

Strasbourg, 15 February 2023

GEC (2023) Bureau Report 1

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)
17th Bureau meeting
9 February 2023

Report

1. Composition GEC Bureau

Following a change in her functions, the GEC Vice-Chair, Karin Bengtson, had informed the Secretariat that she would no longer represent Sweden on the GEC. The GEC Secretary (Natacha De Roeck) informed the GEC Bureau that, as a result, an election for a new Vice-Chair would take place at the GEC meeting in May. The duration of the mandate of the elected member would be until 31 December 2023 (i.e. the mandate of the current Vice-Chair).

2. Follow-up to GEC22

- *2022 Annual Report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023*
- *Report of the 22nd meeting of the Gender Equality Commission*
- *Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women*
- *Transmission of documents to the Committee of Ministers*

The GEC Secretary informed the Bureau about progress with regard to the discussion and adoption of GEC documents by the Committee of Ministers:

- the 2022 Annual Report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 had been updated and finalised to include comments and updates received from the GEC members;
- the complete report of the 22nd meeting of the GEC had been finalised;
- the draft “Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women” had been revised in light of discussions at the GEC meeting. The guidelines were currently with the Council of Europe Legal Affairs Department for their review. The guidelines would then be subject to an editorial review in English and French by the Council of Europe Editorial Service, following which it would be sent to the GEC members for a last validation by them.

All three documents would be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers, for discussion and adoption at a forthcoming meeting (possibly April 2023).

3. Preparation of GEC23 (Strasbourg, 24-26 May 2023)

- Items proposed for next agenda (apart from the usual points on the agenda):
 - *Exchange with Minister of Equality between Women and Men of Luxembourg, to present the outcome of Luxembourg's national campaign to combat sexism*

The Chair confirmed the availability of the Luxembourg Minister of Equality between Women and Men to have an exchange of views during the next GEC meeting, and to present the results of the Luxembourg campaign to combat sexism. The Chair informed the Bureau that Minister Bofferding has expressed a preference to come on 24 May at 3:00 pm to attend the plenary session of the GEC for the above-mentioned presentation. The Head of the Gender Equality Division (Caterina Bolognese) said that a representative of the Directorate of Communication of the Council of Europe would also attend as they were interested in developing a similar package for other countries, in order to promote the Council of Europe campaign beyond the scope of the GEC.

- *Exchange of views with OECD (postponed from November 2022)*

The GEC Secretary will contact OECD to confirm availability of their representative for the GEC meeting in May.

- *Discussion and possible adoption of the "Study on the impact of artificial intelligence on equality, including gender equality, and discrimination"*

The Secretariat (Christa Jakobsson) informed the Bureau that the Task Force met recently to discuss the study's recommendations and the feedback had been positive. The study will be translated and made available to the GEC in April for discussion and adoption during the May meeting.

- *First discussion on the draft Strategy on Gender Equality 2024-2029*

The GEC Secretary informed the Bureau that one full day of the GEC meeting would be allocated to the discussion of the draft strategy, in order to allow enough time for such an important subject.

- *Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State*

As the GEC meeting will take place shortly after the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State, the Secretariat will report back to the GEC meeting about any issues or decisions taken which will be relevant to the GEC and its work.

- *Exchange with ODIHR about tools and guides which have been produced on gender equality in politics (**new proposal**)*

The GEC Secretary proposed holding an exchange of views with ODIHR on gender equality in politics, should time allow for this during the next May meeting. The Chair agreed to the proposal.

- Creation of a restricted website for GEC meetings

The GEC Secretary informed the Bureau that from now on all working documents will be published on a restricted shared folder. The documents will be available for review by all GEC members, but would not be published on the public website until they were finally adopted/approved by either the GEC or, where relevant, the Committee of Ministers. This was to conform with standard practice of other steering committees within the Organisation.

4. Request for comments from the Gender Equality Commission on Council of Europe texts

The GEC Secretary thanked the Bureau members for their feedback on texts requiring GEC comments.

- *Congress of Local and Regional Authorities: Recommendation 481 (2022) – Reception of women and children refugees in Europe's cities and regions (please see attached)*

The Secretariat (Cécile Gréboval) said that the recommendation of the Congress referred to the CM Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, but that some missing issues could be pointed at in a possible GEC response to the Congress' recommendation.

The Chair asked the Secretariat to prepare comments on the Congress recommendation which he would review. Once the GEC Bureau had agreed, the document could then be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers.

- *Parliamentary Assembly: Resolution on The Istanbul Convention: progress and challenges*

The Chair asked the Secretariat to prepare comments on the Parliamentary Assembly resolution which he would then review. Once the GEC Bureau had agreed, the document could then be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers by 17 March 2023.

5. HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming - update

The Secretariat (Cécile Gréboval) informed the Bureau about the progress on the preparation of the online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. A presentation of a part of the pilot course will be made to the GEC members at their meeting in May before being finalised in June. While the course is being developed as an in-house training for Council of Europe staff and experts, in English and French, it would be possible for the wider public to use it as a training tool and for trainers to use it in a hybrid format.

It was agreed that a presentation of the HELP platform could be made during a forthcoming GEC meeting in order to explain how the platform can be used in the member states.

6. GEC/Secretariat participation in activities

▪ Participation in events since previous Bureau meeting

- *Round Table on migrant women's access to fundamental rights organised by the European Network of Migrant Women (Strasbourg, 19 January 2023) – Cécile Gréboval*

The Secretariat (Cécile Gréboval) presented the Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls to the Round Table participants.

- *Round Table on the feminist diplomacy organised by the Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes (Strasbourg, 24 January 2023) – Claudia Luciani*

The Secretariat (Caterina Bolognese, Cécile Gréboval) attended this decentralised event in Strasbourg. The Haut Conseil à l'Egalité presented its [annual report on the state of sexism in France](#) which was a very interesting report as not many countries carry out this type of survey. There was a particular focus on the impact of pornography on gender stereotypes, especially on young men. The subject of feminist diplomacy was discussed in a round table and the Council of Europe (Claudia Luciani) was invited to make a presentation on this topic.

- *Round Table on Strengthening the protection of persons in a vulnerable situation, in particular women and children fleeing the war in Ukraine (Online, 26 January 2023) – Ralph Kass*

The Chair presented the Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls at this event and also spoke about the challenges in implementing this comprehensive text. He found the event to be very positive and interesting.

The Chair used this opportunity to raise the issue about implementation in the member states of recommendations and texts produced by the GEC. He was not sure that colleagues in other ministries used them in their work or were aware of all the texts produced. He said it may not be clear for all GEC members what is expected of them once texts are adopted.

The Head of the Gender Equality Division said that it was an interesting issue and it was important to ensure the implementation of the texts produced by the GEC. Periodically implementation of recommendations which are “soft law” texts are conducted, such as the current review of the implementation of the Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism. However, it was not possible to review the implementation of all the texts and these reviews can only be undertaken with the co-operation of the GEC members. The Secretariat welcomed any ideas to improve the dissemination and implementation of adopted texts, including recommendation and guidelines.

The Chair proposed discussing the subject at a GEC meeting in order for GEC members to share their good practices in this regard.

- *Presentation of the report on the impact of Covid-19 on women's access to justice to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 26 January 2023) – Caterina Bolognese*

The Head of the Gender Equality Division participated in the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination committee and spoke about the GEC work on access to justice and the report on the impact of Covid-19 on women's access to justice. PACE members were interested in the outcomes.

She also informed the members about the forthcoming GEC conference on the theme of men and boys, as the Parliamentary Assembly had recently adopted a [resolution on the role and responsibility of men and boys in stopping GBV against women and girls](#)

The GEC Secretary informed the Bureau about contacts with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe European Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ) to have an exchange of views on the gender dimension of their work at a forthcoming GEC meeting.

- *European Law Institute's High Level Expert Group Meetings on Justice and Gender Discrimination (Online, 27 January 2023) – Ralph Kass & Natacha De Roeck*

The Chair participated in this meeting and presented the necessity of data collection regarding violence and other articles of the Istanbul Convention. He also presented the report on the impact of Covid-19 on women's access to justice. The European Law Institute proposed co-operating on a project with the GEC, and the Chair would report back about this once he had received the proposal which would be discussed at the February meeting of the Institute.

- *Conference of the Swedish Presidency on the economic perspectives on gender-based violence – paving paths to prevention (Stockholm, 1-2 February 2023) – Karin Bengtson & Natacha De Roeck*

The GEC Secretary said it was a very interesting and well-organised meeting. It was a good opportunity for her to network and make contacts. She also gathered information about possible speakers for future GEC events.

- *4th plenary meeting of the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) (Strasbourg, 1-3 February 2023) – Radan Safarik & Christa Jakobsson*

The Secretariat (Christa Jakobsson) participated in this meeting with the Czech GEC Representative, Radan Safarik, who also consulted with the Czech Representative on the CAI. The Secretariat said it was important to have a GEC member present, and the dual approach from two representatives on different committees made a big difference. As a result of their interventions, the CAI committee agreed to include the term "gender equality" in the preamble of the draft convention.

- Call for expressions of interest of GEC members for activities related to the Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

The GEC Secretary informed the Bureau that Maria Ellul, the Maltese GEC representative, would follow the issue of migrant and refugees, along with a Maltese expert in this field, Erika Borg.

7. Forthcoming events

- *European Law Institute High Level Expert Group – Online, 17 February 2023*

The Chair confirmed his participation.

- *EU High level group meeting on gender equality – Stockholm, 27-28 February 2023*

Participation by the Council of Europe to be confirmed.

- *Council of Europe/Iceland side event at the Commission for the Status of Women - New York, 7 March 2023*

The Secretariat (Tryggvi Hallgrímsson) said that preparation of the programme of the event on “Responding to Regional and Global Challenges Protecting the Rights of Migrant, Refugee and Asylum-seeking Women and Girls”, was underway. The Prime Minister of Iceland and the Council of Europe SRSG on migration and refugees have confirmed their participation. There will be a representative of Ukraine and from ENOMW also on the panel.

- *Gender Equality Calendar – Strasbourg, 8 March 2023*

The Secretariat (Tryggvi Hallgrímsson) informed the Bureau that the Gender Equality Calendar would be launched on 8 March. The GEC members had contributed to the information and data contained in the online perpetual calendar.

- *Exchange of views between GEC Chair and European Commission for Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) – Strasbourg, 28 March 2023*

The Chair confirmed his participation.

- *GEC annual conference – Strasbourg, 27-28 April 2023*

The Secretariat (Tryggvi Hallgrímsson) said that preparations were underway for the conference on “Men and boys as agents of change and gender equality”. The President of Iceland had confirmed his participation in the Barbershop event on the first day of the conference. The Chair said that he was happy to help with contacts for speakers should they be needed.

8. Proposed date of next Bureau meeting

The Chair proposed holding the next Bureau meeting on 28 March while he was in Strasbourg for the ECRI exchange of views.

Participants:

Bureau: Ralph Kass (Chair), Andri Savva (Member - apologised)

Secretariat: Caterina Bolognese, Natacha De Roeck, Cécile Gréboval, Christa Jakobsson, Tryggvi Hallgrímsson, Adrienne Looby, Evrydiki Tseliou