., which groups of women and girls should be covered, and terminology such as the use of the term “gender”. Following this, the Chair proposed to review the text chapter by chapter. The GEC agreed to this approach and proceeded to discuss the text of the draft Recommendation.

86. First, regarding the scope, Vera Eloi da Fonseca, the Chair of the GEC-MIG, explained that the draft text included all groups of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, as previously agreed upon by the GEC. However, a few member States had voiced hesitations regarding certain provisions referring to some groups of women (notably undocumented migrants). GEC-MIG had therefore carefully drafted each provision in order to address these sensitivities, in particular by including numerous references to national law. It was recalled that the draft Recommendation does not create new rights but rather aims at compiling and making more visible those that already exist and to uphold the relevant international and Council of Europe standards and policies.

87. Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) stated that the document was fundamentally acceptable as it applies to existing European and international regulations. Nevertheless, Hungary's consistent position on migration is that the primary task is to help reduce its root causes and to ensure that those in need of international protection receive it as close as possible to their country of origin. The integration of refugees is not one of Hungary's primary goals.
88. A general discussion then took place regarding terminology issues and in particular the use of the term "gender". Vera Eloi da Fonseca (GEC-MIG Chair) recalled that an agreement was reached within GEC-MIG to limit the use of the term "gender" (including terms such as "gender-based violence", "gender-sensitive" etc.) in order to accommodate the concerns of one delegation. This required the introduction of the explanation included in paragraph 16 of the preamble and the use of paraphrases such as "that takes into account the different situations and personal characteristics of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls" in various parts of the text. Terminology using the word "gender" was kept when the great majority of delegations considered that it was necessary to use it in order to include a context-based approach towards the issues, and which addresses the structural dimension of violence and discrimination against women worldwide.
89. Olga Opanasenko (Russian Federation) experienced technical difficulties connecting to, and actively participating in, the meeting remotely. She reiterated the position of the Russian Federation regarding the use of the word "gender", as raised during several meetings of the GEC-MIG. Other issues were presented in the form of written comments and a dissenting opinion. Due to the connection difficulties encountered by Olga Opanasenko, the presentation of a number of these interventions was delivered by a representative of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation or facilitated via the GEC Chair. Further to the request of the Russian Federation, it was agreed that the comments and dissenting opinion of the Russian Federation would be appended to the GEC meeting report (see Appendices IV and III, respectively).
90. Kira Appel (Denmark) thanked the drafting committee for their work and stated that Denmark would agree to the text as proposed in GEC(2021)9, provided no significant changes were made by the GEC. Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom) also declared that the text as proposed was fair and balanced and could be accepted by the United Kingdom also in the Committee of Ministers, provided no major changes were made by the GEC. Similarly, Basim Al Alousi (the Netherlands/Vice Chair) and Ralph Kass (Luxembourg) stated that their delegations could accept the text as proposed, with no major deviation. Kateryna Levchenko (Ukraine/Vice-Chair) expressed the full support of her delegation to the text, stressing that it was based on agreed policies, language and terminology.
91. The Chair thanked the GEC for these initial remarks and noted the agreement expressed on the scope and terminology. The GEC then proceeded to discuss the text chapter by chapter.

92. Regarding the Preamble, two delegations (Hungary and the Russian Federation) asked for the deletion of the reference to the Istanbul Convention (IC) in paragraph 6. However, a great majority of delegations did not agree with this proposal, stressing the particular relevance of the IC to the topic.
93. The Russian Federation delegation also asked for the deletion of the reference, in paragraph 9, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention”. This was not accepted by the GEC as several delegations stressed the relevance and importance of the UNHCR Guidelines for the protection of women asylum seekers. This same point had also been raised and dismissed on several occasions during meetings of the GEC-MIG.
94. Stefanie Friedrich (Germany) proposed the inclusion of a reference to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The GEC accepted this proposal.
95. A discussion ensued regarding the request by the Russian Federation for several footnotes to be added in the text (see Appendix IV). The Secretariat (Irene Suominen, Directorate of Legal Advice) explained that, whereas it is possible, in principle, to include footnotes, the proposed footnote regarding the notion of “gender” as such constituted an interpretation by one delegation and could not be included in a legal instrument. The Secretariat confirmed that the remarks of the Russian Federation would be included in the meeting report.
96. The GEC moved on to consider the Appendix to the draft Recommendation. Martina Schwaiger (Austria) expressed certain concerns and asked for the deletion of the references to “age and sex” in paragraph 9.3 (girls/reception systems) as well as to “separated children” in paragraphs 9 and 10 (girls/unaccompanied children). These proposals were not accepted by the GEC. The Austrian representative stated that Austria would reiterate these concerns when the text would go before the Committee of Ministers.
97. Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) said that paragraph 12.4 (access to information/health and other services) was a red line for her delegation. Anne-Julie Kerhuel (Holy See) expressed the opposition of the Holy See to the use of the term “gender” in general and to references to “sexual and reproductive health and rights” and “comprehensive sexuality education” in paragraph 12.4. Farid Adilov (Azerbaijan) asked that the reference to “comprehensive sexuality education” in paragraph 12.4 be deleted. This issue was raised again by Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) and Anne-Julie Kerhuel (Holy See) regarding paragraph 66 (health services).
98. A number of delegations (France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom) expressed their strong support for the text as proposed, in particular to maintain the references to sexual and reproductive health and rights in paragraphs 12.4 (access to information) and 66 (health services). The text was, therefore, not amended.

99. Regarding paragraph 19 (access to justice/gender sensitive assessment), Alexis Rinckenbach (France) asked for the reference to “credibility” to be deleted so as not to imply a potential lack thereof on the part of migrant women. The GEC agreed to the alternative wording “when determining their individual situation and needs”. It was also agreed to delete the word “assessing” in paragraph 19.
100. Regarding paragraph 20 (artificial intelligence), Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) asked that the paragraph be deleted and Martina Schwaiger (Austria) suggested the replacement of “should” by “endeavour”. These proposals were not accepted by the GEC.
101. In the section on Protection and Support, Martina Schwaiger (Austria) asked for an addition to be made to paragraph 31 (sexual exploitation of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls). The GEC agreed to add the following text: “Member States should also implement measures to increase monitoring and awareness, in order to enable the identification of victims and allow for appropriate support and recovery.”
102. In the section on Arrival/Transit and reception facilities, Kätlin Sander (Estonia) asked for the addition of “essential” (shopping facilities) in paragraph 45, which was accepted by the GEC.
103. At the request of Kätlin Sander (Estonia), a discussion took place regarding paragraph 47 (presence of trained staff – preferably women – in transit and reception facilities). As the GEC could not agree on alternative wording, it was decided to keep the original version.
104. Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) reiterated the concerns of her delegation as regards reference to sexual and reproductive health in paragraph 66. She proposed to add the word “and rights” to the second sentence of paragraph 66, so as to read: “This should encompass notably mental, sexual and reproductive health services and rights”. This proposal was accepted by the GEC. In the same paragraph 66, Anne-Julie Kerhuel (Holy See) suggested replacing “health rights” by “health care”. This was not accepted by the GEC.
105. Regarding paragraph 85 (access to financial services and financial literacy), Martina Schwaiger (Austria) suggested the addition of “language and values training”. In response it was pointed out that language training was included in paragraph 79. The GEC did not agree to the inclusion of the notion of “values training”.
106. Olga Batanova (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe) asked for the deletion of paragraph 92 (on providing pathways to naturalisation) and for the complete revision or deletion of the chapter on Family reunion (paragraph 93). The delegation also asked for the deletion of the first sentence of paragraph 101 (voluntary returns). These changes were not accepted by the GEC. In particular, several delegations (Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Ukraine and the United Kingdom) expressed strong support for the notion of giving privilege to voluntary returns.

107. The francophone delegations proposed that they review together the revised text after the GEC meeting, in order to look at potential issues with translation and terminology. This was agreed.
108. The Chair thanked the members for their active contribution to the discussions. She said that note had been taken about the dissenting views expressed by Austria, Hungary and the Russian Federation, and that these would be reflected in the report of this meeting. The text of the draft Recommendation was thus agreed by the GEC and the Chair instructed the Secretariat to transmit the document to the Committee of Ministers.
109. The Secretariat outlined the next steps in the procedure and said that the French version of the document would be revised in accordance with the discussion and sent to the francophone members of the GEC for their agreement before transmitting both documents to the Committee of Ministers.

The GEC

- *discussed and revised the draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls;*
- *took note of certain dissenting views expressed by the delegations from Austria, Hungary and the Russian Federation on parts of the text, which will be reflected in the report of the 20th Gender Equality Commission meeting;*
- *adopted the draft Recommendation and instructed the Secretariat to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers at the earliest opportunity, following the internal procedures regarding draft recommendations.*

h. Objective 6 - Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures

- Update by the Secretariat about gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe activities

110. Cécile Gréboval) informed the members about the ongoing activities within the different sectors of the Council of Europe regarding gender mainstreaming. In her [presentation](#) (available on the GEC meeting website), she informed the members that the Gender Equality Division is very active in encouraging the various sectors to work on gender mainstreaming. Because of a lack of resources, however, it had been more challenging in the past year to provide all the support needed and to follow all the work being undertaken. Nevertheless, it was clear that a dynamic has started in several sectors of the Council of Europe to undertake serious gender mainstreaming work.
111. Noteworthy gender mainstreaming examples, since the previous GEC meeting, were: EURIMAGES, the European Cinema Support Fund of the Council of Europe, has adopted its third [strategy for gender equality in the European film industry covering the period 2021-2023](#); the [MEDICRIME Convention](#) sector organised a webinar on the “[Gender Perspective in the fight against the falsification of medical products and similar crimes](#)”; in another area, the [European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare](#) has produced a booklet on “[Fertility preservation: A guide for people facing an illness or life events that may affect their fertility](#)”.

112. As regards upcoming activities, the Secretariat informed the members about the annual training for the Gender Equality Rapporteurs of intergovernmental committees and the meeting of the intra-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team, both of which would take place in December 2021. She also informed the participants that agreement had been reached with UN Women to adapt their online course on equality and gender mainstreaming for the staff of the Council of Europe. This will result in an online training for all current and future staff members, which will hopefully become part of the Organisation's mandatory training programme. The Secretariat was very happy to cooperate with UN Women and hoped to present the course to the GEC at one of its forthcoming meetings.
113. In response to Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom), who asked if Carlien Scheele (former Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Adviser) had been replaced or if her gender mainstreaming work had been completed when she left the Organisation, the Secretariat replied that the work could not be considered as having been completed and that she had not been replaced. The Secretariat added that the Council of Europe would welcome secondments from the member states to continue and strengthen the work on gender mainstreaming.
- *The GEC took note of the presentation by the Secretariat about the ongoing activities regarding gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe sectors.*
- Reports from GEC members who have participated in the following intergovernmental committee meetings:
 - Meetings of the [Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence \(CAHAI\) and its subordinate committees](#)
114. Käthlin Sander (Estonia) informed the participants about the meetings regarding artificial intelligence which took place since the last GEC meeting. These included two meetings of the CAHAI Policy Development Group (CAHAI-PDG), three meetings of the CAHAI Legal Framework Group (CAHAI-LFG), several meetings of their sub-groups and one plenary meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI).
115. The 6th and final meeting of the CAHAI, to take place from 30 November to 2 December 2021, is expected to finalise and adopt the draft document on "Possible elements of a legal framework on artificial intelligence, based on the Council of Europe's standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law". This document, which is the final deliverable of the CAHAI, raises issues which, in the CAHAI's view, need to be addressed in future transversal standard-setting work of the Council of Europe in the field of artificial intelligence. It is intended as a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers concerning the various elements to be included in a possible transversal legally binding instrument, as well as in instruments which are not legally binding.

116. Kätlin Sander said that, unless decided otherwise, this document submitted to the CAHAI will include a provision on respect of equal treatment and non-discrimination of individuals in relation to the development, design, and application of artificial intelligence systems, to avoid unjustified bias being built into artificial intelligence systems. For the same reason, the document to be adopted by CAHAI should suggest that a legally binding transversal instrument should contain provisions on ensuring that gender equality and rights related to vulnerable groups, including children, are upheld throughout the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems.
117. With regard to the use of artificial intelligence in the public sector, the document submitted to CAHAI includes the idea that any risk of impact on gender equality should be assessed. The actual drafting and negotiation of a transversal legally binding instrument is hoped to begin in 2022, pending a decision by the Committee of Ministers.
- *The GEC took note of the presentation by Kätlin Sander (Estonia) about the activities and developments at the CAHAI and subordinate meetings.*
- Meetings of the [Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)](#) and its subordinate committees
118. Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair/Portugal) informed the members about her participation at the [3rd meeting of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)](#) which took place in June 2021. During the meeting, it was agreed to hold a public consultation on the draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation to member States on combating hate speech. Further guidance was also provided to the subordinate committee, the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS), for the finalisation of this draft recommendation, including that the scope of the draft recommendation should not be limited and should cover a broader range of hate motives, including sex, disability and age. Andreia Lourenço Marques had recommended to remove the footnote which proposed deleting “age, disability, sex and gender” from the list of personal characteristics or status explicitly mentioned in the definition of hate speech. This recommendation had received the vocal support of several delegations and was followed.
119. Other items on the agenda of the CDADI meeting included the adoption of a study on the active political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member States; an exchange of views with the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network (EFPN); taking note of the status of the implementation review process on Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity; adoption of a model framework for an intercultural integration strategy at the national level; and agreement to hold a public consultation on the draft CM Recommendation on multi-level policies and governance for intercultural integration.

120. At the same meeting, the participants exchanged views on artificial intelligence, equality and discrimination and discussed possible activities on this topic in the future, including on gender equality (see also paragraph 123 of this report).
121. The report of the 3rd meeting of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) was presented to the CDADI. An exchange of views took place with Zora Popova, who presented her report on "[Empowerment of Roma and Traveller women: A change under construction. Towards a Roadmap for Advancing Gender Equality of Roma and Traveller women in Council of Europe member States](#)". During the exchange which followed, the importance was highlighted of taking into account the gender perspective through all the CDADI work and discussions. A proposal to develop a draft CM Recommendation on promoting equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls was also welcomed.
122. Andreia Lourenço Marques also participated in the [4th meeting of the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech](#) (ADI/MSI-DIS), which took place over two separate two-day meetings in October 2021. During these meetings participants received guidance on the text of the draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation to member States on combating hate speech following a public consultation procedure. She reminded members that the GEC Bureau had provided comments on their behalf, which had generally been accepted.
123. The discussions on the draft recommendation and its explanatory memorandum were very lengthy, taking place over four days. It was not possible to achieve an immediate consensus on the text and a delegation asked for the opinion of the Legal Department of the Council of Europe on certain issues and methodologies. The texts of the draft recommendation were finalised one week later and both documents will be submitted to the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) and the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) at their respective meetings in December.
- *The GEC took note of the presentation by Andreia Lourenco Marques (Chair/Portugal) about the activities and developments at the meeting of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI).*
 - *The GEC took note of the progress made on the new Council of Europe Recommendation on hate speech at the subordinate meeting of the CDADI, the Expert Committee on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS).*

- Study, together with CDADI, on the impact of artificial intelligence, in close co-operation with the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI)

124. In light of the adoption of the GEC Terms of Reference for 2022 to 2025, the GEC Secretary informed the members that, in the area of artificial intelligence, the terms of reference include a “main deliverable” to study the impact of artificial intelligence systems, their potential for promoting equality – including gender equality – and the risks they may cause in relation to non-discrimination (jointly with CDADI) in close co-operation with Committee on Artificial Intelligence. The Secretariat invited the members to propose experts who could work on this topic, to express their own interest in taking an active role in this work, and to share any studies or other relevant information which could be useful in this work.
125. The Chair informed the members that Kätlin Sander, the representative of Estonia, was leaving her current role and that this was her last GEC meeting. On behalf of all the GEC members and Secretariat, she thanked her for all the work which she had done on this topic, as well as for her active participation in the GEC’s activities over her years as a member.

The GEC

- *took note of the information presented by the Secretariat about the proposed study to be carried out in co-operation with CDADI on the impact of artificial intelligence;*
- *was invited to submit information about any national studies, names of experts in artificial intelligence and their own interest in taking an active part in the future work on this issue to the Secretariat by 15 December 2021.*

- Conference on [“The role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality: addressing the challenges, pushbacks and obstacles faced by women”](#) (Nicosia, Cyprus, 26 October 2021)

126. The Chair welcomed back Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, who had moderated one of the panels in the conference on “The role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality: addressing the challenges, pushbacks and obstacles faced by women”, which took place in Nicosia, Cyprus on 26 October 2021. Claudia Luciani thanked the Cypriot authorities for co-organising the conference on such an interesting topic. She said that [takeaway points](#) had been prepared and were available on the conference website.
127. Claudia Luciani said that Cyprus was representative of how leading by example from the top can help to make important changes. The actions by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who opened the conference, had changed the atmosphere within the ministry and he had helped colleagues understand how central and political this issue was. She stated that the very interesting panels of the conference had highlighted the role of international organisations, which must always ensure a forum for the many disagreements about women’s rights and gender equality to be expressed and discussed.

128. The Director mentioned the challenge currently being experienced by the Council of Europe on the pushback against women's rights and said that it was essential to be ready to deal with this pushback in order to move forward. The role of civil society was also discussed, and the conference highlighted the importance of using human rights terminology when discussing women's rights and gender equality. Education was also strongly emphasised, as well as the usefulness of involving research institutions and think tanks in discussions.
129. Kostas Psevdiotis, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the Council of Europe, thanked Claudia Luciani and her colleagues for the excellent co-operation in organising the joint conference and expressed his appreciation for the participation of Deputy Secretary General Bjørn Berge. The conference had more than 200 participants, either physically present in the meeting or following online. He said that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had prioritised gender equality in foreign policy in 2019 with the appointment of a special adviser on the issue. As a result, gender mainstreaming would continue and Cyprus would continue to achieve practical goals in this important area.
130. Karin Bengtson (Sweden) stated that a feminist foreign policy was a very important issue for Sweden and its feminist government. Sweden also has an ambassador whose role is to promote and co-ordinate Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. Indeed, the Ambassador had also participated in the conference. She appreciated Claudia Luciani's feedback about the aspects which needed to be focused upon and she asked whether any formal commitments were made at the conference.
131. Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom) pointed out that the Minister for Women in the United Kingdom had, in the past, always been combined with another ministry and that, for the first time this role was combined with that of Foreign Secretary. He said that, whereas a minister may have two roles, they tried to have a similar set of priorities for both, which meant matching international and domestic policies. While this was not always easy, he said that there were some issues that were mirrored in both areas, for example, on violence against women and in education. While the issues may be different, he said that the experience had been very positive and it was perhaps one of the reasons that the Foreign Secretary had been able to reverse the cut to foreign aid which would have adversely affected women and girls.
132. In response to the interventions, Claudia Luciani congratulated Sweden on their feminist government and said the work being done in this regard by Sweden had been very clear during the conference. She said that while there were no formal commitments emanating from the conference, the takeaways prepared could be followed up, particularly by the GEC. She said that the mirror effect was very evident in the discussions in the conference and the credibility of a foreign minister can be enhanced abroad, if they are in a position to say that an issue enjoys a similarly high priority domestically.
133. Farid Adilov (Azerbaijan) shared the significant progress made in Azerbaijan in the protection of women's rights and gender equality and gave an overview of the number of women in senior and decision-making roles.

134. The GEC Secretary said that there were various avenues where the GEC could pursue the takeaways from the conference. For example, they could be borne in mind when drawing up the future gender equality strategy.

- *The GEC took note of the takeaways from the conference on “The role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality: addressing the challenges, pushbacks and obstacles faced by women” (Nicosia, 26 October 2021), presented by Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance.*

i. Follow up to the conference “Gender equality and the Istanbul Convention: a decade of action” (Berlin, 11 May 2021)

135. The Chair introduced the item, recalling the conference on “[Gender Equality and Istanbul Convention: a decade of action](#)” which took place in Berlin in May, for which a [report](#) was prepared. She asked that members share the report nationally.

136. Stefanie Friedrich (Germany) thanked the Council of Europe for the good co-operation in organising the event and she also encouraged the GEC members to disseminate the report.

- *The GEC took note of the report of the conference “Gender Equality and Istanbul Convention: a decade of action” (Berlin, 11 May 2021) and agreed to disseminate it.*

IV. Events attended by GEC members, experts and the Secretariat

137. The Chair introduced the item and referred to [document GEC \(2021\)7](#), which outlines the events in which GEC members, experts or Secretariat members have participated. She reminded the members that the Secretariat is regularly solicited for GEC members to participate in events and explained that the reason members are asked to complete an “expertise form” is to help identify those members who have expertise or experience in a particular area. The Chair invited all the members to update their information, providing it to the Secretariat so that they can be considered for participation in future events.

- *The GEC took note of the information contained in document GEC(2021)7 on events attended by GEC members, experts and the Secretariat and agreed to update information about their expertise directly with the Secretariat (gender.equality@coe.int).*

V. Co-operation with international/regional organisations

- [Generation Equality Forum](#) (Paris, 30 June-2 July 2021)
138. Alexis Rinckenbach (France) informed the members about the recent adoption by the United Nations Third Committee of a joint statement [joint statement](#) on 18 November on behalf of 64 member States and the European Union, and which included references to the Generation Equality Forum. The Generation Equality Forum was referred to as a major driving force and came at a crucial moment for the empowerment of women and girls. It brought decision-makers together to accelerate the gender equality road map to deliver on Beijing and meet the SDGs.
139. While the Forum did not take place as planned, its hybrid format was a success, with over 100,000 people connecting online, and even more connecting to the working groups. The [meeting was opened by the President of France](#), who wanted it to be a multi-lateral event. Over 1,000 commitments were made in Paris, including a world global plan for gender equality and six coalitions for action; financial commitments of USD 40 Billion will fund these commitments coming from States, institutions, international organisations, civil society, the private sector and UN agencies. The [outcomes](#) of the meeting are available on the dedicated UN Women website.
140. Alexis Rinckenbach invited the members to contact him directly if they had any questions about his presentation.
141. In response to a question from the Chair about the Council of Europe's role in the coalitions, the Secretariat said that the Secretary General participated in the opening of the Forum. Agreement by all the member States would have been required in order to be formally associated with a coalition. Nevertheless, the Council of Europe, indeed the GEC, is free to explore opportunities to co-operate with the coalitions on any of the issues.
142. The Chair asked whether there were any plans for a follow up conference at the end of the five-year programme of the Forum. Alexis Rinckenbach replied that this was something that the organisers would indeed have to consider. He did say that, as the commitments were very practical, there would be a follow-up assessment and a Forum+1 or +5 might be envisaged. However, it was too early to say at this stage.
- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Alexis Rinckenbach (France) about the Generation Equality Forum.*

- [Council of the European Union](#) – gender equality agenda:
 - o Portuguese Presidency (January-June 2021)
143. Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair/Portugal), acting in her capacity as representative of Portugal, presented the outcomes of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Among their three main priorities was the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention and this was achieved through a high-level meeting in April 2021. The second was to research the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on gender equality. [In co-operation with EIGE, a study](#) was produced. This topic was also included in the adopted conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO).
 144. The third priority was to integrate a gender perspective in the European Social Rights European Pillar. The establishment of a European helpline for women victims of violence was discussed with the European Commission and this was re-launched during the German Presidency. It was finally approved and the process to create this helpline will begin shortly.
 145. During the 65th Commission on the Status of Women, an informal ministerial meeting and a side-event on the socio-economic impact of COVID on gender equality were organised. A ministerial debate during the EPSCO Council about gender equality in recovery plans for the forthcoming years.
 - o [Slovenian Presidency](#) (July-December 2021)
 146. Jasna Jeram (Slovenia) presented the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency and said that great emphasis had been placed on the efforts to respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19, while also focusing on the more strategic aspects of responding to the future long-term challenges. The main events organised during the Presidency were high-level conferences on “Quality Work for the Quality of Life”; on overcoming ageing stereotypes; and on increasing the mobility of persons with disabilities. Webinars on the “Child Guarantee” to ensure equal chances for every child, and on tackling the issue on how to build safe digital spaces for women and girls, will take place on 25 November 2021.
 147. The latest developments include draft Council Conclusions on the impact of artificial intelligence on gender equality in the labour market, prepared on the basis of a study by EIGE, which will hopefully be adopted in December 2021, and Council Conclusions on gender mainstreaming in the EU budget, which were adopted in October 2021.
 148. Progress has been made on the pay transparency directive, which is an important step towards achieving equal pay for equal work for women and men, and it is hoped to reach a general approach in December 2021. Also in December, a policy debate will be organised to address some of the most pressing challenges the COVID pandemic has highlighted regarding gender equality in the labour market.

- French Presidency (January-June 2022)

149. Alexis Rinckenbach (France) said that while it was too early to provide details about the French programme, which will be announced formally by the President of France, he said that France had been working with the Czech Republic and Sweden for over a year on the next trio of presidencies. He could confirm that together with these two countries, the trio would emphasise two main priorities of action for the European Union. One will be on combating violence against women – including sexual and sexist violence, as well as all new forms of violence.
150. The second priority will be on economic empowerment of women. In this respect, France will organise a EU Ministers of Equality conference in January 2022. It is hoped that the conference will be in person, but more information will be available in December about this.
- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair/Portugal), Jasna Jeram (Slovenia) and Alexis Rinckenbach (France) about the gender equality programme of their respective presidencies of the Council of the European Union.*

VI. Current and future activities at national and international level

- Council of Europe gender equality agenda:
 - [Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers](#) (May-November 2021)
151. Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) informed the members about the gender-equality activities organised during the Hungarian Presidency on the topics of youth policies, children's rights and the protection of families, which in most cases affect the empowerment of women and girls. A special focus was placed on young people belonging to national minorities and on non-discrimination. The support of female talent and their innovation potential was the focus of a talent summit organised in Budapest in September. This is a priority topic for the minister responsible for gender equality.
152. Brigitta Gyebnár also spoke about a conference which was organised in September entitled "From birth to profession: the first decade of social inclusion and Roma integration strategies". The conference dedicated an entire day exclusively to the topic of Roma women and the role played by them in social inclusion and Roma integration. She said that the reconciliation of work and family life was at the heart of Hungary's gender equality policies and was a focus of the 4th Budapest high-level democratic summit in September, at which five heads of state and government signed a declaration on the democratic renewal of Europe.
- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Brigitta Gyebnár (Hungary) about the gender equality programme of Hungary's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.*

- Italian Presidency (November 2021-May 2022)

- High level event on work-life balance in the perspective of women's empowerment.

153. Stefano Pizzicannella (Italy) informed the members about the three main priority themes for the current Italian Presidency: recommitting to shared principles and values; enhancing women's empowerment and the rights of children and adolescents, promoting youth policies while fighting discrimination and building a people-centred future. In his [presentation](#), which is available on the GEC meeting website, he focused on the second theme regarding women's empowerment. Because of the rise in domestic violence and gender-based abuse during the COVID-19 restrictions, as well as the decline in women's participation in the labour market, Italy had decided to put this aspect at the centre of their Presidency, as they had done during their recent Presidency of the G20. Stefano Pizzicannella also said that Italy would use its Presidency to encourage member States to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention, as the most advanced instrument at multilateral level to fight violence against women and domestic violence.

154. Among the activities planned during the Presidency is the high-level panel taking place during the GEC meeting on violence against women on the occasion of the 16 days of activism against violence against women, with the participation of the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family, Elena Bonetti; a high-level conference in Rome on 12 April 2022 [on work-life balance through women's empowerment](#), which will also be the GEC annual thematic conference for 2022; and Italy will also organise a side event at the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 14-25 March 2022), in co-operation with the Council of Europe. The CSW priority theme is on "Achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes".

- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Stefano Pizzicannella (Italy) about the gender equality programme of the current Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers including hosting the GEC annual conference on work-life balance through women's empowerment, in Rome on 12 April 2022.*

- Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (May-November 2022)

155. Deirdre Ní Néill (Ireland) informed the members that preparations for the Irish Presidency from May to November 2022 were underway and discussions were taking place with the permanent representations of Italy and Iceland to the Council of Europe, as well with various sectors of the Secretariat, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Commissioner for Human Rights. The themes of the Presidency will be confirmed shortly and they will likely include: participatory democracy with a focus on children and youth; support for the European Court of Human Rights and support for the European Commission for Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). It is expected that a gender perspective will be applied across all these themes. She said that more information would be provided at the next meeting of the GEC in May 2022.

- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Deirdre Ni Neill (Ireland) about the gender equality programme of Ireland's forthcoming Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.*
 - Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (November 2022-May 2023)

156. The Chair welcomed Ambassador Ragnhildur Arnljótsdóttir, the Permanent Representative of Iceland to the Council of Europe. Ambassador Arnljótsdóttir informed the members that preparations for the Icelandic Presidency, which starts in November 2022, are underway and that gender equality will be a top priority. The main topics in the programme will include the human rights of women; violence against women, including the Istanbul Convention; digital violence; and the involvement of men and boys. Events will be organised around these topics in both Reykjavik and Strasbourg. Ambassador Arnljótsdóttir said she was very pleased to see that gender equality was also high on the agenda for the preceding Italian and Irish Presidencies. As research has shown, empowering women is one of the most important ways to build a healthy society, when it comes to welfare and the economy.
157. In answer to a question from Basim Al Alousi (the Netherlands) about Iceland's activities on online violence, Ambassador Arnljótsdóttir said that Iceland has new legislation which was passed earlier in 2021 and which includes a special article on digital/online violence. Iceland is now focusing on a project with the police to ensure implementation of this legislation. The lawyer who drafted the legislation is now working for the state police.
158. The GEC Secretary took the opportunity to inform the participants that the Violence against Women Division were [launching GREVIO's first general recommendation later that day on the digital dimension of violence against women](#). Time permitting on the GEC's agenda, members would be able to follow the live transmission of the launch.
- *The GEC took note of the information provided by Ambassador Ragnhildur Arnljótsdóttir (Iceland) about the gender equality programme of Iceland's future Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.*

VII. Proposals for the agenda of the next meeting, including thematic discussions

159. The Chair invited members to make proposals for the agenda of the next GEC meeting (May 2022). Kateryna Levchenko (Vice-Chair/Ukraine) proposed to hold an exchange of views with UNESCO on artificial intelligence, given the relevance of the topic. She said that gender equality is one of UNESCO's priorities and it had a special position of Director of Gender Equality. The Director, in a recent meeting with Kateryna Levchenko, had expressed her interest in co-operating with the Council of Europe. She also re-launched her previous proposal of having an exchange of views with OECD.

160. The Chair instructed the Secretariat to take note of the proposals.

- *The GEC proposed an exchange of views with UNESCO, for example regarding artificial intelligence, or with OECD, for the agenda of the next meeting.*

VIII. Other business

161. Ana Arrillaga Adama (Spain) informed the members that she was retiring from her post after 35 years. She thanked everyone for their co-operation over the years. The Chair said that her presence in the GEC would be missed. She thanked her for her active participation and wished her all the best for her retirement.

IX. Dates of forthcoming meetings

162. The Chair informed the members about the dates of the forthcoming meetings which included the 2022 GEC annual thematic conference which would be hosted by the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on work-life balance in the perspective of women's empowerment. The proposed dates of the next two GEC meetings were also confirmed.

- *The GEC agreed on the dates of the next GEC-related meetings: GEC Conference 2022: High-level event on work-life balance through women's empowerment – hosted by the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (November 2021 – May 2022), Rome, 12 April 2022; 21st meeting of the GEC, Strasbourg, 11-13 May 2022; 22nd meeting of the GEC, Strasbourg, 16-18 November 2022.*

X. Adoption of the abridged report of the 20th GEC meeting (23-25 November 2021)

163. The Chair presented the draft abridged report, which was adopted by the members. She instructed the Secretariat to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers for them to take note of it. The Chair thanked the speakers, members and participants for their active participation, as well as the technical staff, the interpreters and the Secretariat, and closed the meeting.

- *The GEC agreed on the abridged report of the meeting and instructed the Secretariat to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers, for them to take note of it.*

APPENDIX I

Agenda

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

- *Draft Agenda*

GEC(2021)OJ2 Revised

II. Gender Equality Commission

- Election of President and two Vice-Presidents (January-December 2022)
- GEC Terms of Reference (2022-2025)

III. Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality**1. Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023****a. Draft 2021 annual report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy**

GEC(2021)6

Activities and measures in member states towards the achievement of the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy

GEC(2021)5

b. Thematic discussion/exchange of views on COVID-19: its effect on gender equality

Report of the seminar "Advancing Gender Equality: the role and situation for gender equality mechanisms in the context of COVID-19"

Publication

c. Objective 1 – Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism

- The places of men and boys in gender equality policies – plans for future work on this topic
- Committee of Ministers Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism – the approach to review its implementation GEC(2021)8

d. Objective 2 – Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence

- High level panel with Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Elena Bonetti, Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities of Italy and Iris Luarasi, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

- Update by the Secretariat of co-operation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning violence against women and domestic violence
- e. Objective 3 – Ensure the equal access of women to justice**
- Update by the Secretariat on co-operation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning equal access of women to justice
- f. Objective 4 - Achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making**
- Update by the Secretariat of co-operation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division concerning balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
- g. Objective 5 - Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls**
- Preparation of a draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls
 - Presentation by the Secretariat of the GEC-MIG process and presentation of the text of the recommendation by Vera Eloi da Fonseca, Chair of the Drafting Committee on migrant women (GEC-MIG)

4th meeting report (April 2021)
5th meeting report (October 2021)
 - Discussion and adoption of the text of the Draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls *GEC(2021)9*
- h. Objective 6 - Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures**
- Update by the Secretariat about gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe activities
 - Reports from GEC members who have participated in the following intergovernmental committee meetings:
 - Meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) and its subordinate committees

- Meetings of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and its subordinate committees
- Study, together with CDADI on the impact of artificial intelligence, in close co-operation with CAHAI
- Conference on “The role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality: addressing the challenges, pushbacks and obstacles faced by women” (Nicosia, Cyprus, 26 October 2021) *Takeaway points*

i. Follow up to the conference “Gender equality and the Istanbul Convention: a decade of action” (Berlin, 11 May 2021) *Report*

IV. Events attended by GEC members, experts and the Secretariat *GEC(2021)7*

V. Co-operation with international/regional organisations

- Generation Equality Forum (Paris, 30 June-2 July 2021)
- Council of the European Union – gender equality agenda:
 - Portuguese Presidency (January-June 2021)
 - Slovenian Presidency (July-December 2021)
 - French Presidency (January-June 2022)

VI. Current and future activities at national and international level

- Council of Europe gender equality agenda:
 - Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (May-November 2021)
 - Italian Presidency (November 2021-May 2022)
 - High level event on work-life balance in the perspective of women empowerment. *Draft preliminary concept note*
 - Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (May-November 2022)
 - Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (November 2022-May 2023)

VII. Proposals for the agenda of the next meeting, including thematic discussions

VIII. Other business

IX. Dates of forthcoming meetings

- *High Level Event of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on work-life balance in the perspective of women empowerment, Rome, Italy, Rome, 12 April 2022*
- *21st meeting of the GEC, Strasbourg, France, 11-13 May 2022 – dates to be confirmed*
- *22nd meeting of the GEC, Strasbourg, France, 16-18 November 2022 – dates to be confirmed*

X. Adoption of the abridged report of the 20th GEC meeting (23-25 November 2021)

Calendar of forthcoming events and meetings

- *International Conference on the roles of women and children in terrorism, Strasbourg, 15-16 December 2021*
- *High Level Event of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on work-life balance in the perspective of women empowerment, Rome, Italy, 12 April 2022*
- *Conference organised by the Pompidou Group in the framework of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers about rape drugs, Spring 2022*
- *21st meeting of the GEC – Strasbourg, 11-13 May 2022 – dates to be confirmed*
- *22nd meeting of the GEC – Strasbourg, 16-18 November 2022 – dates to be confirmed*

APPENDIX II

List of Participants

Members

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| Albania <i>Online</i> | Brunilda Dervishaj Head of the Sector for Policies and Strategies on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Ministry of Health and Social Protection |
| Andorra <i>online</i> | Mireia Porras Garcia Head of the Equality Policies Service Social Affairs Department Ministry of Social Affairs, Justice and Interior |
| Armenia <i>In person</i> | Lilit Shakaryan Head of Division of Cooperation with International Monitoring Bodies Department of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Austria <i>In person</i> | Martina Schwaiger Federal Ministry of Labour Unit International and EU social policy in labour law |
| Azerbaijan <i>Online</i> | Farid Adilov Head of International Relations and Protocol Service Department State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs |
| Belgium <i>Online</i> | Marian Vandenbossche Policy Officer (International policy) Team Equal Opportunities Agency for Home Affairs Government of Flanders Barbara Brunisso Acting Director Directorate for Equal Opportunities Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation Carine Joly Adviser Institute of Gender Equality |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>Online</i> | Samra Filipović Hadžiabdić Director Agency for Gender Equality Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees |
| Bulgaria <i>Online</i> | Irina Ivanova Head of Unit Equal Opportunities, Antidiscrimination and Social Assistance Benefits Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |

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| Croatia <i>Online</i> | Martina Bosak Expert associate Government Office for Gender Equality |
| Czech Republic <i>In person</i> | Radan Šafařík Head of the Secretariat of the Government Council for Equality of Women and Men Acting Director of the Gender Equality Department Zuzana Andreska Desk Officer Gender Equality Department Dusana Maliniakova Project Manager Gender Equality Department |
| Cyprus <i>Online</i> | Andri Savva Officer Office of Commissioner for Gender Equality Kostas Psevdiotis Deputy Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe |
| Denmark <i>In person</i> | Kira Appel Deputy Head of Department Department for Gender Equality Ministry of Employment Kristina Kriips Intern |
| Estonia <i>In person</i> | Käthlin Sander Head of Gender Equality Policy Equality Policies Department Ministry of Social Affairs |
| Finland <i>Online</i> | Päivi Yli-Pietilä Ministerial Adviser Gender Equality Unit Ministry of Social Affairs and Health |
| France <i>In person</i> | Alexis Rinckenbach Head of the European and International Affairs Office Directorate General for Social Cohesion Ministry of Solidarity and Health/Delegate Ministry for Equality w/m |
| Germany <i>Online</i> | Stefanie Friedrich European and international gender equality policy Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth |

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| <p>Georgia <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Niko Tatulashvili Adviser to the Prime Minister on Human Rights</p> <p>Guliko Matcharashvili Specialist of the Human Rights Secretariat of the Government Administration</p> |
| <p>Greece <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Georgia Papageorgiou Head of the Independent Department of European and International Co-operation General Secretariat for Demography, Family and Gender Equality Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</p> |
| <p>Hungary <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Brigitta Gyebnár Head of Women's Policy Unit Department for Adoption and Women's Policy Prime Minister's Office, Minister without Portfolio Responsible for Families</p> |
| <p>Iceland</p> | <p>Tryggvi Hallgrímsson (<i>Online</i>) Special Advisor Directorate of Equality</p> <p>Ragnhildur Arnjótsdóttir (<i>in person</i>) Ambassador Permanent Representative of Iceland to the Council of Europe</p> |
| <p>Ireland <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Deirdre Ní Néill Assistant Principal Officer Inclusion, Equality and Gender Equality Unit, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</p> |

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| <p>Italy</p> | <p>Elena Bonetti (<i>in person: high-level panel</i>) Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities</p> <p>Michele Giacomelli (<i>in person: high-level panel</i>) Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe</p> <p>Roberta Leone (<i>in person: high-level panel</i>) Head of Press Service</p> <p>Mattia Peradotti (<i>in person: high-level panel</i>) Head of Secretariat</p> <p>Stefano Pizzicannella (<i>online</i>) Director Office for International and General Affairs Department for Equal Opportunities</p> <p>Tiziana Zannini (<i>online</i>) Director General Coordinator of Office II on Family Policies Department for Family Policies Presidency of the Council of Ministers</p> <p>Cordialina Coppola (<i>online</i>) Presidency of the Council of Ministers Office for International and General Affairs, Department for Equal Opportunities</p> <p>Cristiana Carletti (<i>online</i>) Expert, Department for Equal Opportunities</p> |
| <p>Latvia <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Agnese Gaile Senior Expert Department of Social Policy Planning and Development Ministry of Welfare</p> <p>Ieva Juhņēviča Senior Expert Department of Social Policy Planning and Development Ministry of Welfare of Republic of Latvia Department of Social Policy Planning and Development Ministry of Welfare</p> |
| <p>Lithuania <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Lina Charauskaite Advisor of Equal Opportunities & Women and Men Equality Division Ministry of Social Security and Labour</p> |
| <p>Luxembourg <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Ralph Kass Senior Advisor 1st Class Ministry of Equality between Women and Men</p> |

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| Malta <i>In person</i> | Maria Ellul Manager II (Research) Human Rights Directorate Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance |
| Republic of Moldova <i>Online</i> | Lilia Pascal Head Svetlana Micu Senior Consultant Division of policy for ensuring equality between women and men Ministry of Labour and Social Protection |
| Monaco <i>Online</i> | Corinne Bourdas Magail Policy Officer Department of External Relations and Cooperation Ministry of State |
| Montenegro <i>Online</i> | Biljana Pejović Head of Division for Gender Equality Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights |
| Netherlands <i>In person</i> | Basim Al Alousi (Vice-Chair) Gender Equality and LGBTI Equality Department Ministry of Education, Culture and Science |
| North Macedonia <i>Online</i> | Elena Grozdanova State Counsellor for Equal Opportunity Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| Norway <i>In person</i> | Elin Grotnes Senior Adviser Department of equality and universal design Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs Anette Hoel Senior Advisor Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs |
| Poland <i>Online</i> | Iwona Rzymowska Director Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment Ministry of Family and Social Policy Paweł Kosmulski Specialist Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment Ministry of Family and Social Policy |
| Portugal <i>In person</i> | Andreia Lourenço Marques (Chair) International Relations Adviser Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality |

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| Romania <i>Online</i> | Andreea Pascu Head of Unit National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men |
| Russian Federation | Olga Opanasenko (<i>online</i>) Counsellor Ministry of Foreign Affairs Olga Batanova (<i>in person</i>) Deputy to the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe |
| San Marino <i>Online</i> | Stefano Palmucci Expert Directorate of Legal Affairs Department of External Affairs |
| Serbia <i>In person</i> | Katarina Štrbac Special Adviser to the Minister Ministry for Human Minority Rights and Social Dialogue |
| Slovak Republic <i>In person</i> | Zuzana Brixová Director Department of Gender Equality Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family |
| Slovenia <i>Online</i> | Jasna Jeram Undersecretary Equal Opportunities Department Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities |
| Spain <i>Online</i> | Ana Arrillaga Aldama Director Support Unit Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality |
| Sweden <i>Online</i> | Karin Bengtson Division for Gender Equality Ministry of Health and Social Affairs |
| Switzerland <i>In person</i> | Thomas Thentz Federal Department of Home Affairs Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE |
| Turkey <i>Online</i> | Onur Dinçer Expert on Family and Social Policy General Directorate on the Status of Women Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs |

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| <p>Ukraine <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Kateryna Levchenko (Vice-Chair) Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy</p> <p>Ganna Zavalykut Attaché General Department for International Organisations Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Liudmyla Protasenko Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the Council of Europe</p> <p>Olga Dunebabina Consultant La Strada-Ukraine Assistant, Apparatus of Government Commissioner for gender equality</p> |
| <p>United Kingdom <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Charles Ramsden Head International Policy Government Equalities Office</p> <p>Daniel Breger (high-level panel) Legal Counsellor Delegation of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe</p> |

Observers

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| <p>Holy See <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Anne-Julie Kerhuel Section for Relations with States Secretariat of State</p> |
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Participants

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| <p>Council of Europe <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Marija Pejčinović Burić Secretary General</p> |
| <p>Conference on INGOs <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Cianán B. Russell Senior Policy Officer ILGA-Europe</p> |
| <p>Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Iris Luarasi President, GREVIO</p> |
| <p>Drafting Group on Migrant Women (GEC- MIG) <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Vera Eloí da Fonseca Chair</p> <p>Louise Hooper Expert supporting the work of the Drafting Committee</p> |

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| <p>UNHCR</p> | <p>Andreas Wissner (<i>in person, 23 November</i>) UNHCR Representative to the European Institutions in Strasbourg</p> <p>Caroline Dulin-Brass (<i>online, 23 November</i>) Senior Community-Based Protection Officer UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, Geneva</p> <p>Jutta Seidel (<i>in person, 23 November</i>) Senior Legal Associate UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg</p> <p>Florine Casier (<i>online</i>) Intern UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg Online</p> |
| <p>UN Women <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Alia El-Yassir Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia UN Women</p> <p>Nargis Azizova Programme Specialist UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia</p> |
| <p>OSCE <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Vera Strobachova Budway Senior Co-ordination Adviser Gender Issues</p> |
| <p>European Institute for Gender Equality <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Carlien Scheele Director</p> <p>Christian Veske Stakeholder Relations team leader</p> |
| <p>University Women of Europe (UWE) <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Anne Bergheim-Negre</p> |
| <p>International Alliance of Women <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Anje Wiersinga</p> |
| <p>Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Noemi Alarcón Chair of CCBE Migration Committee</p> |
| <p>Nordic Information on Gender <i>Online</i></p> | <p>Jenny Pentler Project Co-ordinator</p> |
| <p>Journalist <i>In person</i></p> | <p>Robin Forestier-Walker Moderator High Level Panel</p> |

Secretariat

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|---|---|
| Directorate of human dignity, gender equality and governance <i>In person</i> | Claudia Luciani Director/ <i>Directrice</i> |
| Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department <i>In person</i> | Roberto Olla Head of Department |
| Gender Equality Division | Caterina Bolognese Head of Division Cécile Gréboval Programme Manager, Gender Mainstreaming Adrienne Looby Co-Secretary to the GEC Laurène Thil Project Assistant Evrydiki Tseliou Administrative Assistant Coralie Charlet Intern Capacity-building and co-operation projects Marta Becerra Head of Unit Jenna Shearer-Demir Programme Adviser Anca Sandescu Project Manager |
| Violence Against Women Division <i>In person</i> | Johanna Nelles Head of Division Executive Secretary (<i>GREVIO</i>) |
| Private Office of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General <i>In person</i> | Gianluca Esposito Deputy Director |

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| Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights <i>In person</i> | Cristina Genovese Adviser |
| Office of the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees <i>In person</i> | Carolina Lasén Diaz Legal adviser Benoit Orly <i>Intern</i> |
| Office of the Directorate General of Programmes | Arezo Banafsheh (<i>Online</i>) Council of Europe Pristina Office Diana Ghazaryan (<i>Online</i>) Council of Europe office Yerevan |
| Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law | Irene Suominen Legal Adviser |
| Interpretation, Travel, Events and Multimedia (ITEM) <i>In person</i> | Amanda Beddows - 23 and 25 November 2021 Interpreter Katia Di Stefano Interpreter Fabienne Kissian - 24 November 2021 Interpreter Sara Webster Interpreter Sarah Linder ITEM Multimedia Antoine Brauer ITEM Multimedia Margaux Fabre ITEM Multimedia |

Appendix III
Submission by the Russian Federation:
Dissenting opinion of the Delegation of the Russian Federation
on the draft Recommendation on protecting the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

The Delegation of the Russian Federation appreciates the work that has already been done by the Secretariat providing the revised draft Recommendation on protecting the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. We also thank the Secretariat and the experts for taking into account some of our comments made at the previous GEC-MIG meetings.

It is however deplorable that despite the fact that the Delegation of the Russian Federation had numerous amendments and comments to the draft Recommendation it was impossible due to technical difficulties to raise them at the relevant point when the Chair was opening discussion on the relevant chapter. As a result, only a small part of our proposals was discussed during the meeting. Therefore, we stick to the point that the text of the Recommendation needs to be finalized and specified, and it is still too early to adopt it. In other words, the draft Recommendation is not acceptable to the Russian Federation in its present form.

Taking into account the abovementioned the Delegation of the Russian Federation reiterates all the points that were listed in its dissenting opinion made at the 5th GEC-MIG and reserves the right to provide further comments, as well as concrete amendments to the whole text of the draft Recommendation, as the work on the draft progresses.

The Delegation of the Russian Federation kindly asks the Secretariat to reflect its position in the final report of the 20th GEC meeting.

Appendix IV

Submission by the Russian Federation:

Comments on the draft Recommendation on protecting the human rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

1. The Delegation of the Russian Federation opposes the use of the phrase "significant developments in gender equality concept" in **Paragraph 14 of the Preamble**. This phrase is vague, it can be interpreted differently and we see no need in it in this paragraph. It is not clear, what do we understand under this wording?

2. It is proposed to change the beginning of **Paragraph 16 of the Preamble** as follows: "Underlining that women are exposed to a continuum of violence that is specific to them because ~~they are women~~ of their sex, or which affects them disproportionately, ~~and that such violence is, in this sense, gender based;~~..."

3. We kindly ask the Secretariat to reflect the position of the Russian Federation relating to the word "gender" after its mentioning in **Paragraph 16 of the Preamble** in a wording "gender-based" in the text of the Recommendation in a footnote, reading:

"The Russian Federation expresses its position that in this document any reference to "gender" as a separate word and in all wordings as "gender-based, gender-sensitive" etc. should be considered as a sex-based concept".

4. We cannot be satisfied with the word "gender-based" in **Paragraph 17 of the Preamble**. We propose to change the word combination "gender-based violence" to the phrase "some forms of violence".

5. In **Paragraph 9 of the Appendix** it is proposed to insert the word "equality" after the word "gender".

Alternative:

To substitute in **paragraph 9** the word combination "gender considerations" with the wording "the idea of taking into account specific situations, special needs, characteristics and vulnerabilities of children" and delete the word "considerations".

"Member States should mainstream ~~gender considerations~~ *specific situations, special needs, characteristics and vulnerabilities of children* across policies, guidance, and capacity building on unaccompanied and separated children in line with the scope and mandate of each national authority in order to: ..."

6. To delete **paragraph 11**

Rationale: There is no definition of what constitutes « essential services », and access to services will depend on the legal status of the person which is not specified here.

Adulthood is reached at the age of 18 years, as per Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7. In **Paragraph 12.4 of the Appendix**

To delete the end of the paragraph and put a full stop after the word “country”.

Rationale: This list is unnecessary as it presumes availability of certain services which may not be provided by States.

Alternative:

We propose to change the word “sexuality” to the word “sex”.

8. To rephrase **Paragraph 19 of the Appendix** as follows:

“An intersectional ~~and gender-sensitive~~ approach *that is sensitive towards special needs and characteristics of* migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls should be adopted in legal proceedings, when determining/assessing their credibility, particularly where decisions have an impact on their legal status”.

9. To delete the word “gender-sensitive” in **Paragraph 39 of the Appendix**.

Alternative:

To rephrase **Paragraph 39** as follows:

“Easily accessible mechanisms should be in place in all relevant State- and privately-run institutions to enable incidents of violence against women including trafficking in human beings to be reported to staff and by staff. Member States should ensure access to age-~~and gender-sensitive~~ telephone helplines *for women and girls*, procedures for referral to other appropriate agencies, and medical and psychological treatment to facilitate reporting..”

10. In **Paragraph 41 of the Appendix** we propose to change the word combination “gender-based violence” to “violence against women and girls”.

11. To add at the end of **paragraph 41.3** the word combination “where appropriate”.

Rationale: state of emergency and crisis management are deep within the prerogatives of States, which should be given sufficient margin of appreciation in taking decisions on these critical matters.

12. Everything that is said in **Chapter IV** should clearly distinguish between migrants and refugees and asylum seekers. If a refugee needs many things that are mentioned in this chapter, then is not a fact that a migrant needs them all. And it should be clearly understood that the State has different obligations under international law in relation to these three groups of people. And in this chapter we de facto equalize them, that erodes the mechanism of international refugee protection. And this is unacceptable.

13. To delete the word “gender-sensitive” in **Paragraph 42 of the Appendix**.

“Member States should ensure that immigration procedures take into account women and girls’ specific situations, characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities ~~and~~ are age- ~~and gender-sensitive~~.”

Alternative:

To rephrase **Paragraph 42 of the Appendix** as follows:

“Member States should ensure that immigration procedures ~~take into account~~ *are sensitive towards* women and girls’ specific situations, characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities ~~and are age- and gender-sensitive~~ as well as to their age”.

Rationale: the word “gender-“ is superfluous in this context since the phrase “specific situations, *characteristics*, needs and vulnerabilities” is all-encompassing and already includes everything.

14. To rephrase the first sentence of **Paragraph 44 of the Appendix** as follows:

“Competent authorities should ensure that transit, reception, accommodation and screening arrangements are ~~age- and gender-~~sensitive *to age and different situations and personal characteristics of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women.*”

Rationale: the word “gender-“ is superfluous in this context since the phrase “*different situations and personal characteristics*” is all-encompassing and already includes everything.

Alternative:

“Competent authorities should ensure that transit, reception, accommodation and screening arrangements *take into account women and girls’ specific situations, characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities and* ~~are age- and gender-~~sensitive”.

This wording is more relevant to the subject. It *is more general and* it also includes gender sensitive aspect.

15. To rephrase **Paragraph 52 of the Appendix** as follows:

“Member States should adopt *if appropriate* and implement ~~age- and gender-~~sensitive asylum standards, practices and procedures *that are sensitive towards age and other specific situations, characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities of migrant, refugee or asylum-seeking women and girls.*”

“Member States should adopt *if appropriate* and implement age- ~~and gender-~~sensitive asylum standards, practices and procedures *taking into account special needs of migrant women and girls.*”

16. To delete **paragraph 55**

Rationale: We see no need in **Paragraph 55**.

I would like to stress that neither the GEC nor the Committee of Ministers has the competence to determine or to give a new interpretation to international conventions.

It is therefore unacceptable to ensure “a gender-sensitive interpretation of the 1951 Convention” (as it is formulated in paragraph 55 of the Appendix). More than that the 1951 Convention already guarantees rights of all refugees without any specification.

The Delegation of the Russian Federation would like to stress here that this so-called gender sensitive interpretation is not commonly accepted in the international level.

As it is set out in the Preamble of our recommendation (paragraph 21) we are wishing to review and update Recommendation to member states on women migrants R(79)10 and not to rewrite or to

update the Convention of the United Nations which has been proving its effectiveness for about 70 years.

Arguments:

In the Preamble of the 1951 Convention it is said that ‘the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly have affirmed the principle that **human beings** shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms **without discrimination**’.

All people in vulnerable situations, all persons who have special characteristics or who found themselves in a difficult situation are human beings. I hope no one will dispute this.

Therefore, these universal words of the Preamble to the 1951 Convention stress that 1951 Convention cover all persons without any discrimination.

18. To reformulate **paragraph 56** as follows:

“*Member states should if necessary* make efforts to develop comprehensive *and taking account of the specific situations and needs of women and girls* ~~gender-sensitive~~ guidelines at all stages of the asylum process, including reception and support services, screening, determination of ‘safe’ countries for the purpose of accelerated or suspensive procedures, detention, status determination, adjudication and returns; and to train all relevant staff in respect of such guidelines.”

17. To reformulate **Paragraph 60** as follows:

“Member States should ensure that women and girls have access to complementary/subsidiary protection *procedure*, where ~~necessary~~ *available*, if the decision on their refugee status is negative.”

Alternative: To add the words “if applicable” or “if there is a serious reason to believe they might need it”:

“If the decision on a woman or girl’s refugee status is negative, member States should ensure that they have an effective opportunity to request *if applicable* complementary/subsidiary protection *procedure*”.

Or:

“If the decision on a woman or girl’s refugee status is negative, member States should ensure that they have an effective opportunity to request complementary/subsidiary protection *procedure if there is a serious reason to believe they might need it*”.)

Rationale: Not all Member States may have complementary/subsidiary protection laws, and the granting of such protection is usually subject to a certain procedure and fulfillment of relevant criteria.

18. To delete **paragraph 61** in its entirety.

Rationale: This paragraph is too prescriptive. Whether or not to engage in resettlement and relocation programmes is at the discretion of States. The phrase “legal pathways to ensure safe transit” is too vague.

19. To reformulate **paragraph 62** as follows:

“Member States are encouraged *to consider if necessary* funding specific assistance and humanitarian resettlement programmes for women and girls who are victims, or at risk, of violence against women or trafficking in human beings, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation.”

20. It is not clear what is meant by “cross-border protection mechanisms” in the context of **paragraph 63**.

21. To reformulate **paragraph 64** as follows:

“Authorities should ensure that healthcare provision takes into account the situation and personal characteristics *of legally present* migrant women and girls and that it is age- ~~and-gender~~ sensitive.”

Rationale: the word “gender-“ is superfluous in this context since the phrase “the situation and personal characteristics” is all-encompassing and already includes everything.

22. To add in **Paragraph 65** the word combination “legally present” before “migrant women”.

At the end of this paragraph to add a new sentence, reading:

“Member States are encouraged to extend these services to migrant women and girls in an irregular situation, where feasible”.

23. To reformulate **Paragraph 66** as follows:

“Member States should also seek to enable legally present migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls to access free or affordable, comprehensive, quality, *sensitive to* age and *other individual needs, situations and characteristics* health services encompassing mental, sexual and reproductive health, including during and after pregnancy and services related to experiences of violence against women.”

Rationale: the word “gender-sensitive“ is superfluous in this context since the phrase “sensitive to age and other individual needs, situations and characteristics” is all-encompassing and already includes everything.

24. To reformulate **Paragraph 70** as follows:

“Member states should consider ensuring that migrant women lawfully residing in the country are given a treatment not less favourable than that accorded to nationals regarding access to housing and rents”.

25. To delete **paragraph 72** which provisions contradict Articles 32 and 81 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as Federal Law No. 67-FZ "On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Participate in a Referendum of Citizens of the Russian Federation".

26. To delete **paragraph 92**.

Rationale: There is no such obligation upon Member States, and nationalisation policy is within their sovereign purview unless prevailing legal obligations exist, which are not mentioned.

27. To chapter “Family reunion” There is no universal «right to family reunion» in international law. Concrete obligations may exist in specific circumstances delineated by applicable treaties (such as the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the European Social Charter). However, this paragraph is formulated far too broadly and without sufficient basis. It should be either reworked or removed.

Also, the subparagraphs are too far-reaching in their requirements

28. To rephrase the first sentence of **paragraph 94** as follows:

“In respect of all forms of deprivation of liberty, member States should adopt an ~~age and gender-sensitive~~ approach, which takes into account **age**, individual situation and personal characteristics of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.”

Rationale: the words “age and gender-sensitive” are superfluous in this context since the phrase “takes into account **age**, the individual situation and personal characteristics” is all-encompassing and already includes everything.

29. To delete the 1st sentence of **paragraph 101**

Rationale: No basis for this requirement. If the presence of a migrant is illegal and there are no overriding obligations, such as under the 1951 Convention, expulsion will remain the lawful response.

30. To delete “including those acts which disproportionately affect women or are directed at them because they are women” from **paragraph 101**.

Rationale: This addition is either unnecessary (as those acts will already be included under preceding clause) or unfounded (if not related to preceding clause). Either way, should be removed for legal certainty.

Appendix V

Submission by the Russian Federation on the 2021 Draft Annual Report on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

The Russian delegation appreciates the work that has already been done by the Secretariat providing the 2021 Draft Annual Report on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.

While we support main ideas reflected in the document, some provisions of it are of deep concern and require concrete amendments.

1. It is proposed to concretize the word "gender" with the word "equality" throughout the Report.

2. The 2nd sentence of Paragraph 7 of "Highlights" should be put after paragraph 4 where the Istanbul Convention is mentioned.

(Alternative: Paragraph 7 of "Highlights" should be divided into two separate paragraphs.)

3. The Gender Equality Strategy is not a legally binding document. It can "provide policy guidance", "set the vision and a framework for the Council of Europe's role and action in the area of gender equality", "set priority areas" or "outline the goals and priorities". Therefore, in paragraph 3 of "Introduction" it would be better to substitute the word combination "establish commitments" with one of these wordings.

We kindly ask the Secretariat to make appropriate amendments.

4. In order not to put a false color on the Council of Europe project "Cooperation on the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)" we kindly ask the Secretariat to add a new paragraph after paragraph 17 of "Introduction", reading:

"Taking into account position of the Russian Federation on the Istanbul Convention the Cooperation project with the Russian Federation is based on the concept of an equal exchange of experience and best practices in two areas: women's political participation and violence against women. When implementing the cooperation project both sides proceed from the position that programme cooperation provides an opportunity, along with others, for Russia to promote in a dialogue with European partners its vision of public issues, including the protection of women's rights, to facilitate knowledge creation, exchange of best practices and increase the capacity of relevant stakeholders in order to advance women's empowerment, more effectively prevent violence against women on the basis of their national legislation and commonly accepted international documents".

The rationale is following:

The position of the Russian Federation on the Istanbul Convention is well known. Russia neither supports this convention nor considers a possibility to join it. In this regard even at the stage of discussing the main directions of the Cooperation project and the relevant draft action plan we clearly expressed to our partners that in the course of the realization of the Cooperation project we do not consider as relevant the mentioning of this non-consensual document.

This Cooperation project is based on the concept of an equal exchange of experience and best practices, and not on “provision national authorities with tools and expertise to implement gender equality standards, the principles of the Istanbul Convention etc.” as it is written in paragraph 17.

5. The first and the second sentences of paragraph 19 should be reformulated as follows:

“In 2021, many co-operation activities continued to focus to a large extent on implementation support concerning the Istanbul Convention, as it remains a high priority for ~~many~~ the 34 member States of the Council of Europe ~~that ratified it and beyond~~. ~~Many~~ Some of the member States which have not yet ratified (or signed) the Istanbul Convention are currently involved as beneficiaries in co-operation projects, including through ad hoc events...”

The rationale is following:

The Istanbul Convention has now been ratified only by 34 Member States. Many countries have signed it but cannot ratify it because it contains some issues of concern. There are also some countries which have ratified it with reservations. Some countries are planning to withdraw from the convention or have already withdrawn.

We therefore shouldn't overestimate the meaning of this document for those countries which have neither signed nor ratified it.

6. According to my colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who are in charge of Phase II of the Council of Europe project “Cooperation on the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)” the discussion of its substantive part is still ongoing and its official launching is planned for December 2021.

It is therefore too early to formulate the 3rd subparagraph of paragraph 21.

In any case, the last sentence of this subparagraph should be deleted, since both parties have already agreed not to include such wording into the text.

7. It is proposed to reformulate paragraph 22 as follows:

“References to Council of Europe standards *and instruments* – expertise and sharing of good practices with member and non-member States and other regional and international organisations increases the visibility of Council of Europe standards *and instruments* among its strategic partners. References continue to be made regularly to the Strategy, ~~the Istanbul Convention~~ and other Council of Europe ~~standards instruments~~ and tools in the field of gender equality, ~~such as the 2019 Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism~~, notably in European Union (EU) documents...”

The rationale is following:

In spite of the fact that the aim of the Istanbul Convention deserves support, the Convention was not adopted by consensus, it doesn't reflect general state practice in Europe and cannot be seen as a “standard” universally accepted by Member States. Such a treaty includes neither any universal norms nor legal or political effect. Fully in line with international treaty law, it only creates binding obligations in respect of its states parties.

It is our firm position. Commonly accepted international documents are those that must be seen as standards.

In paragraph 47 of the Explanatory report it was specified that "This Convention is an agreement between states, which would create obligations only for them."

8. In the 2nd subparagraph of paragraph 22 it is proposed to substitute the word combination "gender pay gap" with the word combination "pay gap between men and women".

9. In the 2nd sentence of paragraph 25 it is proposed to add the words "in a number of cases" before the words "have a strong focus on the protection..."

(As indicated earlier, particular efforts continued in 2021 to promote the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism (which is now available in 26 languages) and the co-operation projects run by the GED in a number of cases have a strong focus on the promotion and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.)

10. In the 2nd sentence of paragraph 38 it is proposed to substitute the word combination "gender-related vulnerability of victims" with the word combination "vulnerability of victims on the basis of their sex".

11. During the sessions of CDADI, ADI/MSI-DIS and CAHAI Russian experts consistently opposed the use of the word "gender" as a separate word and in all wordings as "gender-sensitive etc." and asked not to use them since there is no commonly accepted definition of the word "gender" at the international level.

We therefore kindly ask the Secretariat to make a relevant footnote after the 1st mentioning of the word "gender" in paragraph 47.