

TOWARDS AN AMBITIOUS COUNCIL OF EUROPE AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality

Based on PACE Resolution 2290 (2019) and Recommendation 2157 (2019)
Rapporteur: Ms Elvira Kovács (Serbia, EPP)

Gender inequality affects women and girls in all spheres of life, affecting areas such as equal opportunities, visibility and empowerment, as well as equal access to resources. Equality cannot be considered as effective without equal rights *de jure* and *de facto* for women and men, girls and boys. It is necessary to change the still prevailing unbalanced power relationships between men and women present in our societies, which prevent the full functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law, protection of human rights and the economic competitiveness of States.

Although much has been done to improve gender equality, cultural and social obstacles prevent its achievement. Recent years have seen increasing opposition to, and erosion of, women's rights worldwide: a backlash against women's rights is jeopardising the progress made. This calls for renewed efforts, in which a change in mindsets, political will and real commitment are preconditions for solid, long-lasting progress.



Gender stereotypes, sexism, and violence against women: serious barriers to gender equality

Gender stereotypes, sexism and violence against women negatively impact women's enjoyment of their fundamental rights and prevent them from equally accessing resources and employment opportunities. Women's participation in political and public life is also hindered, interfering with their ability to express their views, vote and run for public office, ultimately undermining the representativeness and legitimacy of elected institutions. Achieving gender equality is therefore essential to ensure well-functioning democracies.

Long-acquired rights are being targeted and previously agreed language questioned. Heightened vigilance in defending the progress achieved in gender equality and strong political commitment and leadership to secure further advances are needed. Policies, measures and practices must seek to reduce inequalities between men and women in all fields, connect democracy with gender and increase women's participation, representation and leadership in politics.

Gender equality is crucial to the mission of the Council of Europe and the advancement of women's rights is a priority in its actions. The Organisation has for decades been a driving force in countering discrimination against women and proposing renewed, ambitious standards to tackle gender inequality. Instruments used range from information and awareness-raising campaigns to binding international instruments such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

Recommended action for member States, national parliaments and media

Gender inequality manifests itself in various forms and contexts which are inter-linked and call for simultaneous action. The Assembly's Resolution 2290 (2019) and Recommendation 2157 (2019) "Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality" seek to fix ambitious goals for the Organisation and its member States, underlining the need to step up efforts to counter attacks on gender equality. Recommended action includes, but is not limited to:

- ▶ implementing relevant texts adopted by the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers as well as practical tools developed by the Council of Europe (see below)
- ▶ making use of gender impact assessment tools and implementing a gender mainstreaming approach when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating legislation, policies, programmes and projects
- ▶ implementing existing standards and the adequate resourcing of gender equality policies and mechanisms as well as of civil society organisations
- ▶ strengthening cooperation with journalists' associations, traditional and online media organisations to prevent the use of sexist language and communication
- ▶ making use of role models, including men, to trigger positive changes in mindsets and attitudes
- ▶ signing, ratifying and implementing the [Istanbul Convention](#), and ensuring that due attention is paid to [GREVIO evaluation reports](#) including parliamentary involvement in the monitoring process and recommendations put forward in the reports are implemented
- ▶ promoting gender parity and setting targets for equal gender representation in decision-making bodies by 2030
- ▶ enacting legislation prohibiting discrimination in remuneration, with the aim of eradicating the gender pay gap by 2030
- ▶ providing mandatory, comprehensive and inclusive sexual and relationship education and guaranteeing access to affordable and modern methods of contraception
- ▶ ensuring that a gender-sensitive perspective is adopted in policies and measures with respect to migration, asylum and the integration of migrants



Council of Europe action

PACE adopted texts

- ▶ [Resolution 2386](#) (2021) on “Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making”
- ▶ [Resolution 2290](#) (2019) and [Recommendation 2157](#) (2019) “Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality”
- ▶ [Resolution 2289](#) (2019) and [Doc. 14908](#) on “The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges”
- ▶ [Resolution 2274](#) (2019) and [Recommendation 2152](#) (2019) on “Parliaments free from sexism and sexual harassment”
- ▶ [Resolution 2244](#) (2018) on “Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration”
- ▶ [Resolution 2235](#) (2018) on “Empowering women in the economy”
- ▶ [Resolution 2167](#) (2017) on “The employment rights of domestic workers, especially women, in Europe”
- ▶ [Resolution 2159](#) (2017) on “Protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence”
- ▶ [Resolution 2111](#) (2016) on “Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation”
- ▶ [Resolution 2101](#) (2016) on “Systematic collection of data on violence against women”
- ▶ [Resolution 2054](#) (2015) on “Equality and non-discrimination in access to justice”
- ▶ [Resolution 2084](#) (2015) on “Promoting best practices in tackling violence against women”

PACE action

- ▶ Modification of the [Code of Conduct for members of the Assembly](#) to introduce the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct and the obligation to take account of the Council of Europe rules on the protection of dignity. A report on the Revision of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Parliamentary is under preparation, as well as a report on gender representation in the Parliamentary Assembly proposing changes to the Rules of Procedure concerning gender representation
- ▶ Revision of the [Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Assembly](#) to ensure the issue of violence against women, sexism and sexual harassment are systematically taken into account in the context of election observation by the Assembly
- ▶ Regular awareness raising, information and training for Parliamentary Assembly members on the issue of sexism and violence against women, including dissemination of an “Information Kit” for parliamentarians and the Secretaries of national delegations
- ▶ Annual statistics on the gender breakdown in Assembly positions¹ providing an overview of the progress made in achieving gender equality in the functioning of the Assembly
- ▶ Active work by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and creation of *sui generis* structures such as the [Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence](#), actively promoting the ratification and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention

Council of Europe standards

- ▶ [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2019\)1](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on “Preventing and combating sexism”
- ▶ [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2003\)3](#) on “Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making”
- ▶ [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#)
- ▶ [Rule No. 1292](#) of 3 September 2010 on the protection of human dignity at the Council of Europe
- ▶ [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#)

1. See 2020 figures on gender equality in the functioning of the Assembly



Practical tools

- ▶ Council of Europe [video](#) and [action page](#) to promote the fight against sexism
- ▶ [Handbook for Parliamentarians](#) on the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2019)
- ▶ [Handbook](#) on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media (2015)
- ▶ [Inter Parliamentary Union Guidelines](#) for the Elimination of Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women in Parliament (2019)
- ▶ [Brochure](#) – Parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment
- ▶ [Compilation](#) of good practices to promote an education free from gender stereotypes (2015)
- ▶ [Compilation](#) of good practices from member states on Gender Equality and the Media at National Level (2015)
- ▶ [Compilation](#) of good practices from member states to reduce existing obstacles and facilitate women's access to justice (2015)
- ▶ [Compilation](#) of good practices to prevent and combat sexism in Council of Europe member states (2018)
- ▶ [Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals \(HELP\)](#)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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