

IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY

There has been a global focus on the promotion of equality between women and men in recent decades. While progress has been made, a lot more needs to be done to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. As the United Nations Development Programme notes, “[T]he disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc – with negative repercussions for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice.”¹⁹

— To address these concerns, the Council of Europe launched its Programme on Gender Equality in 2012 and its Gender Equality Strategy in 2014. A Gender Equality Commission was established to oversee the implementation of the strategy, the overall objectives of which are to “achieve the advancement and empowering of women and hence the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe member States” and to “increase the impact and visibility of gender equality standards, supporting their implementation in member States through a variety of measures, including gender mainstreaming and action in a number of priority areas”.

— Five priority areas were agreed on to measure progress on the implementation of the strategy:

- ▶ combating gender stereotypes and sexism;
- ▶ preventing and combating violence against women;
- ▶ guaranteeing equal access of women to justice;
- ▶ achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;
- ▶ achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

— The European Social Charter (revised), in Article 20, also recognises the right to gender equality in the workplace, stating that “[a]ll workers have the right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination on the grounds of sex”.



Bulwell Riverside Centre, Nottingham, United Kingdom²⁰

— Bulwell Riverside Centre, a youth centre run by Nottingham City Council, worked with young people, through the medium of art, music and performance, to promote awareness about the issue of abusive relationships. The artworks that were created were displayed and performed in schools and youth centres to raise awareness in the local community about domestic abuse.

20. See www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk, accessed 10 June 2016.



Recognising that young women living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are at risk of additional social exclusion and discrimination and, therefore, need greater support to access their social rights, the recommendation calls for member states to promote gender equality and improve access to social rights by introducing the following actions:

- ▶ encourage young parents (especially young mothers) from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to continue or return to education or training;
- ▶ also encourage these young parents (especially young mothers) to pursue employment opportunities; this could be supported in different ways, including through appropriate benefits and childcare support services;
- ▶ provide opportunities for young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to raise issues of concern to them publicly and also provide possibilities for them to participate in youth organisations, political activities and in society in general;
- ▶ support young people as leaders in their communities; this could be achieved through gender-specific youth organisations, co-educational youth work and gender-sensitive initiatives for young men.

19. *Gender Inequality Index (GII)*, United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>, accessed 10 June 2016. See also UNDP 2015.