



EUROPEAN CONVENTION
ON **HUMAN RIGHTS**
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

GEC-BU(2025)4

30 September 2025

BUREAU OF THE GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)

28th meeting

11 September 2025

Meeting report

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of agenda

1. The Bureau of the Gender Equality Commission held its 28th meeting online on 11 September 2025. The meeting was chaired by Sara SLANA (Slovenia).
2. The Bureau adopted the agenda of the meeting as it appears in the Appendix.

2. Information from the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat

3. The Bureau took note of the state of play regarding the organisation and the programme of the GEC annual conference on “Tackling sexism and violence against women – an essential step towards equal participation” (17-18 September, Malta).
4. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the timeline for the preparation of the first biennial report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029.

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

5. The Bureau took note that, in line with its terms of reference, the GEC is to conduct a thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism in 2026. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it is preparing a background document proposing a theme and methodology, which will be presented to the GEC for decision at its 28th meeting. The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to proceed with the proposed course of action. The Bureau also agreed that the session at the GEC meeting will include a presentation by the Secretariat, including an explanation of the concrete methodological proposals, and a presentation by the Executive Secretary to the Istanbul Convention on relevant recent findings of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO).

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

6. The Bureau took note that, as the biennium 2024–2025 is coming to an end, the GEC will be expected to take stock of its work and activities, and to begin discussions on possible future activities under the second biennium (2026–2027) of its current mandate. In this context, the Secretariat will prepare an informative background document for the forthcoming GEC meeting.
7. The Secretariat recalled that, as instructed by the Bureau at its 27th meeting, it will finalise a document outlining key issues and proposing practical options for the GEC to consider in deciding whether to undertake a review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy, and will make a presentation at the GEC meeting. The Secretariat underlined that this activity appears in the Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2029 and that the review of the implementation of gender equality standards is a deliverable under the terms of reference of the GEC (deliverable 12). It is proposed that the implementation review be carried out, in cooperation with the CDBIO, in 2027, the final year of the current mandate, as no other evaluation of the implementation of gender equality standards is planned during that year. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Recommendation was adopted 17 years ago and has not been assessed since. It was noted that, in view of persisting gender inequalities in health policy and the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 crisis on women, such an assessment could support member States in identifying effective practices as well as challenges and gaps to be addressed.

8. The Bureau took note of the briefing and proposal regarding the Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making included in the GEC terms of reference 2026-2027. The Bureau agreed with the proposal for the scope, focus and methodology of the study to be prepared by the GEC. In order to avoid repetition with studies and reports recently produced by other international organisations, the study will not focus on data collection or on recommendations, but on promising practices within member states and other stakeholders, including civil society. Criteria will be defined for the promising practices and the content will focus particularly (but not only) on measures creating the conditions for balanced decision-making (including the fight against violence and sexism and measures for balancing private and public life), on public decision-making, on young women and on intersectionality. The aim will be to identify effective initiatives and measures to promote parity that could be reproduced in different contexts. The work will be carried out in 2026 by an external consultant via desk research and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including some GEC members. The GEC will be consulted as the work progresses and the study will be adopted at the November 2026 GEC plenary.

5. Elections and appointments

9. The Secretariat highlighted that elections to renew the Bureau (Chair, Vice-Chair and Bureau member) would take place at the 28th meeting, as all current mandates expire at the end of 2025, and recalled the applicable rules governing elections and mandates for Council of Europe steering committees.

10. The Secretariat recalled that the GEC is also expected to appoint rapporteurs on two of the five Council of Europe mainstreamed perspectives (Children's rights and Roma and Traveller Issues).

6. Preparation of the 28th meeting of the GEC

11. The Bureau examined the draft annotated agenda of the 28th meeting of the GEC (18-20 November 2025).

12. In relation to the mandate and workplan of the GEC, the Bureau took note that, on 3 July 2025, the Committee of Ministers adopted Resolution CM/Res(2025)2, amending Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods. In line with the amended Resolution, the Secretariat contacted GEC members regarding the proposal not to request any changes to the GEC's terms of reference for 2026–2027. No objections were received. The Bureau was further informed by the Secretariat that the Minister's' Deputies would begin discussing the terms of reference of Council of Europe steering committees at the end of the month.

13. In relation to the work of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI), the Secretariat informed the Bureau that the text of the draft Recommendation and its Explanatory Memorandum is to be finalised by the GEC/ADI-AI at its 4th and final meeting (7-9 October 2025). The Secretariat noted that the finalisation of the draft Recommendation at the level of the steering committees should involve only limited changes at this stage. The relevant agenda item at the GEC's 28th meeting will therefore be split in two parts: (i) finalisation of the draft Recommendation and its Explanatory Memorandum by the GEC and by the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) in separate sessions, and (ii) approval of the draft Recommendation and adoption of the Explanatory Memorandum jointly with the CDADI. The joint session with the CDADI will take place in person, with the two committees meeting in the same room for the duration of the discussion. The Secretariat will brief the Chair once the practical arrangements are confirmed. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau of developments regarding EU coordination on the draft Recommendation, noting the continuous contacts of

the joint GEC/ADI-AI Secretariat with the relevant services of the European Commission (DG JUST and DG CNECT). In the interest of ensuring compatibility of the draft Recommendation with the EU AI Act, EU member States and the European Commission have the opportunity to raise any concerns in writing ahead of the final meeting of the GEC/ADI-AI, as well as during the meeting itself, for discussion by the committee.

14. The Bureau took note that the Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO) will examine a revised version of the draft Recommendation and of its Explanatory Memorandum at its 4th and final meeting (30 September-2 October 2025). These documents will subsequently be presented to the GEC for examination at its 28th meeting. In parallel, the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) will review the documents during its 88th meeting (25-27 November 2025). A joint hybrid meeting between the GEC and the CDPC is planned on 26 November 2025 for their approval of the draft Recommendation and their adoption of the Explanatory Memorandum. The Secretariat recalled that, as a quorum is required for the approval/adoption of the documents, online attendance at the hybrid meeting by a sufficient number of GEC members will be needed.

15. Regarding the work of the GEC on developing positive narratives in the context of anti-gender movements, the Bureau took note of the proposal by the Secretariat in relation to the type of document to be adopted by the GEC and the calendar for the adoption of this deliverable. The deliverable as such will consist of a “Guidance for the development of positive narratives aimed at deflecting anti-gender rhetoric.” The Guidance will provide a methodology to support member states in highlighting the benefits of gender equality policies through awareness-raising and value-based messaging. A support document containing examples of messages to deflect anti-gender rhetoric will be presented to the GEC as a useful additional resource that will not form part of the deliverable and will therefore not require adoption by the GEC. The Guidance will be sent to GEC members together with the other meeting documents and members will have the opportunity to send written comments before the discussion and adoption at the November plenary.

16. The Secretariat proposed, instead of a presentation, to organise a one-hour world café-style exchange with colleagues working on cooperation activities, to allow GEC members to learn more about specific topics or regions of interest and to provide a platform for direct engagement with the gender equality colleagues involved in cooperation work. The Bureau welcomed this proposal.

17. The Bureau approved the draft agenda and the draft annotated agenda of the 28th meeting of the GEC.

7. Any other business

18. None.

8. Date of the next meeting

19. The Bureau agreed that, provided no further Bureau meeting would be needed prior to the GEC’s forthcoming plenary meeting, the date for its 29th meeting would be decided on by the incoming Bureau.

Participants:

Bureau: Sara SLANA (Slovenia), Chair of the GEC; Sandra LENGWILER (Switzerland), Vice-Chair of the GEC; and Radan ŠAFARIK, Bureau member (Czechia).

Secretariat: Mathilde BARLOW (Administrative Assistant); Caterina BOLOGNESE (Head of the Gender Equality Division); Flurina FREI (Policy Adviser); Cécile GREBOVAL (Senior Gender Equality Advisor); Yanna PARNIN (Head of the Gender Equality Policy Unit and Secretary to the GEC) and Valerie POPPE (Principal Administrative Assistant and Co-Secretary to the GEC).

APPENDIX

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda	
GEC-BU(2025)OJ3rev	Draft agenda
2. Information from the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat	
3. Thematic implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism	
4. Evaluation of activities in 2024-2025 and discussion on future activities	
GEC-BU(2025)5	Briefing and proposal to the GEC Bureau on the 2026 Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
5. Elections and appointments	
6. Preparation of the 28th meeting of the GEC	
GEC(2025)OJ2	Draft agenda
GEC(2025)OJ2ann	Draft annotated agenda and order of business
7. Other business	
8. Date of the next meeting	