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GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

(GEC)

28th meeting

Strasbourg, 18-20 November 2025

Meeting report

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. Sara Slana (Slovenia), Chair of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), opened the meeting and welcomed the new GEC members. She highlighted achievements since the 27th GEC plenary meeting (13-15 May 2025) and recalled the forthcoming deliverables under the GEC's Terms of Reference.
2. The Chair stated that the GEC would be invited to approve two draft Committee of Ministers recommendations, namely the draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence and the draft Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, and to adopt their respective explanatory memoranda. The Chair further noted that the GEC would examine, with a view to its adoption, the 'Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric'. Further, the GEC would be holding elections for the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair and Bureau member, and would be invited to appoint focal points to follow the work on gender equality of other Council of Europe bodies, as well as rapporteurs on children's rights and on Roma and Traveller issues. Finally, the GEC would be holding exchanges with Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief, Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section, UN Women, with Agnes Schneeberger from the European Audiovisual Observatory, with Francine Raveney of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, and with Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Secretary of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC).
3. The GEC adopted the agenda of the meeting as it appears in Appendix 1.

Exchange of views on the New Democratic Pact for Europe

4. Hallvard Gorseth, Director of Equal Rights and Dignity, welcomed the GEC and presented the New Democratic Pact for Europe (NDPE). He explained the rationale behind the NDPE, which aims to mobilise a shared effort by the Council of Europe, together with its 46 member States and with wider stakeholders, to rebuild trust in democracy and make it more resilient and inclusive. He underlined that the NDPE seeks to identify where the Council of Europe can contribute most effectively to democratic renewal, which concrete tools the Organisation can propose to measure and address democratic erosion, and how it can help shape a renewed, accessible narrative on the value of democracy. The NDPE also aims to translate Council of Europe norms and standards into accessible and understandable language, in order to broaden the narrative that democracy is about prosperity for all and not about rights for the 'few', and to ensure that this message resonates with the wider public.
5. The Director emphasised the current context of polarisation, economic anxiety and large-scale disinformation, in which equality and human rights are increasingly politicised. In this environment, gender equality policies are sometimes portrayed as divisive or as granting "special rights", a narrative he warned is both dangerous and detrimental to democratic security. He stressed that gender equality is essential for democratic security and therefore needs to be embedded in the NDPE. The Director further highlighted the relevance of the GEC's ongoing work to each of the three pillars of the Pact: boosting democratic resilience through inclusive participation, protecting democracies by addressing anti-rights rhetoric and gender-based hate speech, and shaping democracies of tomorrow by responding to challenges posed by emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. He therefore invited the GEC to contribute substantively to the NDPE.
6. Several delegations contributed to the discussion, underlining:
 - that gender equality must be at the heart of the NDPE, noting that a strong and resilient democracy cannot exist without the full participation of women. However, the widening gender trust gap, wherein women increasingly distrust public institutions, poses a serious threat to democratic security.

- that gender equality is not only vital but must be deeply embedded in the NDPE. This presents an important opportunity to mainstream gender considerations within a key document and to ensure sustainable, long-term budgetary support for these efforts.
- that gender-blind policy and legislative work on hate speech is also detrimental to embedding gender equality in the democratic process. There is a need to focus on gender-based disinformation and foreign interference with an anti-gender narrative and LGBTQI lens. The 'Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric' is a useful tool to help us focus on values which unite.
- the need to address the issues of mistrust or disinterest. Men and boys need to be brought on board as allies, taking into account that some feel that they are falling behind in certain spheres. In many areas men and boys do not see a future that includes them, so it is essential to make gender equality relevant for men and boys and to stress that their perspective is an added value and that inequality hurts them too, underlining that it is not a zero-sum game. It was further noted that the manosphere must be addressed in a way that reminds men of the profound consequences of a failing democracy and that men are not oppressed by, but are rather beneficiaries of gender equality, just as they benefit from functioning democratic systems.
- that women are excluded from online discourse. Legal systems are in place to address this issue, but criminal codes must include elements related to gender when addressing gendered hate speech. The challenge of addressing harmful online discourse and behaviours that remain lawful was underlined. Artificial intelligence (AI) can present potential risks including a threat to fundamental rights and can provide virtual reality spaces in which gender-based violence is hardly sanctioned. Efforts towards safer digital spaces for users should be ensured and the digital divide must be addressed through digital literacy training for women and men.
- that civil society and NGOs are the last barrier to defending democracy and human rights as they can express ideas that government representatives cannot. It was noted that civil society is being weakened and that questionable funding of certain civil society groups is further weakening the message of feminist NGOs and civil society.
- that the human rights language is not always understood outside of human rights circles. The Organisation has many excellent norms, reports and studies hinting at solutions to feed into the NDPE, but it would be pertinent to present them in more understandable language, including for political leaders. These significant resources could be broken down into simpler, more impactful, messages for easier use and broader reach.

7. Other key issues raised by member States included: persistent underrepresentation of women in public, political, social, and economic life; political culture still based on patriarchal models creating and reinforcing structural inequalities; and obstacles to women's participation such as sexism and sexist behaviours, gender stereotypes, unequal distribution of domestic and unpaid care work, gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and institutional barriers (electoral systems and functioning of political parties).

8. It was further noted that the 2025 GEC Annual Conference on "Tackling violence and sexism against women in politics" was organised as an activity linked to the NDPE. The key takeaways from the Conference discussions were that combating sexism and violence against women in politics demands sustained, coordinated, and adequately resourced action at all levels of governance, and that legislative, institutional, cultural, and societal measures to achieve gender equality must be fully integrated if they are to be effective. Recommendations stemming from the conference focus on six priority areas:

In relation to legal and policy reform:

- Criminalising all forms of violence against women in politics (psychological, sexual, physical, economic, online and offline) in line with Istanbul Convention and other international standards.
- Ensuring that law enforcement and judicial authorities investigate and prosecute with urgency and sensitivity.
- Embedding gender-sensitive provisions in electoral laws, party statutes, and public administration frameworks, with sanctions including loss of mandates or public funding.
- Recognising gender equality as a cornerstone of democracy in the NDPE.

In relation to institutional accountability:

- Adopting binding codes of conduct in parties and parliaments, with independent complaints mechanisms and transparent reporting.
- Institutionalising regular gender audits to assess power structures and representation, producing data-driven reforms.
- Integrating national action plans on combating sexism and violence against women into broader gender equality and democratic governance strategies.
- Allocating resources for mandatory training, mentoring, and gender equality efforts.

In relation to technology-facilitated violence:

- Holding technology companies accountable for moderating misogynistic content and online threats; ensuring cooperation with law enforcement.
- Promoting voluntary charters or codes for media and platforms prohibiting sexist content and harassment.
- Adopting survivor-centred digital protection measures: privacy safeguards, secure removal of harmful content, and prevention of re-victimisation.
- Investing in digital literacy, cyber-safety training, and awareness campaigns for women politicians and activists.

In relation to civil society, solidarity, and funding:

- Sustaining partnerships with civil society for prevention, response, and monitoring.
- Ensuring predictable, multi-year funding for women's rights organisations, recognising their watchdog role and independence.
- Strengthening cooperation with organisations providing first-response services, training, and monitoring.
- Ensuring that donors provide flexible funding to support emerging threats and to offer legal, psychological, and digital protection.

In relation to leadership and men's engagement:

- Men acting as visible allies: enforce zero-tolerance standards, mentor young women, speak out against sexism.
- Integrating gender equality into leadership training, induction, and performance frameworks.
- Promoting public campaigns normalising gender-balanced leadership, promoting women's visibility, and ensuring equal representation, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

In relation to intersectionality, monitoring, and knowledge-sharing:

- Adopting an intersectional approach recognising the compounded discrimination faced by women from diverse backgrounds.
- Collecting and disaggregating data on all forms of harassment and violence; feeding into regional monitoring frameworks.
- Strengthening peer learning, data exchange, and sharing of good practices; replicating successful models such as gender audits, digital safety initiatives, and mentoring networks.

9. The discussion concluded that equal participation is a democratic imperative and that equal participation of women and men, in all their diversity, is essential not only for gender

equality and inclusion but also for democratic legitimacy, resilience and pluralism in political life, without which democratic systems risk stagnation and weakened public trust.

2. Report from the Chair and Bureau of the GEC

10. The GEC took note of the information provided by the Chair about her participation in the 11th plenary meeting of the Steering Committee on Antidiscrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on 2 July to present the work being done on gender mainstreaming. She explained that the CDADI is currently preparing a guide and checklist on equality mainstreaming. She highlighted that in this regard it is critical for the GEC and for CDADI to ensure complementarity and synergy between a possible new equality mainstreaming strategy and the gender mainstreaming approach that it has been developing for many years both at the level of the Council of Europe and of member States.

11. The GEC took note of the information provided by the Vice-Chair about her participation in the webinar on “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality: A New Perspective”, organised by the Conference of INGOs (CINGO) on 26 May 2025, where she spoke about the concrete tools of the Council of Europe to help to improve the position of women in decision-making positions. The GEC also took note of the Vice-Chair’s participation as a panellist in the High-Level Conference ‘Equality, Europe!’ in Poznan, organised by the Polish Presidency of the EU Council on 23 June 2025, where she presented the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 and highlighted that ambitious instruments and dialogue and cooperation between member States can produce good results.

3. Mandate and workplan of the GEC

12. The GEC took note of the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of its terms of reference for 2026-2027 and of the workplans of the GEC for 2025 and for 2026-2027.

13. The GEC took note of the information provided by the Secretariat and the representative of Monaco on the theme of the 2026 annual conference of the GEC organised under the Monaco Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (9 June 2026, Strasbourg). The conference will focus on the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In line with the Council of Europe’s commitment to support democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Ukraine, the Conference will focus on the need to effectively integrate gender equality considerations in efforts regarding peace and security in the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

4. Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029

14. The GEC took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the ongoing data collection and preparation of the first report of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029, covering the period 2024-2025. The Secretariat recalled that member States were invited to provide data according to their own terminology, classification and collection methods, indicating sources and reference years, where relevant. The Secretariat further noted that, while data for 2025 may not yet be available, the latest available data could be submitted for this report, and missing information could be included in the subsequent implementation report. A draft report compiled by the Secretariat will be circulated for an initial round of comments. Those will be taken into account in a revised version, which will be submitted to GEC members for their consideration and adoption at their 29th plenary meeting (10-12 June 2026).

5. Elections and appointments

15. The GEC re-elected Sara Slana (Slovenia) as Chair and Sandra Lengwiler (Switzerland) as Vice-Chair. They elected Lea Spörcke (Germany) as member of the Bureau.

16. The GEC appointed Jeanne Jezierski (France) as Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child, Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) as Rapporteur on Roma and Traveller Issues, Maria Ellul (Malta) and Ralph Kass (Luxembourg) as focal points in the Working Group on gender expression of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC) and Tryggvi Hallgrímsson (Iceland) as focal point in the Working Group of the Steering Committee on Education (CDEDU) to develop a Council of Europe Scorecard on Gender Equality in Education.

6. Preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism

6.1. *Work of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI)*

17. The Chair explained that this session would allow the GEC to finalise discussions on the draft Recommendation and its Explanatory Memorandum, ahead of a joint session with the CDADI on 20 November 2025, at which the steering committees were expected to jointly approve the draft Recommendation.

18. The Vice-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI), Radan Šafařík (Czechia), presented the outcomes of the 4th and final meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI. He reported that the Committee had finalised the draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence and its Explanatory Memorandum, in light of comments received during the public consultation and from members of the Expert Committee, the GEC and the CDADI. Key outcomes included: the relocation of definitions to the Explanatory Memorandum to avoid inconsistencies with other legal frameworks, the retention of the comprehensive list of discrimination grounds from the Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2029, the nuanced treatment of intersectional and multiple discrimination, the inclusion of provisions on transparency, explainability, and oversight, flexible references to certain sectors in Chapter VII, and a clarification that the Recommendation does not impose obligations on national security-related AI activities. The draft Explanatory Memorandum was updated accordingly, incorporating detailed examples and suggestions from consultations. The Vice-Chair highlighted the close coordination with EU member States and the European Commission to ensure compatibility with the EU AI Act, acknowledging their engagement in resolving potential points of incompatibility. He further noted that the EU Council adopted on 13 November 2025 a Council Decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union on the draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on equality and artificial intelligence. The Decision states that the position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the joint plenary session of the GEC and the CDADI, as well as in the relevant meeting of the Committee of Ministers, shall be to not object to the approval and adoption of the Recommendation and Explanatory Memorandum.

19. The GEC provisionally approved the draft Recommendation and provisionally adopted its Explanatory Memorandum, with no changes made to the texts prepared by the GEC/ADI-AI.

20. The joint session was opened by Marja Ruotanen, Director General of the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity. She noted the importance of this landmark Recommendation, which aimed to assist member States to take steps towards avoiding risks of discrimination which can arise from activities within the lifecycle of AI systems, and to harness the positive potential of such systems and promote equality including gender equality. The GEC and the CDADI examined and approved the draft Recommendation and adopted the Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Recommendation. Both committees decided to submit the draft Recommendation and the Explanatory Memorandum to the Committee of

Ministers, inviting it to adopt the draft Recommendation and to take note of the Explanatory Memorandum.

21. Bulgaria made a statement, which is attached to the meeting report as Appendix IV, and reserved the right to provide a statement at the level of the Committee of Ministers.

6.2. *Thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism*

22. The Secretariat proposed to focus the thematic review of the implementation of the Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism on Section II.F concerning the justice sector. The review would assess how sexism affects access to justice for women and girls, including persistent gender bias and the risk of secondary victimisation, drawing on existing Council of Europe monitoring and cooperation work as well as relevant case law. The proposed methodology would combine desk research, consultations with stakeholders, and a targeted questionnaire, with a draft report prepared for discussion at the 29th GEC plenary meeting and final adoption at its 30th plenary meeting.

23. The GEC took note of the presentation by the Executive Secretary to the Istanbul Convention, Johanna Nelles. She underlined the central role of the judiciary in ensuring justice and protection for victims, which is why it is a key focus of GREVIO's current thematic evaluation round. She recalled the Istanbul Convention's obligation to provide systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training for all professionals, including judges, noting that such training is essential to building trust, ensuring effective protection and guaranteeing that victims are treated with competence and dignity. Since 2017, GREVIO has repeatedly highlighted major gaps in judicial training, noting in over 30 out of 36 baseline evaluations that existing ad hoc and voluntary approaches fail to equip judges with the necessary understanding of domestic and gender-based violence. GREVIO has found that insufficient training of judges and family law professionals seriously affects child custody and visitation decisions after domestic violence, leading to inadequate consideration of prior abuse, weak information-sharing between courts, reliance on poorly informed experts, and persistent gender bias that results in the downplaying of violence, secondary victimisation, and the non-recognition of harm suffered by children. GREVIO has likewise observed that insufficiently trained judges have a limited understanding of the cycle of violence and often underestimate the risks of alternative dispute resolution in cases of violence against women, leading to situations where victims may feel unable to refuse mediation and where restraining and protection orders are underused. GREVIO also noted that many judges do not apply effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions or fully consider aggravating circumstances, often relying on suspended or conditional sentences. In response to the widespread shortcomings identified, GREVIO has begun explicitly urging States to introduce mandatory, systematic training for judges, while emphasising full respect for judicial independence and the essential role of the judiciary in upholding the Istanbul Convention. Recent developments in several member States, together with data of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice showing the feasibility of compulsory training, illustrate growing recognition that only mandatory, in-depth training can equip judges with the specialist knowledge required for effective, rights-based decision-making in cases of violence against women.

24. The GEC agreed to focus the thematic review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on the justice sector and approved the methodology and timeline proposed by the Secretariat.

7. Preventing and combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence

7.1. *Work of the Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO)*

25. The Chair explained that this session would allow GEC members to finalise discussions on the draft Recommendation and its Explanatory Memorandum. The Council of Europe Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) would examine the drafts on 25 November 2025 during its 88th plenary meeting. Subsequently, at a joint GEC-CDPC session on 26 November 2025, the Steering Committees would be expected to jointly approve the draft Recommendation.

26. The Vice-Chair of the GEC/PC-eVIO, Tryggvi Hallgrímsson (Iceland), gave an overview of the main outcomes of the 4th and final meeting of the GEC/PC-eVIO. Members, participants and observers discussed the draft Recommendation and Explanatory Memorandum, focussing on the relevant paragraphs in respect of which members, participants and observers of both Steering Committees had submitted observations ahead of the meeting. The GEC agreed to insert two new paragraphs in the draft Recommendation: one specifically addressing the situation of women and girls with disabilities, and another on freedom of expression, highlighting the need for States to refrain from unjustified restrictions and to take proactive steps to prevent and respond to the silencing effect of technology-facilitated violence on women and girls. The GEC agreed on the definition of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls to be used in the draft Recommendation, and decided to move to the Explanatory Memorandum illustrative examples of the types of technology involved, and to keep in the draft Recommendation the references to relevant instruments, including those on AI. Furthermore, the GEC emphasised the importance of maintaining a coherent level of ambition in the non-legally binding Recommendation and emphasised the importance of maintaining language that upholds established legal standards and does not dilute the level of protection provided therein.

27. Italy reaffirmed its preference for using the terminology of “additive approach” rather than “intersectional approach” which appears in the draft Recommendation, and reiterated the need for careful use of the term “gender-transformative”.

28. The GEC provisionally approved the draft Recommendation, including some amendments, and provisionally adopted its Explanatory Memorandum, both documents and proposed amendments having yet to be examined by the CDPC at its plenary meeting.

29. At their joint session held on 26 November 2025, the GEC and the CDPC examined and approved the draft Recommendation and adopted the Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Recommendation. Both committees decided to submit the draft Recommendation and the Explanatory Memorandum to the Committee of Ministers, inviting it to adopt the draft Recommendation and to take note of the Explanatory Memorandum.

30. In relation to paragraph 14 of the Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Recommendation, Bulgaria stated its position regarding the interpretation of the term “gender” and gender-related terminology, in accordance with its internal legal order.

7.2. *Implementation of the Istanbul Convention*

31. **Austria** informed the GEC that in 2024, it developed a comprehensive violence-protection strategy to improve coordination and counselling for women affected by violence, in close cooperation with women’s and girls’ counselling centres and violence protection centres. In April 2025, the government of Austria initiated a National Action Plan on Violence against Women with concrete measures currently under political review. The Action Plan will be presented before the end of 2025. Additionally, to support victims of sexual violence, clinics now provide free and anonymous examinations of victims and legally valid evidence collection for victims of violent assaults. Every public prosecutor’s office also operates a cybercrime competence centre staffed by specialised prosecutors.

32. **Belgium** informed that it had recently received recommendations from GREVIO. It recalled the importance of ratifying the Istanbul Convention at a time when gender equality is being called into question, as the planned evaluation process allows States to make progress on the basis of the recommendations issued. These recommendations will be taken into account in Belgium's new plan to combat gender-based violence, due to be adopted in 2026. Belgium recently conducted a national campaign on the concept of consent which was explicitly included in the Criminal Code in 2022. The national campaign is aimed at young people aged 18 to 25 and is entitled: 'Consent? So sexy!'. Its aim is to promote a clear, respectful and inclusive culture of sexual consent. The campaign also addresses the essential principles of Belgian criminal law related to sexual offences, namely that consent must be free, informed and voluntary, and can be withdrawn.

33. **Luxembourg** announced the recent inauguration of a National Centre for Victims of Violence (CNVV), as well as the adoption of its national action plan on gender-based violence on 20 June 2025, in line with GREVIO's recommendations.

34. **France** informed the GEC that with regard to the definition of rape and sexual assault in the Criminal Code, the parliament adopted a cross-party bill, supported by the government. This bill aims to expressly mention the absence of consent in the criminal definition of rape and other sexual assaults. The bill was adopted following a vote in the National Assembly on 23 October and in the Senate on 29 October, and was published in the Official Journal on 7 November 2025. The law amends Article 222-22 of the Criminal Code to introduce the concept of consent into the definition of rape and other sexual assault. Article 222-22 of the Criminal Code now defines rape and any other sexual assault as any sexual act committed without consent. The law also specifies that consent must be freely and clearly given, that it must be specific, that it must be given prior to the sexual act, that it can be withdrawn before or during the act, that it must be assessed in light of the circumstances, and that it cannot be inferred from the victim's silence or lack of reaction.

35. **Denmark** underlined the importance of new political narratives. Its current action plan against intimate partner violence and intimate partner killings ends in 2026 and it is currently working on a follow-up. The current action plan includes providing equal access to shelters for victims of intimate partner violence and their children, among other activities. New initiatives will include the establishment of a "femicide commission" to review police tools to prevent, detect and intervene against intimate partner violence and killings, honour-related violence, stalking, and coercive control; the establishment of a so-called "family justice centre" to support victims of violence and their families; and legislation against "stealthing" or the removal of contraception, such as condoms, without consent.

36. **Germany** informed the GEC that it had submitted the state report for the first GREVIO thematic evaluation procedure on 17 October 2025. The report outlines important new measures against violence against women and domestic violence, including the adoption of the Protection Against Violence Strategy based on the Istanbul Convention and the establishment in 2024 of a coordination body in accordance with the convention, as well as the passing of the Violence Support Services Act at the beginning of 2025. GREVIO's visit is scheduled for April 2026. The second round of the baseline evaluation focusing on 15 specific recommendations was launched at the beginning of May 2025 and the report should be submitted by 4 December 2025. Germany emphasised its commitment to upholding the values of the Istanbul Convention and therefore plans to submit a highly qualified candidate for the 2026 GREVIO election.

37. **North Macedonia** informed the GEC that the National Coordinating Body for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention has drafted a National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection from Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2026–2033, along with an Action Plan for 2026–2029. The strategy is expected to be adopted by Parliament in 2026. In cooperation with the non-governmental sector, a femicide observatory has been established comprising representatives from institutions and two NGOs. The

campaign "You are not alone - Don't Be a Silent Witness – Report Violence" continues, and during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence it will be intensified through social and traditional media. Trainings for all professionals are being conducted continuously.

38. **Romania** announced that it has set up a working group within the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to continue its efforts to harmonise national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, and to implement GREVIO's recommendations. This working group includes relevant central ministries and institutions, local public administration, representatives of non-governmental organisations active in the field, representatives of academia and reputed legal specialists. It aims to consider proposals to amend laws and regulations on preventing and combating domestic violence and on the management of domestic violence cases by police officers. The amendments would address: regulating other types of violence against women; introducing a gender perspective in the provision of social services and specialised services for domestic violence victims; allowing central and local public administration authorities to finance a package of alternative support measures for victims, in accordance with the victim's individualised material support needs in risk situations, personalised support packages; integrating the perspective of Roma women in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies by supporting women's NGOs that represent them and establishing a percentage of funding for public and private social services in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence from the state budget; collecting administrative data on various forms of violence against women to outline an overview of the phenomenon; ensuring systematic and mandatory initial and ongoing training on the prevention and detection of all forms of violence against women regulated by the Istanbul Convention, concerning equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, and the prevention of secondary victimisation for all professional groups, especially in law enforcement, the health sector, and the judiciary. A mechanism has been established for the issuance, distribution and reimbursement of vouchers for victims of domestic violence, intended to cover urgent needs. The mechanism represents an advance payment of the financial compensation approved by local court commissions.

39. **Slovakia** informed the GEC that although it had not ratified the Istanbul Convention, it would transpose the EU Directive on violence against women and domestic violence in order to strengthen the national legal framework for the protection of victims. It will continue to work on the comprehensive harmonisation of legislation in line with the requirements of the Convention. At the national level, Slovakia has a system of specialised facilities for victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence and training for police, judiciary, and health care professionals in identifying and addressing cases of violence will continue. Slovakia will implement a national awareness project on social issues, including a major media campaign addressing violence against women and children. It will also engage young people through interactive educational activities in schools, aimed at informing students about gender stereotypes and violence. Slovakia will participate in the nationwide "Stop Violence Against Women" campaign, coordinated by the Methodological Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, within the global Orange the World initiative during the 16 Days of Activism, with this year's focus on digital violence against women and girls. Buildings across the country will be illuminated in orange and the campaign will include expert discussions and cooperation with diplomatic, cultural and sports institutions, NGOs and public figures, presenting services and projects supporting women affected by violence and their children. Slovakia underlined that the Criminal Code was amended to add a section on dangerous electronic harassment, punishable by imprisonment depending on the severity and aggravating circumstances. Dangerous electronic harassment is defined as the intentional substantial deterioration of another person's quality of life by means of electronic communication services, computer systems, or computer networks through long-term humiliation, intimidation, acting unlawfully on their behalf or otherwise harassing them, or unlawfully publishing or making available to a third party a visual, audio, or audiovisual recording of their personal expression obtained with their consent, capable of significantly compromising their dignity or causing other serious harm to their rights. Slovakia further informed the GEC that an amendment to the Criminal Code

was submitted, which was intended to extend more comprehensive protection against various forms of gender-based violence, including cyber violence, sexual harassment, mobbing, identity theft, humiliation, and non-consensual sharing of intimate materials. However, the amendment was not approved by parliament. Slovakia further noted that proposals to amend the Criminal Code on other issues related to the protection of women and girls against violence are being prepared. It highlighted that this topic was a key issue in political discussions, including by the former President of the Slovak Republic, who founded an online platform to support survivors of gender-based violence and victims of hate speech called “Sme tu” (We Are Here).

40. **Ukraine** noted that it had implemented Article 40 (Sexual Harassment) of the Istanbul Convention in December 2024 by introducing an administrative liability for sexual harassment. Since then, 64 cases were detected under Article 173-7 "Sexual Harassment" of the Code of Administrative Offences. The analysis showed a gradual increase in the number of cases of sexual harassment in 2025, demonstrating accountability, and showed that all offenders were male, while 98% of sexual harassment cases involved female victims. Judicial practice in Ukraine currently covers all regions, except for the Mykolaiv region, as well as the territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Luhansk and Donetsk regions, which are either fully or partially uncontrolled by Ukraine.

41. The **United Kingdom** informed the GEC that it had set an objective to halve levels of violence against women and girls in a decade, and underlined the usefulness of GREVIO's findings would inform the government's approach in pursuing this objective. The United Kingdom further noted that a strategy on tackling VAWG will be published as soon as possible and updated the GEC on key achievements, including increased support to victims of violence against women and girls through growing government investment in specialist services to improve capacity and efficiency. The government has announced a £19.9m investment to provide vital support for victims of violence against women and girls; projects across the country to increase awareness of violence against women and girls and to help prevent these crimes; projects targeting high-risk, high-harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse, involving intensive monitoring, disruption tactics and behavioural interventions to prevent perpetrators from re-offending and to keep victims safe from harm (Drive Project); measures focusing on prevention and awareness of specific crimes, including 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) through developing a statutory definition for HBA, delivering community engagement campaigns, enhanced training for police and multi-agency response to HBA and funding for support services. Finally, the United Kingdom highlighted its commitment to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve youth engagement with key support services to address the behavioural and social drivers of crime: the Young Futures Programme aims to intervene earlier to ensure children and young people who are facing poorer outcomes and are vulnerable to being drawn into crime, specifically knife crime, antisocial behaviour and violence against women and girls, are identified and offered support in a more systematic way.

42. The **Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)** informed the GEC that the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination is finalising two new reports, one on the culture of consent and another taking stock of the first 10 years of implementation of the Istanbul Convention. They are scheduled to be discussed at the PACE plenary session of April 2026. PACE noted that the issue of male victims of sexual violence should also be considered.

7.3. Cooperation activities on violence against women and domestic violence

43. The GEC participated in a World Café-style exchange with the Secretariat on cooperation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division on the following themes: perpetrators programme, digital violence against women and girls, women's access to justice and civil society engagement.

44. With regard to violence against women and domestic violence, participants reflected on the importance of focussing on digital violence and of running and promoting programmes to prevent and eliminate such violence. For example, a specific programme launched by UN Women and joined by the Council of Europe focuses on seeking consensus regarding images published online and on technology companies' role in this. Furthermore, the participants agreed on the need to support civil society in the context of shrinking civic space. GEC members were encouraged to help to distribute information about Council of Europe calls for grants to CSOs in 2026, and to inform the Secretariat about CSOs which are active and specialised in priority areas. Participants also discussed the challenges and successes of perpetrators programmes, noting that many perpetrators who participate in such programmes show a decrease in violent or harmful behaviour.

7.4. *Exchange of views with Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief, Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section, UN Women*

45. The GEC took note of the presentation (online) by Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief of the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section at UN Women. She emphasised the critical need to address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls as part of a broader continuum of violence, noting that domestic and intimate partner violence often extends into digital spaces, where it is amplified through new forms. Governments and partners are increasingly recognising the problem and adopting measures to regulate digital violence, though targeted and comprehensive approaches remain limited. Ms Mingeirou underlined that UN Women's work addresses these challenges through a combination of strengthening normative standards, advancing legislation, generating data and evidence, supporting prevention and law enforcement guidance, and enhancing survivor support, including digital resilience initiatives and partnerships with feminist movements. She noted that global campaigns, such as the UNiTE campaign around the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, seek to raise awareness, promote legal and policy reforms, strengthen protection and accountability, and empower women's organisations to respond effectively to violence in both physical and digital spaces. Finally, she invited GEC members to share with UN Women their planned activities around the 16 Days of Activism in order to amplify their reach through a global platform.

46. In the discussion that followed the presentation, **EIGE** highlighted its ongoing work on cyber violence against girls, noting an upcoming study focusing on 13 to 18-year-old girls, which includes focus groups with both girls and boys. **Denmark** emphasised that digital violence can amplify physical and psychological harm offline and discussed the role of the manosphere in shaping harmful narratives about masculinities, particularly among vulnerable young men. Kalliopi Mingeirou added that, together with Equimundo, UN Women are conducting a global study on masculinities and the manosphere, aiming to identify perpetrator profiles and concrete entry points to provide tools and solutions for boys and young men to protect themselves in digital spaces. **PACE** asked whether UN Women's forthcoming guidance for law enforcement on technology-facilitated violence against women specifically addresses AI-based technologies, such as non-consensual image abuse and deepfakes. Kalliopi Mingeirou noted that while the guidance will cover all forms of digital violence, promising practices for AI-facilitated abuse are currently limited, and the guidance will need to be adapted over time. Finally, the **Chair** raised the question regarding how UN Women engages member States to join the digital violence campaign and whether States can adapt the materials for national use. Kalliopi Mingeirou explained that the campaign is implemented in more than 85 countries, with local offices working closely with governments and partners to tailor materials to the national context.

8. Ensuring equal access to justice for women and girls

8.1. Co-operation activities on women's access to justice

47. The GEC participated in a World Café-style exchange with the Secretariat on cooperation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division on the following themes: perpetrators programme, digital violence against women and girls, women's access to justice and civil society engagement.

48. With regard to access to justice, participants discussed the need to break down the barriers women face. In particular, they noted that statements related to a woman's clothing or behaviour should not be cited as mitigating factors related to the offender's responsibility in court. They stressed the importance of the European Court of Human Rights caselaw maintaining a high standard and setting an example to national courts when it comes to gender equality and women's access to justice. In an interactive discussion around gender stereotypes and assumptions participants explored social constructs. For example, empathy is more cultivated in women and girls, who are often trained to be aware of social cues and family matters, whereas men and boys are often not conditioned or expected to be as empathetic. Recent studies in cognitive sciences were discussed: men in general know how to name three times fewer emotions than women. There was further discussion about what skills and characteristics one is born with and what one is socialised into as representing a given gender. Participants also discussed that while cultural practices and traditions should be duly acknowledged, they cannot be an excuse for not respecting someone's human rights or for upholding gender inequalities.

9. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political, public, social and economic life

9.1. Exchange of views with Francine Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport

49. Francine Raveney informed the GEC that the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) serves as a platform allowing for policy development and exchange between governments and grassroots sports organisations and federations, and has a Consultative Committee consisting of sports bodies. She noted that countries can engage with EPAS regardless of whether they are one of the 41 member States of the agreement. For instance, an online library of best practices is open for anyone who wants to contribute to EPAS' work and data collection. EPAS' work builds on three pillars: ethical sport, inclusive sport, and safe sport. Underpinned by the Council of Europe's key values of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, gender equality in sport is a key issue for EPAS. Work to this end is continuous and has visible highlights include annual roundtables on underexplored topics regarding gender equality in sport. In March 2025, the annual roundtable discussed women's health and sport. Previous roundtables have touched upon combating gender-based violence in sport, and sports officiating and equality. The 2026 edition will focus on the participation of women and girls in sport. Francine Raveney further underlined that besides the annual roundtable, EPAS works with Gender Equality Rapporteurs from its governing board and consultative committee, trains committee members and the European Broadcasting Union on unconscious bias, works with partner organisations, e.g. UNESCO, on topics such as combating gender-based violence in sport, and advances gender mainstreaming across EPAS' work.

50. Francine Raveney also shared key highlights from a European Union-Council of Europe project called "All In Plus: promoting greater gender equality in sport", which was run by the Council of Europe's Sport Division until February 2025 and is now led by EPAS. She highlighted that within its overarching goal of highlighting the benefits of greater gender equality in sport, the project focuses on countering the relative invisibility of women in sport and the ongoing lack of awareness about gender imbalance in sport and related issues. The project consists of data collection, an online library of best practice examples, and media

sensitisation work. It covers and standardises data collection in 21 jurisdictions. The “All In Plus” data results are striking across six strategic fields, namely: leadership, coaching and officiating, participation, gender-based violence, media/communication, and gender equality policies and programmes. The collected data demonstrates significant underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in sport federations (29% of board members and vice-presidents, and only 12% of presidents are women), among coaches (women make up only 22% of registered coaches and 22% of elite-level coaches) and among athletes participating in elite competitions (of whom 36% are women). The project also collects information about actions taken to advance gender equality across the six indicators. Improvements can be seen since 2020, but progress is slow. For instance, 34% of sport organisations across the surveyed countries have developed written policies or action plans for advancing gender equality in sport, a notable improvement from 22% in 2019. 39% of sport organisations have a policy or action plan on preventing gender-based violence in sport, but of those only 33% have funds allocated to its implementation. The project includes recommendations for actions across its six strategic areas to guide further work, ranging from better disaggregated data collection to improved affirmative action measures to support women’s participation and leadership. The project indicators will be reused in five years to obtain comparative data over time. There is also an interest in replicating the data collection model at a wider international level and in building a global observatory on gender equality in connection to UNESCO’s work, reaching out to regions beyond Europe.

51. The **Chair** noted that the data reveals how bad the situation is for women in sport across different indicators. She emphasised health as an important focus, as girls tend to drop out of sport during teenage years and might believe they are not good enough instead of obtaining information and support regarding changes related to puberty. In addition, sexual and other forms of harassment, often with coaches as perpetrators, is important to tackle from a health perspective and from media angles that may otherwise justify harassment and violence under the guise of “a need to be tough”. Coaches should be able to address differences between girls and boys and create a safe environment for women and girls in sport.

52. **Switzerland** stressed the need to disseminate the collected data and to ensure that relevant government bodies are aware of challenges and of tools to address them. **Italy** inquired whether the obstacles for girls’ participation are cultural or financial, noting that data shows that participation of girls in sports is low also among those under 18 years of age. Francine Raveney pointed to various interlinked barriers, including related to body image, menstruation, safety, representation, accessibility, clothes that girls are expected to wear in sport, etc. **Luxembourg** shared that a recent incident in the country related to a football player convicted of domestic violence raised questions about whether such a person can continue to be part of a national team, and lead to a national project related to ethics in sport. Luxembourg also shared about its engagement in a national action plan on GBV, including a study on the prevalence of violence in sport. Francine Raveney expressed that good practices such as Luxembourg’s work regarding ethics and safety in sport should be shared with others.

53. **CINGO** pointed to the gendered differences in how media covers sport. Women are portrayed e.g. crying, through appearance-based, sexist and “animal” images and messaging. This raises the question about how to educate media not to report about women’s emotions or looks but about their results. Francine Raveney shared information about work with a network of sports journalists to counter this, with a view to calling out bad examples and raising awareness on the differences in questions put to women and men athletes. **Czechia** raised a question about employment conditions of women in sport, referring to national practices that may impact women’s careers disproportionately, including athletes who do not have employment contracts and who therefore remain without social benefits. Francine Raveney pointed to key references to explore this issue further, such as Committee of Ministers Recommendations CM/Rec(2018)12 on the promotion of good governance in sport, and CM/Rec(2011)3 on the principle of autonomy of sport in Europe. Finally, **University Women of Europe** pointed to the fact that the sport sector lags behind in analysis related to gendered

impacts and inclusive representation. The implementation of CEDAW general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems is one context in which decision-making in sport could be considered.

10. Ensuring women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges

10.1. Developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements

54. The Secretariat recalled the process leading to the development of the "Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric" and its supporting document. Earlier steps in this process included the setting-up of a GEC Working Group on developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements - which held two meetings in February and June 2025 - as well as a workshop on value-based communication during the GEC's plenary meeting in May 2025.

55. The expert-consultants supporting the activities of the GEC and its Working Group presented the Guidance and its supporting document. The Guidance is a value-based communication methodology comprising possible positive narratives to counter the impacts of anti-gender rhetoric and to advance gender equality. The supporting document explores how value-based communication and framing can be applied to strengthen the relationship between gender equality and democracy. The overarching aim of the Guidance is to encourage more strategic narrative work on gender equality and women's rights: choosing frames that connect with the values that are most relevant to different audiences and shaping messages that feel authentic and grounded in people's lived realities. Above all, the goal is to create narratives that bring people in, rather than push them away: narratives that build bridges across differences, open space for dialogue, and strengthen the understanding of gender equality as a shared democratic value.

56. The GEC took note of the information provided by the Secretariat and of the presentation by the experts. They thanked the Working Group and the experts for their excellent work. **Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania** and the **United Kingdom**, as well as **CINGO**, commended the usefulness of the guidance documents, particularly in the challenging political context. Delegations stressed the need for dissemination activities at the national and European level and suggested the inclusion of a point on follow-up activities on the agenda of the next GEC plenary meeting.

57. The GEC adopted the Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric and instructed the Secretariat to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers for note to be taken of it. The GEC also took note of the supporting document.

11. Achieving gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach in all policies and measures

11.1. Exchange of views with Agnes Schneeberger, European Audiovisual Observatory

58. Agnes Schneeberger informed the GEC that the Observatory monitors developments in the European audiovisual industry from legal and economic perspectives. She highlighted three key messages related to the observatory's work on gender equality. First, European film and TV production lacks gender balance, with cumulative factors at play such as a low share of women among film and TV professionals, fewer assignments for women professionals, and work undertaken by women often being co-drafted and/or shared among many professionals. The TV industry comes across as being easier for women to enter than the film industry.

Second, progress towards gender equality is slow. On average, between 2015 and 2024, the share of women among active European film professionals grew each year by less than one percentage point. Parity varies across roles, with a lower share of women professionals found among cinematographers and composers, and a higher share of work assignments for women among producers and screenwriters. Third, working structures among the crew are paramount for change. For example, in film production, the gender of directors and writers are often the same, and the director and screen writer are sometimes the same person, whereas in TV production, director and screen writer roles are separate and include a higher share of women writers. Also, when women direct, more women are in other roles such as writers or producers.

59. Expressing appreciation for the presentation, the **Chair** asked whether the reason for slow progress is due to there not being women trained in the sector or whether there is exclusion of women in the sector. Agnes Schneeberger responded that there is gender balance among those graduating from film schools and thus a competent talent pool of women in the sector, but that gendered behaviours and barriers are holding women back in the labour market. A major obstacle is the lack of relations and networks for women in the sector. A working culture maintaining a “boys’ club”, hiring biases and intentional exclusion from network has also been observed in the industry.

60. **Norway** inquired of initiatives or best practices to engage more women in the labour market of the sector. Agnes Schneeberger shared that shedding light on what is happening and supporting more gender equal structures in film funds e.g. through bonus structures and other affirmative action measures are potentially good responses. Targeted action, funding and networking support is key for supporting women in the sector. **Denmark** asked why it was easier for women to access TV than film. According to the Observatory, one reason appears to be that work on series is more stable, and there is more room in the TV industry as series have several seasons, more writers and more work to share. In terms of the film industry, it might be difficult for women to enter the hierarchies prevalent in the industry. Working conditions and hiring processes are harsher and less foreseeable in film, which might impact women’s participation negatively.

11.2. Gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe activities

61. The GEC took note of the presentation by the Secretariat about ongoing gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe activities. The Secretariat reported on contributions to the draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for *inter alia* preventing and combatting violence against children, prepared by the Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE) under the supervision of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF). Other important policy inputs mentioned concerned the Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller inclusion 2026-2030 adopted by Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), the draft Parameters for Democracy developed by the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) and the work done by the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on intersectional discrimination and on equality mainstreaming. Other Council of Europe sectors have also implemented gender mainstreaming activities, such as the Multilateral Meeting on Women in Prisons organised in November 2025 or the continuation of the work on gender mainstreaming in anti-doping in sport.

62. The Secretariat informed the GEC about developments related to the HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming and the different language versions of this course. The course is currently available in English, French, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Belarusian and Arabic and will soon be available in Ukrainian (2026). A Turkish version may be developed through a cooperation project.

63. The GEC took note of the reports presented by its focal points and rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives who participated in the meetings and activities of other Council of Europe intergovernmental bodies. Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) reported on the 11th meeting of the CDADI (1-3 July 2025) and underlined the relevance of many of its deliverables for the GEC. She highlighted the GEC contribution to the Feasibility study on preventing and combating intersectional discrimination (adopted by CDADI at its November 2025 plenary meeting), and to the work on equality mainstreaming. These inputs allowed for a better integration of a gender equality perspective. She also mentioned the Feasibility study on desegregation and inclusion policies and practices in the field of education for Roma and Travellers. Finally, she underlined the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Recommendation on equal rights for intersex persons.

64. Maria Ellul (Malta) reported on the recent work of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC) and the outcomes of its 3rd and 4th meetings (May and October 2025). She highlighted the adoption and launch event of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)7 on equal rights for intersex persons, which addresses systemic discrimination and human rights violations against intersex individuals. She also informed the GEC about the thematic review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, focused on ‘Combatting hate speech on grounds of SOGIESC’ and about the ongoing development of a new Council of Europe Strategy for the equality of rights of LGBTI persons (2027–2032).

65. Radan Šafařík (Czech Republic) reported about his participation in the 1st meeting of the Drafting Committee on Human Rights and Drug Policies (DH-PDA) in July 2025. DH-PDA is mandated to produce a draft Recommendation on human rights and drug policies, based notably on the policy document “Guidance for aligning drug and addiction policies with human rights” adopted by the Permanent Correspondents of the Council of Europe International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) in November 2024, as well as on the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Discussions so far in DH-PDA have included issues related to gender equality and gender-based violence. A Gender Equality Rapporteur has been nominated to support gender mainstreaming within the work of the Drafting Committee.

66. In the absence of the relevant rapporteur, the Secretariat reported on the 12th meeting of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) (October 2025). An important point was the endorsement of the Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller inclusion 2026-2030, which includes equality and gender equality as one of the three strategic priorities mainstreamed throughout the objectives. It was noted that the final evaluation report on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020–2025) refers to the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 and its strong intersectional approach and to the groundbreaking Committee of Ministers Recommendation on equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls adopted in 2024. Future activities of the ADI-ROM include: a draft Recommendation on desegregation and inclusion policies and practices in the field of education of Roma and Traveller children, on which the GEC will be able to provide comments; a Handbook on democratic governance and representation and participation of Roma and Travellers in public and political life, whose concept is being finalised; and a thematic visit in 2027 on the topic of “Inequalities faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls.”

11.3. Cooperation with other Council of Europe sectors

67. Dr Shreya Atrey, an expert-consultant who drafted the “Feasibility study on preventing and combating intersectional discrimination in Europe”, presented the final study as adopted by the CDADI at its 11th meeting in November 2025. The GEC noted with appreciation that the comments it made during the consultation process were duly reflected in the text. The study is intended to support the preparation of a draft Committee of Ministers

Recommendation on preventing and combating intersectional discrimination. Importantly, the study proposes a definition of intersectional discrimination to facilitate the legal implementation of the concept.

68. Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Secretary of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC) presented the newly adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)7 on equal rights for intersex persons. The Recommendation addresses systemic discrimination and human rights violations against intersex individuals, providing guidance on legal recognition, bodily autonomy, healthcare, awareness-raising, anti-discrimination measures, and access to justice. **Luxembourg** took the floor to indicate that, in light of regression on the question of intersex persons, it is considering a multidisciplinary model involving medical and/or paediatric associations to analyse each case individually.

12. Gender equality activities in multilateral settings

12.1. *Gender equality activities of the Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers*

69. **Malta** recalled the priorities of its Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and the importance of gender equality in its agenda, as illustrated by the fruitful GEC annual conference on “Tackling sexism and violence against women in politics: an essential step towards equal participation” (17-18 September 2025, Malta). It was underlined that the conference was one of the first events organised under the aegis of the NDPE and its recommendations will feed into it.

70. The **Republic of Moldova** informed the GEC that gender equality is a strategic priority throughout their mandate, with a special focus on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. During its Presidency, it will organise a series of national and international initiatives promoting gender equality: a Parliamentary Dialogue on the Istanbul Convention (20–21 November 2025); a 16 Days of Activism campaign with national events (25 November – 10 December 2025); an international conference on “*Femicide – the most severe form of violence against women*,” co-organised by the Women’s Law Centre and the Moldova State University (28 November 2025); and the ‘Platform on Gender-Based Violence’ conference (9 -10 March 2026). The Republic of Moldova underlined that it will co-organise, with the Council of Europe, a side-event to the 70th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), reaffirming its commitment to the global gender equality agenda (March 2026 – see item 12.2).

71. **Monaco** informed the GEC that priorities during its Presidency include combatting violence against women, especially in the context of the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention in 2026. Planned events include: a thematic debate with the Committee of Parties to the Istanbul Convention and the Committee of Ministers; the GEC Annual Conference (June 2026) which will focus on the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding; and the 40th GREVIO meeting.

12.2. *United Nations - Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)*

72. The Secretariat and the Republic of Moldova provided information on the theme of the side-event to be co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations during the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70). It will focus on gender-sensitive policing to ensure women and girls’ access to justice when faced with technology-facilitated violence and on cooperation between law enforcement services and digital platforms. The side-event should take place at the beginning of the first week of CSW70, which starts on 9 March 2026.

73. **Cyprus** informed that it will take an active role in CSW70 as part of its EU Council Presidency. It will deliver a joint statement on behalf of the EU, host an EU Ministerial Breakfast, organise a Cyprus Presidency reception and lead a flagship side event on cyberviolence against girls.

12.3. Gender equality activities of the Presidencies of the Council of the European Union

74. **Denmark** indicated that core priorities under its presidency of the EU Council included combatting gender-based violence, early detection and intervention against violence against women and domestic violence; combatting hate, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ persons, combating sexual violence and promoting consent in sexual relationships, and the role of men and boys in advancing gender equality.

75. **Cyprus** underlined that one of its highest priorities is to tackle cyberviolence against girls, with the aim of ensuring that girls can engage with the digital world with confidence, safety and dignity. Planned events include: the meeting of the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming (16-17 February 2026); the high-level stakeholders' conference (28 April 2026) and the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers of Shipping (29 April 2026) towards the drafting of the Nicosia Declaration on the welfare and education of seafarers and the promotion of gender equality and gender balance in the shipping industry the Conference on preventing and combating all forms of cyberviolence against girls (18-19 May 2026) with an emphasis on the role of men and boys and on the opportunities and challenges of digital technologies as important catalysts for combating gender stereotypes and inequalities. Cyprus further noted that it will actively support initiatives advancing gender equality at European level, including the new EU Roadmap for Women's Rights which was endorsed by Cyprus in June 2025, and the forthcoming European Strategy for Gender Equality, including by hosting a dedicated event on 5 March 2026 in Brussels.

13. Evaluation of activities in 2024-2025 and discussion on future activities

Evaluation of activities

76. The GEC evaluated the activities led and completed in 2024-2025. The Secretariat provided an analysis of the implementation of the terms of reference for this period.

77. During the reporting period, the GEC held four plenary meetings and the Bureau met seven times online, ensuring continuous follow-up and a smooth transition between Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Eight deliverables were foreseen in the terms of reference for this period and all have been completed, reflecting steady progress across the GEC's mandate with strengthened coordination within the Council of Europe and with relevant intergovernmental committees.

78. The GEC successfully oversaw the transition from the Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2023 to the 2024–2029 Strategy. The final report on the 2018–2023 Strategy, adopted in April 2024, provided a comprehensive overview of achievements and remaining challenges. Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2029 has advanced, supported by new implementation monitoring tools designed to reinforce an evidence-based approach across member States. The new methodology to report on the implementation of 2024–2029 Gender Equality Strategy was adopted at the last GEC plenary meeting. It is composed of a questionnaire and indicators to improve data comparability and analysis across all six objectives. This methodology is an important step for evidence-based implementation review.

79. Progress on standard-setting has been substantial. The two draft recommendations to be examined at the 28th meeting, on equality and artificial intelligence and on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, represent major achievements. Developed through extensive consultation with experts and member States, they address key

challenges linked to digitalisation and ensure that gender equality remains central in technological developments and regulatory efforts.

80. The GEC also organised two annual conferences during the reporting period. The 2024 conference, *United around gender equality*, marked the launch of the new Strategy and the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention's entry into force. The 2025 conference, *Tackling sexism and violence against women in politics*, co-organised with the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, addressed structural barriers to women's equal political participation. Thematic discussions on the Istanbul Convention continued as a standing agenda item, with regular exchanges involving GREVIO and member States.

81. Co-operation and visibility have remained strong. The GEC continued close collaboration with GREVIO, the CDADI, and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), and engaged with external partners including the CEDAW Committee, UN Women and ODIHR. The Chair and members represented the GEC in numerous high-level events, contributing to mainstreaming gender equality across sectors. The youth perspective was further strengthened through joint work with the CCJ and its integration in GEC events.

82. The GEC has also continued to promote an intersectional and inclusive approach, ensuring that gender equality policies take into account the full range of experiences of women and men in all their diversity. Overall, the GEC has maintained its role as a key platform for policy development in the field of gender equality, providing political guidance, fostering cooperation across sectors and ensuring that gender equality remains firmly linked to the Organisation's democratic and human rights objectives.

Future activities under the current terms of reference (2026-2027)

83. The Secretariat presented a proposal to review the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy, following the agreement of the Bureau at its 27th meeting. A background document was prepared to support the GEC's discussion (document GEC(2025)18), together with an overview of past review exercises regarding of recommendations under the GEC's responsibility (document GEC(2025)19). The Secretariat recalled that reviewing the implementation of standards is foreseen under deliverable 12 of the terms of reference and that no activity has yet been planned for 2027 in this regard. Only a third of the 15 recommendations under the GEC's remit have been reviewed to date, and the 2008 Recommendation has not been assessed since its adoption in 2008. Considering the persisting gender inequalities in health policy and the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 crisis on women, assessing its implementation could help member States identify effective implementation practices as well as challenges and ongoing gaps in policy to address. The Secretariat clarified that this review would be carried out in cooperation with the Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO).

84. As to the proposed methodology and timeline, the review would be carried out in two phases. The first phase would take place at the spring 2027 plenary meeting of the GEC and would include a *tour de table* with the participation of CDBIO representatives to discuss member States' implementation experiences, followed by an exchange with stakeholders and relevant experts. This discussion would be supported by a background paper prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the CDBIO and, if appropriate, an external consultant. The second phase would consist of drafting the implementation report. The Secretariat, with the support of a consultant, would prepare a draft report drawing on the plenary discussion and on responses to a questionnaire. A joint GEC–CDBIO working group would be established to examine the draft through two or three online meetings before circulating it for written comments. After revisions, a consolidated version would be submitted to both committees, before a final revised report would be presented to the GEC ahead of its November 2027 plenary meeting for adoption.

85. In the course of discussions, the **United Kingdom** proposed examining the topic of mid-life and older women's health, including menopause. The GEC agreed to conduct a review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy under deliverable 12 of its terms of reference.

86. **Luxembourg** proposed to reflect more generally on how to improve the dissemination of Council of Europe recommendations and strengthen cross-ministry outreach and use, including through a collection of good practices and other measures to enhance their practical application. The GEC agreed to undertake such reflection at its next meeting.

87. The Secretariat presented the proposal agreed on by the Bureau concerning the "Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making" to be finalised by the end of 2026. Considering the extensive work recently carried out at international level on this topic, the proposal aims to ensure that the study provides added value by building on existing data and analysis, highlighting promising practices and aiming for implementation of Council of Europe standards and priorities. The study will focus on: "promising practices" by member states and other stakeholders, including defining criteria for what constitutes "promising practices"; measures that create the conditions for full and meaningful participation of women in decision-making; gender balance in public life (including the environmental sector); promoting the participation of different groups of women in public and political life including young women; and ensuring links with the Reykjavik Declaration and the NDPE. The study will be primarily drafted by an external consultant based on desk research and interviews with relevant stakeholders. Member States' responses to the relevant questions of the Gender Equality Strategy implementation questionnaire will serve as a primary source of information for the consultant. Additional input may also be gathered through targeted consultations, including with relevant Council of Europe bodies and monitoring mechanisms. The consultant will present a draft outline of the study at the 29th GEC plenary meeting in June 2026. This will be followed by a discussion during which the GEC will provide concrete guidance and approve the outline. Based on this input, the consultant will prepare the draft study, which will be circulated to the GEC for comments. A revised version would then be submitted ahead of the 30th GEC plenary meeting in November 2026, in view of its adoption. The GEC took note of the information provided on the "Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making," including the methodology and timeline.

14. Update of the gender equality perpetual calendar

88. The Secretariat presented the Council of Europe's gender equality perpetual calendar, launched in 2023 on International Women's Day. The calendar is located on the Council of Europe Gender Equality Division's website, automatically displaying the latest available entry according to the day of the year. The calendar highlights episodes from Europe's gender equality history, including events and people from each member State, spanning over 200 entries contributed primarily by GEC members and edited and curated by the Secretariat.

89. Available in English and French, it can be updated to include new contributions or to revise existing ones. The Secretariat invited the member States to review the calendar, in particular the entries referring to their respective countries, and to make proposals, if they wish, for new entries or to revise existing ones. Proposals should be made, in English or French, via a dedicated [Entry Submission Form](#) located directly in the calendar. In line with the calendar's simple format, each new entry proposal should refer to a specific date in history, and should consist of a short, telegraphic title (around 10-15 words) and a somewhat longer text not exceeding 150 words.

90. The GEC agreed to submit proposals by 31 January 2026, which would allow for the update to be ready in time for International Women's Day 2026.

15. Preparation of the next meeting

91. The **Chair** informed the members that the 29th meeting of the GEC will take place from 10 to 12 June 2026 in Strasbourg. She underlined that the meeting would be preceded by the 2026 GEC annual conference on 9 June. The Chair noted that the agenda of the next meeting will include, in particular, examining and adopting the first report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 (covering the period 2024-2025); an initial discussion on the next terms of reference (2028-2031); it's a yearly exchange of views with the President of GREVIO; provided the two draft Recommendations are adopted by the Committee of Ministers in early 2026, an exchange on ways forward to support their implementation, including through awareness-raising activities and practical tools; and a broader discussion on supporting the implementation of Council of Europe gender equality standards, with a view to identifying needs, opportunities and priority areas for action.

92. In addition, **Luxembourg** suggested an exchange with a delegation of the Luxembourg Red Cross, which manages the National Centre for Victims of Violence (CNVV). Various delegations proposed to include an agenda item on the dissemination at national and European level of the Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric, with a view to promoting its practical use and wider visibility.

16. Other business

93. Sandra Lengwiler (Switzerland) presented Switzerland's new national campaign "Equality prevents violence" on preventing domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence. The campaign, which was launched on 11 November 2025, aims to change mentalities and behaviours sustainably by linking gender equality to the prevention of violence, addressing power imbalances and discriminatory norms that underpin violence. It focuses on raising awareness, encouraging discussion, and providing information to victims, their families, and potential perpetrators, while involving government authorities at national level as well as cantons, municipalities, civil society, and other actors. A baseline study has been commissioned to measure public perceptions of violence and the effectiveness of the campaign, which revealed persistent stereotypes and a lack of knowledge on how to respond to violence. The campaign is being rolled out progressively in phases targeting victims, their close circles, and potential perpetrators, and has already received strong media coverage and public engagement.

94. **CINGO** asked how NGOs working on gender-based violence were involved in the campaign. In response, it was clarified that NGOs were included from the start, contributing to working groups, providing input, participating in the launch alongside the minister, and they continue to be supported in their own local campaigns, ensuring that the initiative complements rather than competes with their work. **Germany** asked for details about the independent institution leading the campaign evaluation and the campaign's timeframe. Sandra Lengwiler explained that the campaign is planned over five years in three phases, with an independent research institute in Bern conducting annual studies to assess impact and guide adaptations. **Luxembourg** asked about the campaign's budget, content, inclusion of male victims and witnesses, and how a federal campaign can reach all cantons. Sandra Lengwiler replied that the campaign is funded by parliament with an annual budget of 1.5 million euros, combines media outreach with educational materials, includes some content featuring male victims, and will address witnesses in the second phase. She also clarified that the campaign provides cantons with materials and resources to ensure consistent implementation across the country. **PACE** highlighted its efforts to engage parliamentarians through the "Women Free from Violence" network and a new HELP course specifically for parliamentarians on the Istanbul Convention, reaching national parliamentarians via their PACE delegations, plenary sessions, and seminars, and providing practical tools and positive narratives for parliamentary debates.

17. Adoption of the abridged report

95. The GEC adopted the abridged report of the meeting and instructed the Secretariat to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers for note to be taken of it.

APPENDIX I

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

GEC(2025)OJ2rev	Draft agenda
GEC(2025)OJ2ann rev	Draft annotated agenda and order of business

2. Report from the Chair and Bureau of the GEC

GEC-BU(2025)4	Report of the 28th meeting of the Bureau
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3. Mandate and workplan of the GEC

CM(2023)131-addfinal	Terms of reference of the GEC
GEC(2025)1rev	Workplan of the GEC for 2025
GEC(2025)21	Workplan of the GEC for 2026-2027

4. Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029**5. Elections and appointments**

GEC(2025)2rev	List of rapporteurs and focal points appointed by the GEC
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6. Preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism***6.1. Work of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI)***

GEC(2025)22	Draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence
GEC(2025)23	Draft Explanatory Memorandum to the Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence
GEC/ADI-AI(2025)8rev	Report of the 4th meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI

6.2. Thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism

GEC(2025)14	Proposed theme and methodology for the thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism
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7. Preventing and combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence***7.1. Work of the Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO)***

GEC(2025)24	Draft Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls
GEC(2025)25	Draft Explanatory Memorandum to the Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls
GEC/PC-eVIO(2025)10	Report of the 4th meeting of the GEC/PC-eVIO

7.2. Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

7.3. Co-operation activities on violence against women and domestic violence

7.4. Exchange of views with Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief, Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section, UN Women

8. Ensuring equal access to justice for women and girls

8.1. Co-operation activities on women's access to justice

9. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political, public, social and economic life

9.1. Exchange of views with Francine Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport

10. Ensuring women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges

10.1. Developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements

GEC(2024)7	Workplan of the Working Group on developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements
GEC-WG-PN(2025)2	Report of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group
GEC(2025)15	Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric
GEC(2025)16	Supporting document to the Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric

11. Achieving gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach in all policies and measures

11.1. Exchange of views with Agnes Schneeberger, European Audiovisual Observatory

11.2. Gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe activities

11.3. Cooperation with other Council of Europe sectors

12. Gender equality activities in multilateral settings

12.1. Gender equality activities of the Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers

12.2. United Nations - Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

12.3. Gender equality activities of the Presidencies of the Council of the European Union

13. Evaluation of activities in 2024-2025 and discussion on future activities

GEC(2025)17	Evaluation of activities 2024-2025
GEC(2025)18	Background document to assess the need to review the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy
GEC(2025)19	Overview of implementation reviews of Council of Europe gender equality recommendations

14. Update of the gender equality perpetual calendar

GEC(2025)20	Explanatory note on the gender equality perpetual calendar and its proposed update in 2026
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15. Preparation of the next meeting

16. Other business

17. Adoption of the abridged report

APPENDIX II

Abridged report

Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Gender Equality Commission (GEC) held its 28th meeting in Strasbourg from 18 to 20 November 2025, with Sara Slana (Slovenia) as Chair.

The GEC adopted the agenda of the meeting as it appears in Appendix 1.

List of items for decision by the Committee of Ministers

The GEC examined and approved the following texts and decided to submit them to the Committee of Ministers for possible adoption:

- draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence, approved at the joint session held with the Steering Committee on Antidiscrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on 19 November 2025 (accompanied by its Explanatory Memorandum).
- draft Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, approved at the joint session held with the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) on 26 November 2025 (accompanied by its Explanatory Memorandum).

The GEC adopted the following text and decided to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers to take note of it:

- Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric.

List of items for information of the Committee of Ministers

The GEC:

- re-elected Sara Slana (Slovenia) as Chair and Sandra Lengwiler (Switzerland) as Vice-Chair, and elected Lea Spörcke (Germany) as member of the Bureau.
- held an exchange with Hallvard Gorseth, Director of Equal Rights and Dignity, on the New Democratic Pact for Europe (NDPE), during which the GEC emphasised that gender equality must be embedded at the heart of the Pact; noted that women's exclusion from decision-making processes and the gender trust gap undermine democracy; highlighted that equal participation of women and men in all their diversity is essential not only for gender equality and inclusion but also for democratic legitimacy and resilience, and that structural obstacles to women's participation, rooted in institutional and cultural inequalities, must be addressed; underlined that value-based communication is required to counter anti-gender rhetoric and tackle disinformation; stressed the importance of engaging men and boys as beneficiaries of gender equality; underlined the role of online spaces as democratic forums but also as vectors of gendered hate speech which silences women and drives them out of political and public life; highlighted that AI brings both risks and opportunities, with digital spaces often reproducing gender-based violence, and emphasised the need for safer online environments and equal access to ICT/Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) education; underlined the erosion of civic space and the need to reinforce civil society, including through adequate resources, emphasising that gender equality actors and women's rights organisations face disproportionate pressure despite their central role in defending democratic values; highlighted the recommendations of the 2025 GEC Annual Conference, focusing on six priority areas (legal and policy reform; institutional accountability; technology-facilitated violence against women and girls; civil society,

solidarity and funding; male engagement; and intersectionality, monitoring and knowledge sharing) and their relevance to the NDPE; and concluded by underlining the need for robust gender mainstreaming across all three pillars of the NDPE.

- agreed to focus the thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism on the justice sector and took note of information by provided by Johanna Nelles, Executive Secretary of the Istanbul Convention, on relevant recent findings of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO).
- agreed to conduct a review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy under deliverable 12 of its terms of reference.
- appointed Jeanne Jezierski (France) as Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child, Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) as Rapporteur on Roma and Traveller Issues, Maria Ellul (Malta) and Ralph Kass (Luxembourg) as focal points in the Working Group on gender expression of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC) and Tryggvi Hallgrímsson (Iceland) as focal point in the Working Group of the Steering Committee on Education (CDEDU) to develop a Council of Europe Scoreboard on Gender Equality in Education.
- took note of the information provided by the Chair of the GEC and Malta on the GEC Annual Conference “Tackling sexism and violence against women: an essential step towards equal participation”, held on 17-18 September 2025 in Malta under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.
- began a discussion on possible future activities of the GEC to be included in its next terms of reference and agreed to hold an exchange of views on this matter at its next meeting.

As regards the other items on its agenda, the GEC:

- took note of the information provided by the Chair and of the Bureau members on their activities since the 27th plenary meeting of the GEC and took note of the report of the 28th meeting of the Bureau.
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the terms of reference of the GEC for 2026-2027 and of the workplans of the GEC for 2025 and for 2026-2027.
- took note of the information provided by Radan Šafařík (Czechia), Vice-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI), on the outcomes of the 4th and final meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI.
- took note of the information provided by the Tryggvi Hallgrímsson (Iceland), Vice-Chair of the Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO), on the outcomes of the 4th and final meeting of the GEC/PC-eVIO.
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the ongoing data collection and preparation of the first report of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029.

- took note of the information provided by the expert consultants on narrative-building and value-based framing in relation to the Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric and took note of the report of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group on developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements.
- took note of the information provided by member States regarding national developments in relation to the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
- held an exchange of views with Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief of the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section at UN Women, on UN Women's UNiTE campaign and work on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
- took note of the information provided by Sandra Lengwiler (Switzerland) and held an exchange on Switzerland's national campaign to prevent domestic violence, sexual violence, and gender-based violence.
- held a World-Café style event on co-operation projects undertaken by the Gender Equality Division on the following themes: perpetrators programme, digital violence against women and girls, women's access to justice and civil society engagement.
- held an exchange of views with Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Secretary of the Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC), on Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)7 on equal rights for intersex persons.
- held an exchange with Dr Shreya Atrey, expert consultant, and the Secretariat of the CDADI on the Feasibility study on preventing and combating intersectional discrimination in Europe adopted by the CDADI, and noted with appreciation that the comments made by the GEC during the consultation process were duly reflected in the text.
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on gender mainstreaming activities undertaken by the various structures and bodies of the Council of Europe.
- held an exchange of views with Francine Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), on the All-In Plus project aiming to promote greater gender equality in sports and its legacy.
- held an exchange of views with Agnes Schneeberger, TV and VOD Market Analyst at the European Audiovisual Observatory, on women's participation in the audiovisual sector.
- took note of the information provided by its representatives in the meetings and activities of other Council of Europe intergovernmental bodies.
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat about the Annual Conference of the GEC to be organised under the Monegasque Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 9 June 2026).
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat and the Republic of Moldova about the side-event to be co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations during the 70th session of the

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), as well as of updates from member States about planned side-events during CSW70.

- took note of the information provided by the representatives of Malta, the Republic of Moldova and Monaco regarding the gender equality programmes of their presidencies of the Committee of Ministers.
- took note of the information provided by the representatives of Denmark and Cyprus about their gender equality agendas during their presidencies of the Council of the European Union.
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat in relation to the gender equality perpetual calendar on the Council of Europe gender equality website and agreed to proceed with its update by 31 January 2026.
- adopted the present abridged report of its 28th meeting.

Resource implications

The financing of the activities described in this report is assured.

Evaluation of completed activities

The GEC took note of the completion of three deliverables. It underlined the importance of the draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence and the draft Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, stressing that these instruments are essential to ensure that gender equality remains central to regulatory and policy developments concerning new technologies, contributing to the Organisation's leading role in standard-setting in the field. It also stressed the relevance of the Guidance for the development of positive narratives to deflect anti-gender rhetoric and its usefulness in addressing anti-rights narratives in the current context, further noting the importance of ensuring its effective dissemination at national level.

The GEC conducted an evaluation of activities led and completed in 2024-2025. Eight deliverables were foreseen in the terms of reference for this period, and all have been completed, reflecting steady progress across the GEC's mandate with strengthened coordination within the Council of Europe and with relevant intergovernmental committees. The GEC successfully oversaw the transition from the Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2023 to the 2024–2029 Strategy. Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2029 has advanced, supported by new implementation monitoring tools designed to reinforce an evidence-based approach across member States. The GEC has also continued to promote an intersectional and inclusive approach, ensuring that gender equality policies take into account the full range of experiences of women and men in all their diversity. Overall, the GEC has maintained its role as a key platform for policy development in the field of gender equality, providing political guidance, fostering cooperation across sectors and ensuring that gender equality remains firmly linked to the Organisation's democratic and human rights objectives.

Other observations

None.

APPENDIX III

List of participants

MEMBERS/MEMBRES	
Albania Albanie	Etleva Sheshi Director Directorate of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Policies General Directorate of Social Protection Ministry of Health and Social Protection <i>Direction des politiques d'inclusion sociale et d'égalité de genre</i> <i>Direction générale de la protection sociale</i> <i>Ministère de la santé et de la protection sociale</i>
Andorra Andorre	Mireia Agulló Farré Social Services Technician Social Affairs Department Ministry of Social Affairs, Justice and Interior <i>Technicienne en services sociaux</i> <i>Département des Affaires Sociales</i> <i>Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la Justice et de l'Intérieur</i>
Armenia Arménie	Sofya Margaryan Head, Division of Cooperation with Monitoring Bodies, Department of Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Austria Autriche	Miriam Putz Policy Officer, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection <i>Directrice, ministère fédéral du travail et de l'économie</i>
Azerbaijan Azerbaïdjan	Sadagat Rahimova Leading advisor of the Gender and Women Issues Department State Committee for Family, Women, and Children's Affairs <i>Conseillère principale du Département des questions de genre et des femmes</i> <i>Comité d'État pour les affaires familiales, les femmes et les enfants</i>
Belgium Belgique	Carine Joly Advisor Institute for Gender Equality <i>Conseillère</i> <i>Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes</i>
Bulgaria Bulgarie	Irina Ivanova Head of Unit Equal Opportunities, Antidiscrimination and Social Assistance Benefits Ministry of Labour and Social Policy <i>Cheffe d'unité</i> <i>Égalité des chances, lutte contre la discrimination et prestations d'assistance sociale</i> <i>Ministère du travail et de la politique sociale</i>
Croatia Croatie	Irena Sarta Senior Advisor Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Gender Equality

Cyprus <i>Chypre</i>	Niovi Georgiade Officer, Office of Commissioner for Gender Equality <i>Agente, Bureau de la Commissaire de l'égalité de genre</i>
Czechia <i>Tchéquie</i>	Radan Šafařík (Bureau member) Director of Gender Equality Department Office of the Government of Czechia <i>Directeur du département de l'égalité de genre</i> <i>Bureau du gouvernement de la Tchéquie</i>
Denmark <i>Danemark</i>	Jeppe Andersen Holm Special Consultant Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality <i>Consultant spécial</i> <i>Ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Égalité de genre</i>
Finland <i>Finlande</i>	Päivi Yli-Pietilä Ministerial Advisor Gender Equality Unit Ministry of Social Affairs and Health <i>Conseillère ministérielle</i> <i>Unité pour l'égalité de genre</i> <i>Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé</i>
France	Jeanne Jezierski Office for European and International Affairs General Directorate for Social Cohesion Ministry of Solidarity/Ministry in charge of equality between women and men <i>Bureau des affaires européennes et internationales</i> <i>Direction générale de la cohésion sociale</i> <i>Ministère des solidarités/Ministère délégué chargé de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes</i>
Germany <i>Allemagne</i>	Lea Spörcke Policy Officer Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth <i>Chargée de mission</i> <i>Ministère fédéral de la famille, des personnes âgées, des femmes et de la jeunesse</i>
Hungary <i>Hongrie</i>	Lilla Miklós Government official, Women's Policy Unit Ministry of Culture and Innovation, State Secretariat for Family Affairs <i>Fonctionnaire, Unité chargée des politiques relatives aux femmes</i> <i>Ministère de la Culture et de l'Innovation, Secrétariat d'État aux Affaires familiales</i>
Iceland <i>Islande</i>	Tryggvi Hallgrímsson Special Advisor Directorate of Equality Department of Equality and Human Rights, Prime Minister's Office <i>Conseiller spécial</i> <i>Direction de l'Égalité</i> <i>Département de l'égalité et des droits humains</i> <i>Bureau de la Première Ministre</i>

Ireland <i>Irlande</i>	Grace Andic Policy Officer Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU <i>Chargée de politiques</i> <i>Représentation permanente de l'Irlande auprès de l'UE</i>
Italy <i>Italie</i>	Elena Palloni Senior officer of the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of Council of Ministers <i>Haute fonctionnaire du département de l'égalité des chances de la présidence du Conseil des ministres</i>
Latvia <i>Lettonie</i>	Agnese Gaile Senior Expert Department of Social Policy Planning and Development Ministry of Welfare <i>Experte principale</i> <i>Département de la planification et du développement de la politique sociale</i> <i>Ministère de l'aide sociale</i>
Lithuania <i>Lituanie</i>	Ramunė Vitartaitė Equal Opportunities and Women and Men Equality Group Ministry of Social Security and Labour <i>Groupe Egalité des Chances et Egalité femmes/hommes</i> <i>Ministère de la sécurité sociale et du travail</i>
Luxembourg	Ralph Kass Senior Advisor 1st Class Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity <i>Conseiller de Direction 1e Classe</i> <i>Ministère de l'Égalité des genres et de la Diversité</i>
Malta <i>Malte</i>	Maria Ellul Head - Gender Mainstreaming Unit Human Rights Directorate Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance <i>Cheffe - Unité sur l'approche intégrée de l'égalité de genre</i> <i>Direction des droits humains</i> <i>Ministère de la justice, de l'égalité et de la gouvernance</i>
Republic of Moldova <i>République de Moldova</i>	Daniela Palii Senior Advisor Division on Gender Equality Policy <i>Conseillère principale</i> <i>Division des politiques d'égalité de genre</i>
Monaco	Florian Botto Premier Secrétaire Département des Relations Extérieures et de la Coopération de Monaco Ministère d'État <i>First Secretary</i> <i>Department of External Relations and Cooperation of Monaco</i> <i>Ministry of State</i>

The Netherlands Pays-Bas	Annemiek Komen Senior Policy Officer, Women's Rights and Gender Equality Ministry of Foreign Affairs <i>Responsable principale des politiques, Droits des femmes et égalité de genre</i> <i>Ministère des Affaires étrangères</i> Willemijn Lelyveld Deputy Head, Women's Rights and Gender Equality Ministry of Foreign Affairs <i>Directrice adjointe, Droits des femmes et égalité de genre</i> <i>Ministère des Affaires étrangères</i> Lisanne Post Senior Policy Officer/Agente principale des questions politiques Directorate for gender equality and LGBTI equality Ministry of Education, Culture and Science <i>Direction de l'égalité de genre et de l'égalité LGBTI</i> <i>Ministère de l'éducation, de la culture et des sciences</i>
North Macedonia Macédoine du Nord	Svetlana Cvetkovska Head of the Equal Opportunities Sector Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth <i>Responsable du secteur Égalité des chances</i> <i>Ministère de la Politique sociale, de la Démographie et de la Jeunesse</i>
Norway Norvège	Georg Antonsen Senior Advisor Ministry of Culture and Equality <i>Conseiller principal</i> <i>Ministère de la Culture et de l'Égalité</i> Tori Loven Kirkebø Advisor Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs <i>Conseillère</i> <i>Direction générale de l'enfance, de la jeunesse et de la famille</i>
Portugal	Andreia Lourenço Marques International Relations Advisor Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality <i>Conseillère en relations internationales</i> <i>Commission pour la citoyenneté et l'égalité de genre</i>
Romania Roumanie	Gianina Dimitrescu Directorate for Gender Equality ANES National Agency for Gender Equality <i>Direction pour l'égalité de genre</i> <i>ANES Agence nationale pour l'égalité de genre</i>
Slovak Republic République slovaque	Roxana Maliti Department of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic <i>Département de l'égalité de genre et de l'égalité des chances</i> <i>Ministère du travail, des affaires sociales et de la famille</i>

Slovenia Slovénie	Sara Slana (Chair) Secretary Equal Opportunities Department Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities <i>Secrétaire</i> <i>Service de l'égalité des chances</i> <i>Ministère du travail, de la famille, des affaires sociales et de l'égalité des chances</i> Jasna Jeram Undersecretary Equal Opportunities Department Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities <i>Co-Secrétaire</i> <i>Service de l'égalité des chances</i> <i>Ministère du travail, de la famille, des affaires sociales et de l'égalité des chances</i>
Switzerland Suisse	Stéphanie Lachat Director Federal Office for Gender Equality <i>Directrice</i> <i>Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes</i> Sandra Lengwiler (Vice-Chair) International Affairs Officer Federal Department of Home Affairs, Federal Office for Gender Equality <i>Agente des affaires internationales</i> <i>Département fédéral de l'intérieur, Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes</i>
Türkiye	Hatice Karakuş Expert Ministry of Family and Social Services <i>Experte</i> <i>Ministère de la Famille et des Services sociaux</i>
Ukraine	Anatolii Dosych National Consultant for Apparatus of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy <i>Consultant National pour l'Appareil de la Commissaire du Gouvernement pour la Politique d'Égalité de Genre</i>
United Kingdom Royaume-Uni	Georgia Wolff Head of International Gender Equality Policy <i>Cheffe de la politique internationale d'égalité de genre</i>
PARTICIPANTS/PARTICIPANT·ES	
Holy See Saint-Siège	Nicole Dominique Scorziello Representative of the Holy See

Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics <i>Comité d'experts sur l'orientation sexuelle, l'identité et l'expression de genre, et les caractéristiques sexuelles (ADI-SOGIESC)</i>	Yuri de Boer Chair of the ADI-SOGIESC Présidente de l'ADI-SOGIESC Ellsworth Camilleri Co-Secretary of the ADI-SOGIESC Co-secrétaire de l'ADI-SOGIESC
Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)/Assemblée Parlementaire (ACPE) Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination <i>Commission sur l'égalité et sur la non-discrimination</i>	Carolina Lásen Diaz Secretary Secrétaire Louise Morlon Junior Project Officer Jeune Experte Associée Zeynep Kucuk Trainee Stagiaire
Conference on INGOs <i>Conference des OINGs</i>	Bettina Hahne Co-Chair of CINGO's equality committee Co-présidente du comité pour l'égalité de CINGO Anita Schnetzer-Spranger Co-Chair of CINGO's equality committee Co-présidente du comité pour l'égalité de CINGO
Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) <i>Conseil consultative sur la jeunesse</i>	Stanislava Stefanova Gender Equality Rapporteur Rapporteuse pour l'égalité de genre
European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) <i>Institut Européen pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes</i>	Zivile Macijauskiene Stakeholder Relations Team Leader Responsable des relations avec les parties prenantes
United Nations Children's Fund <i>Fonds des Nations unies pour l'enfance (UNICEF)</i>	Harma Sheeba Senior Regional Gender Advisor Conseillère régionale principale en matière d'égalité de genre
OBSERVERS/OBSERVATEURS	

Kazakhstan	Bakytbekkyzy Anel Consul General <i>Consule Générale</i> Ayap Azamat Minister-Counsellor <i>Ministre-Conseiller</i>
Morocco Maroc	Amina Dik Chair of the Gender-Sensitive Justice Observatory Ministry of Justice <i>Présidente de l'Observatoire de la Justice sensible au genre</i> <i>Ministère de la Justice</i>
University Women Europe (UWE)	Anne Bergheim-Nègre President <i>Présidente</i>
European Women's Lobby (EWL)	Vice-President <i>Vice-Présidente</i>
European Network of Migrant Women Réseau européen des femmes migrantes (ENOMW)	Adama-Sira Le Blay Co-president <i>Co-présidente</i>
INVITEES/PERSONNES INVITEES	
UN Women ONU Femmes	Kalliopi Mingeirou Chief, Ending violence against women and girls section <i>Cheffe de la section pour mettre fin à la violence à l'égard des femmes</i>
EXPERTS-CONSULTANTS/EXPERTES-CONSULTANTES	
Bridge to impact consulting	Caroline Hickson Evelyne Paradis
SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE/SECRETARIAT DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE	
Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law/Direction Générale droits humains et Etat de droit	
Directorate of Security, Integrity and Rule of Law/Direction de la sécurité, de l'intégrité et de l'Etat de droit	

Criminal Law Division <i>Division du droit pénal</i> (CDPC)	Eva Pastrana Head of Division <i>Cheffe de Division</i> Meave Buchignani Assistant <i>Assistante</i>
Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity/Direction Générale de la démocratie et de la dignité humaine	
Directorate of Equal Rights and Dignity/Direction de l'égalité en droits et en dignité	
Directorate of Equal Rights and Dignity <i>Direction de l'égalité en droits et en dignité</i>	Hallvard GORSETH Director of Equal Rights and Dignity <i>Directeur de l'égalité en droits et en égalité</i>
Inclusion and anti-discrimination programmes division <i>Division des programmes sur l'inclusion et l'anti-discrimination</i>	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics Unit/Unité sur l'orientation sexuelle, l'identité et l'expression de genre et les caractéristiques sexuelles (SOGIESC) Evgenia Giakoumopoulou Head of Unit <i>Cheffe d'unité</i> Gabriella Calleja Senior policy advisor <i>Conseillère politique principale</i>
Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department <i>Service de la dignité humaine et de l'égalité de genre</i>	Roberto Olla Head of Department <i>Chef de service</i>
Violence Against Women Division <i>Division sur la violence à l'égard des femmes (GREVIO)</i>	Johanna Nelles Head of Division and Executive Secretary of the Istanbul Convention/ <i>Cheffe de Division et Secrétaire exécutive de la Convention d'Istanbul</i>

Gender Equality Division <i>Division de l'égalité de genre</i>	Caterina Bolognese Head of Division <i>Cheffe de division</i> Cécile Gréboval Programme Manager, Senior Gender Equality Advisor <i>Responsable de programme, conseillère principale en matière d'égalité de genre</i> Krista Orama Policy Advisor <i>Conseillère en politiques</i> Laura Medina Balmaseda Division Assistant <i>Assistante de division</i> Co-operation Unit/Unité de coopération Elena Jovanovska-Brezoska Head of unit <i>Cheffe d'unité</i> Anca Sandescu Project Manager <i>Responsable de projets</i>
Secretariat of the GEC/Secrétariat de la GEC	
	Yanna Parnin Head of the Gender Equality Policy Unit and Secretary to the GEC <i>Cheffe de l'unité des politiques d'égalité de genre et Secrétaire de la GEC</i> Valérie Poppe Principal Administrative Assistant and Co-Secretary to the GEC <i>Assistante administrative principale et co-Secrétaire de la GEC</i> Flurina Frei Policy Advisor <i>Conseillère en politiques</i> Mathilde Barlow Administrative Assistant <i>Assistante administrative</i>
Interpreters/Interprètes	
	Remy Jain Ophélie Derancy Elisabetta Bassu

APPENDIX IV

Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria in relation to the draft Recommendation on equality and artificial intelligence

The Republic of Bulgaria attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring equality and combating discrimination as fundamental values of the European Union and Council of Europe.

In 2018, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court adopted a decision stating that the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention') promotes legal concepts related to the notion of 'gender' that are incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Bulgarian Constitution. Moreover, in 2021 the Constitutional Court further clarified that the notion of 'sex' used in the Constitution should, in the context of the national legal order, be understood in its biological sense only (men and women).

Bulgaria recognises the need to examine the impact of artificial intelligence ('AI') systems, their potential to promote equality, including gender equality, and the risks they can pose to non-discrimination in the context of the Union's legal framework.

At the same time, the draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on equality and artificial intelligence contains terms that are incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. In accordance with the abovementioned decisions by the Constitutional Court, the Republic of Bulgaria declares that it cannot accept the use of gender-related terminology within the meaning of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention') or any other document that seeks to distinguish between 'sex' as a biological category (women and men) and 'gender' as a social construct. As a result Bulgaria will interpret the gender-related terminology used in the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on equality and artificial intelligence within the meaning of the biological understanding of sex (women and men).