

Advancing Gender Equality: The Role and Situation of Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Context of COVID-19

Online seminar organised by the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission in partnership with the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe



Report

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French edition:

Faire progresser l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes : Le rôle et la situation des mécanismes institutionnels pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans le contexte du Covid-19

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Introduction

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and of gender equality are central to support public policies in this area and to ensure sustainable progress. For many years, the Council of Europe has been promoting and implementing a double approach to gender equality involving, on the one hand, specific policies and measures to promote gender equality, and on the other, a gender mainstreaming strategy.

Different standards of the Council of Europe guide work in this area, in particular the comprehensive and forward-looking [Recommendation Rec\(2007\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#).

At the level of member states, the institutional arrangements, available resources and power of gender equality mechanisms vary. Concerning violence against women, the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#), provides a cohesive legal framework for preventing and combating domestic and gender-based violence, including regarding the necessary institutional arrangements in States Parties. The Istanbul Convention also offers guidance to those member states who have not yet ratified it.

However, the [2020 Beijing+25 Review Report](#) prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) indicates that in European Union (EU) countries, the status of governmental structures in charge of gender equality has declined during the period 2012 to 2018, and that gender mainstreaming efforts have also been reduced during this period.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed a new light on the need for integrating a strong gender equality perspective in all policies, accompanied by appropriate resources, in order to mitigate the gendered impact of the crisis, including a focus on combating gender-based and domestic violence.

In addition, current challenges related to gender equality and women's rights, the tendency to merge gender equality bodies with institutions dealing with anti-discrimination, more broadly, as well as past and foreseeable future economic difficulties for national governments, may stall the positive advancement of institutional mechanisms for gender equality.

The aims of the seminar were to:

- ▶ Take stock of current trends in relation to institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the national and international level.
- ▶ Examine the gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of institutional mechanisms to limit the negative consequences of this crisis.
- ▶ Examine the gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the existing structures dealing with the prevention of and protection against gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- ▶ Look at promising practices at the national and international levels, and by civil society.
- ▶ Provide a platform to discuss solutions to strengthen institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming.

Opening Remarks

The seminar was officially opened by **H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Ms Katerina Sakellaropoulou**. In her address, President Sakellaropoulou pointed out that in times of crises the gender gap between women and men becomes even more pronounced. Women as a rule are paid less than men and are overrepresented in sectors disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing to offer their services in precarious conditions and with the prospect of unemployment widening.

President Sakellaropoulou outlined how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities. Women disproportionately bear the burden of home and family care; this “invisible work” that is not paid and is often not recognised. Doubly invisible and ignored are women in a state of multiple vulnerability who are struggling to make ends meet such as single mothers, migrant women and refugees, and elderly women. These vulnerabilities are compounded by the dramatic increase of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Apart from the pressures arising from the pandemic, this increase is taking place within the framework of already existing patriarchal structures and unequal power relations between women and men. President Sakellaropoulou also pointed out the devastating impact of domestic violence on children, a factor that is not taken sufficiently into account in responses to violence against women.

Within this framework, the role of institutional mechanisms is all the more important in order to inform women of their rights, and ensure access to justice when these rights are violated. Not only do laws on gender equality and women’s rights need to be respected and enforced, but, importantly, the needs and experiences of women need to be taken into account in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and measures in the political, economic and social sphere.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, in his opening remarks emphasised that despite women’s dynamic presence and participation in social and political life, substantive equality remains elusive. Inequality and discrimination continue to permeate all walks of life: in the home, in education, in employment, and in society. He highlighted that, in Greece, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected women and girls disproportionately. He noted, however, that the pandemic has also acted as an accelerator for positive action to eradicate gender stereotypes in employment, and to ensure that the home is safe for all family members. Greece has implemented a series of measures – based on the goals of the Council of Europe and its Gender Equality Strategy – to provide additional support to women experiencing violence, to provide information to migrant women and refugees and other vulnerable groups, to address the gender pension gap, and to reconcile work and family life.

In his address, **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, and President of the Committee of Ministers** at the time, pointed out the importance of women’s contribution to the economy and society. The role of women has been made more visible during the pandemic as women have been at the frontline, given that 76% of those employed in the health sector are women. The crisis has inevitably also revealed continuing inequalities in all areas. Restrictions and social isolation brought to the fore thousands of cases of domestic violence. In addition, 25 million jobs will be lost due to COVID-19 – and will most likely hit sectors dominated by women. Mr Varvitsiotis emphasised the need for specific measures to support women in these sectors, as well as single mothers that are at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. He drew attention to the [Council of Europe COVID-19 Toolkit](#), aimed at assisting governments across Europe on respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law during the COVID-19 crisis.

In her opening address, **Marija Pejčinović-Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**, reflected on the 25th anniversary of Beijing Platform for Action, which she had hoped would be an opportunity to envision greater equality between women and men, and create the necessary momentum to achieve it. COVID-19, however, has threatened to reverse hard-won progress. Echoing the previous speakers, she stressed how the COVID-19 lockdown, while necessary, had placed women and children at increased risk of domestic violence. She drew attention to groups of women who are particularly vulnerable including elderly women, women with disabilities, single mothers, homeless women, as well as migrant and refugee women. At the same time, while

the pandemic has had severe economic repercussions, she noted that only a fraction of funds has addressed the gendered impact of the crisis and the increase in women's unpaid care work.

The Secretary General underlined that the Istanbul Convention and the [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#) are key tools for governments to address the current challenges. Yet some member states have refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention, while others have threatened to withdraw from it. She warned that we cannot afford to let gender equality go backwards – it is neither just nor sustainable. She welcomed that some of these issues would be considered in the context of this seminar.

Session 1: Institutional mechanisms for gender equality: state of play and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Barbara Limanowska, Gender Mainstreaming Programme Co-ordinator at the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), presented the [EIGE 2019 study on institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming](#). The study maps the trends and pace of progress on Area H of the Beijing Platform of Action ("*Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*") in the EU, using indicators developed by the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2005, and later in 2012 and 2014.

The study has revealed a waning commitment to institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming tools across the EU in the last decade. In fact, Ms Limanowska noted that the promotion of gender equality is less institutionalised now than it was six years ago. Recent developments have further undermined the importance of gender equality as a priority. For example, the use of tools such as gender statistics and gender impact assessments has decreased.

The results of the study have also shown that progress across the EU is scattered and that there is a lack of clear trends. Ms Limanowska underlined that this may indicate a general lack of understanding of the role of gender equality mechanisms. Some setbacks include mergers of equality bodies and a decline in the practical use of the gender mainstreaming methods and tools, as well as insufficient collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data.

Ms Limanowska stressed that the EU in the last decade is operating in perpetual crises mode – the economic crisis, the migration crisis, the security crisis, the climate crisis, and of course the health crisis with COVID-19. These crises have shifted political attention away from human rights and gender equality approaches to crisis prevention, where gender equality is not seen as part of the solution. There is also evidence of “gender equality fatigue” and the emergence of new approaches – such as family mainstreaming, and diversity mainstreaming – promoted by minority groups and progressive politicians. However, these approaches are taking attention away from the specific needs and experiences of women.

In closing, Ms Limanowska highlighted that the EIGE indicators are the only of their kind in this area internationally, and that improvements in the measurement framework used for the individual indicators could increase the usefulness of the monitoring tool to inform EU policy and co-operation among member states.

Katerina Sarri, Professor at the School of Economic and Peripheral Studies of the University of Macedonia (Greece), discussed how COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we live and work. Remote work, social distancing, and the use of technology have dramatically changed working life. Emerging evidence on the impact of the pandemic supports the notion that women’s economic and productive lives are and will continue to be affected disproportionately and differently from men. The pandemic has hit sectors where women’s employment is concentrated such as retail, tourism, hospitality, health care and the garment manufacturing industry. Additionally, COVID-19 lockdowns have closed schools and day care centres making it even harder for parents – and mothers, in particular – to keep working. At the same time, women play a disproportionate role in responding to crises, including as frontline health care and social workers, and as mobilisers in their communities.

Ms Sarri reflected on whether the pandemic could be a catalyst for progress despite its negative effects. Bearing in mind the lessons learned from the 2008 economic crisis, she highlighted some of the ways in which the current crisis may be an opportunity for positive change. She stressed the importance of collecting, analysing and acting on comprehensive gender data in order to assess the different impact of the pandemic on women and men. This will enable the design of gender-fair bailouts, subsidies and other economic recovery measures. She recalled that the fiscal measures adopted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis had a disproportionately negative impact on women,

and austerity policies drastically reduced the welfare state that supported them. Ms Sarri underlined that austerity policies should be avoided in COVID-19 recovery measures.

Another important measure to offset the impact of the crisis on women is ensuring an adequate minimum wage and social security for part-time, flexible and other forms of non-standard employment. Additionally, governments should implement measures to support the reconciliation of paid work with family/care responsibilities for both women and men.

Brigitte Grésy, President of the French High Council of Equality between women and men (HCE), discussed the experience of France and the national institutional mechanism for gender equality in identifying and responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.

She explained that, in France, these challenges manifested along three main axes. The first axis concerns women's bodies. The upsurge of domestic violence, particularly in the context of the restriction measures, made it even more necessary to strengthen reporting and protection mechanisms. Several measures were put in place in France during the lockdown period: an alert system in pharmacies for women victims of violence, an emergency text messaging service (114), and the setting up of "support points" in shopping centres to assist victims of domestic violence.

Another challenge related to women's bodies are limitations on access to health, which threatens women's sexual and reproductive rights. The lockdown and the pressures on the health system during the pandemic made access to care more complicated, further restricting women's access to abortion services and contraception. In response to this challenge, the Minister of Health authorised a two-week extension for medical abortion.

The second axis concerns the invisibility of women, with the COVID-19 crisis revealing the lack of representation and inclusion of women in the media, but also in various decision-making bodies. The French Audiovisual Council reported that during the health crisis, female experts were severely under-represented in the media, with a rate of only 20%. At the same time, although 52% of hospital doctors in France are women, they represent only 19% of university professors and hospital practitioners. Ms Grésy underlined that with less decision-making power, there is a risk that women's needs are not taken into consideration.

The third axis concerns the gendered division of labour and time-sharing. The pandemic has revealed the vital role played by care professions, mostly occupied by women such as nurses, residential care workers, supermarket workers, and maintenance staff. It has also highlighted the need to re-value these professions, which are largely invisible and underpaid. She underlined the unequal division of household and family responsibilities between women and men, a situation that is exacerbated by the crisis and the associated lockdown. In addition, women are likely to be more exposed to the economic consequences of the crisis, due to the increased risk of unemployment and underemployment, as well as due to the exclusion of women from the new technologies and digital sector.

Ms Grésy stressed that the COVID-19 post-crisis recovery must rely on two essential tools in order to build more equitable, more inclusive and more sustainable economies and societies. These include the application of parity rules in the allocation of public funds, as well as in decision-making bodies. Aid provided to economic sectors must be conditional on respect for, and actions on, diversity and parity. The HCE also considers the introduction of quotas extremely important and calls for the application of parity rules in all crisis response committees and councils. The HCE is also advocating for the establishment of a quota of reserved places for women in all schools and training courses for the new jobs linked to digital technology and ecological transition.

Despina Syrri, Director of the Civic School of Political Studies (Greece), discussed in her intervention the specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women. She highlighted that the crisis has revealed how migrant women are differentially and disproportionately affected. For example, labour and migration uncertainty, as well as social distancing, exacerbate existing gender-based violence, and discrimination in service provision has resulted in women's inability to access essential victim services. In many countries, migrants are excluded from mainstream public services and support packages, including access to sexual and reproductive health and maternal health services. Migrant women's overrepresentation in the informal sector, with low skilled, low paid and precarious jobs has meant that they are taking the brunt of rising unemployment.

At the same time, several countries are using the pandemic as an excuse for border closures and stricter border policies, while there has also been an erosion of the right to seek asylum. In addition, civic space for migrant women to organise and claim their rights has steadily been shrinking.

Ms Syrri emphasised that COVID-19 responses must take into account gender and migrant status and ensure that they do not reproduce or perpetuate discriminatory practices and inequalities. It is also important to ensure the availability of shelters and other support for women survivors of violence regardless of their immigration status. In addition, states must also take measures to ensure women and girls can access health services, including sexual and reproductive health, regardless of their immigration status, without fear or risk of deportation, detention or harassment. Finally, migrant women should be included in decision-making in crisis responses, as well as in global, regional, national and local COVID-19 policy spaces.

Session 2: Ensuring that recovery measures reinforce gender equality-related bodies and services

Maria Syrengela, Secretary General for Family Policy and Gender Equality in Greece, outlined actions taken in Greece during the COVID-19 lockdown to address violence against women and domestic violence. Measures implemented included introducing online methods of counselling and assistance to victims, providing additional temporary accommodation to women victims and their children, and working closely with NGOs and civil society organisations to co-ordinate actions. Information on COVID-19-related restrictions were also made available in various languages to migrant and refugee women survivors of gender-based violence. In addition, a nation-wide campaign was launched on mainstream media and social media with the message: “We stay at home but we do not stay silent”.

Other measures adopted during the crisis to offset the impact on workers included the introduction of a ‘special purpose leave’, in order for working parents to care for their children while the operation of child care centres and schools was suspended. In addition, a ‘parents’ leave’ of 14 days was introduced to allow parents to care for children affected by COVID-19.

Janet Veitch, Chair of the Women’s Budget Group, based in the United Kingdom, discussed the linking of economic recovery plans with supporting gender equality bodies and services.

Ms Veitch outlined the key areas and focal points for making the connection and thinking about how economic recovery can be inclusive of women’s needs. She noted that most global institutions support gender responsive budgeting, but often this does not translate into concrete spending and revenue plans. Ms Veitch highlighted the need to make stronger connections between women’s community-based organisations that understand the economic impact on the ground, and policy makers responsible for economic recovery plans.

While the pandemic has shown that women are overrepresented in key roles that keep the economy moving, the terms and conditions in these jobs include low pay, insecure and often 'zero hour' contracts. Thus, the COVID-19 crisis has shown the need to change how we value work. To indicate this, studies have shown that in the United Kingdom investment of 2.8% of GDP in a combination of child and social care would create nearly 2 million jobs, 2.7 times as many jobs as an equivalent investment in construction. Comparators in several OECD countries have shown similar results.

Finally, Ms Veitch highlighted a recent [publication of the Women's Budget Group's Commission on a Gender Equal Economy](#) that outlines the necessary steps for governments to transition to caring economies that are central to the achievement of gender equality.

Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director of UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECA), presented recommendations put forward by gender equality mechanisms in the ECA region to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

In order to identify the effects of the pandemic and the emerging needs and priorities of women, UN Women is engaged in consultations with partners across the ECA region, including with gender equality mechanisms. Representatives of gender equality mechanisms underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic is evolving beyond a global health crisis into a labour market, social and economic crisis, posing a serious threat to women's safety, employment and livelihood. In response, they underlined a set of priorities as essential for gender equality.

On responding to violence against women, gender equality mechanisms stressed the need for a well-co-ordinated and integrated response following a survivor-centred and human rights-based approach. They highlighted the importance of transformative change in mind-sets of the public and service-providers, and the need for investment in primary prevention and early intervention.

On women's economic empowerment and access to the labour market, a number of recommendations were put forward including the provision of targeted economic empowerment provision to women, measures to facilitate women's access to the labour market, and policies for the redistribution of unpaid care work to address women's economic insecurity.

An important priority area identified is access to information and decision making. Gender equality mechanisms in the region stressed the need for equal

access to decision making as an essential part of crisis response and recovery. They also underlined the importance of improving access to information on crisis-related measures and available services.

Finally, the importance of working with women's groups and civil society organisations was emphasised in order to provide targeted assistance to vulnerable groups, and the need to integrate this collaboration into national pandemic response plans.

The next speaker on this panel was **Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou, member of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)**, who discussed the importance of implementing the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in light of the pandemic – particularly those provisions on strengthening support services for victims.

Ms Kostopoulou highlighted the provisions of the Istanbul Convention related to support services – and particularly specialist support services that provide support and assistance tailored to the needs of victims. She stressed the importance of ensuring wide geographical distribution of such services, including rape crisis centres and/or sexual violence referral centres.

Essential in the provision of specialist services is a gendered understanding of violence against women that avoids revictimisation and instils in victims a sense of control over their lives. Good practice in the area of specialist support is the adoption of an integrated approach and, where possible, services working within a multi-agency framework under the same roof.

The Istanbul Convention requires that specialist services be made available without discrimination, and that measures are taken to ensure access to women experiencing multiple discrimination. Also important is that access to specialist services is not dependent on a victim's willingness to lodge a complaint, and that appropriate and age-specific support is extended to children, including child witnesses.

Ana Maria Peláez Narváez, UN CEDAW Committee member, Vice-President of the European Disability Forum, and Executive Vice-President of CERMI Women's Foundation (Spain), discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women with disabilities.

In her intervention, Ms Peláez Narváez recalled the CEDAW Committee's [Guidance Note on CEDAW and COVID-19](#) that called on states to ensure that measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic do not directly or indirectly discriminate against women and girls, enable women's socio-economic

empowerment, and guarantee their participation in policy and decision making in all crisis responses and recovery efforts.

She continued to highlight areas where women with disabilities have been disproportionately and differentially affected by restrictions on freedom of movement and physical distancing in the context of COVID-19.

Firstly, given that information about the pandemic was largely disseminated through the use of information technologies, women with disabilities experienced significant obstacles in access to information and communication. She underlined the need for information to be made accessible to women with disabilities, particularly those who are victims of violence.

Ms Peláez Narváez also discussed the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on women living in institutions that continue to be socially isolated despite restrictions having been lifted in many countries. She emphasised that institutions need to be monitored by independent mechanisms in order to ensure that abuses or violence are not perpetrated.

In relation to violence against women, women and girls with disabilities are always more exposed to violence, not just from their partners but also from their immediate environment – a situation exacerbated by lockdown measures. Furthermore, already inaccessible services such as sexual and reproductive health services were completely cut off to women with disabilities during the lockdown period.

Another issue affecting women with disabilities is access to education, as well as to employment. For example, alternatives available to working women – such as teleworking – are often not a possible solution for women with disabilities. Similarly, virtual education posed a major barrier to inclusive education for girls with disabilities.

Ms Peláez Narváez underlined the need for recovery plans to include positive action measures to address the impact of the pandemic on women with disabilities, in close consultation with representative organisations. In addition, data collection and studies on the impact of the crisis must include the intersecting variables of sex and disability in order to inform pandemic recovery policies that take the specific needs of women with disabilities into account.

Conclusions

The seminar highlighted the diverse ways in which the current health crisis – as with previous crises – has impacted women, drawing on emerging research and the experience of civil society organisations and gender equality mechanisms across Europe. As COVID-19 continues to affect lives and livelihoods around the world, evidence shows that the pandemic and its fallout are having a regressive effect on gender equality. Indeed, several speakers warned that the pandemic threatens to restrict or roll back women's and girls' fundamental human rights. In this context, the role of institutional mechanisms for gender equality becomes all the more important in adopting measures to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the crisis on women.

Areas of concern raised during the seminar included the impact of restrictions and social isolation on the 'hidden pandemic' of violence against women and domestic violence, with a dramatic rise in reporting during the lockdown period. This took place in a context of increasing resistance in many countries party to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. While a number of measures were taken to ensure access to victim support services in many countries, women experiencing multiple vulnerability – including migrant and refugee women, and women with disabilities – faced additional barriers in accessing these services.

Another recurring issue highlighted during the seminar was the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, given that they are overrepresented in those sectors providing essential services, but also due to the increased burden of care work. Speakers highlighted the need to 're-value' care professions dominated by women, which are largely invisible, underpaid, and insecure. At the same time, it was stressed that measures taken in response to the crisis often did not take into account women and girls with disabilities, who already faced significant barriers in accessing education and employment. Furthermore, measures to offset the economic impact of the crisis failed to respond to the challenges faced by migrant women, who are overrepresented in the informal sector and therefore at higher risk of unemployment.

Seminar speakers underlined that the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to build more equal, inclusive and resilient economies and societies. Speakers emphasised the need to integrate gender equality in crisis and post-crisis response measures and recovery plans. The collection of sex-disaggregated data on the impact of the crisis on women, as well as on women experiencing intersecting inequality, is of vital importance in order to inform policies that consider the specific needs and experiences of women. Essential in this respect is women's access to, and participation in, decision making in response to and recovery from the pandemic crisis.

Speakers recalled important tools available to governments including the [Council of Europe COVID-19 Toolkit](#) and the Organisation's [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#). Equally important is the key role of the Istanbul Convention in adopting a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and human rights-based response to the crisis.

Seminar recommendations

A number of recommendations were brought forward by the seminar participants along the main themes addressed during this online event. The Council of Europe may want to consider assessing existing standards in these fields with a view to taking further action.

Institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming

- ▶ Strengthen institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality, including by ensuring that such bodies have sufficient power and financial/human resources to carry out their mandate.
- ▶ Ensure that the mandate and capacity of these bodies allow them to influence the development of all government policies, to formulate and review legislation, and to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of government decisions, while involving civil society organisations and social partners.
- ▶ Ensure that gender equality remains a policy priority and is mainstreamed in other policy areas through the practical use of the gender mainstreaming methods and tools, as well as through developing and enhancing synergies with other ministries/government bodies.

Violence against women and domestic violence

- ▶ Fully implement the Council of Europe Convention on the Preventing and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and particularly its provisions on general and specialist services for victims of violence and their children. The convention must play a key role in adopting a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and human rights-based response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ Strengthen services for women who experience violence during the COVID-19 crisis by ensuring sufficient long-term financial support to specialist women's organisations to meet the increased demand for essential services and emergency shelter.
- ▶ Ensure access to information and essential services to all women, including those experiencing intersectional inequality and discrimination, such as migrant and refugee women, elderly women, and women with disabilities.

Women's economic empowerment/employment

- ▶ Analyse and assess the different impact of the pandemic on women and men in order to enable the design of gender-fair bailouts, subsidies and other economic recovery measures.
- ▶ Ensure an adequate minimum wage and social security for part-time, flexible and other forms of non-standard employment.
- ▶ Implement measures to support the reconciliation of paid work with family/care responsibilities for both women and men.
- ▶ Invest in gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure to work in a long-term and inclusive way.

Integrating gender equality in (post-)crisis response measures

- ▶ Ensure the regular production of sex-disaggregated statistics at the national level, and promote research and studies on the impact of the crisis on women, including women experiencing intersectional inequality and discrimination.
- ▶ Ensure that sex-disaggregated data is used to establish targets and indicators in crisis and post-crisis response measures and recovery plans.
- ▶ Ensure that gender equality mechanisms and women's organisations participate in decision-making processes around long-term recovery, so that the needs and concerns of women and girls are included in national pandemic response plans.

” The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to restrict or roll back women’s and girls’ fundamental human rights. In this context, the role of institutional mechanisms for gender equality becomes all the more important in adopting measures to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the crisis on women.

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