



KEY ACTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY



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Why is Gender equality important?

Gender equality is crucial for a functioning democracy, ensuring that all women and men, and boys and girls enjoy equal rights and opportunities. This includes the same representation, visibility, empowerment, and participation in all aspects of life. It also implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men.

” We recall that gender equality and the full, equal and effective participation of women in public and private decision making processes are essential to the rule of law, democracy and sustainable development. We underline the pioneering role of the Council of Europe, including through the Istanbul Convention, in the fight against violence against women and domestic violence.

[Reykjavík Declaration](#) (2023)

Gender equality must be understood as a key component of a larger struggle to safeguard human rights and ensure social justice. It is essential to recognise the interdependence of these issues and work together to build a more equal, inclusive and sustainable society.

The Council of Europe's (CoE) pioneering work in the field of human rights and gender equality has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework at both European and national levels. Gender equality is one of the priorities of Council of Europe member states. These countries have committed through the Organisation to addressing both current and emerging challenges and to removing barriers to the achievement of substantive and full gender equality.

Member States of the Council of Europe will put the strategy into action. Governments will participate in intergovernmental work on gender equality, based in Strasbourg. Findings from relevant monitoring bodies will guide their approach. Governments and civil society will also be engaged in international cooperation and development projects to address specific aspects of the Strategy.

In order to implement the strategy, the Council of Europe has adopted a comprehensive approach, including [intergovernmental work](#) and [co-operation projects](#), building on the results of relevant monitoring work.

Why do we need a new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy?

1. The 2024-2029 Gender Equality Strategy focuses on ensuring that gender equality policies benefit all individuals, especially from disadvantaged groups and those facing discrimination. In line with the Reykjavík Declaration, there is an emphasis on an intersectional approach to create an inclusive Gender Equality Strategy for the Council of Europe and its 46 member states.
2. Addressing gender disparities in employment, pay, poverty, pensions, education, and unbalanced sharing of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities is crucial for women's economic independence.
3. The growing impact and use of information technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), poses new challenges in terms of gender equality and women's rights. The new strategy addresses such challenges by establishing standards to address gender bias and discrimination in AI, the lack of diversity, and the potential disproportionate impact on women and girls.

4. The new strategy addresses the involvement of men and boys from a horizontal perspective, under each strategic objective. They should be active partners in combating violence against women and girls, and in promoting the human rights of women and girls. Men and boys also benefit from gender equality policies.

5. The Council of Europe's comprehensive and extensive body of instruments and work provides important input towards the efforts of the member states to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including the implementation of SDG No. 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and SDG No. 16 ("Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels").

A gender-equal Europe for everyone

Equality, diversity, and respect, including gender equality, are fundamental for democracy and human rights. However, inequality and discrimination persist in European societies.

Discrimination can be based on a variety of grounds, such as sex, gender, "race", colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

An intersectional approach is used to understand the complexities of discrimination and vulnerabilities experienced by individuals. This approach helps in crafting gender equality policies that consider the interactions between gender, sex, and other personal characteristics. Anyone can be vulnerable to these forms of discrimination, but certain groups of women and girls are particularly exposed to them and thus stand to benefit in particular from an intersectional approach to gender equality policies. It aims to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a gender-equal Europe for all.

Involving men and boys in addressing gender inequalities is essential as the beneficiaries of change, as well as agents of change and allies. Their engagement is crucial in combating violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality.

This policy will be co-ordinated alongside strategies relating to children and youth including, [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#) and [Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030](#).

Where boys and girls are concerned, a child-rights approach will be incorporated together with a gender equality perspective.

Ending violence against children is a legal, ethical and economic imperative. The gender-based vulnerability among girls and boys at risk of violence needs to be acknowledged and the particular needs and situations of girls must be addressed.

Who is involved in the Gender Equality Strategy?

All Council of Europe institutions, decision-making, advisory and monitoring bodies, as well as human resources policies, will support and actively contribute to the achievement of the goal and strategic objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029.

Other contributors and partners include:

- ▶ [European Institute for Gender Equality](#)
- ▶ [European Union](#)
- ▶ [Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#)
- ▶ [UN Women](#)
- ▶ [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
- ▶ [Organisation of American States](#)
- ▶ [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#)
- ▶ [EDVAW Platform](#)
- ▶ Member states parliaments and national governments
- ▶ Local and regional authorities and their associations
- ▶ Gender equality bodies

- ▶ National human rights institutions
- ▶ Ombudsperson institutions and equality bodies
- ▶ Professional networks and relevant specialist organisations, in particular in the fields of justice, journalism, education, health and social services
- ▶ Social partners
- ▶ Youth-led organisations and youth workers
- ▶ Academic, educational and research institutions
- ▶ the media
- ▶ the private sector



Strategic Objective 1 – Preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism

Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained social and cultural patterns that assign specific characteristics and roles to women and men based on their sex leading to discrimination. These stereotypes hinder the achievement of gender equality and limit the development of girls' and boys' talents and abilities, affecting their education, career choices, opportunities, and life expectations. These stereotypes also negatively impact men and boys, reinforcing harmful masculinities and contributing to gender-based violence. The media, online pornographic content and social media platforms often perpetuate these stereotypes enabling abuse, including harassment and violence against women and girls.

Member states and the Council of Europe will:

- promote and implement the [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec \(2019\)1 on preventing and combating sexism](#);
- promote and implement the [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls](#);
- prevent and combat gender stereotypes;
- address algorithmic gender-based and intersectional discrimination;
- collect sex disaggregated data and conduct research.

Examples of CoE actions

- ▶ Support member states in implementing campaigns and other resources such as: [Stop sexism](#) and [Preventing and combating sexism](#).
- ▶ Identify, compile and disseminate good practices to eradicate gender stereotypes in education, training, labour markets, and family life including the gendered division of tasks between women and men.
- ▶ Prepare a draft Recommendation on artificial intelligence, gender equality and non-discrimination and promote and support its implementation.
- ▶ Support data collection and research on sexism and develop guidelines on sex-disaggregated data collection using an intersectional approach.
- ▶ Support the implementation of the [2023 guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women](#).



Strategic Objective 2 – Preventing and combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence

Violence against women and girls and domestic violence remain widespread in all member states of the Council of Europe with harmful consequences for women, societies, and economies. The [Istanbul Convention](#) is widely recognised as the most comprehensive international treaty for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Member states will:

- take stock of and implement the recommendations from the monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention conducted by GREVIO and the CoP;
- take measures to address emerging forms of violence against women and girls, including its digital dimension develop;
- develop strategies and plans to prevent and combat violence against women and girls and domestic violence and exchange good practices, including those in relation to perpetrator programmes.

Examples of CoE actions

- ▶ Support member states in implementing relevant international instruments including [CEDAW](#), [SDGs Nos. 5 and 16](#), [Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security](#) and the recommendations of the monitoring bodies of the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ Encourage signatories of the Istanbul Convention to accelerate ratification and utilise recommendations from GREVIO.
- ▶ Develop tools to counter misinformation about these conventions and increase funding for campaigns against misinformation.
- ▶ Support member states in taking measures to address all forms of violence, including steps to address sexual violence in public spaces, strengthen legislation on sexual violence based on lack of consent, and take measures to address conflict-related sexual violence to address the issue of access by victims to shelter, legal services and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training, and assistance in finding employment.
- ▶ Develop new standard to address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and support its implementation.
- ▶ Develop information tools on the role of men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls.

- ▶ Design pilot projects, programmes / perpetrator programmes, develop specialised psychological care for perpetrators and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these interventions in preventing recidivism.
- ▶ Support the development of disaggregated data collection by sex and age as well as research on violence against all women and girls and domestic violence.



Strategic Objective 3 – Ensuring equal access to justice for women and girls

Access to justice is essential for promoting the rule of law and democracy. However, culturally ingrained stereotypes and lack of trust in the system impede women's access to justice. Women face additional barriers such as taboos, prejudices, poverty, and discriminatory attitudes within the justice system. Gender inequality biases disproportionately affect certain groups of women, including victims of violence against women, LGBTI women, migrants, women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women; targets of sexist hate speech; Roma and Traveller women; women belonging to national, ethnic, and religious minorities and undocumented women, as well as women human rights defenders.

Member states will:

- use Council of Europe guidance and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights to ensure women's equal access to justice;
- increase their capacity to remove barriers and obstacles to women and girls' access to justice;
- improve sex-disaggregated data collection and research.

Examples of CoE action

- ▶ Support member states in implementing relevant instruments such as [General Recommendation No. 33 of the CEDAW Committee on Women's access to justice](#) and the [COE report on The impact of Covid-19 on women's access to justice](#) and recommendations from relevant studies.
- ▶ Continue to address harmful impact of gender stereotypes on judicial decision making by monitoring court decisions and raising awareness among legal professionals including stereotypes in the judicial system and protection against gender-based violence and discrimination.
- ▶ Develop and disseminate training tools and materials including the Human Rights Education for Legal Professional (HELP) courses to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women, and improve access to justice.
- ▶ Monitor and follow up on court decisions to raise awareness and ensure a better understanding among legal professionals of issues related to women's access to justice, including stereotypes in the judicial system and protection against gender-based violence and discrimination.
- ▶ Encourage standardised data collection by sex and age and research in the area of access to justice for women and girls, considering intersectional characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability.



Strategic Objective 4 – Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political, public, social and economic life

” Together we commit to the following Reykjavík Principles and will... ensure full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life for all, in particular for women and girls, free from violence, fear, harassment, hate speech and hate crime, as well as discrimination based on any ground.

[Reykjavík Principles for Democracy \(2023\)](#)

Equal participation of women and men in political and public life is crucial for democracy. Gender disparities exist in political activities, decision making, and socioeconomic areas, with persisting inequalities in women's access to healthcare and in the exercise of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Gender stereotypes marginalise women, especially in unpaid care and domestic work, part-time or low-paid jobs, with women's contributions undervalued due to how tax and productivity are measured. Gender equality brings economic growth and well-being, whereas stereotypes, sexism, and violence marginalise women. Revising laws and engaging men and boys is important for gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Member states will:

- ensure equal participation of women and girls, men, and boys in political and public decision-making;
- ensure women's equal access to the labour market and tackle their higher levels of precariousness and related risks of poverty;
- ensure that all women and girls, men and boys have effective access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and to affordable, equitable and quality healthcare services, including in the area of mental health.

Examples of CoE action

- ▶ Support the full implementation of relevant standards such as the [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3 of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making](#) and [Recommendation CM/ Rec\(2023\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on Roma youth participation](#) and of effective gender mainstreaming strategies and policies.
- ▶ Encourage and support action to facilitate women's participation in elections, tackling sexism and violence against women in politics, and promoting gender equality in electoral systems and decision-making bodies.

- ▶ Encourage employers to take measures to promote women's economic independence and remove obstacles to their labour market participation, particularly in emerging sectors such as the green and digital economy.
- ▶ Recognise the value of care and promote the equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work; promote paid maternity and paternity leave and quality childcare and encourage men's involvement in caregiving and flexible working arrangements.
- ▶ Prepare a study on women's effective rights to decide on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence including women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- ▶ Work to achieve balanced participation of women and men in all Council of Europe bodies, institutions and decision-making processes.



Strategic Objective 5 – Ensuring women’s empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges

Global and geopolitical challenges such as the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic, migration flows, climate change, and natural disasters have disproportionately affected women and girls worldwide. These crises have worsened existing gender inequalities and created new ones, leaving women vulnerable to violence, discrimination, and exclusion. Furthermore, the rise of anti-gender movements undermines gender equality and threatens fundamental rights, risking the reversal of human rights gains in combatting discrimination.

Member states will:

- take action based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of gender equality;
- adopt a gender perspective in the prevention and mitigation of crises;
- implement [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\) on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls](#);
- join forces to counter anti-gender narratives.

Examples of CoE actions

- ▶ Disseminate and support the implementation of relevant standards on the rights of migrant women through co-operation projects.
- ▶ Carry out activities addressing the adverse effects of climate change on gender equality.
- ▶ Support the systematic integration of a gender equality perspective in policies and measures regarding public health, conflict resolution, climate change, and economic downturn.
- ▶ Support member states in recognising gender equality and women's rights as core elements of multilateral relations and crisis management, addressing gender-based violence in conflict situations, and supporting women and girls as agents for conflict prevention and building sustainable peace as per the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building](#).
- ▶ Support research and launch an awareness raising initiative to counter anti-gender rhetoric.



Strategic Objective 6 – Achieving gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach in all policies and measures

The Council of Europe has established a foundation for gender mainstreaming through various instruments and practices, including a reference definition of the term. Different sectors of the Organisation have also implemented gender equality-related activities integrating an intersectional approach to address multiple forms of discrimination and oppression faced by certain groups, particularly certain groups of women and girls. By adopting a gender mainstreaming and intersectional approach, the Organisation aims for better informed policy making, resource allocation, and governance, leading to sustainable advancements in gender equality.

Member states and the Council of Europe will:

- strive to achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and sectors;
- strive to achieve gender mainstreaming through co-operation activities;
- integrate a gender equality and intersectional approach in all their activities and policy areas.

Examples of CoE actions

- ▶ Provide targeted training and produce materials and tools on gender mainstreaming and gender equality in various intergovernmental, monitoring and co-operation sectors.
- ▶ Encourage CoE sectors to address the need for sex disaggregated data in standard-setting, monitoring and cooperation activities.
- ▶ Monitor progress on the implementation of a gender mainstreaming approach within the organisation, identifying, supporting and replicating promising initiatives.
- ▶ Facilitate networking and exchange of information with members, partners, and organisations on gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, and human rights-based solutions for inequalities.
- ▶ Involve all relevant actors, including gender equality experts and civil society, in the promotion and implementation of a gender mainstreaming and intersectional approach.
- ▶ Continue to mainstream gender equality in Council of Europe staff and other internal policies, including budgets, tools and indicators to measure and assess progress.

Contacts, links and further reading

[Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#)

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. [Ensuring women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges](#)
6. [Achieving gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach in all policies and measures](#)

[Council of Europe Gender Equality Division](#)

[Council of Europe Gender Equality Cooperation Unit](#)

[Council of Europe Gender Equality Resources](#)

[Council of Europe project "Promoting Gender Equality in Ukraine" \(Pro-GE\)](#)

Contact the Council of Europe Gender Equality Division at
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/contact-us>

This brochure is based on the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029. To view the final content of the Strategy, please see the [full version](#).

Brochure developed by the project, «**Promoting Gender Equality in Ukraine**» (Pro-GE)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 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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