



Gender Equality Commission



CONFERENCE

Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring actions:
the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017

30 June – 1 July 2016
Tallinn, Estonia

REPORT



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*Please see the [Council of Europe Gender Equality website](#) to access all presentations made during the Conference.

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*The opinions expressed in this work are the
responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily
reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe*

Summary of the Report

Half way in the implementation of its Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017, the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) of the Council of Europe organised a conference on 30 June and 1 July 2016 in Tallinn, Estonia, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, in the context of Estonia's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The aim of the Conference was to look at progress in the implementation of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017; launch discussions on the next strategy; and to examine two specific topics: (1) gender mainstreaming and (2) the impact of social media on gender equality.

The Conference brought together members of the GEC, Council of Europe Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) in other Council of Europe committees; high level decision makers from member states; a range of international organisations including the European Commission and UN Women; and representatives of civil society.

The present Strategy, covering the period 2014 – 2017, has five key priority areas/strategic objectives:

1. Combating gender stereotypes and sexism.
2. Preventing and combating violence against women.
3. Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice.
4. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.
5. Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

The Conference heard reports of significant progress under all five of these priority areas. However, as the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out, "*no country in the world has achieved full gender equality – it remains a challenge...*" and, as the leading organisation fostering human rights in Europe, the Council of Europe continues to play an essential role in advancing the equality of women in all sectors in accordance with the standards and mechanisms adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

Expert panels led discussion on two topics of special concern during the Conference. The first focused on the place of social media in sharing knowledge and information. Although there were many positive messages about the capacity of social media to reach out to young people and to those living in remote communities about gender equality, much of the debate focused on the negative aspects of social media from a gender equality perspective, including cyber bullying, revenge porn and the exploitation of women, among others. The debate led to recommendations to member states, the Council of Europe and the media to foster the positive opportunities and address the problems associated with social media.

In recent years, the Council of Europe has adopted an exemplary approach to the mainstreaming of gender equality within its organisation, as has the United Nations (UN), most recently under the direction of UN Women. These efforts might well be replicated to a greater extent in member states, as the Conference heard that few countries have fully mainstreamed gender in all their policy making processes. The debate led to clear recommendations, largely addressed to member state governments.

The final panels of the Tallinn Conference returned to the theme of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy and discussed the possible content of its successor which will be developed in the coming year. The following are the key recommendations in this regard:

1. In developing its new gender equality strategy, the GEC should consider progress and achievements on each priority under the present Strategy; the added value of continuing work on that priority; emerging issues; linkages to the overarching priorities of the Council of Europe; and the avoidance of duplication of work undertaken by other international bodies.
2. The new gender equality strategy must be targeted and ambitious in its content; have the flexibility to respond to emerging issues; be grounded in the reality of scarce resources; and meet the needs of the member states and the Council of Europe.
3. The GEC should continue to serve as advocate at the national level for the implementation of all Council of Europe standards on gender equality.
4. The GEC should continue to collaborate with the other regional and international bodies, strengthening links where appropriate, particularly in light of the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. In considering major emerging issues such as migration, the GEC might assess the scope of its potential contribution to the challenges and identify linkages between existing priorities such as 'women's access to justice' and 'violence against women', both of which are addressed by the Council of Europe as very significant challenges for migrant women, including for women refugees and asylum seekers.
6. The GEC might also consider establishing a stand-alone priority or a cross-cutting theme to address the intersectionality of discrimination against women by starting a dialogue on the specific needs of women from groups such as Roma women; women from ethnic minorities; women with a disability; LBT women; migrant women; older women; women experiencing poverty.
7. In developing its new strategy, the GEC might consider how it can further use social media to promote awareness of gender stereotypes and sexism, reaching out in particular to young people and also to men in leadership roles, both are essential agents for change, albeit from very different perspectives.
8. Any future work on violence against women might include work on the misuse of the internet and social media as resources to perpetrate violence against women, through cyber bullying, hate speech, revenge porn, grooming, etc.

9. The mainstreaming of gender equality in the Council of Europe (and in the UN) serves as a model of good practice to be replicated by member state governments in a more concerted manner, 21 years after the adoption Beijing Platform for Action. Member states are encouraged to be more proactive in implementing gender mainstreaming at national level, while retaining it as a core principle underpinning the new strategy (building on achievements to date and ensuring that all policies and measures of the Council of Europe integrate a gender perspective).
10. While there are still significant deficits in relation to women in decision-making roles, despite the fact that the impetus lies with the member states in closing the gaps, the Council of Europe plays an important role in providing them with support to implement existing standards.

Foreword

Three years have passed since the launch of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017. At the Conference in Tallinn, organised jointly by the Gender Equality Commission and the Ministry of Social Welfare of Estonia, we had the opportunity to look at the work of the GEC and the Council of Europe over these years. We celebrated progress, discussed barriers and challenges and how to overcome them, and opened the conversation about priority areas for future work.

The work of the Gender Equality Commission has been pivotal to achievements and progress with the implementation of the Strategy and its impact at national level. The Gender Equality Commission is determined to continue its work to support member states in their efforts to advance and empower women and to effectively realise *de facto* as well as *de jure* gender equality. Over the next year, we will be evaluating the current Strategy and developing its successor.

We know that sexism and gender stereotypes are not yet eradicated, that violence against women continues at an alarming rate, that we are far from having a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, that women do not have equal access to justice, and that much needs to be done to successfully mainstream a gender approach in all policies and measures.

The current humanitarian and financial crisis has brought about new challenges. Europe needs our joint forces and efforts to make progress towards real gender equality in everyday life. The Council of Europe has numerous and powerful standards addressing gender equality challenges, including the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the European Social Charter and many relevant Recommendations from the Committee of Ministers.

For the Council of Europe, achieving gender equality is fundamental to protecting human rights; the functioning of a democracy; respect for the rule of law; and economic growth and sustainability. In developing a new strategy, we will draw on the Conference discussions summarised in this report. We must review our approach to existing priorities in close co-operation and consultation with our member states and our partners. I am reassured by the spirit of co-operation and partnerships demonstrated at this conference by member states, international organisations and civil society, and believe that this will enrich our forthcoming work.

Sergiy Kyslytsya

Chairperson of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe

Introduction

Achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law and economic growth and sustainability.

Thorbjørn Jagland,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has, as Europe's leading human rights organisation, worked proactively for over sixty years to foster gender equality. Gender equality is a prerequisite to a well-functioning democracy, to the full exercise of human rights and to economic growth, competitiveness and the fight against poverty.

The challenge of fostering gender equality has been addressed through international charters and conventions, coupled with international and national legislation. It has also been addressed through programmes of positive actions, again at international and national levels, coupled with many initiatives at regional and even local levels. However, despite this work, inequalities between women and men persist in all sectors of society and in all democracies, even those which serve as global models.

The role of international bodies such as the United Nations, including UN Women; the Council of Europe; and the Institutions of the EU, has been central to the development of conventions and the legal *acquis*, and in maintaining the focus of key stakeholders, including governments, business, civil society and the media on the importance of attaining *de facto* gender equality as a human right and as an instrument to foster economic growth and promote social well-being.

In 2011, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a new approach to advance Europe's work on gender equality. It introduced a new Transversal Programme which aimed to increase the impact and visibility of gender equality standards both within the entire body of the Council of Europe and at intergovernmental level. The new approach has two elements. It has enshrined gender mainstreaming as a transversal principle across all its decision making, advisory and monitoring bodies, and it established the Gender Equality Commission to steer the intergovernmental work to achieve gender equality.

It was the Committee's intention that this work would be underpinned by the relevant recommendations¹ of the Committee of Ministers including the 'Gender Equality Standards and Mechanisms'² developed by the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men in 2007.

¹ See Appendix IV for more detail

² Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17

The new Gender Equality Commission (GEC) was complemented by the call to appoint a Gender Equality Rapporteur (GER) in each of the Council of Europe's steering committees, monitoring bodies or partial agreements; the designation by member states of a National Focal Point (NFP), to provide the link between the Council of Europe Secretariat and the key players with responsibility for gender equality and the promotion of international standards at member state level; and the appointment of the Gender Mainstreaming Team which collaborates across the Council of Europe Secretariat.

In its work, the GEC also collaborates with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the Conference of INGOs. Furthermore the Organisation's work on gender equality is further enhanced through co-operation with the relevant UN agencies (including UN Women); the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the World Bank; the Organization of American States (OAS); the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and with institutions and agencies at EU level, including the European Commission, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017

The first major task of the new GEC and the Secretariat was the preparation of the Council of Europe's first gender equality strategy which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in November 2013. This marked a formal commitment to operationalise the extensive legal base and recommendations on gender equality issues in an action plan, focusing on a number of key priorities. Its purpose was to build upon the strengths, specificities and the added value of the Council of Europe.

The overarching goal of the Gender Equality Strategy is *'to achieve the advancement and empowering of women and hence the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe member States by supporting the implementation of existing standards'*.³

The Strategy identified five key priority areas/strategic objectives:

1. Combating gender stereotypes and sexism
2. Preventing and combating violence against women
3. Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice
4. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
5. Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

³Op. cit. : p 9

The GEC oversees the implementation of the Strategy, submitting annual progress reports to the Committee of Ministers. The preparation and implementation of the Strategy continues to be complemented by a programme of work by the Secretariat which included the organisation of a number of key actions and events related to the key strategic objectives and the publication of a number of important research, guidance and informational documents. A list of the key events organised to date is given in Appendix V and the key publications are detailed in Appendix VI.

'Are we there yet?' – The 2016 Gender Equality Conference

Half way in the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, the GEC organised a conference in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia in the framework of Estonia's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, to look at progress in the implementation of the Strategy; launch discussions on its successor and to examine two specific topics: (1) gender mainstreaming and (2) the impact of new media on gender equality.

The Conference brought together approximately 160 participants comprised of representatives from 38 member states of the Council of Europe, members of the GEC, GERs, high-level decision-makers from member states, and international organisations such as the European Commission and UN Women, and representatives of civil society.

The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017: Taking stock

*Gender Equality should be seen as the quality
mark of a well-functioning democracy*

Taavi Rõivas
Prime Minister of Estonia

There is ample evidence that gender inequality persists in 21st century Europe. The political, justice and socio-economic systems have not yet been transformed to meet the needs and exploit fully the potential and valuable contribution which could be made by the female population. Persistent societal norms and the media contribute to depict women as subordinate members. This leads to the ongoing sexualisation of women and to violence against them.

This ongoing challenge has been recognised globally with the adoption by the United Nations of a stand-alone Goal (SDG5) for Gender Equality *'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'* in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁴ while a further ten of the 17 Goals have gender sensitive targets, reflecting the universal reach of gender equality.

Work has also advanced at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which, in 2015, reviewed progress in the 20 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted and considered *'the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals'*⁵, while CSW60 in 2016 reviewed *'women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development'*.⁶

At EU level, a new 'Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality' was published by the European Commission in 2015.⁷ It focuses on key aspects of women's economic engagement; their role in decision-making; combating gender-based violence; and the promotion of gender equality and women's rights across the world.

The complementarity of the work of the Council of Europe to that of both UN Women and the EU brings added value, building on the strengths of each body. This also facilitates exchanges of good practice which assist member states in formulating positive actions which remain central to the methodology for achieving gender equality.

Furthermore, each of the bodies has adopted a new focus on the goal of mainstreaming gender across their organisation and this work should also trigger good practices to be replicated by member states across Europe.

⁴ United Nations: Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: September 2015

⁵ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/outcomes>

⁶ Op cit.

⁷ European Commission: Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019: published 2015

Despite these positive steps, external challenges to the attainment of *de facto* gender equality persist or are emerging. These include challenges such as the '*rising conservatism and a pushback on gender equality and women's rights and empowerment*' as identified in the 20 year review of Beijing or the annual evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy. Furthermore the reduction in resources for national gender equality mechanisms is impacting on work at member state level. Additional and important challenges arise from intersectionality affecting, among others, migrant women; women refugees and asylum seekers; women from ethnic groups such as Roma; LBT women and women with a disability.

The review of progress across Europe undertaken in the context of Beijing+20 referred to 'the existence of a wide gap between legislation and its implementation in all areas of the Beijing Platform for Action'.⁸

Accordingly, the ongoing work of the Council of Europe in the field of gender equality remains critical to the support of its own member states, but it also remains important because the Council of Europe's work on gender equality, including its conventions and its tools, have become reference points for other regional and international organisations.

Among those tools are the standards and mechanisms and the Committee of Ministers' Recommendations which have underpinned the work of the Organisation in proactively addressing the priorities in its Gender Equality Strategy. The Tallinn Conference has critically reviewed progress on each priority.

Combating gender stereotypes and sexism

Under cover of a culture, a tradition or even a joke, too often women are victims of sexism and sexist hate speech which feeds into and is at the origin of violence against women. We need to speak out against sexism and sexist hate speech and we need to use all the tools available at the Council of Europe.

Snežana **Samardžić-Marković**
Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe

The Strategy defines gender stereotyping as '*preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex*'.

Since its inception, the GEC has overseen a number of significant initiatives to advance understanding of gender stereotypes, including two conferences on the themes of 'Media and the Image of Women' (Amsterdam, 2013) and 'Combating Gender Stereotypes in and through Education' (Helsinki, 2014). In addition, it has overseen the preparation of a number of publications,⁹ aimed, *inter alia* at the media and at policy makers.

In parallel, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) adopted a General Policy Recommendation on combating hate speech,¹⁰ including on the basis of sex, gender,

⁸ UNECE: ECE/AC.28/2014/2: p. 6

⁹ See Appendix VI for the listing of recent publications

¹⁰ ECRI General Recommendation No. 15: Adopted December 2015

gender identity and sexual orientation. The Secretariat jointly organised a seminar for young people on Combating Sexist Hate Speech, prepared information papers on this topic, and is currently working with the GEC on the preparation of a draft recommendation for consideration by the Committee of Ministers to combat sexism.

The Helsinki Conference,¹¹ which focused on education and stereotypes, found that *'gender stereotyping places unhealthy demands on both sexes which inhibit their natural talents and interests from developing, and consequently limit economic progress and prevent social cohesion. Gender stereotyping is transmitted to children from babyhood; by parents, social networks, early learning experiences and by media.'*¹² The Conference concluded that *'societies remain strongly gender stereotyped and that the education system, which is a subsystem of the societies they serve, reproduce the values and culture of those societies without challenging their possible limitations on the life opportunities and experiences of their pupils'*.¹³ The Helsinki Conference made comprehensive recommendations of relevance.¹⁴

Speakers and participants discussed evidence about ongoing challenges in relation to women's role, engagement, depiction and vulnerability in the media, in all its forms.¹⁵ While many media organisations have devised gender equality strategies, few are implemented or monitored. Women are still under-represented in senior positions within media organisations and as news reporters. Women reporters are more likely to deal with social affairs issues rather than with politics, economics or technology. This lack of a female presence impacts on media content. Efforts to identify women journalists as media commentators has been driven more by women's groups than by the media sector itself and has therefore not been very successful. Freedom of expression is a fundamental freedom, but it is not an absolute right. It is linked to other human rights, which it may not cancel and endanger, such as the rights to life, dignity, safety or privacy¹⁶. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled on various cases concerning the violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights¹⁷. At the international level, Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights clearly expresses the need for responsibility in the exercise of the right to expression. Contemporary media is driven by falling advertising revenue, media concentration, media competition and the search for sensationalism. Awareness raising and training on gender issues are therefore essential. A sustained commitment from news media managements to foster women's presence in the media is imperative to bring the change that is essential to address both women's presence and discussion of gender equality in the media.

Sexism, sexist hate speech and sexist behaviour still prevail in the media. Published in 2014, the IWFM/INSI study on women in journalism¹⁸ showed that almost half of survey respondents said

¹¹ Report of the Conference 'Combating Gender Stereotypes in and through Education' published in 2015

¹² Council of Europe: GEC (2015)1 EN Conference on "Combating gender stereotypes in and through education" (Helsinki, 9-10 October 2014): p. 81

¹³ Ibid p. 87

¹⁴ Op. cit.

¹⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality and media.

¹⁶ See the report of the Council of Europe Conference "Media and the image of women" (Amsterdam, 4-5 July 2013): p. 15

¹⁷ See Factsheet of the European Court of Human Rights on Hate Speech, at http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf

¹⁸ International Women's Media Foundation/International News Safety Institute: <https://www.iwfm.org/blog/2014/03/07/executive-summary/>

they suffered sexual harassment in different forms, with the majority of attacks being perpetrated by supervisors or colleagues. The study concludes that most of these abuses go unreported because of fear of reprisals: loss of job, loss of freedom, and in some cases, threats against and loss of life.

Female journalists are also more likely to experience online sexism and hate speech. This can take a number of forms, including online impersonation where cyber abusers produce false media content to discredit and insults, threats and harassment through emails and social media. There is evidence across Europe that online harassment has increased.

Further work by governments, managements and professionals within the media sector is essential to address these deficits in the media, while the important role of education in fostering gender equality was a repeated theme at this Conference.

Preventing and combating violence against women

Violence against women in its different forms, [is now] better addressed by legislation, [but] in practice it continues to remain the most widespread and less punished violation of women's human rights. The ratification of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by a growing number of countries should accelerate change in this respect.

Lakshmi Puri

Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

The high point of the Council of Europe's work in recent years on violence against women was the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention¹⁹ on 1 August 2014. This achievement followed a programme of over 105 events working frequently with local partners in 35 countries. By summer 2016, 22 member states have ratified the Istanbul Convention while an additional 20 member states have signed but not yet ratified the Convention, which has received much global acknowledgement as a standard which might be adopted by countries outside Europe. Indeed the EU is working towards its signature and ratification. The quality of the Istanbul Convention as a comprehensive international treaty to address violence against women is also recognised by both the OSCE and the OECD, while UN Women is high in its praise of the Convention.

The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)²⁰ has been established as the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. It is tasked to evaluate legislative and other measures taken by the states parties to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and to initiate special enquiries if necessary. It has begun its work and has developed its monitoring mechanism. GREVIO's work will also rely on the contribution of civil society to the monitoring and evaluation process, while it is also recommended that national parliaments engage in monitoring, as foreseen in the Convention.

The Istanbul Convention has led to positive changes in legislation and in the development of strategies in a number of member states, but the Tallinn Conference heard suggestions that there

¹⁹ Council of Europe 2011: Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

²⁰ For more information see <http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

is still scope for the acceleration of measures to ratify the Convention in many member states of the Council of Europe. It also heard that some member states may still not be moving expeditiously to ratification of the Convention.

A number of significant challenges persist in developing policies and actions to address violence against women. The shortage of resources to provide support services persists, while the Convention very specifically identifies the need for both general and specific services for victims of violence. Indeed, a recent negative trend is a focus on “gender-neutral” programmes and services to address violence in some member states. It is therefore essential that specialist and dedicated support services are provided to all women victims of violence.

The prevention of violence against women remains important but is often under-funded as a result of which it can be difficult to monitor and measure outcomes. It is essential to commit resources to prevention, in order to find models that are impactful and feasible in different contexts. In this regard, changing attitudes to violence against women, including through education and awareness-raising, is also important and these should be driven both from the grassroots - civil society, activists and service providers - and from the top, where presidents, prime ministers and governments should take a proactive stance against attitudes which perpetuate violence against women and harmful practices.

In addition, the needs of the ever increasing numbers of women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers requires a gender sensitive response, particularly as resources in countries of first arrival are over-stretched, as a result of which there is a lack of appropriate services and support for survivors of violence in the current refugee crisis.

Guaranteeing Equal Access of Women to Justice

Ensuring access to justice is ensuring access to fair, affordable, accountable and effective remedies in terms of contact with, entry to and use of the legal system.

Sylwia Spurek

Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland
responsible for equal treatment issues

The Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 notes that '*persistent inequalities between women and men, gender bias and gender stereotypes result in unequal access of women and men to justice*'.²¹ The Strategy therefore aims to gather data and identify the obstacles that women encounter in gaining access to justice, and to identify and disseminate remedies and good practices, which might be replicated to address the deficits.

The GEC has organised a number of research projects, events and other actions to highlight the issue, narrow the data gap and draw together good practices. This work culminated in recommendations from the Bern Conference “Towards Guaranteeing Equal Access of Women to Justice” (October 2015), on the key challenges for the attention of member states; national equality bodies; civil society and lawyers’ associations, and to justice and law enforcement authorities.²²

²¹ Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017: p. 11

²² GEC Report (GEC (2016)5: Conference: Towards Guaranteeing Equal Access to Justice for Women: p.18 (published September 2016)

Participants at the Tallinn Conference were reminded that equal access to justice implies the right to an effective remedy; the right to a fair trial; the right to equal access to the courts; and the right to legal aid and legal representation. Women continue to face a combination of legal, institutional, socio-economic and cultural barriers in accessing justice.

These barriers also include a lack of awareness of the procedures and a lack of financial resources, coupled with restrictions on the availability of legal aid and other support services needed to meet the reality of women's lives – including costs for childcare during a legal process. Furthermore, free legal aid regimes rarely if ever list victims of violence against women or discrimination as service qualifiers. While alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation, are often favoured as time rich, low cost alternatives to the courts service, often they do not provide women with an accessible fair and empowering process, due to the unequal power positions which prevail in such situations.

Cultural barriers, fear and shame also impact on women's access to justice, as do discriminatory attitudes and the stereotypical roles of women as carers, men as providers, which still persist in fact as well as in civil and family law in many jurisdictions. These barriers may persist during investigations and trials, especially in cases of gender based violence. Such barriers impact even more on women exposed to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination and therefore rendered more vulnerable.

Despite the existence of international standards and legislation at UN, Council of Europe and EU levels, there are still challenges including, *inter alia* the need to ensure access for women to a free legal aid system which takes gender considerations into account; raising awareness among law enforcement officials and the other justice actors to eliminate gender stereotypes; access of NGOs to legal systems; and special measures to address the needs of women exposed to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination in accessing legal services.

Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

The countries which are most successful in achieving gender equality in political life are those that adopt a holistic approach and design legislation and policies based on a gender perspective in all areas.

Elena Centemero
Chairperson, Committee on Equality and non-Discrimination,
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Based on the premise that pluralist democracy requires balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, the Council of Europe has actively pursued this goal over many years. It has twice conducted monitoring processes to assess the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, finding that just 21.1% of places in single/lower houses of parliament were held by women in 2005, while the second monitoring exercised showed an increase to 21.7% in 2008.

In 2016, the GEC launched a third monitoring round, the results of which will be published in 2017. It anticipates that the outcome will also identify gaps in policies and legislation and will compile examples of good practice which will assist member states. The Secretariat and the GEC have also worked actively with other sectors in the Organisation to foster enhanced gender equality in political life.

In 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a Resolution on 'Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation',²³ while the Venice Commission also actively reviews work on the political empowerment of women.²⁴ The Electoral Assistance Division is also carrying work in this area.

The Rapporteur of the Resolution and its background report, Elena Centemero, Chair of the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination, presented her key conclusions at the Tallinn Conference. She reminded delegates that the threshold for a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making has long been a minimum of 40% for both women and men. This goal is coupled in the Assembly with a call for electoral quotas for women as a temporary special measure and as a remedy to the endemic underrepresentation of women.

²³ PACE; Resolution 2111 (2016)

²⁴ See CDL-PI(2016)007 European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) Compilation of Venice Commission Opinions and Reports concerning Gender Equality

The research undertaken by the Assembly led to two key conclusions. The first found that progress in the field of women's representation has been achieved through a variety of measures, including reforms of constitutional legislation (granting women voting rights both to vote or to stand for election) and reforms to civil law, granting women equal access to property, inheritance, marriage citizenship as basic preconditions and then equal rights in public and political life. Secondly, women's political representation is based on a wide variety of factors: social factors, which affect the sharing of caring and household duties; and economic factors, such as the gender pay gap, the gender gap in access to professions and careers, and access to financing, particularly for economic purposes. However, cultural factors are also crucial: gender stereotypes affect women's ability to acquire real parity and education and the media have a responsibility to eradicate stereotypes.

The PACE Resolution confirmed that *'electoral quotas are the most effective means of achieving significant, rapid progress, provided that they are correctly designed and consistently implemented. Quotas should be adapted to the electoral system in force, set ambitious targets and be coupled with stringent sanctions for non-compliance.'* That said, the current minimum goal of 40% for each sex might be regarded as out-dated and, it was suggested that steps should now be taken to set the new goal at parity.

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, the Council of Europe has also adopted a new transversal approach to gender mainstreaming and this was explored in greater detail during a dedicated panel of the Tallinn Conference and is summarised later in this report.

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, the Council of Europe through the GEC, its member states, its own offices and institutions and the new transversal approach, has made great strides in advancing awareness of gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the Organisation and in many of its committees. In addition, the GEC, supported by its secretariat has, over the past five years, organised a range of innovative events, resources and recommendations to bring about real improvements in gender equality. It is now timely to begin the discussion on existing and new priorities.

In addition to the discussion on gender mainstreaming, the Tallinn Conference also reviewed the impact of social media on gender equality. The explosion in social media represents both a challenge and an opportunity for those working in gender equality and the time is now ripe to consider the role of social media in informing future gender equality policy, while also addressing the negative forces which have emerged as new forms of abuse against women.

Sharing knowledge and information to advance the gender equality agenda to implement the Council of Europe Strategy: the impact of social media

*The limits between the virtual world and the real world
become narrower and narrower.*

Léa Clermont-Dion
Laval University, Canada

It is estimated that there are now over 3.4 billion internet users in the world – over 40% of the global population, while Facebook alone reportedly has more than 1.3 billion users every month. Even in less developed countries, internet penetration approaches 32% of the population.²⁵ Accordingly, social media offer scope to reach out to the population in a manner quite unimaginable at the turn of the millennium.

Social media play an important role in our lives, particularly when used as originally intended, to share information and expand awareness of a wide range of issues. However, experience now shows that all of the social media are open to abuse and that steps taken to address cyber bullying and the misuse of the media channels have largely proven fruitless to date.

While social media can impact negatively on women's lives, they also have the capacity to serve as an invaluable tool for raising awareness of gender equality issues. Indeed they have been used to very good effect by, for example, UN Women through the "HeforShe" campaign, bringing strong gender equality messages to a global readership and the "Bring Back our Girls" campaign in Nigeria which highlighted the kidnap and resulted in over 4.5 million tweets globally.

Social media are the primary communications tool for the younger generation and therefore they can be used to reach out very easily to young people with messages to educate and which enhance awareness of gender equality issues. The Tallinn Conference was told that conversations about feminism on Twitter have increased by some 300% in three years and that a surge in younger women bloggers, attracting younger women activists, is helping to foster feminism for a new audience, while also breaking stereotypes.

Social media also have the capacity to reach out to remote and to new communities and, with their universality, can disseminate ideas and campaigns with ease and speed. The Tallinn Conference heard of successful online media campaigns, undertaken in a couple of member states (i.e. Estonia and the Russian Federation). In one instance, anonymous stories of women victims of violence and sexism were gathered and served to raise awareness among victims that they are not alone and that others have coped with and survived such abusive behaviours. However such work was not without its challenges. The creator of this website reported that it also attracted negative and destructive comments and re-posts, which could add to the trauma of those who had contributed.

This response is not atypical, as evidence from a speaker from Slovenia affirmed. She highlighted the negative comments received on her social media site, where ill-informed commentators made the incorrect assumption that all contributors were female, based on the fact that the website was known to have a female management. Efforts by the same website to highlight a lack of a female

²⁵ International Telecommunications Union

presence in the national media were met with a backlash, most frequently from combative male critics.

Women journalists are more likely to experience online harassment than their male counterparts. The Conference heard of the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in the area of gender based violence in media, specifically concentrating on online media. Through her Office, recommendations were prepared and published in September 2015. These highlighted the need for various actors to take responsibility to support journalists, including the provision of adequate support to those who experience online abuse. It must be made easier for journalists to report abusive content. People working in the sector must feel that there is somewhere to turn to if they are being harassed online. Such harassment cannot be seen as something 'not too serious' as a result of which victims are often left with no support.

The Council of Europe has worked extensively on the issue of freedom of expression in the media and the protection of journalists. Freedom of expression is of course a fundamental freedom. However it cannot be used as an excuse for threatening behaviour and parties to the European Convention on Human Rights also have a responsibility to protect citizens from threatening behaviours. The Council of Europe has also worked on the matter of safety of journalists. These two areas of activity have resulted in the adoption by the Committee of Ministers in April 2016 of two Recommendations on freedom of expression and the internet²⁶ and on the safety of journalists.²⁷

However, freedom of the media cannot be used as a cover for freedom of behaviour. The anonymity offered by cyberspace is one of the great weaknesses of the internet, as is the absence of rules – either legal or moral – to steer acceptable usage. The web is equally open to information pirates, hackers and others who perpetrate intimidating and violent behaviours online with total impunity, in an environment that does not impose sanctions.

Such behaviours can take the form of credible threats of violence against the person or her/his property; harassment, stalking, controlling or coercive behaviour, revenge pornography or blackmail; grossly offensive, indecent or obscene behaviours; and finally hate crime, which may well not be outlawed, even when it is misogynistic.

The promotion of sexist language and hate speech on the internet can bring dire consequences but cannot be easily stamped out. Well-developed and well-intentioned social media sites are easily targeted by behaviours which negate their benefits. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that the internet and cyberspace have become a home for virulent debate based on discriminatory, sexist and/or racist hate speech.

Such behaviours online are not confined to sexism – similar experiences are found in relation to sexual orientation, race, religion and other forms of discrimination. Freedom of expression is often abused as an excuse to cover unacceptable and offensive behaviour.

²⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Internet freedom

²⁷ Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors

While there are few concrete data available, there is research which suggests that young girls between 16 and 18 years are most frequently the focus of cyber-violence campaigns. Research from the Pew Institute²⁸ suggests that young women aged 18-24 experience certain severe types of online harassment at disproportionately high levels: 26% of these young women have been stalked online, and 25% were the target of online sexual harassment.

At present, legislations appear to have limited or no capacity to prosecute cyber-violent offences across borders while victims have no or limited access to legal recourse to obtain redress. In relation to the issue of responsibility, the Tallinn Conference heard that the case of *Delfi v Estonia* at the European Court of Human Rights²⁹ merits consideration. While this case related to defamation rather than to hate speech or violence and to a news portal, its findings might be interpreted to include the dissemination of hate speech and incitement to violence. The Strasbourg Court's ruling does not create the need for any new law for the internet, but attempts to underline that the internet is not a law-less society, asserting that the laws that apply in the offline world should also apply online.

What the Strasbourg Court found was that there needs to be a system through which those that facilitate the posting of defamatory comments (or it could be other illegal comments and content) have a responsibility for the impact of those comments. As a result of a lack of a clear legal framework, the internet has created a workspace in which people who threaten, harass and violate can roam free because law enforcement measures have not caught up.

It can be argued that it is not necessary to introduce new legislation as legislation against abuse of different kinds already exists. Swift, inexpensive legal and law enforcement processes are required to make the filing of a complaint viable and easy. However the existing legislation may not be applied effectively in the case of cyber-abuse for different reasons. Firstly, addressing and solving online crime against private individuals is not normally a priority for law enforcement services. It can be very difficult in the cyber environment to enforce laws, as activities can move so easily from one jurisdiction to the other; there are various means of anonymous activities; and so on. Another reason is that law enforcement agencies may not sufficiently understand threats and limitations to human rights and may not identify dangers arising from such behaviour.

²⁸ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/>

²⁹ <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-155105>

Online abuse must be dealt with in the broader context of gender based violence, in the same way as it would be dealt with if it were perpetrated in the real or offline world. Police departments across national boundaries need to collaborate more closely to bring perpetrators to justice. Prosecutions must be considered on the basis of both evidence and public interest. There is a need for specialised training and awareness raising for the police and judicial services.

Furthermore, the social media companies still do not adequately recognise or proscribe online behaviours linked to gender-specific violence, including bullying and all the behaviours referred to previously. It is important that such online behaviours are researched and measured in the context of human rights. The idea of responsibility for social media requires a number of actors to play an active part.

Soft law measures such as industry guidelines, codes of ethics and professional rules can offer guidance to service providers, as well as opportunities to deal with the underlying attitudes that lead to unacceptable usage. Education, awareness raising and open discussion can be more beneficial than rules and laws in fostering understanding and addressing prejudices and negative attitudes. Governments can take a more active role to enforce standards on the internet, while the main responsibility for changing behaviours lies with the digital social media companies themselves.

A number of additional issues merit consideration. The first is the need to encourage women to make greater use of the internet to disseminate information and break down stereotypes. The Tallinn Conference heard that *"women do not always feel comfortable when conflict breaks out on the internet and work needs to be done to address this lack of confidence in one's own beliefs; women are not as media savvy as their male counterparts and frequently need further development on the use of social media"*.

A second consideration is the need to engage men as active collaborators in creating awareness of gender equality issues, in particular the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the impact of negative behaviours. This was one of the key purposes of both the "HeforShe" campaign which seeks the support of men and boys as advocates for change in gender equality and the "White Ribbon Campaign" which also seeks the support of men and boys in the campaign to combat violence against women. Men from all walks of life must be encouraged to actively campaign against the misuse of the internet.

The third consideration is one of education in the appropriate use of the internet and the risks attached to behaviours. This is particularly important for younger people, who readily commit every facet of their lives to cyberspace and who are quick to espouse behaviours and actions which can have devastating consequences.

The debate at the Tallinn Conference presented a challenging picture of the internet, a picture where the misuses of social media may appear to outweigh the benefits. However the important benefits of social media in reaching out to foster and create awareness of the benefits of gender equality makes it imperative that the challenges are addressed through collective effort as a matter of urgency.

*Recommendations in relation to Social Media*³⁰

Based on the relevant legal and policy frameworks, as well as the presentations of evidence, good practices and experiences and the subsequent discussion, the Tallinn Conference led to the following recommendations:

To member states

- Actively implement Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention on the participation of the media in the prevention of and combating violence against women in all its forms.
- Foster the use of the internet as a tool to disseminate information on gender equality and to overcome stereotypes and other barriers to *de facto* gender equality.
- Encourage the use of social media based campaigns to maximise messages to young women and men, girls and boys.
- Ensure that the laws which apply offline in relation to violence against women, harassment, hate speech, incitement, pornography, etc. are also applied to prosecute criminal online behaviours.
- Ensure that victims of abuse on the internet can avail of swift, inexpensive legal and law enforcement processes to make the filing of a complaint viable and easy.
- Establish helplines to support victims.
- Provide training in the negative impacts of illegal internet usage for law enforcement services.
- Encourage transnational activity by law enforcement bodies to address international crimes associated with social media.
- Create awareness that freedom of the media cannot be used as a defence for the misuse of the internet.
- Ensure that journalists, especially female journalists, are not victimised in the course of their work, either by their employers or by the wider public.
- Encourage internet and social media service providers to adopt soft laws such as industry guidelines, codes of ethics and professional rules to govern the usage of the services they provide.
- Actively encourage internet and social media providers to cease online anonymity which fosters unacceptable behaviours and conceals criminal activity.
- Ensure that education curricula are used to create awareness among young people of the misuse of the internet.
- Where relevant and as appropriate, take note and address the gender-related aspects and the need to promote gender equality when implementing the above-listed measures.

³⁰ See also the Recommendations from the Council of Europe Conference “*Media and the image of women*” (Amsterdam, 4-5 July 2013). Link: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680590587>

To the Council of Europe

- Continue to implement actions including awareness-raising campaigns, the creation of new standards and inter-Committee collaborations to address the negative impacts of misuse of the internet.
- Continue to work with member states on the implementation of the highest standards for the media including social media.
- Continue to collaborate with other multi-lateral bodies to foster the use of the internet to reach out to women and men in less remote parts of Europe and beyond.
- Consider preparing a handbook for the media examining the limitations of engaging Article 10³¹ of the European Convention on Human Rights in the context of social media behaviour/abuse.

To the media and to internet and social media service providers

- Develop clear guidelines and rules for potential users on the appropriate use of social media, respecting the human rights and dignity of all potential users.
- Monitor usage of services to ensure that reporting rules and guidelines exist and are enforced, blocking illegal, dangerous and defamatory postings at the earliest opportunity.
- Foster awareness of the appropriate use of the internet and social media, particularly but not exclusively for young people.
- Ensure that management and journalists actively promote an equality ethos, including gender equality.
- Protect journalists from discrimination, hate mail and online abuse.

To national equality bodies

- Make active use of the internet to advance the goals of gender equality, reaching out in particular to young people and to men as advocates for change.
- Make active use of the internet to create awareness of the impact of discriminatory behaviours, online and offline, reaching out in particular to young people.

³¹ On Freedom of Expression.

Gender Matters: Gender mainstreaming in international organisations – best practices and impact on national policies and strategies

Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

UN Beijing Platform for Action 1995

Introduction

With the recommendation quoted above repeated throughout the Beijing Platform for Action, the Fourth UN World Conference on Women gave voice to the concept of gender mainstreaming as a tool to promote gender equality through the evaluation of the impact of all policies on women and on men. In the subsequent 20 years, the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming is far from universal, either globally or in Europe. This is confirmed in both the report of the UN Secretary General to CSW59³² and the UNECE Report on the implementation of Beijing in Europe.³³

That said, key international institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the UN, have now taken concrete actions at the highest levels to reactivate gender mainstreaming as a tool to foster gender equality in policy making within their organisations. Evidence of progress in these two bodies should serve as a role model to encourage governments and international institutions to take stronger measures to mainstream gender in all their policy making.

Following the adoption of 'Beijing', the implementation of gender mainstreaming opened a mix of debate and actions without conclusive outcomes or significant progress. Governments struggled with the mandate, while certain elements of civil society and the feminist movement were sceptical about the ability of patriarchal institutions to serve as an ally for feminism,³⁴ a scepticism which increased in the early years of the new millennium. There is evidence that gender mainstreaming policies were often developed but seldom were they implemented. Furthermore the aim of integrating a gender equality dimension into policies led to the misapprehension that gender equality was a cure for all global issues.

On the other hand, many researchers saw gender mainstreaming as a potentially transformative strategy. The co-option of feminism by the state created a widespread agreement that gender equality persists as a problem and the insertion of gender issues into spheres of government has made it possible for feminist voices to be heard. This has created positives in addressing the challenges of gender inequality. As an example, an increasing number of international institutions have embraced gender mainstreaming – UN Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Bank and International Telecommunications Union, among others – showing

³² Commission on the Status of Women: March 2015: Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly : Report of the Secretary-General

³³ UNECE: ECE/AC.28/2014/3: Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting: Geneva, 2014: Regional review of progress: regional synthesis

³⁴ Dr Elisabeth Prügl: Presentation to the Conference in Tallinn

evidence of a clear and welcome move away from the 'softer' sectors such as the gender mainstreaming of health and education, into the economic and technological sectors.

A further advantage which has emerged is the development of a pool of experts whose range of expertise links gender and one or more other fields. This enables these experts to more easily serve as advocates for gender and support institutional processes. The development of such expertise also facilitates the enhanced engagement of men as advocates for gender equality. A new understanding of gender equality issues has given the World Bank a transformative understanding of the impact of market forces on women. Similarly, the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 has forced reluctant governments to respond to a feminist perspective, thereby protecting women in times of conflict and facilitating their participation in peace building.

The keynote speaker on this topic at the Tallinn Conference concluded that *'gender mainstreaming makes gender a topic to be argued about in the many forums of government and international politics. The outcome of these arguments cannot be administratively preordained. It will need activists both inside and outside government to carry the torch for what is still a radical idea – the idea of gender equality.'*³⁵

Mainstreaming gender in and through the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe's engagement with the challenges of *de facto* gender equality started in the 1980s. The Standing Committee on Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) began work on gender mainstreaming after Beijing and five specific Committee of Ministers' Recommendations on gender mainstreaming topics have been adopted by the Committee of Ministers since 1998.³⁶

The Council of Europe was instrumental in developing the concept of gender mainstreaming from the 1990's onwards, including its conceptual framework and methodology. Furthermore the Council of Europe's Standards and Mechanisms, published in 2007,³⁷ notes that gender mainstreaming is one of a number of complementary approaches required to achieve *de facto* gender equality.³⁸ It defines mainstreaming as *'the adoption of methodologies for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, including gender budgeting, gender-based analysis/gender impact assessment, cross-checking where necessary gender- or sex-related data with statistics on socio-economic or other relevant personal circumstances'*.³⁹

As mentioned previously, the Council of Europe has adopted a new approach⁴⁰ to advance gender equality which included a commitment to introduce a new Transversal Programme to

³⁵ *Ib id*

³⁶ Recommendation No. CM/Rec (1998)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming; Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education; Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy; Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality and media; and Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in sport

³⁷ Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms

³⁸ *Ibid*: Section C.1 – paras 62-65

³⁹ *Ibid*: Section A.3 Para 8 ix

⁴⁰ Resolution CM/Res(2011)24

mainstream gender equality in all of the Organisation's work. This has been achieved through the appointment of more than 40 Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs), in the Organisation's intergovernmental and institutional bodies, which has led to co-ordinated and sustained efforts to introduce a gender equality perspective in all policies and at all levels of the Council of Europe. The setting up of an intra-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team⁴¹ has also contributed to the spread of gender mainstreaming throughout the organisation.

This work has been supported by a manual for GERs; training sessions; policy briefs; factsheets; the Gender Equality website and other resources. Progress is reported annually to the Committee of Ministers.

A number of good practice examples have already emerged from these initiatives. These include ensuring the protection of women in the 2016 Committee of Ministers' 'Recommendation on journalism and the safety of journalists'; work by the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) on the gender dimension of corruption; by the Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs (Pompidou Group) on the gender dimension of non-medical use of prescription drugs; by the European Cinema Support Fund (EURIMAGES) in relation to data collection, and the development of a EURIMAGES gender equality strategy in 2015; and by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)⁴² on the development of gender equality indicators in sport, following the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in sport.

The CDEG, the predecessor to the GEC, oversaw significant work in relation to gender budgeting, including the preparation of a handbook, which serves as a guide for the implementation of gender budgeting. The Beijing+20 review documents showed evidence of a growing practice of gender analysis of member state budgets.

However, one of the key challenges is to ensure that any policy analysis is neither gender neutral nor gender blind. The former is found all too frequently in analysis. Furthermore many policy makers remain resistant to the process of gender mainstreaming.

Based on its work to date, the Council of Europe has concluded that the key aim of gender mainstreaming is to ground new and existing policies on the concrete situation of women and men and on the specific needs of the target populations. This results in better informed policy making and better government. One of the key factors for success is a policy of involving everyone – all relevant actors – in the process. It must be underpinned by the availability of gender disaggregated data and training of all participants to ensure that they are gender aware and skilled, equipped with the necessary competences and committed to gender equality.

Some of the main challenges identified by the Council of Europe are the need to involve the relevant actors involved in policy-making so that gender mainstreaming takes place in all policies and measures; the lack or shortage of relevant data disaggregated by sex in many policy areas; the need for training on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis; and the limited human and financial resources available for this work.

⁴¹ See P 5 above for more detail

⁴² Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport: Council of Europe Structure, established 2007

The Council of Europe recommends ongoing work to build on successes and tackle challenges to gender mainstreaming. The challenges fall into two categories – general challenges, which include budgetary cuts and the weakening of national gender equality mechanisms, together with political opposition in some countries; and specific challenges, which including the lack of willingness of some sectors to engage; scarcity of resources and expertise and the need to focus more on methodologies.

Mainstreaming gender in and through the United Nations and UN Women

As the driving force behind gender mainstreaming, UN Women fulfils a dual role both in monitoring its implementation by parties to Beijing and in leading the UN process within its institutions and agencies.

UN Women reports a significant increase in political will and commitment to gender mainstreaming and actively makes supports available to governments in the form of assistance in preparing national strategies, coupled with training, capacity development and practical resources. UN Women also supports civil society to play critical advocacy roles on gender mainstreaming. It also makes important efforts to involve more men and boys in gender equality initiatives, especially at the national level.

UN Women concurs with the Council of Europe in finding challenges to gender mainstreaming, noting in particular that it is seen as too complex and not easily understood by policy makers and practitioners. It finds that the full implementation of gender mainstreaming has been marred by a lack of sustained procedures and practices; leadership; financial and human resources; and accountability structures.

Across the UN system, UN Women has been mandated since 2012 to lead on gender equality and women's empowerment within the broader UN family. A System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) serves as a unified accountability framework aimed at accelerating gender mainstreaming across the UN system. It contains 15 minimum performance standards to which all entities must aspire and adhere by 2017. As with the Council of Europe, performance in the UN is reported annually and gender mainstreaming is now acknowledged as everyone's responsibility across the whole organisation.

One of the key outcomes of this new approach within the UN system has been the incorporation of gender equality targets across eleven of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, showing that gender has truly been mainstreamed within the UN system.

UN Women shares many of the concerns of the Council of Europe in relation to progress on gender mainstreaming, including the need for political commitment and financial support. UN Women considers that enhanced co-operation of international/intergovernmental organisations is critical to promote a whole of government/whole of society approach. Evaluation of the outcomes of gender mainstreaming initiatives is also important to determine whether the desired outcomes are actually being achieved. UN Women also actively supports gender responsive budgeting and encourages all governments to implement it more thoroughly.

UN Women stressed the increasingly critical importance of gender mainstreaming for implementing existing and new normative commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030. UN Women is mandated to support member states and the UN system with gender mainstreaming efforts, and to strengthen coherence, co-ordination and accountability for the work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

One of its main outcomes has been increased coherence and networking. It has also diffused responsibility for gender mainstreaming within agencies and for all staff. UN Women is co-ordinating the next phase of the UN-SWAP, which will begin in 2018. This next phase will support the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through a stronger focus on accountability for including gender results in each entity's SDG-related strategic, planning and reporting processes and documents.

Mainstreaming gender in other international institutions

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted an action plan for gender equality in 2004. It sets goals to be achieved within OSCE Secretariat and requires states to bear responsibility for the overarching commitments on gender equality. Again, annual reporting on progress is a key element. However, agreement on the priorities between the member states can be a challenge. Nevertheless, ministerial council decisions have been taken on a number of gender issues, including violence against women; women's economic empowerment; and women, peace and security.

One of the key challenges identified by OSCE is bridging the gap between commitments and actual implementation at national and local levels. This is where OSCE turns to gender mainstreaming within the organisations, as a methodology to work in tandem with awareness raising, tools and resources. Such an approach was found to be particularly beneficial in developing actions plans for UNSCR 1325. Again international collaboration is central to the work of OSCE, which works closely with the Council of Europe across a wide range of activities linked to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The World Bank is also active in fostering gender mainstreaming. It has been very active in relation to gender equality for many years, recognising that gender equality and the empowerment of women are prerequisites for economic growth and prosperity. The International Development Association (IDA) within the World Bank focuses in particular on the advancement of women in the least developed parts of the globe, supporting land titles for women; education

of girls and the provision of microfinance to support small scale entrepreneurship, in order to alleviate poverty and stimulate growth.

In December 2015, the World Bank published a new Gender Equality Strategy⁴³ which looks critically at the challenges of gender mainstreaming and then commits to strengthen the process in its future work. Specifically the new World Bank Strategy identifies the same challenges as were also identified by the Council of Europe and UN Women in relation to a sustained commitment, inadequate resources and also mentions that the concepts were frequently misunderstood.⁴⁴The World Bank continues to support gender mainstreaming as a tool and lays out a commitment to implement it in a new methodology particularly in the work of the IDA.⁴⁵

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is a decentralised agency of the EU and fulfils a role which differs somewhat from the roles of the other international bodies at the Tallinn Conference. EIGE is largely a research body which is also tasked, *inter alia* to develop tools and resources to foster the work of the EU Institutions and the EU member states in relation to gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming has been a key focus of the work of EIGE. It has undertaken considerable research and developed numerous resources to help EU member states to mainstream gender. The most recent tool developed by EIGE is the Gender Mainstreaming Platform, which was launched in June 2016. This Platform⁴⁶ offers an abundance of resources including definitions, methodologies, tools, information and guidance in relation to the mainstreaming of gender across 22 sectors.

In addition, the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (2016-2019) continues its focus on gender mainstreaming by incorporating gender equality considerations in impact assessments and evaluations of EU laws and policies. The Inter-Service Group on equality between women and men (in which all Commission departments are represented) continues to monitor and steer the integration of a gender equality perspective in policy, legal and spending programme activities, including budgetary matters, across all EU policy areas. A report on gender mainstreaming is foreseen for 2017, covering gender equality in sectoral policies such as transport, energy, education, health, taxation, agriculture, trade, regional policy, maritime affairs and the environment.

⁴³ World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY16-23): Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Future Growth

⁴⁴ Op. cit.: p 22

⁴⁵ Op. cit.: Appendix 4

⁴⁶ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/>

Tools for enhancing gender mainstreaming – from political will to e-solutions

A second panel at the Tallinn Conference presented examples from Council of Europe member states of good practices in mainstreaming gender.

An overview of experiences in EU member states

A review of experiences across the EU member states⁴⁷ identified four distinct phases to a gender mainstreaming strategy:

- the mandate – when the strategy is adopted;
- the tools and methods – when instruments are developed to facilitate its implementation;
- the outcomes – when gender mainstreaming affects the measures and routines of the different policy sectors; and finally
- the impact on society.

The review found that most EU member states have developed the mandate phase, passing laws and developing programmes to foster gender equality as a transversal goal. The equality mechanisms have also been developed to include mainstreaming as part of its core tasks but also to include the resources required to support special actions. A wide range of the tools required for gender mainstreaming have also been developed, if on a piecemeal basis across member states. Sex-disaggregated data, training and research on gender issues are found in most EU member states. However, more complex tools such as gender impact assessment and gender budgeting are much less developed and therefore less frequently used as a matter of course across many EU member states.

Despite these developments, it was pointed out that gender mainstreaming is still not an integral part of the policy making progress in EU member states and therefore the impact of gender mainstreaming on policy outcomes is limited.

The Conference then heard about experiences in a number of individual Council of Europe member states.

Sweden

Much of the ground-breaking work on the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been done in the Nordic countries.

A new initiative in Sweden requires 60 of its state agencies to mainstream gender over the period 2013 to 2018. This work is supported by a small team of just six persons. The approach they have adopted is to interact with the management boards of the different agencies because unless the management board engages with the process, evidence shows that it will not be a success. Training and guidance on the development of a gender mainstreaming plan has been provided to the agencies. The agencies can also participate in networking opportunities that enable them to learn from each other and to share good practices.

⁴⁷ Presentation by Dr Alba Alonso Alvarez

Despite being a front runner in the development of gender mainstreaming, Sweden also finds many shortcomings in its implementation. Conclusions drawn from these can be used to inform future work, both in Sweden and in other member states. The first weakness identified is the tendency to set up gender mainstreaming as a time bound, short term project. For it to be successful it must not be regarded as a project and it should be acknowledged that its work is never completed. It must be implemented as an established part of an ongoing decision-making process. Secondly, and affirming the view of the international institutions, gender mainstreaming is not a goal but a strategy. Thirdly, gender mainstreaming is too often 'sold' as a natural or normal element of policy making that anyone can do, but this approach tends to send out misleading signals. Gender analyses are required to address the inequalities in society that the agencies are to solve, and these analyses require specific expertise and knowledge.

The support structure works on two levels: one at the agency level; and the other at central government level. When the central government sets out the specific gender quality issues to be addressed by their respective agencies, it strengthens the focus and approach of the work of the agencies. An ongoing dialogue between the agencies, the ministries and ministers also contributes to the development regarding the definition of gender mainstreaming.

As of 2016, there is an additional initiative regarding the 33 state universities, with a similar support structure in place, which will run up until the end of 2019

Estonia

Estonia has engaged actively with the mainstreaming of gender in its labour laws, driven by its Ministry for Social Affairs. The Estonian authorities found that their labour laws are focused in their content on a society of middle aged male workers (seen as the productive sector) and take little heed of the needs of women workers who might be part of and need to combine activity in both the productive and the reproductive sectors. Women are still constrained by low maternity pay, impacting on the gender pay gap and by discrimination in the work place. Men who avail of parental leave to assist with raising families also experience discrimination in the work place. A new booklet identifies clearly the rights of parents, male and female, in the workplace and is intended to break down barriers and stereotypes.

Albania

Following the introduction of programme budgeting in 2008, Albania received support from UN Women in 2010 to introduce gender responsive budgeting into its medium term budget programme. The support took the form of meetings, training, the presentation of good practices and study tours for senior officials to strengthen their capacity to use gender budgeting in practice. Following a pilot project, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, supported by UN Women, collaborated in the preparation of detailed procedures for the implementation of gender responsive budgeting in sectoral ministries. With the provision of technical assistance, gender responsive budgeting was implemented in 20 government programmes. Arrangements are now being made to formalise this process in law. As with any new procedures, there are still some challenges to be addressed. These include an expanded awareness of the process across all government departments; the need for enhanced statistical data; the need to make drafting teams more inclusive of those involved in service delivery; and the need for a stronger legal framework and a manual on the whole process.

France

The need to treat gender mainstreaming as a long term issue was highlighted based on the experience in France. In 2012, an explicit political commitment was made to make gender mainstreaming systemic. This was a goal fostered by a reenergised feminist movement and a well-resourced civil society movement during the presidential campaign. Following the election, the goal was activated at the highest levels through a series of measures which included the appointment of both a gender balanced government and a Minister for Women's Rights, and the establishment of an independent national advisory body – the High Council for Gender Equality. This institution has already prepared more than 20 reports including research and recommendations for government ministries. The purpose of the new approach was to make gender equality a central issue rather than a peripheral issue in ministries. An inter-ministerial committee for women's rights and equality, led by the Prime Minister was reactivated and new gender focal points were identified in each ministry, and tasked to prepare and report on roadmaps for gender equality in each ministry, resulting in a comprehensive and easily understandable progress report in 2014. This followed the Swedish policy model and served to inform and engage ministers at the highest levels.

However, four years later, France too has found blockages to the success of the model, principally because human and financial resources were not adequate to drive and evaluate the outcomes of the process. There were also delays in the delivery of training. Without a significant dedicated budget, it has not been possible to meet all the requirements of gender mainstreaming and to move from the legal base to reality. In addition, other political priorities have overtaken the gender debate, while the broad understanding of the benefits and processes of gender mainstreaming is still regarded as unclear and inefficient, despite all the work on awareness raising and training.

Iceland

As another Nordic country and exemplar of good practice, Iceland actively engages in gender budgeting, holding the view that it offers an opportunity to link justice and fairness with economic well-being. This is based on the belief that economic well-being depends on gender equality. A first attempt at gender budgeting in 2005 did not meet with success and the process was restarted in 2009. This renewed effort began with the collection of data and information and with the appointment of a steering committee from all the ministries and of an overall project manager. In the early years, 17 pilot projects were undertaken and found to increase knowledge of gender budgeting and some resulted in changed processes. The findings of the pilot projects were then mainstreamed by tasking each government department to implement gender budgeting in one of their key policy areas.

This has led to a new phase, whereby gender budgeting is integrated into all decision-making processes. The focus is now on analysis of the gender perspective before decisions are made. The new plan includes challenging targets: in budget proposals, the plan is to progress from 0% in 2015 to 100% in 2020, while, in all proposed bills, the plan is to go from 0% in 2014 to 100% in 2019. The implementation model in Iceland is very close to that of both France and Sweden – a cross-ministerial approach; political commitment at the highest levels and steering committees were also essential for success in Iceland. Some of the challenges identified include the link to feminism which is interpreted negatively and an overall opposition to change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The presentations and subsequent discussion at the Tallinn Conference indicated an ongoing commitment on the part of both the international institutions and the Council of Europe member states' representatives to gender mainstreaming as a tool to foster *de facto* gender equality. They also highlighted the ongoing challenges. Much of the evidence to date shows that few member states have adopted a cross-government approach to the mainstreaming of gender. In working to mainstream gender, governments and their gender equality mechanisms have largely tended to focus on social sectors and other limited approaches.

The new commitment made by both the Council of Europe and the UN to mainstream gender across the two bodies brings a fresh impetus to the process. Early results from the international institutions are very encouraging and can serve as a model to be espoused by member states. Among the key factors essential for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming are both commitment at the highest political and administrative levels and a transversal approach. On the basis of this experience governments must again be encouraged to recognise the advantages of mainstreaming gender as an essential but basic element of policy making.

A range of tools has been developed to assist member states and their equality mechanisms in implementing gender mainstreaming. These include the excellent handbook on gender budgeting prepared by the Council of Europe⁴⁸ while EIGE has recently published an online platform⁴⁹ of gender mainstreaming resources to support member states.

⁴⁸ Council of Europe: Gender Budgeting Practical Implementation Handbook 2008
(<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680599885>)

⁴⁹ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>

Recommendations on gender mainstreaming

To member states

- Reenergise the process of mainstreaming gender through gender-focused policy making, gender impact assessment and gender budgeting in policy making across all sectors of government;
- If not already in place, establish a transversal, all-government committee to oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of gender mainstreaming across all public policies and enabling legislation;
- Ensure the replication of this process in each ministry and government agency as an ongoing strategy;
- Ensure that all the necessary resources such as personnel, adequate financial provision and gender disaggregated statistical data are readily available to facilitate gender mainstreaming across all sectors of government; and
- Ensure the provision of training to all public policy makers to ensure that they are fully aware of the benefits of gender equality and the methodologies for incorporating gender mainstreaming in all its forms into public policy making.

To the Council of Europe

- Continue to implement gender mainstreaming as a transversal programme within all bodies of the Council of Europe.
- Use all possible opportunities to foster external awareness of the work of the Council of Europe in fostering gender mainstreaming in order to serve as a model to encourage governments and other international institutions to follow its example.

To national equality mechanisms

- Continue to engage and work with governments and standard setting organisations such as UN Women, Council of Europe and the European Union to ensure the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a key element of national gender equality policies.

The Way Forward: Next steps in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy

No country in the world has achieved full gender equality – it remains a challenge for us all.

Marina Kaljurand
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia

Introduction

One of the key goals of the 2016 Gender Equality Conference organised by the GEC in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia was to review progress in the implementation of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017, its impact to date and especially to open discussion on the formulation of the next Council of Europe strategy.

The significant progress made in relation to each objective of the Strategy has been outlined in earlier sections of this Report. Mention was also made about the many challenges which still persist. The GEC and the Secretariat have delivered an impressive work programme since the GEC was established. Previous GEC conferences have addressed issues relating to gender equality and the media, access to justice and education. The present Conference offered opportunities for detailed discussion on two key elements of gender equality - social media, as an emerging issue; and gender mainstreaming, as a long term strategy, which has still to be fully implemented, despite the commitments made in Beijing.

The Conference also heard about progress in mainstreaming gender equality across the different sectors of the Council of Europe, and of the collaborations between the Secretariat and other Committees of the Council, in order to strengthen the focus on gender equality issues.

Working in partnership

The Tallinn Conference took a global collaborative approach to the challenge of gender equality, thanks to extensive inputs from external collaborators. These included UN Women, the European Commission, OSCE and the World Bank; all of which have active programmes to foster gender equality.

The Council of Europe, the institutions of the EU and UN Women have dual roles in relation to gender equality in that they are creators of both *de jure* and *de facto* approaches to gender equality. The work of each of these three groups of bodies in the field of gender equality is underpinned by legal obligations, be it national or international legislation and international conventions and agreements signed and/or ratified by member countries. These legal obligations are complemented by programmes of positive actions which serve to provide *de facto* gender equality and services which will support women in all the complex areas that come together to ensure true gender equality.

Such inter-institutional collaborations are essential in the current atmosphere of scarce resources to ensure complementarity rather than duplication of effort. Every European country, every public administration, every international institution has found it necessary in recent years to achieve significant savings to address budgetary challenges. The new mantra is "to do more with

less". This has, on occasion, led to reductions in the level of funding available for national gender equality mechanisms and has required policy makers in all corners of Europe to re-evaluate all their services to optimise and maximise outputs. This is not without merit. It serves to reopen debates and refresh thinking. It becomes necessary to identify benefits and to find new ways of working cleverly to reach the same goals.

The Tallinn Conference also heard contributions on behalf of the non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in the sector. The Council of Europe offers a unique role to NGOs through its Conference of INGOs which contributes actively to the work of the Council, including its work on gender equality. The important role played by NGOs internationally in ensuring that national parliaments are briefed and engaged in gender equality was highlighted during the Conference.

In developing its first Gender Equality Strategy, the GEC was asked specifically to look at the implementation by member states of the quite comprehensive 'Standards and Mechanisms'⁵⁰ for gender equality, which had been developed by the CDEG⁵¹ and published in 2007. It was also tasked to look at other priority areas within the Council of Europe where the GEC could bring complementarity. This led to the identification of the five priority areas for the first Strategy; four⁵² of which build on the existing 'Standards and Mechanisms', while the fifth relates to the high priority area of the Council of Europe on "Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice".

Developing a new strategy

The strategic planning process must be based on an evaluation of the existing Strategy; the availability of resources, both financial and human; changes to and newly emerging priorities, both within the Gender Equality sector and the broader Council of Europe; and changes in the external operating environment. In light of the scarce resources that prevail, there is no option but to look at each existing priority under the Gender Equality Strategy in order to determine:

- Progress and achievements to date;
- The added value to be achieved by continuing to work on that priority;
- The extent to which the goals of that priority link with the key goals of the Council of Europe and the needs of its member states;
- Whether there is duplication of the work of other organisations;
- Whether the onus is now on member states to take the work forward, with the possibility of its being monitored by the GEC; and
- Whether less time/fewer resources could now be dedicated to that priority, at least for a period of time.

In tandem with its review of its own goals and those of the Council of Europe, the GEC must also look at the external operating environment to determine whether there is sufficient evidence for it to change its key priority areas of operation within the next strategic planning period and/or to alter the focus of existing priorities. It may also look at its working methodologies in this regard.

⁵⁰ Op. cit. (2007)

⁵¹ Standing Committee on Equality between Women and Men (predecessor to the GEC)

⁵² Combating gender stereotypes and sexism; Preventing and combating violence against women; Achieving balanced participation in political and public decision-making; and Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures

If the present Strategy has been successful, it is likely that the new strategy may well be reshaped to review present priorities and consider adding one or more new priorities. The GEC can then monitor progress on those excluded priorities in order to establish their status in any future Strategic period.

Changes in the Operating Environment

Presentations to the Tallinn Conference highlighted a number of key external issues which merit consideration by the GEC when it formulates its new Strategy.

Migration

The proper handling of migration is probably the most challenging issue for Europe at present. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) statistics⁵³ show an increase of over 1.3 million (43%) in the number of refugees in Europe during 2015. Statistics from Eurostat show that the number of asylum seekers presenting in the EU for the first time has trebled since 2013.⁵⁴

While the gender of the migrants has until now been skewed towards men, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees commented at an International Women's Day event in March 2016 at the European Parliament that *'in 2016 to date, 138,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Southern Europe. In public opinion, the image is often that of young single men arriving in Europe to look for work. Today, on International Women's Day, I wish to report instead that nearly two-thirds [of that number] are women and children, up from last year's 41 per cent'*.⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that women represented only 28% of those who sought asylum in the EU in 2015,⁵⁶ particularly as this highlights the issue of family separation.

The European Commissioner on Human Rights also addressed the issue of women in migration and the asylum process in his 8 March 2016 communiqué.⁵⁷ In a wide ranging address he summarised the many challenges experienced by women in this scenario, making particular reference to issues for migrants which link to two of the priorities within the Council of Europe's current Gender Equality Strategy – violence against women and the access of women migrants to justice.

In looking at any future work on women and migration, the GEC might also consider the outcomes of the consultative work done previously by the CDEG which identified many of the challenges experienced by migrant women, including economic migrants, as they tried to integrate into new environments.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

⁵³ UNHCR: Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2015: p 14; Table 1

⁵⁴ Eurostat: Asylum Statistics: March 2016: commentary

⁵⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: European Parliament, Strasbourg, 8 March 2016: "Women refugees and asylum seekers in the European Union."

⁵⁶ Eurostat: ib.id

⁵⁷ European Commissioner for Human Rights: 07 Mar 2016: "Human rights of refugee and migrant women and girls need to be better protected"

Mention has already been made in this report of the inclusion of a specific goal for gender equality (SDG 5) in the new UN 2030 Agenda and the incorporation of a gender perspective into a significant number of other goals. Europe as a whole can, and must, serve as a role model in espousing policies which will ensure gender equality in its member states and the incorporation of a gender equality perspective into their development and humanitarian work. Many of the targets incorporated into SDG 5 link closely with the existing priorities of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy and to the broader work of the Organisation, through its conventions on anti-trafficking and on combating violence against women. SDG 5 calls, *inter alia* on member states to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls; to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls; end harmful practices; ensure women's roles in leadership; ensure women's access to economic resources; and use technology to promote the empowerment of women.

To underpin the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, UN Women is working to generate comprehensive data on gender equality and women's empowerment, including statistics, indicators and monitoring frameworks. In preparing its own monitoring work, the GEC should consider work which also meets the needs of UN Women.

Collaboration

Each of the international bodies working to foster gender equality and women's economic empowerment brings a unique perspective to its work. However, there are many common areas of interest where collaboration will enhance the outcomes, while in other areas, duplication of effort should be avoided, particularly as they are wasteful of scarce financial and human resources. The Council of Europe added value is grounded in its human rights-based approach, including the vast legal and policy *acquis* on gender equality that the Organisation has built up over the years. They are at the disposal of the European Union, United Nations and other international organisations so that they can build on them or take inspiration, as appropriate. The Istanbul Convention, which is considered as a reference standard to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, is a case in point.

The United Nations Statistical Commission has also undertaken work to identify indicators for both Gender Equality and for Violence against Women, and therefore it makes sense to build on this work rather than start from scratch in Council of Europe member states.

At the Tallinn Conference, the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women specifically invited the European countries to assist in the development of the indicators necessary to measure the implementation of SDG 5.

She also commented very positively on the Istanbul Convention, calling for it to be universalised to prevent violence, protect women across the globe from violence, to ensure the provision of adequate services and to prosecute perpetrators, another example of possible collaboration, which might be further considered/developed under the new Council of Europe strategy.

All of the materials prepared by the EU institutions can be readily accessed by those countries who are not EU members, and indeed a number of Council of Europe members have expressed interest in replicating the work of the EIGE, including for example the Gender Equality Index.

The Way Forward: identifying the priorities to be included

Speakers in Tallinn suggested that the new strategy should be very targeted and specific, both ambitious and flexible enough to respond to emerging issues and support the work of member states on the ground. The NGO sector called specifically for an action plan to implement the Strategy and suggested the creation of a suite of indicators to measure progress.

A number of themes emerged from the discussion – the need to consider migration in the new strategy; the role of social media, both good and problematic; the need to create awareness of gender equality issues in the younger generation, particularly issues such as the negative impact of bullying and other abuses of social media and the unacceptability of violence against women.

The previous Strategy contained five priorities and four or five key priorities seem to be a suitable number to maintain for the next strategy. Accordingly it becomes necessary to evaluate each existing priority in accordance with the framework developed previously – achievements, added value, etc.

In addressing the new issues mentioned above, it is important to consider whether these should become stand-alone priorities or whether they are elements of one or more of the existing priorities. One cannot lose sight of the issue of resources. The Council of Europe's budget dedicated to gender equality is small, but, thankfully, its impact to date has been disproportionate to its size. Therefore the GEC must continue to work cleverly to maximise outputs by ensuring that it only adopts priorities on which it can make a significant input.

While it might appear appropriate to work on addressing the many issues facing migrant women, this is a hugely complex area and one which, in its totality, is far too large to be addressed by the GEC alone. However, the GEC could consider in particular the special challenges associated with migrant women as victims of violence, including domestic and other forms of violence against women in areas of conflict and could work to raise awareness of the tenets of the Istanbul Convention among those providing services for asylum seekers, refugees and migrant women. This would link work on migrants with work on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and with the violence against women priority in the forthcoming strategy.

A further priority, aspects of which relate to migrant women and women seeking asylum/refugees, is women's access to justice. Bearing in mind the comments of the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights in March this year, future work on 'Women's Access to Justice' might include a focus on access for migrants and asylum seekers. In the same context, the Commissioner also highlighted the needs of women from Roma communities and women with a disability who also experience difficulty in accessing services to report violent crimes against them. This also merits consideration as a topic to be addressed under the new strategy.

Such work would also bring an inter-sectional perspective to the work of the GEC and the new strategy. Consideration might be given to having a stand-alone priority to address inter-sectional issues which affect so many women. This group includes, among others, Roma women; women from ethnic minorities; women with a disability; LBT women; migrant women; older women; women experiencing poverty. The selection of a stand-alone priority would be an innovative approach but it would replicate the innovation which has been so successful in mainstreaming

gender across the Organisation. Indeed preparatory work undertaken on the next strategy might well lead to the mainstreaming of the needs of women with intersectional issues across the Council of Europe in the future.

One of the key strengths of the Council of Europe is its capacity to raise awareness and reach out to a wide audience. The first priority under the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 is "Combating gender stereotypes and sexism". Gender stereotypes persist at all levels in society, despite the combined work of the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe. All three bodies hold the view that the elimination of stereotypes is central to the achievement of *de facto* gender equality.

Accordingly, it is essential that the new strategy continues to focus on the issues of stereotypes and sexism. It may be that new tools might be developed to reach out to young people but much of the key to the advancement of women into leadership roles lies with senior male decision-makers. As there are common areas of interest here, it may well be that a collaboration between the Council of Europe and other regional or international institutions such as the EU institutions, notably the Commission and UN Women would bring mutual benefits.

The emergence of social media as a force for good and for evil was one of the key themes of the Tallinn Conference. As a concept for inclusion in a new Strategy, this crosses over three of the existing priorities. First of all, social media is the medium of choice for reaching out to young people, both men and women. It is therefore the ideal medium to use to raise awareness of the key messages of gender equality – the win-win situation; the need to respect both girls and boys in all behaviours; the need to think laterally to avoid stereotypes; and build on personal developmental opportunities, in work, in sport and across life.

However, social media is also contributing to many of the new strands of violence against women – bullying, pornography, sexualisation of girls and boys, grooming, the online sex trade, revenge porn - to highlight but a few. This situation also needs to be addressed, for example by creating awareness-raising programmes, aimed both at young men and women, who may not be aware of the impact of their behaviours. While young men may perpetrate unacceptable behaviours, young women can find themselves subjected to abuse due to their ignorance of the appropriate use of social media. This challenge obviously cuts across the awareness-raising priority but also the prevention of and protection from violence against women. Finally, improving the participation of women in political and public life will depend to a large extent on how sexist and/or violent messages and content through social media against female politicians and women working in the public sphere will be tackled.

Another proposal which emerged on many occasions during the discussion in Tallinn related to a possible initiative to incorporate gender equality into the educational curriculum, across member states. While this has merit, given that children experience gendered behaviours and stereotyping from an early age, it is very difficult to envisage how such difficult concepts can be taught to young children. The Council of Europe has previously done work on the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (but not without challenges). In addition, the focus should be placed in implementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education.

More recently, the Council has developed and is currently piloting a framework of competencies for democratic culture which aims to teach children about democratic values and critical thinking in a very structured manner. This work, if successful, might well serve as a model to introduce children to the complexities of gender equality. It would therefore be beneficial if the GEC were to follow the progress of that project, with a view to its replication in a gender equality context in the future.

One of the existing priority areas which has seen progress to date is the advancement of women into decision-making roles, although there is still much work to be done to achieve the rather soft target of a minimum of 40% representation of women in leadership roles. The Chair of the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination called for the adoption of the stronger target of parity.

It could be argued that the GEC now has a limited role in relation to the achievement of these targets, the impetus for which lies within the member states and other key stakeholders such as political parties, leaders of industry and governments who collectively have the power to foster the advancement of women into the most senior roles. However, it is important to track progress in relation to key indicators of gender equality and such an exercise is in progress at time of writing.

The final priority in the current Strategy is that of gender mainstreaming. This is a priority which has met with considerable progress within the Council of Europe over the past four years. It can be argued that it is now a matter for member states to emulate both the Council of Europe and the UN by adopting a whole of government approach to gender mainstreaming. Tools developed by both the Council of Europe and EIGE are readily available to assist member states in this task. Discussion at the Conference leads to the conclusion that gender mainstreaming is an ongoing process required for good policy making and not a goal in itself.

Recommendations on a new Gender Equality Strategy

1. In developing its new Gender Equality Strategy, the GEC should consider progress and achievements on each priority under the present Strategy; the added value of continuing work on that priority; emerging issues; linkages to the overarching priorities of the Council of Europe; and the avoidance of duplication of work being undertaken by other international bodies.
2. The new Gender Equality Strategy must be targeted and ambitious in its content; have the flexibility to respond to emerging issues; be grounded in the reality of scarce resources; and meet the needs of the member states and the Council of Europe.
3. The GEC should continue to serve as advocate at the national level for the implementation of all Council of Europe standards on Gender Equality.
4. The GEC should continue to collaborate with other international bodies, strengthening links where appropriate, particularly in light of the new UN Sustainable Development Goals.
5. In considering major emerging issues such as migration, the GEC might assess the scope of its potential contribution and identify linkages between existing priorities such as 'women's access to justice' and 'violence against women' both of which are recognised by the Council of Europe as very significant challenges for migrant women, including for women refugees and asylum seekers.
6. The GEC might also consider establishing a stand-alone priority to address the intersectionality of discrimination against women by starting a dialogue on the specific needs of women from groups such as Roma women; women from ethnic minorities; women with a disability; LBT women; migrant women; older women; women experiencing poverty.
7. In developing its new strategy, the GEC might consider how it can further use new media to promote awareness of gender stereotypes of sexism, reaching out in particular to young people and also to men in leadership roles, as both groups are essential agents for change, albeit from very different perspectives.
8. Any future work on violence against women might include work on the misuse of the internet and social media as resources to perpetrate violence against women, through cyber bullying, hate mail, revenge porn, grooming, etc. and continue promotion of IC and its implementation.

9. The mainstreaming of gender equality in the Council of Europe serves as a model of good practice to be replicated by member state governments in a more concerted manner, 21 years after the adoption of the approach in Beijing. Member states are encouraged to be more proactive in implementing gender mainstreaming at national level, while retaining it as a core principle underpinning the new strategy (building on achievements to date and ensuring that all policies and measures of the Council of Europe integrate a gender perspective).
10. While there are still significant deficits in relation to women in decision-making roles, again the impetus lies with the member states in closing the gaps. Accordingly the GEC should encourage member states to continue collecting data in relation to implementing Rec(2003)3 in order to facilitate the monitoring of progress across all Council of Europe member states.