



EQUAL IN ELECTIONS

Free from sexism,
harassment, and violence
against women



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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150 cases of sexism and acts of violence were registered during the 2020 presidential campaign in Moldova¹, and at least 12 cases of intimidation, violence and vandalism involving candidates were recorded during the 2021 parliamentary elections².

In general, women are more exposed to sexual jokes and vulgarities, stereotypical sexualized references about clothing, body appearance or marital status, gender discrimination, and explicitly violent and hateful speech. These are serious barriers that hinder women's political participation, their involvement in public life, and decision-making processes. This is not only a "women's issue" but a fundamental obstacle to the democratic process.

It is important to recognize sexism, harassment, and violence against women in elections and to respond to them!

1. Olga Bătcă, *Monitoring report: Public discourse from a gender perspective and Violence against women in elections. 2020 presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova. Round I.* The Platform for Gender Equality.

2. Promo-LEX Association, Final Report, 'Promo-LEX' Observation Mission of the new parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021.



SEXISM is any expression (act, word, image, gesture) based on the idea that some persons, most often women, are inferior because of their sex³. It happens in the **public** or **private** sphere, **online** or **offline**.

How do you recognize sexism?

- ▶ Negative comments about the appearance of women or men in the public space based on prejudices and stereotypes;
- ▶ Images or comments that are extremely humiliating or with a sexual connotation, and that are published or shared, including on social media;

3. Recommendation CM/Rec (2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March, 2019; The Law no.5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between men and women provides that „**sexist language** are expressions and words that present women and men in a humiliating, degrading and violent manner, offending their dignity”.

- ▶ Comments, constant interruption, and very simplistic explanations that are provided to women, as if they are unable to either understand a certain subject (mansplaining) or to explain something (maninterrupting);
- ▶ Use of masculinities in electoral debates and use of generic names of professions, functions, or positions;
- ▶ Use of characteristics and adjectives aimed at strengthening the stereotypes related to gender roles.

This is sexism and you do not need to accept it!



Cases of sexist language and discrimination are examined by the court through the lens of Law no. 5/2006 and Law 121/2012. The examination of these cases is exempt from the state fee.



HARASSMENT is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual⁴ nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

How do you recognize harassment?

- ▶ Intimidating behavior, unwanted attention, verbal and physical contact, or any other forms of interactions that create discomfort;
- ▶ Hostile, repetitive, derision and humiliating behavior to gain power and authority;

4. Based on Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (for harassment) and The Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe (for sexual harassment); The Law no.5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between men and women provides that “**sexual harassment** is the manifestation of a physical, verbal or non-verbal behavior that damages the person's dignity or creates an unpleasant, hostile, degrading, humiliating or insulting atmosphere in order to induce a person to have sexual relations or other unwanted sexual actions, committed by threat, coercion, blackmail”.

- ▶ The spreading of rumors about a person's sex life or sexual preferences;
- ▶ Sexual comments about a person's clothing or looks, including offensive jokes and criticism.

At national level, sexual harassment in the workplace is punished.

Sexual harassment is punishable by a fine in the amount of 650 to 850 conventional units or by unpaid work for the benefit of the community from 140 to 240 hours, or by imprisonment of up to 3 years.

(Art. 173. Penal Code of the Republic of Moldova)



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) in politics encompasses all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation seeking to exclude women from politics.

This includes women's participation as candidates, voters, activists, party supporters, observers, election workers, or public officials.

Acts of violence can take multiple forms, including **physical and economic violence** and can occur both **ONLINE** and **OFFLINE**.

How do you recognize VAW?

- ▶ threats of physical harm;
- ▶ intentional use of physical force;
- ▶ pushing, grabbing, choking, shaking, slapping, hitting etc.;
- ▶ limiting free movement, access to food or sleep;
- ▶ unequal distribution of financial resources;
- ▶ limited access to money or means of transportation;
- ▶ exaggerated control of expenses.



It is important to recognize it and find ways to address it.

Mistreatment or other violent actions that have caused insignificant damage to bodily integrity are sanctioned with a fine of 15 to 30 conventional units or with unpaid work for the benefit of the community from 20 to 40 hours, or with contravention arrest from 5 to 10 days.

(Art. 78. Contraventional Code of the R. Moldova)

The repeated persecution of a person who has been caused a state of anxiety, fear for his/her own safety or that of his close relatives, being forced to change his/her way of life, committed by following the person; contacting or attempting to contact by any means or through another person, is sanctioned with a fine from 30 to 60 conventional units or with unpaid work for the benefit of the community from 20 to 40 hours, or with contravention arrest from 10 to 15 days.

(Art. 78/2. Contraventional Code of the R. Moldova)




Sexism, harassment, and violence against women have a negative impact at the individual, private and community levels.


Anyone can report these, whether you are the one experiencing abuse or witnessing it!

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are a victim or witness of sexism, harassment, or violence against women in the context of elections, do not remain silent, report it.


Here are the 5 STEPS to follow:


 **SAVE** the messages, images, emails showing the act of sexist speech, harassment or other form of discrimination or violence against women.


 **RECORD** useful info: date, time, whether or not you witnessed the incident.

 **FILE** a complaint at any police station


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 **NOTIFY** the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. They will review the complaint and restore the rights of the victim of discrimination.

 HOT LINE 0 8003 3388 – free call from landline;

 www.egalitate.md

 The People's Advocate – monitors the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Guided by the principle of legality.

 <http://ombudsman.md/> - submit an online application

 **ACCESS** www.gender.monitor.md and report any case of election violence online. This is one of the most effective forms of reporting violations

 <https://gender.monitor.md/>

www.coe.int

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| All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European
| Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights,
| democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees
| the implementation of the Convention in the member states.