

Strasbourg, 31/10/2024

GME(2024)12

AD HOC MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUP ON THE ENVIRONMENT (GME)

Gender equality rapporteurs:
a vital asset to the Council of Europe transversal programme on gender equality
Information note updated by the Gender Equality Division

HDIM.IO/0235/09

1 October 2009



**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

**DECLARATION
MAKING GENDER EQUALITY A REALITY**

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 May 2009 at its 119th Session (Madrid))

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Recalling that the core objective of the Council of Europe is preserving and promoting human rights and their full enjoyment, democracy and the rule of law and that all its activities must contribute to this fundamental objective;

Recalling that gender equality is an integral part of human rights and a fundamental criterion of democracy;

Recalling that gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference;

Recalling that policies should be gender sensitive and that they should take into account the social reality to which they apply, mainly that society is composed of women and men who may have differing needs;

Recognising that the legal status of women has improved over time, but that 20 years after its Declaration on equality of women and men, bridging the gap between gender equality in fact and in law is still a challenge for its member states;

Recognising that the past decades were often marked by neglect of a gender perspective in legislation and policy with gender equality being a partially or totally isolated issue, with few links with other policies and fields although it is both a goal in itself and a cross-cutting issue which should be at the core of practical decision-making;

Recognising the importance of including men in achieving gender equality;

Regretting the under-representation of women in political and public life and the continued gender based discrimination against women in all sectors of society and at all stages of their lives;

Condemning the persistent gender pay gap, obstacles met by women to entry and advancement in the labour market, degrading labour conditions and exploitation, overburdening with unpaid work in the private and social spheres, further exacerbated by economic deprivation and violence, and the more frequent and deeper effects of poverty on women;

Condemning the fact that many women are exposed to violations of their human rights, are victims of physical, psychological, sexual violence, stalking and trafficking for various purposes, including sexual exploitation, and of practices which qualify as torture or inhuman or degrading treatment (*inter alia* violence, rape, traditional practices harmful to women, genital and sexual mutilation);

Emphasising that a genuine democracy must fully use the competences, the skills and the creativity of both women and men to build a society with a better quality of life for all and respectful of the values on which the Council of Europe is founded;

Urge member states to commit themselves fully to bridging the gap between equality in fact and in law and to act to:

- I. Eliminate the structural causes of power imbalances between women and men, including in political, public and economic decision-making process at all levels;
- II. Ensure economic independence and empowerment of women by guaranteeing that equality is respected in the labour market and economic life. This will be possible by eliminating discrimination generally, and in particular that emanating from gender stereotypes, and by guaranteeing an equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
- III. Address the need to eliminate established stereotypes by investing further in gender mainstreaming in education and research including gender focused research to ensure that both women and men achieve their full economic and social potential;
- IV. Eradicate violations of the dignity and human rights of women through increased and effective action to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women, provide the necessary assistance and support for all victims and prosecute the perpetrators;
- V. Integrate a gender equality perspective in governance by ensuring openness, transparency, participation of all relevant stakeholders as well as real accountability in the process of achieving full gender equality;

And to this end:

1. Take the following steps which are of major importance for abolishing obstacles to the achievement of gender equality in fact:
 - identify the structural causes of inequalities which affect women, including women affected by multiple forms of discrimination and take the necessary social and economic measures for their eradication;
 - eliminate gender stereotypes, responsible for the under utilisation of human resources and which are an obstacle to self-realisation of women and men; take any special measures to address and overcome stereotypes in education and encourage the professionals and actors in the media and communication sector to convey a non stereotyped image of women and men respectful of human rights, including gender equality;
 - create the conditions for a secure life in the private and public spheres by preventing and combating all forms of violence against women;

- raise awareness among women and men of the need to eradicate violence which is a threat to peace, security, human rights and democracy in line with the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008);
- take the necessary measures to guarantee an equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men and create conditions favourable to the reconciliation of private and family life with professional life through a fair and balanced distribution of resources taking into account the different situations in women's and men's lives;
- encourage men to participate actively in the discussions and activities aimed at achieving gender equality in all spheres of life;

2. To accelerate the achievement of these aims, guarantee a visible political commitment by setting up the necessary legislative and policy framework and implement parallel strategies and innovative and effective tools so that gender equality is recognised as a challenge by the whole of society in all its sectors and place it at the heart of the different decision-making and policy-setting processes:

- Adhere to international standards by ratifying all the relevant international legal instruments and by implementing and monitoring them fully at national level, in particular those contained in the relevant conventions of the Council of Europe, as well as in its recommendations;
- Adopt, implement and evaluate gender equality policies by:
 - adopting strategies, plans and programmes at different levels in all policy areas;
 - acknowledging and addressing the obstacles that persist to the achievement of gender equality;
 - establishing target groups, time frames and benchmarks for its effective implementation and using clear indicators to evaluate results and progress achieved;
 - creating or reinforcing monitoring mechanisms;
 - regularly reporting to parliament on progress and results accomplished;
- Adopt and implement specific policies and action plans at different levels and ensure their adequate financing; enable positive action or special measures to be adopted in order to achieve balanced participation, including representation, of women and men in decision-making in all sectors of society, in particular in the labour market and in economic life as well as in political and public decision-making;
- Adopt and implement effectively specific policies and plans of action to prevent and combat gender- based violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators;
- Ensure visible political commitment to the strategy of gender mainstreaming, including where necessary by adopting legislation or other instruments to this effect and appropriate structures to co-ordinate it;
- Use gender mainstreaming effectively:
 - by adopting and using tools such as gender analysis, sex disaggregated data, gender impact assessment;
 - by developing skills of all relevant actors to put gender mainstreaming into practice and

- by creating indicators aimed at evaluating its impact on the promotion of gender equality;
 - Explore the use of gender mainstreaming through gender budgeting to guarantee a fair distribution of resources between women and men;
 - Reinforce national mechanisms for gender equality at the highest political level, guarantee their effective functioning by giving them clear mandates, well defined functions and responsibilities and by providing them the necessary human and financial resources to enable them to fully implement their mandates;
 - Support all actions which denounce discrimination against women and combat inequalities between women and men, including by ensuring the existence of specialised institutional mechanisms entrusted with the task of addressing complaints from individuals and groups on alleged violations of gender equality provisions;
 - Develop and support research on gender issues, including policy-related analytical studies on women's and men's situations and on their participation at all levels and spheres; provide evidence-based analysis to governments and other political decision-makers to assess the situation of women and men, to monitor and evaluate progress and to continue to integrate a gender perspective in all policies;
3. Renew their commitment to achieve equality in fact and in law between women and men as an integral part of human rights and a fundamental criterion of democracy in conformity with the values defended by the Council of Europe and to provide the Council of Europe the necessary human and financial resources;
4. Invite the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to monitor and evaluate progress every three years in the implementation of gender equality policy in the Council of Europe member states.

ANNEX I



Strasbourg, 22 November 2022

GENDER EQUALITY RAPPORTEURS

**A VITAL ASSET
TO THE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE TRANSVERSAL PROGRAMME ON GENDER EQUALITY**

Information note
updated by the Gender
Equality Division
Human Dignity and Gender Equality
Department Directorate of Human Dignity,
Equality and Governance

I THE TRANSVERSAL PROGRAMME: CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER EQUALITY BY INTEGRATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S ACTIVITIES

1. In early 2012, the Council of Europe introduced the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality which was launched by the Secretary General to improve the visibility and impact of the Organisation's gender equality activities in member states and within the Organisation itself. The Council of Europe [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#) outlines the goals and priorities of the Council of Europe on gender equality, in, six strategic areas, including gender mainstreaming.

2. The aim of the Programme is to move from legal equality to real equality, as member states were called upon to do by the Committee of Ministers in its Declaration "Making Gender Equality a Reality". In order to do so it is necessary to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy at legislative and political level in member states and in Council of Europe activities. The Programme therefore seeks to mobilise all of the Council of Europe's bodies, in particular intergovernmental structures, and its external partners.

3. Several interdependent structures are responsible for implementing the Programme to achieve this aim, i.e.

- A [Gender Equality Commission](#) (GEC) composed of a representative from each member state;
- Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GER) appointed from among the members of the steering committees and other intergovernmental structures of the Council of Europe;
- An inter-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team (GMT).

4. The Gender Equality Division within the Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department of the Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, provides the secretariat for the Programme.

II – THE ROLE OF GENDER EQUALITY RAPPORTEURS

5. Most, if not all, Council of Europe committees and monitoring mechanisms can contribute to gender equality in member states by ensuring that their activities integrate a gender perspective. This does not entail additional tasks or mean that it is necessary to embark on new activities. It does, however, require a change of approach. Essentially, committees are required to consider proposals for new activities from a gender equality perspective before finalising them, and to adapt or formulate activities as a result of such an analysis, i.e. by taking account of the likely impact of a proposed activity on both women and men.

6. All intergovernmental structures are now required in accordance with their terms of reference, to appoint a GER from amongst their members. Other committees and structures are encouraged to also appoint a GER. In principle, convention committees should also be able to appoint a GER within the framework of their internal rules. To date, all the intergovernmental structures invited to appoint a GER have done so. Furthermore, 12 monitoring mechanisms have also appointed a GER ([see list](#)).

7. The person appointed as GER will not be required to write reports, but will be invited, along with the committee secretary, to liaise with the GEC (see below) and will be in contact with GERs from other committees. This role is therefore essential in ensuring that everyone understands the [gender mainstreaming](#) strategy in the same way and in providing the impetus needed for its appropriate and effective application.

8. With this in mind, GERs should ensure that a gender perspective is properly integrated during the programming process of their respective committees (i.e. the process of identifying priorities, preparing activity proposals, setting up and implementing the activities, and evaluating the results). In the long term, the person appointed as the committee's GER should not be expected to do this alone; it should become the responsibility of the committee as a whole.

9. It is also important, where possible, that the GER is a member of the Bureau of their committee. Given the reduction in the number of meetings, the committees have increasingly heavy agendas, and as a result, the Bureau plays an increasingly important role in identifying, preparing and examining activities and in assessing their implementation. It is vital for rapporteurs to be able to intervene as soon as the Bureau begins preparing the programme of activities as this would lend more weight to their role. It is therefore strongly recommended that the GER be appointed from among the Bureau members – or at least to involve the GER closely in the Bureau's discussions on the programme of activities.

III – CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH GENDER EQUALITY RAPPOREURS

10. The GEC maintains close links with all partners of the Transversal Programme and creates opportunities to communicate with the other elements, in particular GERs, and to support their work. Regular exchanges of views are held with the GERs to ensure that gender mainstreaming is taken into account within their committee on a long-term basis, improve co-operation with the different partners and, where appropriate, devise joint activities.

11. It is also important to ensure some continuity regarding GERs within each committee, as a change of expert all too often leads to gaps in follow up and loss of expertise. It is therefore important that different secretariats ensure some continuity, and that the GEC not only assists the rapporteurs themselves but also meets the committee as a whole at regular intervals to arouse the interest of its members, improve their knowledge of gender mainstreaming and encourage them to adhere to the strategy.

12. The GEC can help the rapporteurs to carry out their task by giving them examples of gender impact or of methods for incorporating gender issues in policies.

13. When specialised ministerial conferences are being organised, the Chair of the GEC could also send a message to the GERs to remind them of the need to take account of gender equality in the declarations and action plans to be adopted by the ministers and heads of delegation, and thus draw everyone's attention to the need for gender mainstreaming in their forthcoming activities.

14. At the first meeting of the GEC and the GERs, which took place in November 2012, proposals were made for identifying more precisely the role of the rapporteurs, working methods and the methods of intervention and co-operation between the members of the GEC and GERs were discussed.

15. In November 2013, the first training session for GERs took place. To date, eight training sessions have been organised. A dedicated [Handbook](#) to support GERs in their work has been developed, regularly updated and published in 2022.

16. In 2018, a [dedicated website on gender mainstreaming](#) within the Council of Europe, including a specific section on [activities conducted by different entities](#) in different policy areas, was made available on the [Gender Equality website](#).

17. Committees, their secretaries and rapporteurs, should not hesitate to contact the Programme Manager responsible for Gender Mainstreaming at the Gender Equality Division in the Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance for any help, advice or information which might be needed (gender.equality@coe.int).

ANNEX II

Strasbourg, 26 April 2012

Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender
Equality
Gender equality rapporteurs and their role

Information note prepared by the Gender Equality team, Gender
Equality and Human Dignity Department, DGI

Introduction – the transversal programme

1. The Transversal Programme on Gender Equality has been launched by the Secretary General to improve the visibility and impact of the Council of Europe's work on gender equality in the member states ; to move from legal equality to real equality as member states were called upon to do by the Committee of Ministers in its Declaration, « [Making Gender Equality a Reality](#) »¹.
2. The programme has several objectives, including the mainstreaming of gender equality at the level of policy and practice in the member states and within the Council of Europe. In this context, the programme will seek to mobilise all Council of Europe bodies (including the intergovernmental structures) and its external partners.
3. To this end, the programme is composed of several inter-dependent elements, namely :
 - A Gender Equality Commission, composed of 16 members appointed by member states²
 - A network of national focal points in each member State,
 - Gender equality rapporteurs appointed within the membership of the steering committees and other intergovernmental structures of the Council of Europe,
 - The Committee of Ministers Thematic Co-ordinator on Equality and Trafficking,
 - An Inter Secretariat gender equality mainstreaming team/network.

Since the beginning of 2012, steps have been taken to progressively put in place these various elements. The process is still on-going. The Gender equality team within the Gender Equality and Human Dignity Department of DGI provides the secretariat for the programme.

¹ 119th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Madrid 12 May 2009. The declaration was circulated to committees in accordance with the decision of the Committee of Ministers taken at the 1057th meeting of their deputies.

² Open to participation by all member states in accordance with Resolution CM\Res(2011)2

Contributing to gender equality by integrating a gender perspective into a committee's activities

4. Most, if not all, Council of Europe committees can contribute to gender equality in member states by ensuring that their activities integrate a gender perspective. This does not imply additional tasks or a requirement to embark on new additional activities. It does, however, imply a change of approach. Essentially, it requires committees to consider proposals for new activities from a gender perspective before finalising them and to adapt or formulate activities as a result of such an analysis ; i.e. by taking account of the likely impact of a proposed activity on women and men.
5. Integrating a gender perspective into a committee's activities is a practical follow-up to the Madrid Declaration³. A few committees are already explicitly required to integrate a gender perspective into their activities. Appointing a gender equality rapporteur will facilitate this objective.
6. The majority of intergovernmental structures are required in their current terms of reference to appoint a gender equality rapporteur from amongst their members. Of course, other committees and structures are free to appoint a gender equality rapporteur should they so wish and they are encouraged to do so. In principal, convention committees should also be able to appoint a gender equality rapporteur within the framework of their internal rules.

Role of the gender equality rapporteur

7. The person appointed as a gender equality rapporteur will not be required to make reports. Although s/he will be invited, along with the committee secretary, to liaise with the Gender Equality Commission (see below) and will be in contact with gender equality rapporteurs from other committees.
8. Essentially, the gender equality rapporteur should watch over the programming process of his or her committee (i.e. the process of identifying priorities, preparing activity proposals, setting-up and implementing the activities, and evaluating the results) in order to ensure that a gender perspective is properly integrated. The person appointed as the committee's gender equality rapporteur should not be expected to do this alone. It should be the responsibility of the committee as a whole. In this sense, the appointment of a gender equality rapporteur is a minimum, to ensure that there is a least one member taking responsibility ; but ideally this should be shared by all the members.
9. It is recognised that committees have increasingly heavy agendas and, in some cases, meet less frequently than in the past. Consequently, the bureaux have an increasingly important role in identifying activities and preparing, reviewing and evaluating their implementation. For this reason, it is recommended that the gender equality rapporteur be appointed from amongst the members of the bureau ; although this is not essential, provided s/he is involved in the Bureau's discussions on the programme of activities.
10. Finally, it should be noted that this is a new initiative and necessarily the precise tasks of the gender equality rapporteur will be further refined with time and in the light of experience.

³ The origins of the gender equality rapporteur lie in an initiative of the former CDMM to appoint such a person as part of its follow-up to the Madrid Declaration and as a means of ensuring that it integrated a gender perspective into its work.

Support to gender equality rapporteurs

11. A training programme has been put in place to ensure that all committee secretaries have the necessary knowledge and skills to assist the gender equality rapporteur and the committee as a whole in integrating a gender perspective into their programme of activities. An information session for gender equality rapporteurs will also be organised in Strasbourg during the second half of 2012 in order to familiarise them with their role and the basic notions of gender mainstreaming.
12. Also, with a view to providing support to the committees in integrating a gender perspective, the Gender Equality Commission is required to maintain close links with the other elements of the transversal programme and, in particular, engage in regular exchanges of views with the gender equality rapporteurs. These exchanges will most likely be organised on either a collective or thematic basis. This will involve travelling to a meeting, at least in the early stages. With time, hopefully it will be possible to introduce video or telephone conferencing. In any event, members of the Gender Equality Commission will attend the information session for gender equality rapporteurs mentioned above.
13. The Gender Equality team of the Secretariat in DGI is available to provide advice and information to committees and their gender equality rapporteurs if required. Moreover, the team welcomes feedback on the experience of appointing the rapporteurs and their functioning in order that this initiative can be improved and developed.