

Opening Session

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Key messages: welcome the thematic complementarity of the Strategic engagement and the Council of Europe's Strategy 2014-2017: Both Strategies focus on preventing and combating violence against women, equality in decision-making and gender mainstreaming. The Council of Europe's Strategy in addition concentrates efforts on combating gender stereotypes and sexism as well as on guaranteeing equal access of women to justice. The Commission's Strategic engagement in turn prioritises equal economic independence and combating the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps as well as promoting gender equality worldwide. Highlight that these Strategies serve as reference points in the field of gender equality and women's rights, both in Europe and beyond.

The Strategic Engagement for gender equality of the European Commission was published in December 2015 and is the follow-up and continuation of the previous Commission Strategy for equality between women and men. It maps out our work towards improving gender equality for the mandate of this Commission until 2019.

The wide consultations and the evaluation that we carried out during 2015 clearly confirm that the priorities we set in the previous Strategy still remain valid. The Strategic engagement focuses on five priority areas:

1. Increasing female labour market participation and equal economic independence;
2. Reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women;
3. Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
4. Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; and
5. Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

We have identified more than 30 concrete actions covering all of these five areas.

We also continue to promote gender mainstreaming: we will strive to integrate a gender equality perspective into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.

Together with timelines, indicators and targets, the Strategic Engagement is a baseline against which we can measure future progress. In short, the Strategic Engagement for gender equality is a solid basis and a red thread for gender equality actions in the coming years.

While every priority area has its own set of actions, it is important to emphasize that the Strategic engagement is a comprehensive package. It is necessary to address all areas of gender equality simultaneously, as progress in one area most definitely impacts other areas, and vice versa.

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