

## Terms of reference of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: Steering committee

Duration: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2027<sup>1</sup>

Programme: Acting for equality, diversity and respect

Sub-programme: Gender equality – Violence against women and domestic violence – Human Trafficking

### Main tasks

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, bearing in mind the Council of Europe legal standards, the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the findings and recommendations of the relevant monitoring mechanisms, the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) steers the Council of Europe’s intergovernmental work in the field of gender equality and advises the Committee of Ministers on appropriate action to be taken in its field of competence. It does so in line with the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029<sup>2</sup> while building on the achievements pursuant to the latest Strategy for 2018-2023.

In particular, the GEC is instructed to:

- i. take due account of the Reykjavik Declaration<sup>3</sup> in conducting its activities and submit proposals for its implementation as appropriate;
- ii. take account of the relevant key findings and challenges set out in the Secretary General’s 2023 Report on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law “An Invitation to Recommit to the Values and Standards of the Council of Europe”;
- iii. oversee and support the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2024-2029);<sup>2</sup>
- iv. carry out substantive legal and policy analyses and hold peer exchanges on trends, developments and good practices in the member States, including on the basis of the findings of monitoring mechanisms;
- v. conduct needs assessments and make proposals for the development of common policy responses - including standard-setting activities - to key challenges for member States within its field of competence;
- vi. promote in the political agendas of the Council of Europe member States and beyond the need to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, including trafficking in persons which disproportionately affects women and girls, and of domestic violence;
- vii. review the implementation of relevant recommendations and guidelines of the Committee of Ministers to member States, including on preventing and combating sexism, in co-operation, where appropriate, with other sectors;
- viii. follow and support relevant co-operation programmes with Council of Europe member States and beyond and, where appropriate, facilitate the dissemination of their results;
- ix. promote gender equality as a visible priority for the Organisation (internally and externally) and, to this end, support the committees and bodies of the Organisation in integrating and implementing gender mainstreaming in their activities;
- x. engage in co-ordination and joint planning at regional and international level with the European Union, including the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the UN, in particular UN Women, the World Bank, the OAS, the OSCE, the OECD, other intergovernmental organisations and civil society, with the aim of strengthening equality and enhancing women’s rights as an integral part of universal human rights;
- xi. orient and oversee the activities carried out by its subordinate bodies, notably the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI), jointly with CDADI, and the Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO), jointly with CDPC (cf. separate terms of reference);
- xii. provide input to the Committee of Ministers in view of the regular, high-level dialogue with member States and partners on delivering on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy;
- xiii. raise awareness about Council of Europe standards and tools in its field of competence in the member States and beyond, through the neighbourhood policy and in other international and global fora, including through participation in meetings of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Council;
- xiv. hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;
- xv. take due account of the following mainstreamed perspectives in the performance of its tasks: youth, children’s rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and Roma and Traveller<sup>4</sup> issues;

<sup>1</sup> These terms of reference are approved for the first biennial period 2024-2025. For the second biennial period 2026-2027, they are approved on a provisional basis, subject to confirmation upon the adoption of the budget for 2026-2027.

<sup>2</sup> New Strategy under preparation, to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2024.

<sup>3</sup> [Reykjavik Declaration - United around our values](#).

<sup>4</sup> The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

- xvi. where relevant, contribute to strengthening meaningful engagement with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in its work;
- xvii. in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility,<sup>5</sup> in co-operation, where appropriate, with the relevant convention-based bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers;
- xviii. contribute to the achievement of, and review progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regard to Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong institutions;
- xix. where relevant, take account of, and propose effective responses to, the challenges posed in its field of competence by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine.

## Main deliverables

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, the GEC is instructed to complete these deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Category ▼	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. Final report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023)	A	1	30/06/2024
2. Awareness-raising tools supporting dissemination and implementation at national level of the Recommendation CM(2022)17 on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls	A	2	31/12/2024
3. Based on the results of the relevant study and of the work of CAI, draft Recommendation on the impact of artificial intelligence systems, their potential for promoting equality – including gender equality – and the risks they may cause in relation to non-discrimination (cf. terms of reference of GEC/ADI-AI, jointly with CDADI and in close co-operation with CAI)	A	1	31/12/2025
4. Draft Recommendation on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, jointly with CDPC (cf. terms of reference of GEC/PC-eVIO)	C	1	31/12/2025
5. Awareness-raising campaign deflecting anti-gender rhetoric and creating a new narrative	C	1	31/12/2025
6. Biennial report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2024-2029)	C	1	30/06/2026
7. Second (thematic) implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism	B	2	31/12/2026
8. Study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making	C	2	31/12/2026
9. Analysis of good practices on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in education, contributing to implementation of the Gender Equality Scoreboard in Education under preparation by CDEDU	C	2	31/12/2027
10. Study on effective access to sexual and reproductive health and rights	C	2	31/12/2027
11. Collect information on best practices from member States on the involvement of men and boys in gender equality policies and more specific in promoting and following up the Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women	C	2	31/12/2027
12. Subject to the results of the main deliverables and to developments in the field of gender equality, publication of analyses of good practices, factsheets and/or review of one or more of the recommendations examined	C	3	31/12 of each year
13. Annual thematic conference to exchange experience and good practices and facilitate progress on a selected topic	A	1	31/12 of each year
14. Thematic debates on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS 210)	A	2	31/12 of each year
<p><b>Key</b></p> <p>A: deliverable under preparation (2022-2023 terms of reference or Committee of Ministers' decision) or deliverable foreseen in the terms of reference provisionally approved for 2024-2025 and reviewed where relevant in the framework of the preparation of the draft Programme and Budget 2024-2027</p> <p>B: review of implementation/re-examination foreseen by the recommendation/protocol/convention</p> <p>C: newly proposed deliverable</p>			

## Composition

### • Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the field of gender equality.

The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).

Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. relevant decisions of the Committee of Ministers ([CM/Del/Dec\(2013\)1168/10.2](#)) and list of Conventions in document [CM\(2023\)132](#).

In accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, in cases where there is no convention-based body including all the Parties, non-member States are invited to take part, with a right to vote, in the committee meetings pertaining to the conventions to which they are Parties.

- **Participants**

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;
- other international organisations: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (including ODIHR), United Nations (including UN Women, the World Bank and other relevant UN agencies), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

- **Observers**

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership, including relevant co-operation activities;
- European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet);
- non-governmental organisations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, European Women's Lobby, WAVE (Women against Violence in Europe), European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW), Equality Now, University Women of Europe (UWE), Eurocentralasian Lesbian Community (EL\*C) and academic, professional and business communities;
- Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE).

Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

## Working methods

The rules of procedure of the Committee are governed by [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

	Plenary meetings ▼			Bureau meetings ▼		
	Members incl. Chair	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members	Meetings per year	Days per meeting
2024	47	2	3	3	2	1
2025	47	2	3	3	2	1
2026	47	2	3	3	2	1
2027	47	2	3	3	2	1

The GEC will appoint from amongst its members up to 4 Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives.

Subject to the agenda, the chairs of its subordinate structures may be invited to attend the GEC's Bureau and/or plenary meetings.

## Subordinate structures

The GEC co-ordinates, supervises and follows the work of its subordinate bodies:

- (2024-2025) Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI, jointly with CDADI) (cf. separate terms of reference);
- (2024-2025) Committee of Experts on Combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (GEC/PC-eVIO, jointly with CDPC) (cf. separate terms of reference).

## Budgetary information \*

	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members reimbursed	Plenary in €K	Bureau in €K	Working groups in €K	Secretariat (A, B)
2024	2	3	47	89.7	-	-	1 A; 1 B
2025	2	3	47	89.7	-	-	1 A; 1 B
2026	2	3	47	↔	-	-	↔
2027	2	3	47	↔	-	-	↔

\*The costs include the per diem, travel costs, interpretation, translation and document printing. These costs are calculated on the basis of standard costs.