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## PREFACE

### *Gender equality does matter*

Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread forms of human rights abuse and a violation of human dignity anywhere. Gender-based violence is a problem in all member states of the Council of Europe and affects millions of women, men and children regardless of their social status, cultural or religious background, civil status, sexual orientation or gender identity. Gender-based violence undermines the core values of human rights on which the Council of Europe is based and to which its member states have subscribed.

As the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention affirms, there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye. It is the responsibility of state authorities to take measures to prevent violence, protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

Legal action, however essential, cannot be the only response if we want to reduce and eradicate such forms of violence. The values of human rights, non-violence and gender equality can be neither imposed nor simply advertised; they must be accepted and respected in real life. The key is education, information and awareness-raising. Only through combined efforts can we ensure that the patterns of oppression and humiliation are not repeated from generation to generation.

The Council of Europe youth sector has taken this matter seriously because young people are more vulnerable to forms of gender-based violence; they must also be the agents of the changes required to eradicate it. The Youth for Democracy programme consistently combats all forms of discrimination and promotes gender equality with an intersectional approach. A Gender Impact Study concluded that there is adequation between the aims of the programme and the promotion of gender equality. The programme is sensitive to the promotion of diversity and the inclusion of

minorities and vulnerable individuals; it has gender equality among its priorities, and its work is in contrast with the current gender inequality patterns in the member states of the Council of Europe. The objectives of the programme are also effective responses to ongoing discriminatory, transphobic and homophobic narratives.

The work of the Council of Europe's youth sector relies on its youth multipliers. The role of young people and youth work is thus very important to reach out to the rest of society to prevent and combat gender-based violence. Gender Matters was first published to support this work. It builds on the educational approaches of *Compass*, the manual on human rights education with young people which enables millions of young people across Europe to learn about, through and for human rights.

Gender Matters is a manual on gender-based violence affecting young people. It is a useful introduction to gender and gender-based violence for people who work with young people, providing reflections on gender and gender-based violence, a background to key contemporary issues and, especially, methods and resources for education and training activities with young people.

We hope that youth workers and activists alike will find in this manual inspiration and resources to resist the backlashes to equality and dignity for all and overcome the narratives of supremacy, sexism, hate and violence. Gender equality matters. Gender-based violence has no future.

