

THE PLACE OF MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND IN POLICIES TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

GUIDELINES



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adopted by the Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe
on 5 June 2023

French edition:

*Lignes directrices sur la place des
hommes et des garçons dans les
politiques d'égalité de genre et
les politiques pour combattre la
violence à l'égard des femmes*

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Guidelines CM(2023)51-add2-final

on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women

(adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 5 June 2023)

Preamble

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1),

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its member States, *inter alia* by promoting common standards and developing action in the field of human rights;

Recalling that gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy and good governance, respect for the rule of law and the promotion of well-being for all; that it entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, and the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation in all spheres of public and private life; and that it implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men, as set out in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023;

Considering that men have a major role to play in eradicating gender-based inequality and violence against women and that their involvement in building an equal society is of medium- and long-term benefit to women, men, girls, boys and society as a whole;

Considering that the issue of how men and boys can contribute to and benefit from gender equality has gained increased visibility in recent years and taking into account the need to provide a policy framework for measures in this area, based on existing standards and policies;

Recalling that there are still structural obstacles preventing the full realisation of gender equality and women's rights in society; that violence against women and girls remains the most widespread violation of women's human rights; that political activities and public decision making remain male-dominated areas and that women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, which has an impact on their access to the labour market, to quality employment, decision making and other opportunities;

Bearing in mind the obligations and commitments as undertaken by States in line with relevant Council of Europe conventions, such as:

- the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5, 1950);
- the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35, 1961, revised in 1996, ETS No. 163);
- the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197, 2005);
- the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, "Lanzarote Convention", 2007);
- the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention", 2011);

Recalling the following recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States of the Council of Europe:

- Recommendation No. R (90) 4 on the elimination of sexism from language;
- Recommendation No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life;
- Recommendation [Rec\(2002\)5](#) on the protection of women against violence;
- Recommendation [Rec\(2003\)3](#) on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
- Recommendation [Rec\(2006\)19](#) on policy to support positive parenting;
- Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)13](#) on gender mainstreaming in education;
- Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms;
- Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2010\)10](#) on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building;
- Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2013\)1](#) on gender equality and media;

- – Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2015\)2](#) on gender mainstreaming in sport;
- – Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)1](#) on preventing and combating sexism;

Taking account of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023;

Recalling:

- the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and its optional protocol (1999);
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995);
- the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (2000) and subsequent United Nations Security Council resolutions on this topic;
- the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development;
- the report “Review of promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and United Nations and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women” adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (2018);

Stressing that patriarchy, as a system that creates and reinforces structural inequalities between women and men, is still pervasive in Europe and continues to severely limit the opportunities and well-being of women and girls, as well as men and boys, with a negative impact on societies, policy making and international relations, including on how issues such as peace, social justice and climate change are addressed;

Noting that the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced existing gender inequalities while generating new forms of disadvantage and exclusion;

Stressing that men’s and women’s diversity – in terms of race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status – should be taken into account when defining the place and contribution of men and boys in policies and measures to promote gender equality and to combat violence against women and girls, and when implementing those policies and measures;

Recognising that the individual and collective conduct of men and boys is crucial for the full achievement of gender equality and women's and girls' rights, that their actions or inaction can accelerate, slow or reverse progress towards equality and that men and boys should increasingly become agents of change, with men in positions of power having a particular responsibility in this regard;

Noting that men and boys can be subject to gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes which can limit their opportunities in public and private life; that certain codes of masculinity can also negatively affect the lives of men and boys, particularly as victims and/or perpetrators of violence, or in adopting behaviour that can be prejudicial to themselves and/or to women and girls; and that men and boys are, therefore, beneficiaries of gender equality in their own right;

Affirming that the ultimate goal of strategies and programmes relating to the place of men and boys in gender equality policies is to achieve gender equality in society and to eliminate all forms of discrimination, sexism and violence against women and girls, including by transforming discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes and promoting non-violent, respectful and equal gender relations,

1. Adopts the following guidelines to serve as a practical framework for the member States, to assist them in strengthening strategies and measures on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women and girls;
2. Invites member States to:
 - ensure that these guidelines are translated into their official language(s) and widely disseminated in a way they consider appropriate to encourage their implementation by all relevant authorities;
 - assess progress in their implementation and inform the competent Council of Europe steering committee(s) of the measures undertaken and the progress achieved in this field.

Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women

I. Objectives and fundamental principles

A. Objectives

1. The aim of these guidelines is to establish fundamental principles to be considered by member States when drawing up strategies, legislation and other measures relating to the place of men and boys in gender equality policies, including care policies and to their place in policies to combat violence against women and girls, and to suggest strategies and practical measures to member States in this regard.
2. The guidelines form part of the process of implementation of the rights and principles enshrined in European and international conventions, standards and policies concerning gender equality and women's rights, in the context of continuous backlash in this area. In particular, antifeminist movements that undermine or challenge existing gender equality standards and policies threaten the realisation of the fundamental rights of all women and men.

B. Fundamental principles

3. "Gender equality entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation, in all spheres of public and private life. It also implies equal access to

and distribution of resources between women and men” (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023). The aim of gender equality policies is to promote substantive gender equality, including by empowering women, and by eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

4. Policies on the place of men and boys in gender equality should comply with international standards and criteria and the relevant instruments of the Council of Europe and should adopt a dual approach:

- specific measures, including positive action when appropriate, in areas critical for the achievement of *de facto* gender equality; and
- the implementation of a gender mainstreaming perspective in all policies and measures.

5. Measures to involve men and boys in gender equality policies should be integrated into comprehensive gender equality standards and policy frameworks and aim to challenge structural inequalities.

6. Measures regarding men and boys should include an intersectional approach, that is one combining the effects of systems of exclusion and disadvantages linked to aspects other than sex and gender, such as race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status or any other status.

7. Measures involving men and boys should serve to reinforce and not replace gender equality policies primarily targeting women and girls or the specific approaches of feminist movements that provide for women-only spaces and women-focused programmes. Measures should acknowledge the leading role of women and girls in making progress towards gender equality and combating violence against women and girls.

8. Measures involving men and boys should not have a negative impact on the visibility of women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and should not compromise the opportunities and resources assigned to promoting women’s and girls’ rights and combating violence against women and girls.

9. Without diverting resources from the promotion of women’s and girls’ rights, empowerment and leadership and the prevention and combating of violence against women, in particular women-only domestic violence shelters, member States should allocate additional funding to measures involving men

and boys aimed at achieving gender equality and strengthening women's and girls' rights. They should further ensure that measures taken in this regard are regularly assessed.

10. Measures involving men and boys should be designed in co-operation with relevant organisations working with men and boys actively combating gender inequalities and violence against women and girls, as well as with relevant women's NGOs.

11. Gender norms, stereotypes and sexism regarding unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, with women carrying out a disproportionate share, need to be addressed in order to achieve an equal sharing of these responsibilities between women and men.

12. Measures concerning men and boys should address the fact that violence against women and girls is perpetrated primarily by men and boys and that they therefore have a particular role in the prevention of such violence. Although women and girls are affected disproportionately by domestic violence, men and boys may also be victims. Special attention should be given to those provisions of the Istanbul Convention that address the role of men and boys, particularly in the area of prevention, including as decision makers, role models, agents of change and advocates for gender equality.

13. Legislation, policies and other measures adopted by member States should be evidence based and reflect current, relevant and accurate scientific data and research in the area of gender equality, women's and girls' rights and combating violence against women and girls.

II. Proposed measures for member States

14. Member States may devise the following types of measures according to the objective pursued:

- measures focusing on men and boys as agents of change and countering resistance to gender equality;
- measures to reduce the negative impact of sexism, social norms and gender stereotypes on men and boys;
- measures focusing on men and boys for the promotion of gender equality in care;
- measures to strengthen the role of men and boys in action to prevent and combat violence against women; and

- measures to promote the development and dissemination of scientific research and data on gender equality and women’s rights.

15. In addition to the proposed measures below, member States should also ensure the full application of relevant provisions of various recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States, including Recommendation No. R (90) 4 on the elimination of sexism from language, Recommendation No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life, Recommendation [Rec\(2002\)5](#) on the protection of women against violence, Recommendation [Rec\(2003\)3](#) on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, Recommendation [Rec\(2006\)19](#) on policy to support positive parenting, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)13](#) on gender mainstreaming in education, [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2010\)10](#) on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2013\)1](#) on gender equality and media, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2015\)2](#) on gender mainstreaming in sport and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)1](#) on preventing and combating sexism.

A. Measures focusing on men and boys as agents of change and on countering resistance to gender equality

16. As stated in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023: “Political activities and public decision-making remain male-dominated areas. Men set political priorities, and political culture continues to be structured around male behaviour and life experience.” It is therefore important to improve the accountability of political leaders vis-à-vis commitments to gender equality and women’s rights at all levels. Men in power in other areas, such as in business and in the media, can also play an important role in promoting gender equality and women’s rights through their decision-making power, resources and influence.

17. Patriarchy is often the root cause of harmful gender norms and behaviour. Patriarchy also has a negative impact on policy formulation and decision-making outcomes at all levels. This needs to be taken into account to ensure that men and boys play a transformative role in achieving gender equality.

18. Misogynist online and offline spaces that oppose or challenge standards and principles in the area of gender equality and women’s rights are a growing concern for stakeholders and organisations that support gender equality and women’s rights. Appropriate measures are needed to counter this resistance

and to limit its impact. This requires improved knowledge and awareness of the various forms of resistance and opposition, the players involved, including certain political and religious ones, how they are financed and the potential threat that they constitute for democracy and human rights. This is even more important when different forces are contesting rights in other gender-related areas, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexuality education and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) persons. Opportunities should be sought to engage with agents of positive change, including those within political and religious movements, who wish to further gender equality and related priorities.

19. The governments of member States should consider adopting the following measures:

- a. secure commitment at the highest level to actively promote an institutional culture which rejects gender-based discrimination and violence against women, sexism, gender stereotypes and gendered power dynamics in the public and private sectors. Such measures could include:
 - the adoption and implementation of gender parity measures and quotas for political, public and private decision-making positions;
 - the adoption and implementation of codes of conduct that include redress mechanisms and sanctions, to provide guidance to public officials and staff in diverse settings;
 - the adoption by leaders of pledges or concrete targets related to promoting gender balance in decision making, combating gender-based discrimination and dedicating adequate funding for measures and programmes to promote gender equality and combat violence against women and girls;
 - public commitments to not holding or participating in public panels or decision-making bodies and in the planning of events which do not have a balanced participation of women and men.
- b. develop democratic and transparent monitoring mechanisms encouraging women and men involved in decision making at all levels, including heads of government and of political parties, to report on actions taken to implement national, European and international standards and commitments relating to gender equality and women's and girls' rights;

- c. identify, encourage and mobilise the voices of men in decision making, including politicians, diplomats, civil servants and members of the armed forces, in support of gender equality, women's engagement in international relations and the full implementation of existing international commitments on women, peace and security;
- d. take concrete steps to challenge and discredit misogynistic, domineering or violent leadership styles, in the public arena and at all levels, through awareness raising, research, training and codes of conduct;
- e. develop and support targeted training sessions for high-level political decision makers on human rights and gender equality, with a view to countering unconscious bias and raising awareness of existing standards and remaining challenges;
- f. encourage and support the adoption of internal policies and actions, as well as compulsory training on gender norms and stereotypes, gender equality, antidiscrimination, sexism, sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, targeting decision makers in private and public companies and services;
- g. in the context of government initiatives, issue clear public statements and information on why men and boys should be meaningfully involved in and support gender equality policies;
- h. promote sustainable and transparent consultation processes and partnerships with relevant women's NGOs and organisations working with men and boys which are active in promoting gender equality, in order to ensure their meaningful participation – as well as accountability and transparency – in the implementation of policies and initiatives to engage men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality;
- i. in close consultation with relevant women's NGOs and organisations working with men and boys, develop criteria for the design and funding of strategies and activities related to the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, including:
 - a stated objective to promote gender equality and full adherence to established international policies and standards on promoting gender equality and combating violence against women and girls;
 - safeguards to ensure that policies and activities to engage men and boys do not negatively affect the funding, legitimacy and

- visibility of programmes and organisations promoting women’s and girls’ rights, empowerment and leadership;
- safeguards to ensure that activities are evidence based and reflect current, relevant and accurate scientific data and research in the areas of gender equality and combating violence against women and girls;
- j. support organisations, projects and programmes that fulfil the above criteria, including training activities to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality;
- k. take measures to ensure the safety and protection of teachers and other professionals who devise and implement gender equality programmes – particularly with children and young people – and who may be the target of attacks by antifeminist groups;
- l. take measures to identify and understand the strategies used by regressive movements, including antifeminist movements and online misogynist spaces, to oppose gender equality and implement preventive interventions to limit their potential to recruit, obtain financing, cause harm and have a negative impact on democracy, political and public discourse and gender equality policies;
- m. encourage the organisation of public lectures, seminars, conferences and awareness-raising campaigns to deconstruct and challenge misogynistic and sexist discourse, as well as myths and misconceptions about gender equality policies and feminist movements;
- n. invite relevant bodies working at national level to adopt a gendered approach to counter-terrorism and to preventing violent extremism, focusing *inter alia* on the links between violent antifeminist movements and terrorism.

B. Measures to reduce the negative impact of sexism, social norms and gender stereotypes on men and boys

20. In 2021, in European Union countries for example, the proportion of early leavers from education and training was slightly higher for young men than for young women (those considered were individuals aged 18 to 24 who had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training at the time of the survey). Early school leavers face a higher risk of unemployment, social exclusion and poverty. Factors affecting early school leaving can include the young person’s socio-economic and

migration background and some groups of young men are more likely to drop out of school in order to seek paid employment. A gender mainstreaming and intersectional approach should therefore be adopted to address this issue.

21. Social norms and stereotypes also affect the health status of women and men differently. Men are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviour because of stereotypical images of men and masculinity, resulting in increased street violence, alcohol abuse and suicide rates. Men also have differing sexual and reproductive health needs, including in relation to contraception, prevention and treatment of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as cancers that affect men. Yet these needs are often unfulfilled due to a combination of factors, including poor health-seeking behaviour among men.

22. Comprehensive sexuality education has positive effects on both boys and girls and can contribute to conveying strong messages in favour of gender equality, eliminating patriarchal patterns, promoting non-stereotyped gender roles and developing respectful social and sexual relationships, including as regards sexual consent. It may also reduce high-risk sexual behaviour, particularly among young men; promote the use of contraception, including equal sharing of responsibility regarding its use; and help prevent the risk of HIV and other STDs.

23. Societal expectations and gender norms around masculinity are linked to men's greater likelihood to engage in violence and participate in extremist groups. Men and boys are also vulnerable to violence and abuse by other men, including in war-related violence and as victims of homicide and violence related to racial and ethnic discrimination.

24. Strategies and programmes on men and boys in gender equality policies should provide a vision of the benefits of promoting non-violent or positive forms of masculinity and on how these may strengthen the role and place of men and boys in society.

25. The governments of the member States should consider adopting the following measures:

- a. introducing evidence-based policies and measures to combat school dropout rates and early school leaving, adopting an intersectional approach to explore how gender may intersect with other factors;
- b. recognising and challenging gender stereotypes and sexism in teaching and learning (including low expectations of boys'

achievement) and developing gender-sensitive teaching practices that are more conducive to motivating and engaging boys and girls. Measures should include concrete actions, within and outside education systems, to raise awareness and promote the development of critical thinking to counter sexism in the content, language and illustrations of toys, comics, books, television programmes, video and other games, online content and films, including pornography;

- c. including in the official curriculum of all levels of education, teaching material on issues such as the principles of gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, violence against women and girls and the right to personal integrity;
- d. ensuring that comprehensive sexuality education is mandatory, sufficiently resourced and mainstreamed across the education system from the early years of school. It should include teaching on gender norms and stereotypes, the meaning of consent and responsible behaviour in intimate relationships;
- e. regularly evaluating and revising sexuality education curriculums, to ensure that they are accurate, evidence based and meet the existing needs of both girls and boys;
- f. implementing measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to abandon sexist behaviour and gender stereotypes and to adopt respectful and healthy behaviour, notably in the digital sphere, and particularly in relation to young women and girls, and women journalists, politicians, public figures and human rights defenders;
- g. adopting policies and measures, including programmes targeting youth, both in and outside of formal education, to address gender stereotypes and harmful manifestations of masculinity, including male violence against men and boys and its consequences;
- h. making visible the societal and financial costs of harmful masculinity, particularly in relation to perpetration of and exposure to violence, risks to health including mental health and well-being, high-risk behaviour, the risk of suicide and dissatisfaction with life;
- i. ensuring the availability and accessibility of support services for men and boys who experience violence, including domestic violence, as well as access to appropriate health and social services and ensuring that professionals are trained to assist victims. Such services should

be adequately resourced without diverting resources from services designed to promote the rights, empowerment and leadership of women and girls;

- j. implementing evidence-based public health policies and developing health promotion programmes, including awareness-raising campaigns and information activities, which address the needs of men and boys, based on an intersectional analysis. This includes campaigns targeting men and boys to improve their use of healthcare services, including mental health, cancer-screening, vaccination and sexual and reproductive health services;
- k. promoting the inclusion of gender equality in initial and in-service training programmes for all professionals in the education, health, social welfare and care sectors, including on transforming gender norms and promoting positive behavioural changes.

C. Measures focusing on men and boys for the promotion of gender equality in care

26. The gendered division of paid and unpaid work, in particular the persistent unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men, is a significant obstacle to gender equality. For example, before the Covid-19 outbreak, women in European Union countries spent sixteen hours more than men every week on unpaid care work and housework. The equal involvement of men in paid and unpaid care is an important aspect of transforming gender roles and relations. Effective and proactive strategies, policies and programmes are needed to ensure gender equality in relation to care, including enhancing the role of public authorities and private sector entities, and involving men and women equally in care and other unpaid work.

27. Tackling sexism and entrenched gender norms and stereotypes is crucial to addressing the low participation of men in paid and unpaid care activities, including through educational and awareness-raising activities and measures to promote equal parenting.

28. The governments of member States should consider adopting the following measures:

- a. contributing to the development of a so-called Care Deal in Council of Europe member States, by promoting care as a responsibility of the State and an equally shared responsibility between men and women. Such a Care Deal also requires the implementation of co-ordinated

and structural measures to develop accessible, affordable and quality care services for children, the elderly and other dependants, taking into account the needs of single parents, and to improve working conditions in the care sector, including remuneration levels and job security;

- b. promoting society's shared responsibility in caring for others and the equal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men. Such measures could include, among others:
 - introducing paid paternity leave;
 - introducing non-transferable paid parental leave and care leave for other dependants, accessible to all workers;
 - introducing flexible working arrangements for both women and men;
 - introducing a right to disconnect from work for all workers;
 - reviewing tax systems so that they contribute to an equal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities between women and men;
- c. encouraging employers in the public and private sectors, as well as social partners, to promote concrete voluntary measures conducive to an equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, as well as to a work–life balance for women and men. Such measures may include:
 - offering better care-leave arrangements and flexible working conditions than those provided by law to all workers, both women and men, and applicable regardless of position;
 - eliminating gender stereotypes and sexism against family members serving as carers;
 - offering or supporting quality and affordable childcare facilities;
 - promoting the exchange of successful company practices;
- d. taking legislative and other measures to encourage reporting by all employers on gender equality, including on the working conditions of women and men, equal pay, policies to reconcile work and private life, and the equal access of women and men to decision-making positions. The specific characteristics of small and medium-sized companies should be considered when determining gender equality reporting requirements;

- e. promoting and disseminating diverse and non-stereotypical portrayals of parenthood, including in educational, social welfare and healthcare settings. This can also be achieved through public communication and family policy measures which target parents in a non-stereotypical manner, sending a strong message that promotes care as the shared responsibility of women and men;
- f. carrying out awareness-raising and media campaigns with messages adapted to different population groups in order to promote a better understanding of unpaid care work and its value and to address gender stereotypes that exist among the general public and hinder the equal sharing of care work between women and men;
- g. adopting systematic approaches and mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the impact of measures aiming at engaging men and boys in the areas of unpaid care work, social norms and gender stereotypes;
- h. addressing gender stereotypes in career choices through the development of innovative pedagogical tools, materials and activities for teachers and career guidance counsellors, to eliminate gender-stereotypical expectations and behaviour among boys and girls; raising awareness among educational and care services for children of the importance of avoiding gender stereotypes in the roles that are attributed to male and female caregivers and employees;
- i. taking steps to adequately measure and value care work, its contribution to the economy and the gross domestic product (GDP) and to social well-being, by increasing the visibility of carers and the role they play, improving the quality of jobs in the care sector and ensuring an adequate level of pay, social protection and labour rights as well as opportunities for development and promotion. Such measures should also encourage more men to choose careers in care by increasing the visibility of male role models in the sector.

D. Measures to strengthen the role of men and boys in actions to prevent and combat violence against women

29. While not all men are perpetrators of violence, violence against women is a manifestation of the unequal power relations between women and men and has an impact on society as a whole. Men and boys have an essential role to play in combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including as allies, witnesses or bystanders.

30. Impunity for perpetrators of acts of violence against women and girls is still one of the major challenges to be addressed. The question of the effectiveness of sanctions as provided for by existing international standards, including the Istanbul Convention, should be addressed in measures relating to men and gender equality.

31. The occurrence of domestic violence should be an essential factor when determining child custody and visitation rights, as required by Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention, as domestic violence has a direct impact on children's safety, development and well-being. The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), the independent group of experts monitoring the level of implementation of the Istanbul Convention, has noted in several baseline evaluation reports that parties tend to give priority to an understanding of the "best interest of the child" as the right to maintain contact with both parents at all costs, regardless of the violence to which children have been exposed. Furthermore, the "parental alienation syndrome", a concept challenged by the scientific community, has been instrumentalised in family courts to negate allegations of domestic and sexual violence and to deny mothers' claims for child custody, granting custody rather to fathers accused or convicted of domestic violence.

32. The governments of member States should consider adopting the following measures:

- a. developing and implementing systematic and sustainable violence prevention initiatives and interventions regarding all forms of online and offline violence against women and girls, throughout the country, specifically among men and boys in both formal and informal education programmes, as well as among the general public;
- b. involving men and boys in all programmes to prevent gender-based violence as agents for change, both as allies and as targets;
- c. devising and implementing interventions that contribute to creating peer environments, especially among young men and boys, which promote non-violent masculinity and in which they feel safe to open up and assume responsibility for men's violence against women and girls, including as perpetrators, witnesses or bystanders;
- d. supporting the implementation of violence bystander intervention programmes, particularly in secondary and tertiary education settings, which are grounded in a gender-transformative approach and which provide men and boys with the knowledge and skills to challenge their

peers safely and effectively. Such programmes should be thoroughly evaluated to measure both attitudinal and behavioural change over time;

- e. addressing impunity for all forms of violence against women and girls by taking measures to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in State responses to perpetrators of such violence, to promote accountability of State agencies, encourage increased reporting and monitor conviction rates for offences covered by the Istanbul Convention;
- f. taking measures to increase the levels of attendance in domestic violence perpetrator programmes and treatment programmes for sex offenders. This can be achieved by integrating referrals to perpetrator programmes into the criminal justice system as a tool to reduce recidivism, while ensuring that such referrals do not replace prosecution, conviction or sentencing;
- g. drafting guidelines for the operation of perpetrator programmes to ensure baseline quality standards and to ensure a victim-centred approach with regard to victims' safety, support and human rights. Member States may consider adopting an accreditation process to ensure such standards, including those set out in the Istanbul Convention;
- h. providing or strengthening systematic initial and in-service training for relevant professionals, including police personnel, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, healthcare professionals and social workers, on all forms of violence against women and girls, on the prevention and detection of such violence, the needs and rights of victims and on how to prevent secondary victimisation. Such training needs to be based on up-to-date and clear protocols and guidelines based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence;
- i. providing and encouraging court-appointed professionals, including health professionals, to undertake initial and ongoing training on all forms of violence against women and girls, including on the effects of such violence on victims, and the impact of violence on children, in order to enable them to provide evidence-based, expert advice in family law proceedings;
- j. taking measures to prevent and address gender bias in courts and in family law proceedings, such as the use of the "parental alienation

syndrome” in child custody cases. In particular, specialised training and awareness-raising activities should be aimed at all legal professionals, including the judiciary, on upholding the principle of the best interest of the child and the principle of gender equality, in line with existing international and European standards to be applied at the national level;

- k. developing integrated and co-ordinated strategies to address the demand that fosters the trafficking and exploitation of women and girls, including by conducting public surveys on the prevalence of, motivation for and factors associated with paying for sex among men, and through awareness-raising and information campaigns targeting men and boys;
- l. encouraging diverse stakeholders, such as sports and cultural institutions, public transportation services and private companies including shopping centres, restaurants and bars, to develop communication and information campaigns targeting men and boys on the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

E. Measures to promote the development and dissemination of scientific research and data on gender equality and women’s rights

33. Age and sex disaggregated data are often not systematically collected or available across policy sectors. Reliable and comparable data are essential to accurately assess progress on key gender equality indicators, to identify those most affected and to assess how gender inequalities intersect with other forms of discrimination. Robust data enable governments to better design, adapt, monitor and evaluate policies and to address the specific needs of both women and men.

34. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that research and tertiary education institutions reproduce social values leading to gender inequalities and that unconscious or implicit bias may impede objective research design and analysis. Data resulting from gender bias in research can be exploited to undermine progress on gender equality and women’s rights.

35. The governments of the member States should consider adopting the following measures:

- a. promoting gender equality in scientific research using sex-disaggregated data, as well as the integration of the gender dimension in research methodology and analysis, ensuring that such analyses are used and disseminated appropriately and feed into policies and measures to promote gender equality;
- b. promoting and strengthening scientific research that includes an intersectional approach to gender inequalities in order to better inform policy measures, by including other demographic variables in the research methodology;
- c. building institutional capacity to collect robust and reliable age- and sex-disaggregated data, and other variables as needed and appropriate, across policy sectors. Governments should consider allocating funding to those bodies and organisations that collect such data, including, for example national statistical offices and research institutes carrying out large-scale surveys, as well as equality bodies, public institutions and civil society organisations that carry out targeted surveys on the needs and experiences of women and girls, and men and boys;
- d. systematically collecting and analysing age- and sex-disaggregated data on the distribution and type of unpaid care work carried out by women and men, including through time-use surveys at regular intervals, in order to better understand and monitor changes in the distribution of unpaid care work between men and women and their links with policies and programmes;
- e. using gender budgeting tools to promote taxation and budgetary policies that contribute to gender equality, including assessments at regular intervals of the economic value of unpaid care work as a percentage of GDP, and widely disseminating the results of such assessments;
- f. promoting and supporting research on men's and boys' perceptions of gender equality and women's rights in order to inform equality policy stakeholders and raise public awareness, particularly among men, both of the pace of change and the diverse attitudes of men with regard to gender equality and women's rights;
- g. promoting and strengthening the use of gender-sensitive language and communication, for example by producing training material and tools.

III. Reporting and evaluation

36. Member States are invited to monitor their progress regarding the implementation of these guidelines and to inform the competent steering committee(s) of the measures taken and progress achieved.

37. Reporting should be regular and include information on:

- strategies, measures, programmes and promising practices that address the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women and girls;
- research undertaken and supported to provide data on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women and girls, as well as the outcomes of any such research;
- national awareness-raising measures and campaigns undertaken at all levels, including regarding the media through which they were conducted.

“The role of men, in both the public and private spheres, is critical to make progress towards real gender equality. Men’s and boys’ participation and responsibility as actors of change for gender equality are very important”.

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