



GEC annual conference to launch the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029  
Marking 10 years since the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention

## United around gender equality: making space for women and girls

Room 1, Palais – Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 30 May 2024

Conference organised in the framework of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

### Concept note

Over the last decades, the legal status of women in Europe has undoubtedly improved, and progress towards gender equality has been made in a number of areas: increased representation of women in leadership positions, measures taken to prevent and combat sexism as well as violence against women and girls or to promote work-life balance are some examples. However, effective gender equality is still far from being a reality. Structural barriers persist in many areas, and major crises, such as the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing economic recession have disproportionately affected women and girls, exacerbating existing gender inequalities and creating new ones, including through new technologies. Women's and girls' experience of gender-based violence is amplified in such contexts. The rise in anti-gender movements further challenges the achievements made on women's rights and gender equality standards and policies.

On the eve of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, a renewed political commitment at the highest level is key to address these numerous and multifaceted challenges and to agree on joint action. This conference, organised by the Council of Europe under the aegis of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, will highlight the political will of Council of Europe member States, as expressed at the highest level in Reykjavik<sup>1</sup> and through the new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029. Structured around six priority areas, including preventing and combating violence against women and girls, this Strategy will shape the work of the Organisation and its member States in the coming years towards a gender-equal Europe for all.

A **high-level opening session** will signal the political commitment of Council of Europe member States to be united around gender equality and to make space for women and girls.

1. **Reykjavik Declaration - United around our values:** "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."



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■ A **keynote speech** by a renowned high-level speaker. This will provide an insight into current and future challenges, and ways forward building on achievements and commitments of stakeholders.

### Part I: launch of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029

The **morning session** will be dedicated to the launch of the new Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 through:

- ▶ A **panel discussion focusing on how to ensure women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to global and geopolitical challenges**. It will provide a youth perspective to the issues at stake – from actions to be taken based on lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, to countering anti-gender narratives, through ensuring a gender-responsive approach to crises, including conflicts or climate change. Speakers with different backgrounds, including youth representatives, will discuss possible action to be taken in this regard. Youth participation in gender equality policies can improve the relevance, effectiveness, ownership and sustainability of public policies by ensuring that the needs, situations and approaches of young people are taken into account. The outcomes of the session will contribute to the follow-up to the Reykjavik Declaration by identifying ways to integrate a youth perspective in the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029.

### Part II: 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

■ The **afternoon session** will celebrate the progress made throughout the decade of the Istanbul Convention's implementation, ten years after its entry into force. Through the lens of professionals working on the ground and with a focus on the achievements identified in monitoring, the session will bring to life the practical change the Istanbul Convention effects on the ground.

- ▶ **Opening by the President of the Committee of the Parties**
- ▶ **Presentation of progress by the GREVIO President**
- ▶ **Presentation by a judge from the European Court of Human Rights**
- ▶ **Panel discussion on the impact of the Istanbul Convention in practice**
  - **Presentation of experiences in implementation** - testimonies by professionals active in the field of preventing and combating violence against women (judges/police officers/professionals involved in the delivery of specialist services/women's rights activists/governmental representatives) on the impact of the Istanbul Convention in their daily work;
  - **Panel discussion around the testimonies** - a former GREVIO president, member(s) of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention (national governmental experts on VAW), representative(s) of European network of NGOs would discuss and give context to the previously presented professional experiences.
- ▶ **The session will be followed by the opening of a photo exhibition "Through the lens: A decade of commitment to the Istanbul Convention"** showcasing ten visual interpretations of core standards of the Istanbul Convention.

■ **Audience:** High-level decision makers and policy makers from Council of Europe member states, observers and non-member states; members of the Gender Equality Commission; members of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention); members of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and the three previous GREVIO presidents; representatives of relevant Council of Europe institutions and bodies; youth representatives; independent international experts; representatives of other regional and international organisations, of parliaments, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, NGOs and civil society representatives, including women's rights organisations; academics; media representatives.



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