

Strasbourg, 18 October 2024

GEC (2024) Bureau 4

**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting**  
**9 October 2024**

**REPORT**

**1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of agenda**

The Secretariat informed the GEC Bureau about the arrival of the new GEC Secretary, Yanna Parnin, as of 1 September, of the secondment from Switzerland, Flurina Frei, as of 10 October, and of the recruitment of two temporary staff, Roza Cseby and Felicia Cojocar, Administrative Assistants, until the end of 2024.

The Bureau welcomed the new members of the Gender Equality Policy Unit.

The Bureau adopted the agenda.

**2. Developments since the 24<sup>th</sup> GEC Bureau Meeting**

The Secretariat reported on the **2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI**, held on 25-26 September, during which it examined a first draft of the Recommendation on Equality and Artificial Intelligence. It was highlighted that the work of the Committee is separate to both the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and the HUDERIA methodology. Some of the key points discussed were the list of grounds of discrimination, the possible inclusion of the “zero question” and ways to take into account different levels of risk discrimination arising from activities within the lifecycle of AI systems. It was suggested by the joint GEC and CDADI Secretariat to use the list of grounds of discrimination listed in the GES 2024-2029 and both Steering Committees were invited to provide guidance in this regard. The GEC/ADI-AI agreed on the need to draft an explanatory memorandum and has begun identifying possible content. The Steering Committees (GEC and CDADI) will receive the revised draft recommendation before their respective November 2024 plenary sessions and will have the opportunity to share comments in writing and hold a discussion to provide general guidance on the draft. After their respective plenary sessions, the Steering Committees will have a further period to submit written comments, until early to mid-December. At the next meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI, scheduled for 26-27 February 2025, the draft Recommendation, revised on the basis of the comments made by the GEC and the CDADI, will be examined.

The Secretariat reported on the outcome of the **1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the GEC/PC-eVIO**, during which an exchange of views was held on the approach to take for the preparation of a first draft of the Recommendation on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG), based on a discussion paper prepared by an independent expert. The GEC/PC-eVIO underlined the need to ensure consistency with GREVIO Recommendation

No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women; the importance of harmonising the definitions and terminology of TFVAWG; the importance of ensuring the criminalisation of acts of TFVAWG and the need to adopt a technology-neutral language to ensure that emerging and future technologies will not make the Recommendation obsolete; the need to focus on addressing harmful behaviours and how technologies are used, rather than addressing the technologies themselves; the need to reflect on the terminology to be used to refer to victims/survivors/ “targets” of violence and the importance of addressing issues related to prevention of TFVAWG, as part of combating it. The Secretariat is preparing a first draft of the Recommendation, taking into account suggestions made by the participants, to be examined at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the GEC/PC-eVIO, scheduled for 22-23 January 2025.

The Secretariat reported on the outcomes of the **Symposium “Young people, democracy and climate change”**, which took place on 24-26 September. The event marked the launch of the [Youth Knowledge Book #31 – Youth and democracy in the climate crisis](#), which explores young people’s experiences of the climate crisis and their actions. The publication highlights emerging issues, such as recognising the unequal impact of climate change on different groups of young people, intergenerational solidarity, links between climate denialism and populism, the rise of eco-anxiety and the blurring of the dichotomy between humans and nature.

The Secretariat reported on the main outcomes and recommendations of the **report on the GEC Annual Conference “United around gender equality: making space for women and girls”** prepared by the Conference Rapporteur and member of the Advisory Council on Youth, Anja Jokić, at an online meeting held on 16 July.

The member of the Bureau, Sara Slana, reported on her participation in the **Conference “Synergy for change: Civil society raising awareness on violence against women in a context of global challenges”** in Budapest on 11-12 July 2024. She congratulated the Secretariat on the quality of the event, highlighting the need for sustainable engagement with NGOs and civil society, which need more support from the Council of Europe, ministries and institutions, in particular further networking opportunities. On an administrative note, she raised concerns about the long delay for the reimbursement of participation costs.

The Secretariat reported that at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI)** on 17-19 September, the first draft of the Methodology for the Risk and Impact Assessment of Artificial Intelligence Systems from the point of view of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (HUDERIA) was examined. HUDERIA provides criteria and processes for identifying contexts and applications in which the deployment of artificial intelligence systems could pose risks to the enjoyment of human rights, the functioning of democracy, and the observance of the rule of law, and for assessing and mitigating these risks. It was underlined that the Council of Europe has a role to play in shaping the international agenda and discussions regarding AI governance, to focus on human rights, democracy and the rule of law as well as the need to bridge the existing gap between the technical and human rights communities.

The Secretariat reported on the preparation of the Council of Europe Reference Framework on Youth Perspective at the **Consultative meeting with the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)** on 19-20 September. A key takeaway is that the Reference Framework should take account of the fact that youth is not a homogeneous group and that youth perspectives need to be included. The GEC was congratulated for its pioneering work in engaging with the youth sector, as evidenced by their active involvement in the GEC Annual Conference “United around gender equality: making space for women and girls” on 30 May. The Chair reiterated by video message the importance of effectively involving youth representatives in the work of the GEC.

The Bureau member, Sara Slana, reported on her participation in the **4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee of Experts on the Prevention of Violence (ENF-VAE)** on 24-25 September. Participants discussed the Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence, including the development of model prevention approaches as well as the feasibility study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education. A stronger gender lens should be ensured when reporting on violence against children, and on consequences of pornography on boys and girls. The draft Recommendation on comprehensive sexuality education will be sent to the GEC Bureau for their comments, which will then be communicated to the ENF-VAE Secretariat.

### **3. GEC terms of reference 2024-2027**

The Bureau agreed on the revised **workplan**, with the Secretariat ensuring that it would be regularly updated and shared with the Bureau.

The Bureau agreed that the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GEC could be held on 18-20 November 2025, in parallel to a meeting of the CDADI, allowing for joint consideration of the draft Recommendation on equality and AI. It asked the Secretariat to submit the proposed dates to the GEC at its next plenary session.

The Bureau also discussed potential contributions by the GEC in relation to “gender equality and the environment”. The Secretariat reiterated that no specific deliverable was included in the GEC terms of reference, but that the “Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making”, for which the deadline is 31 December 2026, should, among other issues, address participation of women in decision-making processes affecting the environment. In addition, the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 provides a framework for such work, in particular under Strategic Objective 5. The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the Terms of Reference of the Ad hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME), to develop a Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment, which stipulates that due account should be taken of mainstreamed perspectives such as gender. The Bureau agreed with the proposal of the Secretariat that, beyond ascertaining whether any national good practices exist which address **gender equality and the environment** as an interlinked issue, a *tour de table* at the next GEC plenary session could also consider potential relevant GEC initiatives. The Bureau also agreed that a focal point on gender equality and the environment should be appointed and instructed the Secretariat to issue a call for interest among the GEC members.

The Secretariat recalled the GEC decisions to establish the following two working groups:

- Working group on deflecting anti-gender rhetoric and creating a new narrative: a team of consultants has been selected to carry out a mapping of existing knowledge on anti-gender rhetoric and a preliminary assessment of effective positive counter-narratives and activities to promote gender equality.
- Working group on reporting on the implementation of the GES 2024-2029: a data collection expert will develop a preliminary reporting format methodology, draft questionnaire and list of indicators.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to put out a call for interest among GEC members to participate in the abovementioned working groups. Expressions of interest can be sent to the Secretariat preferably before, but also during, the forthcoming plenary session.

## 5. Preparation of the 26<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting (19-21 November 2024)

- Draft agenda

The Bureau took note of the draft annotated agenda of the 26<sup>th</sup> GEC plenary meeting. The Secretariat highlighted that elections would take place to renew the Bureau, and reiterated that members should be appointed in the working groups on positive messaging to deflect anti-gender narratives and on reporting on the Strategy. The Bureau tasked the Secretariat to collect expressions of interest from the GEC members on all three points.

The Chair asked about the nomination procedure. As for the previous elections, members could either directly express their interest in becoming Bureau members, or GEC members could propose names of potential candidates to the Secretariat, who would then contact the nominated persons and ask about their interest to put forward their candidacy. The Secretariat and the Bureau agreed that both ways are possible. Members can pose their candidacy until the day before elections.

- Thematic Exchanges

The Bureau and Secretariat discussed the topic of the thematic exchanges, as follows:

- a *tour de table* on gender equality and the environment, including with youth representatives, to discuss national good or promising practices and possible activities to be carried out by the GEC to support the work of the GME, based on a background paper prepared by the Secretariat.
- an exchange of views with Michael O’Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, covering issues of common interest, such as artificial intelligence, migration, matters related to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality issues throughout his mandate (19 November);
- an exchange of views with Yuriko Backes, Luxembourg Minister of Gender Equality and Diversity and Minister for Defence, focused on Objective 5 of the Gender Equality Strategy “Ensuring women’s empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges”. She will lay a focus on women in politics, in peacekeeping and peacemaking and also on the fact that women and girls are more affected by wars, natural crises etc. and the strategies to go against this. She will include the aspects of sexism in politics, the dichotomy between soft and hard policies, women and defence and her personal experience and insights as a woman in the defence sector (20 November);
- an exchange of views with Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou, President of GREVIO, on GREVIO’s ongoing work, with a focus on digital violence against women and girls (21 November).

- Workshop

An expert will present the preliminary findings in relation to a mapping study on anti-gender rhetoric, which members will have a chance to discuss in plenary session. This will be followed by a workshop on positive messaging to deflect anti-gender rhetoric and creating a new narrative, aimed at producing ideas for GEC action. Participants in the workshop will break out into four working groups (20 November).

- Other

Working group on reporting on the implementation of the GES 2024-2029: a data collection expert will present preliminary information in relation to the reporting format and methodology.

## 6. Gender mainstreaming and work of other bodies/committees

The Bureau took note of a brief update with regard to:

- the HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming: the French version is being finalised and, by the time of the 26<sup>th</sup> plenary session, it will have been translated into four languages (French, Azerbaijani, Georgian and Ukrainian) ;
- the [Toolkit on Gender Mainstreaming](#) in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms was published in August and is available on the Gender Equality website. A launch event is being organised in early December;
- Gender Equality Rapporteur training session (to be held on 5-6 November): 20 people have registered;
- the GES 2024-2029 and the HELP course were presented to colleagues who took part in the Gender Mainstreaming Team meeting on 4 June.

## 7. Future Events

The Bureau agreed in principle that the GEC would sponsor “**Lab 7: Improving women’s representation and maximising their potential, a path through gender equality**” (7 November) organised in the framework of the [12<sup>th</sup> World Forum for Democracy "Democracy and Diversity - Can we transcend the divides?"](#) (Strasbourg, 6-8 November).

The Lab examines whether the actions identified and taken to eliminate the systemic barriers that limit women's opportunities, with the aim to create a path towards gender equality, are truly effective. Such actions should improve women's representation and maximize their potential. Improving women’s representation involves not only increasing the number of women in different sectors and leadership roles, but also ensuring that their voices and perspectives are truly heard and valued. Maximising their potential is about creating environments where women can develop their full potential, free from discrimination and stereotypes. In asking whether these efforts lead to true equality, the discussion will focus on the most effective ways to achieve gender balance.

The Bureau agreed that the **Annual Conference of the GEC** should focus on sexism, harassment, violence (including digital violence) and sexual violence against women in politics (within political parties and institutions). The Annual Conference will be hosted by the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers on 17-18 September 2025, in Malta.

## 8. Any other business

In relation to the preparation of the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GEC, on 13-15 May 2025:

- the Chair suggested inviting Nina Grmuša (Chair of the Advisory Council of Youth) for an exchange of views;
- the Secretariat suggested inviting for an exchange of views Nicole Ameline, the Rapporteur on General Recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive participation of women in decision-making systems, scheduled for adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) at its 89<sup>th</sup> session (October 2024).

## **9. Proposed date of the next Bureau meeting**

The Bureau took note of the proposed provisional dates for the next meeting (morning of 28, 29 or 30 January or of 5 or 6 February 2025, should no outgoing Bureau meeting be needed before the end of 2024), and agreed that the date for a first meeting in 2025 would be decided on by the incoming Bureau.

### **Participants:**

Bureau: Ralph Kass (Chair), Maria Ellul (Vice-Chair), Sara Slana (Member)

Secretariat: Yanna Parnin, Valérie Poppe, Evrydiki Tseliou, Roza Cseby, Felicia Cojocar