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WG-GEC-MB (2022) Report June

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)

**2nd meeting of the Working Group on the place of men and boys in gender
equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women
(WG-GEC-MB)**

Hybrid Format

28 June 2022

Report

1. Opening of the meeting and introductions

The Secretariat welcomed participants to the second meeting of the Working Group on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women (WG-GEC-MB). Working Group members and observers introduced themselves briefly. The Secretariat presented the agenda.

2. Objectives and working methods of the meeting

The Secretariat recalled that the text of the draft Guidelines ([WG-GEC-MB \(2022\) 1 rev](#)) was revised further to the discussions at the first meeting, and at the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), and taking into account the comments sent by two member States ([WG-GEC-MB \(2022\)1 rev](#)). The aim of the meeting was for the Working Group to go through the text and adopt it, before transmitting it to the GEC.

The [document](#) to be discussed by the Working Group highlighted revised text. While members were free to raise any issue, it was proposed that the Working Group only formally discuss new text. It was also proposed, and accepted, to review first the sections on “Objectives” and “Fundamental principles”, continue with the section on “Proposed measures for member States” and to look at the preamble at the end. Regarding the section on “Key concepts”, it was included in the draft, as requested by the Working Group, but its ultimate inclusion was to be discussed as it can be controversial.

The Secretariat informed the Working Group that there may be a possibility for the GEC to ask the Committee of Ministers to consider adopting the text as a Recommendation at the end of the process. This does not change the process or work of the Working Group as the two types of instruments have a similar structure and neither are binding. The important difference, however, is that a Recommendation would be adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

3. Discussion on the content of the Guidelines

The Working Group then proceeded to discuss the draft Guidelines, paragraph-by-paragraph, based on the document revised by Susana Pavlou the expert supporting the work of the Working Group, in consultation with the Secretariat.

Certain changes apply throughout the document: the term “anti-feminist” was added in front of “men’s rights movements”, as agreed during the first meeting and the order of “gender equality” and “women’s rights” was reversed at the request of Denmark.

Discussion on the Objectives and Fundamental principles

Regarding paragraph 22, Andreas Lunn, the representative of Denmark, regretted that the document did not stress enough that men and boys are beneficiaries of gender equality in their own right. The Secretariat answered that paragraph 22 mentioned men and boys and was essentially a quote from the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy.

The representative of Denmark expressed concern regarding the formulation “*should guarantee additional funding*” in paragraph 28, as Guidelines are not a legally binding document. Mary Collins, the representative of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) and Virginia Gil, the representative of the Women Against Violence Europe Network (WAVE), proposed to replace “*should guarantee*” by “*should ensure*”. This proposal was accepted by the Working Group.

The representative of Denmark and Lee Maripuu, the representative of Estonia, proposed to replace the terminology “organisations working with men and boys” by “men’s organisations” in paragraph 30, stating that not all women’s NGOs fight for gender equality. The representative of the EWL stressed that only relevant organisations, namely those supporting international standards and principles on gender equality should be consulted. The Secretariat explained that terminology around “men’s organisations” was sensitive to different degrees across Council of Europe member States and that it would therefore be more appropriate not to use it. The Working Group agreed on the formulation “relevant women’s NGOs and organisations working with men and boys”.

Regarding paragraph 32, which lists the (revised) titles of the different types of measures to be taken, the representative of Denmark questioned why issues regarding “countering resistance” were grouped together with care issues. The expert therefore suggested to include the issues related to countering resistance in section II of the measures. This proposal was accepted by the Working Group.

Discussion of the Proposed measures for member States

The Working Group discussed the wording used to introduce the measures at the beginning of each section. The representative of Denmark proposed to replace “The governments of member States *should adopt*” by “The governments of member States *are encouraged to adopt*”, in order to make the formulation less strong. Martina Bosak, the representative from Croatia and the representatives from the EWL and from the WAVE Network supported a strong formulation, taking into account that the Working Group is drafting guidelines and not even a recommendation. The Secretariat added that guidelines are not adopted by the Committee of Ministers and confirmed that even a recommendation would not be binding for the member States. As this is an important matter, the Working Group agreed to leave the decision on this choice of terminology to the GEC.

The representative of Denmark questioned the mention of a “Care Deal” in paragraph 36 and asked why a reference to “Europe” was included in this paragraph. The Secretariat explained that this inclusion was a request from the first meeting of the Working Group, that the meaning of such “Care Deal” was explained in the content of the paragraph and that the mention of “Europe” was included because the European region was the geographical scope of Council of Europe guidelines. The Secretariat proposed to reverse the order of the sentences to clarify this, and to use the wording “Care Deal in Council of Europe member States”. These suggestions were accepted by the Working Group.

Regarding paragraph 37, the representative of Denmark said that the government of Denmark could not “adopt legislation”, due to the role of social partners and that he therefore could not agree with this formulation. The representative of Denmark also did not agree with the content of the proposed measures, including in relation to paternity and parental leaves. Several other members of the Working Group remarked that the formulation “such measures *may* include” left some flexibility to member States and that the content of the paragraph corresponded to the content of European Union directives in this area. The Working Group agreed to keep the wording of paragraph 37 as proposed.

The Working Group agreed to add a mention of the “public sector” in paragraph 38.

The Working Group agreed to add “misogynistic and sexist discourses” to paragraph 48.

As agreed during the discussion on titles/structures, paragraphs 48, 49 and 50 would be moved to section II of the measures.

Regarding paragraph 53, the Working Group agreed to include the term “gender power dynamics” upon suggestion by the representative of Croatia.

Relating to paragraph 54, the representative of Denmark voiced concern about missing information about the type of reporting that was meant. The Secretariat explained that the paragraph had been drafted in a general way, in order to enable member States to choose the reporting modalities that would be more appropriate to the national context.

Paragraph 55 was discussed at length, especially the use of the term “gender transformative”, but no satisfying drafting solution could be found. The Working Group therefore asked the Secretariat to make a proposal in the draft that will be submitted to the GEC.

The wording of paragraph 56 was changed to reflect issues that became more prominent due to the war in Ukraine (addition of diplomats and of members of the armed forces). The Working Group agreed with these additions.

In paragraph 57, it was agreed to replace the wording “gender transformative” by a reference to “unequal power relations and gender norms”.

Regarding paragraph 58, the representative of Croatia proposed to add the terms “gender norms and stereotypes”. The Working Group agreed with this proposal.

Concerning paragraphs 60 and 61, the representative of Denmark asked for the term “men’s organisations” to be included. The expert recalled the discussion about paragraph 30 and added that the term “men’s organisations” was more restrictive than the formulation used in the text, namely “organisations working with men and boys”, because other organisations, such as sports and youth organisations, also often work on gender equality issues with men and boys. The Working Group agreed to use the same formulation in paragraphs 30, 60 and 61.

Regarding paragraph 63, the Working Group discussed whether references to women should be included. The representatives of Denmark and of Estonia preferred to avoid any mention of women. Other Working Group members insisted on keeping a reference to the broader context and to the different impacts for women and men of early school leaving, in terms for example of equal pay or labour market segregation. The Working Group agreed to ask the Secretariat to propose a formulation reflecting these discussions in the document to be submitted to the GEC.

The Working Group agreed to add a paragraph in the introduction to section III that would reflect the issues mentioned in paragraphs 69 and 70.

A discussion took place on paragraph 93 and on the variables that should be included regarding data disaggregation (by age, sex, gender, disability, etc.). The expert explained that age and sex had been included because they were the least sensitive variables, and they provided the most relevant information in this context. It would, however, be difficult to include other factors because the list would never be exhaustive. The Working Group agreed to add the terms “and other variables as needed and appropriate” to the text.

Discussion on the Key concepts

After a discussion, the Working Group decided not to include key concepts in the draft Guidelines, because of the absence of agreed/consensual definitions for some of the terms, such as “patriarchy”. It was also stressed that the different concepts were already explained in the introductory paragraphs.

Discussion on the Preamble of the draft Guidelines

The representative of Denmark asked for the removal of the references to “peace, social justice and climate change” in paragraph 8. Several other members of the Working Group stressed that these issues represented the most pressing issues of our time and were closely related to gender equality and should therefore be kept. The Working Group agreed to keep these references. Additionally, the Working Group agreed to the proposal from the representative of Denmark to add a reference to “gender norms” in paragraph 8.

The representative of Denmark asked for the deletion of the word “some” before “men and boys” in paragraph 12, stressing that all men and boys are subject to inequalities and stereotypes. Additionally, several Working Group members expressed their concern about the terms “may be collateral victims of gender inequalities” in paragraph 12. The Working Group agreed to change the wording to “may be subject to gender inequalities”.

The representative of Denmark asked for a clearer reference to be made in the preamble to the fact that men and boys are beneficiaries of gender equality in their own right. After some discussions, this proposal was accepted by the Working Group.

The Working Group adopted the draft Guidelines as revised.

4. Presentation by Tatiana Moura, Researcher, and Coordinator of the Observatory on Masculinities, Coimbra, Portugal and partner of Equimundo

In her [presentation](#), Tatiana Moura focused on relevant activities by Equimundo (formerly named Promundo-US) on men and boys and gender equality. She explained that the organisation had decided to change its name with the expansion of its geographical reach and diversification of its partnerships. Equimundo aims at achieving gender equality and social justice by transforming intergenerational patterns of harm and promoting patterns of care, empathy and accountability among boys and men.

Tatiana Moura presented the different initiatives that Equimundo implemented over the past decades. Relevant activities include the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) which represents a snapshot of men’s attitudes, knowledge and behaviours towards gender equality, violence and care in over 45 countries; initiatives on fatherhood, like the Men Care Campaign, the bi-annually published Report on the State of the World Fathers, and the Programme P on promoting men’s involvement at all stages of fatherhood; and programmes on preventing violence through youth and intergenerational programming.

One of Equimundo’s most important policy initiatives is the “50/50 rule - Men Care Commitment”: 50 minutes more care work by men per day would accelerate men’s uptake of unpaid care work by 50 per cent.

Concerning the draft Guidelines Tatiana Moura expressed her appreciation of the text, stressing in particular how important the equal sharing of unpaid care work between women and men was. She added that equal parental leave was a crucial policy measure in this respect.

Tatiana Moura also stressed that one of the challenges that she thought should be included in the draft Guidelines was the backlash against gender equality, including attacks against feminist activists and against people promoting gender equality particularly among children and youth.

5. Presentation by Khamsavath Chanthavysouk, UN Women

Khamsavath Chanthavysouk presented the relevant aspects of UN Women's new Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which aims at looking beyond engaging men and boys and instead at transforming "patriarchal masculinities". He stressed that this work should be grounded in feminist principles and women's rights and should not take anything away from women's empowerment, including taking into account the risks posed by men's rights' groups.

UN Women had been implementing work on engaging men and boys in policy and programmes with varying degrees of success and with no defined approach, but social norms and engagement of men and boys were viewed as a critical lever of change in the new Strategic plan. There was therefore a need to consolidate the lessons learned from the last ten years of UN Women working with men and boys for gender equality.

The UN Women Strategic Plan (2022 -2025) commits to a vision of achieving gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, ending violence against women and girls and the enjoyment of human rights. In this context the work on men and boys should echo this ambition, in terms of a high need for coordination and for securing systemic and structural change across all thematic areas, especially around ending violence against women and girls. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk added that it was necessary to innovate in response to "re-energised patriarchies".

He explained that patriarchal masculinities (i.e., the ideas about and practices of masculinities that emphasise the superiority and power of men over women) are expressed individually (in attitudes and behaviours), institutionally (in policies and practices) and ideologically (in social norms and cultural narratives). It was also necessary to recognise that the attributes that grant men patriarchal privileges also make them vulnerable (e.g., from lower life expectancy to mental health problems) and to recognise that men's patriarchal power is shaped by intersectional inequalities linked to sexuality, class, ethnicity, caste, citizenship, etc.

The UN Women review of the work with men and boys identified the following change agents:

- Men – recognising that there are men who see their interests as more closely aligned to those of women in their communities, than with other men and thus the need to link with other struggles for social justice (e.g., economic, climate, racial justice, etc.)
- elite men – in relation to accountability, in positions of economic, political and social power.

The review also identified six recommendations:

- Reframe work as Transforming Patriarchal Masculinities (TPM)
- Restate core feminist principles and emphases of TPM agenda
- Integrate TPM agenda and approach across thematic areas
- Innovate in response to reenergised patriarchies
- Communicate new narrative of TPM
- Collaborate with UN and civil society partners on TPM agenda.

Khamsavath Chanthavysouk also presented the integration of the work with men and boys in the RESPECT framework, which consists of seven implementation strategies to prevent violence against women, and the Learning Plan on preventing violence against women through addressing harmful masculinities.

Khamsavath Chanthavysouk concluded by saying that it was necessary to work with the system and with ideologies in order to change the system, taking into account that patriarchal practices evolve and are dynamic. In order to do this, UN Women was in the process of identifying entry points at different levels and in different areas, as well as enabling factors. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk also congratulated the Working Group on the text of the draft Guidelines.

The members of the Working Group thanked Tatiana Moura and Khamsavath Chanthavysouk for their very interesting and informative presentations, including innovative approaches and uses of terminology.

6. Next steps and closing.

The Secretariat proposed the following next steps to the Working Group:

- A meeting report will be drafted, sent to Working Group members and made available on the webpage of the Working Group;
- The Secretariat will revise and finalise the text on the basis of the discussions during the meeting and the draft Guidelines will be translated into French;
- The draft Guidelines will be transmitted to the GEC members and observers as well as to relevant internal and external stakeholders for consultation at the end of July/beginning of August. All recipients will have until mid-September to submit amendments;
- The draft Guidelines, together with the proposed amendments, will be sent to the GEC at the beginning of October;
- At the GEC meeting plenary on 16-18 November, at least half a day will be scheduled for the discussion and adoption of the Guidelines, which will then be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers.

The Working Group agreed to the proposed next steps and the meeting was concluded.

Appendix I Agenda

1.	10:00 -10:15 am	Welcome, objectives of the meeting and presentation of new participants	
2.	10:15 -11:15 am	Discussion of draft Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women	WG-GEC-MB (2022) 1 rev
11:15-11:30 am Coffee break			
4.	11:30 am -1:00 pm	Discussion of draft Guidelines (continued)	WG-GEC-MB (2022) 1 rev
1:00-2:30 pm Lunch break			
5.	2:30-3:00 pm	Presentation by Tatiana Moura, Researcher, and Coordinator of the Observatory on Masculinities (Equimundo partner- former Promundo US), University of Coimbra, Portugal followed by a discussion	
6.	3:00-3:30 pm	Presentation by Khamsavath Chanthavysouk, Policy Specialist, Ending Violence Against Women policy section, UN Women, followed by a discussion	
3:30-3:45 pm Coffee break			
7.	3:45-5:20 pm	Discussion of draft Guidelines (continued)	WG-GEC-MB (2022) 1 rev
8.	5:20-5:30 pm	Next steps and closing of the Working Group (Secretariat)	

Appendix II

List of Participants

Members

Armenia	Lilit Shakaryan Head of the Division of Co-operation with International Monitoring Bodies, Department of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Croatia	Martina Bosak Expert associate Government Office for Gender Equality
Denmark	Andreas Lunn Head of Section Department for Gender Equality, Ministry of Transport
Estonia	Lee Maripuu Head of Gender Equality Policy Equality Policies Department
Iceland	Rán Ingvarsdóttir Legal Advisor/Deputy Director Prime Minister's Office Department of Equality and Human Rights
Luxembourg	Ralph Kaas Senior Advisor 1 st Class, Ministry of Equality between Women and Men
Portugal	Andreia Lourenço Marques Chair, Gender Equality Commission International Relations Adviser Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality

Observers (NGOs)

European Women's Lobby (EWL)	Mary Collins Senior Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network	Virginia Gil Director, Foundation Aspacia, Spain Camelia Proca Founder and director of Association for Liberty and Gender Equality (A.L.E.G), Romania

Participants

Expert supporting the work of the Group	Susana Pavlou International gender equality expert, Director of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)
Observatory on Masculinities (Equimundo partner - former Promundo-US), University of Coimbra	Tatiana Moura Researcher and Coordinator of the Observatory on Masculinities
UN Women	Khamsavath Chanthavysouk Policy Specialist, Ending Violence Against Women Policy Section

Secretariat

Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance	Claudia Luciani Director
Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department	Roberto Olla Head of Department
Gender Equality Division	Caterina Bolognese Head of Division Cécile Gréboval Programme Manager Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Equality Adviser Secretary to the Working Group Tryggvi Hallgrímsson Policy Adviser Evrydiki Tseliou Administrative Assistant Hannah Hetgens Trainee