

in less than 1000 words...

Why gender equality?

Equality between women and men is now considered as a natural goal for all policies at all levels. However, while most people don't see the links between gender equality and cultural heritage, it is a fact that women and men have different interactions with cultural heritage because of the lack of equality between them, historically and still today. This is why gender equality needs to be integrated in the work around cultural heritage if we want to ensure that both women and men take equally part to preserving, experiencing, producing, accessing to and feeling represented by cultural heritage.

When implementing the Council of Europe "European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century", Member States should aim at promoting gender equality, that is equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, boys and girls, in the field of heritage and creativity.

"Gender equality in cultural life recognises that no members of society should be privileged or disadvantaged in rights, choices, opportunities, benefits and freedom because they are born, or identify, as male or female" (UNESCO).



Raquetists in the Basque Pelota court in Gros, 1938. Copyright: Fototeca Kutxa

How gender stereotypes affect cultural heritage

The recommendations of the Strategy seek to reconnect communities to their heritage values. Cultural heritage and art tell us stories about people and societies, in the past and in the present. But cultural heritage can be highly subjective.

Across centuries, the production and preservation of cultural heritage has been influenced by the power imbalance between men and women.

The stories and cultural heritage we inherit today were created, then identified, preserved and transmitted, according to the criteria defined by people in power over the centuries: overwhelming men. Women are invisible in history books or portrayed according to gender stereotypical roles. Created in 1648, the French Art Academy opened its doors to women only in 1897. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra welcomes female musicians only since 1997. In 2018, only 82 films directed by women had been selected to compete at Cannes during the festival's seven-decade history, compared to 1866 films directed by men.

Collective beliefs about "typical male" and "typical female" roles have contributed to the creation of stereotypes that have limited or enabled opportunities for women and men to act within their cultural context.

While progress has been made, sexism in society still impacts on the cultural sector: limited participation of women in decision-making positions, unequal pay (highly visible those days in the Hollywood sector), segregation into certain activities (public relations and marketing roles are most often performed by women, while creative or technical jobs tend to be occupied by men), unpaid care work relying mostly on women and which impacts on their activity, restricted opportunities for networking and funding for women, fewer women getting awards and being chosen for exhibitions of festivals, etc.

How cultural heritage shapes gender roles and equality

We know how much arts, cultural heritage and culture play a key role in shaping attitudes and gender roles. It is therefore important to be aware of this gender bias in cultural heritage, and to go beyond the usual understand of cultural heritage to ensure a more inclusive sector, with art works, stories and participation of women. Heritage and creative expression have the potential to empower women and girls, not only from a social, civic and political point of view, but also from an economic one.

When implementing the Strategy, Member States need to determine to what extent the whole process of creation, identification, interpretation, conservation and management of heritage is truly inclusive and participatory and does not reproduce or foster gender stereotypical roles or inequalities. It is also their duty to implement a gender equality analysis to ensure that the activities undertaken as part of the Strategy will contribute to the European goal of equality between women and men. Such commitment requires to be proactive in the work related to cultural heritage, and to bring the gender equality analysis at all levels, in all aspects as they are all interrelated.

CHECK LIST: gender equality perspective in the implementation of the Strategy 21:

- ✓ Make women visible choose and encourage art works and cultural heritage produced equally by women and men;
- ✓ Implement impact assessment with a gender equality perspective: assess how women and men access to, use and benefit from cultural heritage and art;
- ✓ Choose inclusive language when communicating about cultural heritage and projects and promote media free from stereotypes and discrimination;
- ✓ Ensure that decision-making, at all levels, is undertaken by both women and men, in all aspects of the implementation of the Strategy: in identifying heritage, defining projects, prioritising preservation, etc.;
- ✓ Collect gender segregated data about cultural heritage and creativity;
- ✓ Implement gender budgeting: assess the concrete impact of any project on both women and men and ensure an equal allocation and use of the budget, without gender bias;
- ✓ Train staff and personal working on cultural heritage about equality between women and men, including in formal and non-formal education;
- ✓ Develop a zero-tolerance policy about all forms of violence against women in the cultural heritage and creativity sectors;
- ✓ Bring a gender equality perspective in the monitoring and evaluation of the activities, assessing the impact on women and men, their respective access to heritage, their feeling of belonging and of contribution to cultural heritage, as well as how the activities contributed to realising equality between women and men;
- ✓ Implement measures aiming at improving the status and working conditions of female artists, especially at the beginning of their career, so that professional equality between women and men is a reality in the cultural sector: facilitate their access to funding sources and schemes, provide scholarships and mentoring programmes to nurture women's creative talents, set up spaces where women can create and develop new skills;
- ✓ Support the production, distribution, and dissemination of women's work, and their participation to and enjoyment of art and cultural heritage.



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