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**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)**

**Working Group on developing positive narratives in the context of
anti-gender movements**

Council of Europe – Strasbourg

1. Background

The purpose of the Working Group on developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements is, by the end of 2025 and on the basis of the mapping study to be prepared by the end of 2024, to develop effective positive narratives and to make proposals regarding the development of communication tools to be used by the Council of Europe and member states to promote gender equality and to prevent and combat violence against women in the context of anti-gender movements.

Youth, particularly young men, and their adherence to a culture of gender equality should be a particular focus of this work.

This work takes place in the framework of the [Terms of Reference](#) of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC). It is also a deliverable under Strategic Objective 5 of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029 (Ensuring women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges). It is undertaken in response to the growing influence of anti-gender movements in Europe, which challenge existing gender equality standards and policies and impedes further progress.

As stated in the Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029, "anti-gender and gender-critical narratives are often used as a tool to promote a broader agenda of opposing gender equality and women's rights. They undermine the understanding of gender as a social construct. These narratives seek to justify discriminatory practices and policies against individuals who challenge traditional gender roles and norms. The fight for gender equality must challenge this anti-gender trend as such, but this can only be achieved by using an intersectional approach and correctly situating the phenomenon in the broader context of the backlash against human rights, including women's rights, the rights of LGBTI persons and the rights of persons from communities subject to marginalisation."

The Strategy also underlines that "anti-rights movements seek to roll back progress on human rights and maintain the status quo of discrimination and inequality. They use various tactics to undermine rights, including spreading misinformation and disinformation, promoting hateful rhetoric and pushing for regressive policies. This backsliding is reflected in the intensification of sexist hate speech in Europe, especially online. Discrimination and sexist hate speech provide fertile ground for violence against women and girls, which is one of the most serious human rights violations suffered by women and girls. Women also face more restrictions and harassment aiming to silence women human rights defenders and persons who defend women's rights. The response of national authorities, including the police, prosecutors and judges, as well as health personnel, is often inadequate in cases of violence against women and girls and must be strengthened. Against this common backdrop, ensuring gender equality must be understood as a key component of a larger struggle to safeguard human rights and ensure social justice."

During its 25th meeting (16-18 April 2024), the GEC held a preliminary discussion on the impact of anti-gender movements on promoting gender equality and combating violence against women and on how to counteract these movements. The GEC agreed with the working methods and timeline proposed by the Secretariat, including the preparation of a mapping study of anti-gender movements with the support of one or more experts, to inform a more in-depth discussion during its next meeting.

The Secretariat identified relevant experts to support the work on this file. The mapping study will be finalised by the end of 2024. It will build upon existing research and targeted interviews, with a focus on understanding the narratives, methods, messengers /multipliers, and reasons for success of anti-gender movements, as well as on analysing their impact on promoting gender equality and combating violence against women across Europe. It will include recommendations to the GEC for developing effective positive narratives to counter anti-gender movements.

The preliminary results of the mapping study on anti-gender movements will be presented at the 26th meeting of the GEC (19-21 November 2024). A workshop will also be organised, during which GEC members, observers and participants will break out into four parallel working groups to discuss the initial findings of the study, exchange information about their experience and consider possible future activities within the GEC.

2. Composition and functioning of the Working Group (2025)

The Working Group will be composed of up to six representatives of member States and three GEC observers and/or participants, for a maximum total of nine members. These members will be appointed by the GEC at its 26th meeting (19-21 November 2024).

The Working Group will hold two online meetings in February and June 2025 (dates tbc). During these meetings, other relevant stakeholders, such as NGOs, academic experts, and international organisations, will be invited to give presentations. Experts specialised in developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements will support the Working Group in its activities.

In between meetings of the Working Group, exchanges will take place between its members, the experts and the Secretariat to further advance the work.

The Working Group will present the results of its work to the GEC for approval at its 28th meeting (18-20 November 2025, dates tbc).

3. Expected deliverables

The Working Group is expected to develop, by the end of 2025, (new) positive narratives and make proposals for possible tools to promote gender equality and to prevent and combat violence against women in the context of anti-gender movements in Europe.

The positive narratives developed by the Working Group will form the basis for the preparation of tools to be used by the Council of Europe and its member States, with the aim to promote gender equality and to prevent and combat violence against women in the context of anti-gender movements, including through the promotion of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The concrete production of the tools will take place at a later stage. The format for messaging and/ or communication tools, including how positive narratives could be conveyed (such as through videos or social media tools) will be decided upon on the basis of the results of the work of the Working Group.

4. Timeline

October-December 2024	Drafting of the mapping study by external experts.
19-21 November 2024	26th GEC plenary meeting Workshop to present and discuss the preliminary findings of the mapping study conducted by experts and exchange about national experiences. Appointment of the members of the Working Group.

December 2024	Finalisation of mapping study by experts, including recommendations for developing effective positive narratives to counter anti-gender movements.
February 2025 (tbc)	First online meeting of the GEC Working Group
13-15 May 2025	27th GEC plenary meeting Presentation of, and general discussion on, the ongoing work of the Working Group.
June 2025 (tbc)	Second online meeting of the GEC Working Group
18-20 November 2025 (dates tbc)	28th GEC plenary meeting Presentation of proposed messaging for approval by the GEC and discussion of possible communication tools.