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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2014-2017:**

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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Highlights

The fourth and final year of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 further consolidated **the important role and contribution of the Council of Europe towards achieving gender equality** within the Organisation, in the member States and beyond.

Gender equality remains a priority area for the successive Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers and member States continue to engage in activities related to all five objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy. This is reflected in numerous legislative and policy initiatives to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in line with the Istanbul Convention; to address the negative impacts of gender stereotypes in both the education system and the media; to improve women's access to justice through access to legal aid and training of the judiciary; to achieve balanced participation in political and public decision-making; and to ensure gender mainstreaming in all other policies at the national level.

The findings of the **analytical report monitoring the implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making** show significant deficits regarding women in decision-making roles in the legislative, executive and judicial powers, as well as in the diplomatic service. The report provides useful data and information and puts forward a set of recommendations to step up efforts to close the democratic gap and increase women's participation in political and public life.

Work to prepare a **draft recommendation to prevent and combat sexism** is advancing and a standard in this area will address the needs and challenges faced by member States.

Gender mainstreaming has continued to gain impetus and momentum within the Council of Europe and in the member States. The adoption of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Gender Equality in the Audiovisual Sector is one of the highlights of 2017.

Targeted co-operation projects, *inter alia*, with Eastern Partnership countries, South Mediterranean countries, as well as with Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovak Republic, have continued to provide national authorities with tools and expertise to comply with gender equality standards and to translate them into tangible measures.

The Council of Europe further **developed and strengthened strategic partnerships with other regional and international organisations and with civil society.** A global collaborative approach is all the more necessary to ensure progress towards achieving gender equality and the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Achieving substantive gender equality requires political will, targeted resources and a change in mentalities. Member States have reported a number of **challenges preventing more rapid and sustainable progress towards gender equality**, such as: the prevalence of gender stereotypes and prejudices affecting women and men, girls and boys; the impact of widespread online sexist hate speech and other forms of violence; barriers to women's economic empowerment and reconciliation between private and public life; difficulties to ensure that all women benefit equally from gender equality policies; the need to improve awareness, knowledge and skills of policy makers to successfully integrate a gender equality perspective in all policies. The **Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023** will address these challenges and action on its implementation will be carried out in close co-operation with the member States and our key external stakeholders.

Introduction

The Council of Europe launched its Transversal Programme on Gender Equality in 2012, with the aim of increasing the impact and visibility of gender equality standards and supporting their implementation in member States and within the Organisation itself. The programme mobilises all of the Council of Europe's sectors, intergovernmental structures, monitoring mechanisms and partial agreements, as well as external partners - it brings together resources and tools for greater impact and focus.

The Transversal Programme prepared the Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality 2014-2017 (the Strategy) that was adopted unanimously by the Committee of Ministers in November 2013. The Strategy builds upon the strengths, specificities and added value of the Council of Europe, and proposes a vision and framework for the Organisation's role and action in promoting gender equality.

The overall goal of the Strategy is to achieve the advancement and empowerment of women and hence the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe member States. This is fully in line with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015. The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy demonstrates the Organisation's commitment to continue providing a leadership role through its legal standards and policy guidance to regional and global efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The Strategy promotes a holistic and integrated approach to gender equality and provides policy guidance and support to Council of Europe member States, as well as internal institutional bodies and mechanisms, to tackle the challenges in implementing standards in the area of gender equality.

The Strategy set **five priority** areas:

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. achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

To assess progress in the implementation of the Strategy, the Gender Equality Commission regularly takes stock of results achieved and prepares an annual report for the attention of the Committee of Ministers.

I. Overall Progress and Implementation

Support to member States to implement standards in the area of gender equality is central to the activities, working methods and partnerships developed across the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality and activities to implement the Strategy. A thorough assessment of the situation and work in progress in the member States has enabled the Council of Europe to better respond to their needs. This has been achieved through:

A. Ensuring ownership by the member States of the Strategy and related processes and activities:

1. **Engagement and regular consultations and exchange** with the core components of the Transversal Programme: the [Gender Equality Commission](#) (GEC) (which meets twice a year), the Gender Equality Rapporteurs in the different committees and monitoring bodies, and the intra-secretariat Gender Mainstreaming Team. Using the Strategy as a baseline, the choice of specific themes and activities is the result of close consultation, engagement and co-operation with the core structure of the Transversal Programme, the GEC.
2. **The annual thematic conferences** organised by the GEC have proven to be a strategic platform for debate and discussion on a specific theme, bringing together a diverse spectrum of stakeholders: government and independent gender experts, civil society and the private sector, as well as other regional and international organisations. In 2017, the annual conference was exceptionally replaced by an event organised by the Czech Republic authorities as part of their Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The conference on “Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Precondition for Efficient Policy Making” was held on 14 November 2017 in Prague, and provided an opportunity for participants to exchange information and discuss examples of good practices as regards research on the social and health impacts of violence against women and domestic violence across Europe, as well as on the economic consequences of violence against women and domestic violence in Europe.
3. Activities, developments and tools for gender equality in the member States were given **visibility** on our [website](#),¹ as well as disseminated among the relevant structures and stakeholders. This has led to recognition of efforts in the member States to comply with Council of Europe and other international standards, and flow of information and experiences among the member States. The regular updating of the gender equality website, as well as the increasing number of translations of Council of Europe standards by member states have contributed to raising the visibility of the Council of Europe standards and activities among experts and the general public.

¹ Examples: Switzerland’s Women’s Human Rights App providing easy access to relevant international and regional legal instruments, as well as agreed language contained in 250 United Nations and Council of Europe documents on women’s human rights and gender equality; Spain’s app to combat domestic violence: YgualéX.

B. Promotion, monitoring/evaluation of standards to identify gaps and obstacles and development of activities, tools and co-operation programmes to address such gaps and support the implementation of relevant standards:

1. **Monitoring** implementation is used as a tool to support member States in their efforts to comply with Council of Europe standards.
 - In 2017, the Gender Equality Commission completed the 3rd monitoring of the implementation of the Committee of Ministers [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3](#) on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making. The report provides an analytical review of information submitted by 46 member States regarding participation of women in the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the diplomatic sector and within Council of Europe institutions. The report highlights slow progress in this area and the need for continued and strong action by all stakeholders, including political parties and all relevant public institutions. The report also underlines that achieving a gender balance in political and public decision-making is closely linked to and depends on the adoption of general gender equality policies in all fields, including economic independence and empowerment, education, media, addressing gender stereotypes and combating violence against women. It concludes that gender balance in decision making cannot be reached if other areas of public and private life remain fundamentally unbalanced.
2. **Reference to Council of Europe standards** - expertise and sharing of good practice with member and non-member States and other regional and international organisations has increased visibility of Council of Europe standards among its strategic partners.
 - Reference to the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (Istanbul Convention) and other Council of Europe standards and tools in the field of gender equality in UN, OSCE and EU documents. Examples include:
 - CEDAW's Concluding Observations continue to call for the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
 - CEDAW's new General Recommendation No. 35 "on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19" refers to the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention as one of the "landmark political documents and regional treaties" on this topic, and highlights the importance of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in *Opuz v Turkey* (2009) in the determination of customary international law.

- The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights “on the compendium of principles, good practices and policies on safe, orderly and regular migration in line with international human rights law”, submitted to the Human Rights Council in September 2017, includes references to the Istanbul Convention and other relevant instruments and tools of the Council of Europe.
- The report “Assessment of opportunities for UN Women to support the development of gender statistics in Europe and Central Asia”, published by the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in February 2017, contains a number of references to Council of Europe gender equality standards.
- OECD’s “Toolkit for Gender Equality in Governance: Implementing the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life”, prepared in 2017, refers to the Istanbul Convention.
- The 2017 “Report on equality between women and men in the EU”, prepared by the European Commission, includes references to the EU’s signature and conclusion of the Istanbul Convention.
- The European Parliament Resolution of 12 September 2017 on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion, by the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- The EU’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2017 “Fundamental Rights Report” also includes references to the Istanbul Convention and calls for its ratification and implementation by all EU member States.
- FRA has expressed particular interest for the Council of Europe’s Collection of Papers aimed at facilitating the implementation of specific articles of the Istanbul Convention.
- The Contribution to the third Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights (November 2017), prepared by FRA, included references to the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe analytical report on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, published in October 2017, and the Council of Europe work to combat sexist hate speech.
- The Opinion on "Gender Balance in Decision-making in Politics" prepared by the EU’s Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men includes several references to the Council of Europe Gender Equality standards and publications, including the analytical report on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.

- Many activities to promote gender equality carried out by member States in 2017 are related to Council of Europe standards and tools. Examples (drawn from the annual reports submitted by member States) include:
- **national strategies and/or action plans on gender equality with thematic priorities in common with the Council of Europe Strategy** (Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine);
 - **legislative and policy measures to prepare for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and/or its implementation** (Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine); measures to address **online sexual violence** (Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland); **men as perpetrators and victims of domestic violence** (Belgium); and **sexist harassment in public places** (Belgium, Croatia);
 - **measures to increase women's participation in political and public decision-making**: application of quotas legislation (Croatia, Ireland, Montenegro); quotas/targets in public and/or private companies (Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Switzerland), including voluntary measures (Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden); data collection (Belgium, Georgia, Norway); training for women and men politicians (Azerbaijan); awareness-raising measures (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Ukraine); promotion of women in local/regional political decision-making (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland);
 - **activities to combat gender stereotypes in the education system** (Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey);
 - **activities to combat sexism in public life, the media, in advertising and the internet** (Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Malta, Spain, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Switzerland, Ukraine) and **tools to promote a non-sexist language** (Cyprus, Greece, Portugal);
 - **activities to improve women's access to justice**, including improved access to legal aid (Greece, Iceland, Portugal, Spain), research (Belgium, Greece, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine) and judicial capacity and training (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Montenegro, Portugal, Turkey, Ukraine);
 - **new and ongoing measures to promote gender mainstreaming** in other policies (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine); as well as **training of public officials on gender mainstreaming** (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine).

This body of work developed at the level of member States, also feeds into and contributes towards the achievement of the SDGs.

3. The development of relevant **new standards in the field of gender equality** has continued in 2017 with the adoption of the [Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)9 on gender equality in the audiovisual sector](#). The GEC is preparing a draft Recommendation to prevent and combat sexism, which when final, will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. Finally, a new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023 will be submitted shortly to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. The new strategy builds upon the vast legal and policy *acquis* of the Council of Europe as regards gender equality, as well as the achievements of the first Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 as outlined by the stock-taking conference "[Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring actions: the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017](#)" (Tallinn, Estonia, 30 June – 1 July 2016).
4. The Council of Europe is implementing **targeted co-operation projects on gender equality issues**:
 - The regional project funded by the EU-Council of Europe Programmatic Cooperation Framework to improve women's access to justice in five countries² of the Eastern Partnership (in 2015-2016) was extended to and concluded in 2017, with Belarus joining the project in its third and final year. The project contributed to improving national legal, policy and institutional frameworks on access to justice for women, and bolstered national dialogue and expertise about the Istanbul Convention. A series of regional and national activities brought together representatives of the Ministries of Justice and other government and civil society stakeholders, including legal professionals, to review progress and challenges with the aim of designing justice systems that advance women's equal rights, opportunities and participation. The capacity of judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach in their work improved as a result of the implementation of national training sessions in all beneficiary countries, with more than 510 national participants during 2016 and 2017. A Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women's Access to Justice was developed and tested during the training. The manual has been designed with the aim of providing guidance for judges and prosecutors on steps that can be taken in their daily practice to improve women's access to justice. This guidance is based on existing Council of Europe and other international, regional and national standards, as well as available good practices from member States of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, gender equality advocates in the Eastern Partnership region were supported with a guidebook on assisting women to seek justice and bring claims on human rights violations before national courts and international human rights venues.
 - Co-operation with South-Med countries³ to combat gender-based violence and promote gender equality continued in 2017, including: (i) supporting the implementation of newly adopted laws and structures in line with Council of

² Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

³ Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Palestine.

Europe standards, (ii) strengthening the knowledge and skills of professionals (authorities and practitioners), and (iii) facilitating the exchange of views, sharing of information and good practices with representatives of ministries, parliaments, civil society, media and universities;

- In 2017, co-operation under the Norway Grants was concluded with Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic. Co-operation under the new cycle of Norway Grants (2014-2021) commenced with Bulgaria, Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Romania. The focus of the Council of Europe is to provide strategic advice to national authorities on the areas to be included in the Norway Grants programmes as regards preventing and combating violence against women, in line with the Istanbul Convention;
 - Targeted co-operation has been developed with specific countries, namely, Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo,⁴ Slovenia and Ukraine in order to build national capacity to implement Council of Europe standards, in particular the Istanbul Convention.
5. **Practical tools and publications, visibility and promotion materials** on the Council of Europe standards and their implementation were prepared and widely disseminated throughout member States and other stakeholders during national, regional or global events, as well as electronically. Such publications are in high demand by member States, as well as internal and external partners, and are considered to be very useful tools to monitor progress and compliance with benchmarks and standards in the area of gender equality. Examples include:
- [Analytical report of the third round of monitoring on the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec \(2003\)3 on balanced participation on women and men in political and public decision-making](#)
 - [A paper on Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention](#) (emergency barring orders in situations of domestic violence), detailing the scope and obligations under Article 52 and clarifying the necessary balance of the rights and legal safeguards in its implementation. The paper includes a checklist to facilitate the application of emergency barring orders.
 - An information document on gender mainstreaming activities in the Council of Europe (updated quarterly).
 - The regularly updated factsheet prepared by the European Court on Human Rights on its [case law related to Gender Equality](#).
 - The [report of the Conference "Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring actions: the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017"](#) (Tallinn, Estonia, 30 June - 1 July 2016)
 - An [electronic newsletter](#), issued quarterly, with gender equality news.
 - The French version of the report of the Seminar on combating sexist hate speech.

⁴ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

- Member States continue translating and making available relevant standards and tools of the Council of Europe, such as the Gender Equality Strategy, the Istanbul Convention, and recommendations from the Committee of Ministers on gender equality issues. These texts are available in the Gender Equality website.

C. Transversal and close co-operation with the various bodies and institutions in the Council of Europe to ensure [gender mainstreaming](#) in all Council of Europe policies and measures:

1. Co-operation and synergies were reinforced with the various steering committees and monitoring mechanisms to introduce a gender equality perspective in Council of Europe policies and at all levels, as called for by the Strategy. Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) have been appointed in 38 steering committees and other intergovernmental bodies, as well as in seven monitoring mechanisms.⁵
 - Over 50 GERs are currently operational in their respective committees and monitoring bodies, leading efforts to integrate a gender dimension into their specific work and activities.
 - An inter-Secretariat discussion session on gender mainstreaming and the needs of GERs and Committees is scheduled for December 2017.
2. The GEC holds regular exchanges of views with GERs and representatives from different sectors across the Organisation to share information, expertise, know-how, good working methods and practices, as well as to discuss challenges. In 2017, such exchanges took place with the President of GREVIO; the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees; the Gender Equality Rapporteur of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; the Deputy Executive Director of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) of the Council of Europe; as well as with the Head of the Youth Department, the Head of the Electoral Assistance Division, and a representative of the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. In addition, the Chairperson of the GEC held an exchange of views with the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in September 2017.
3. The Gender Mainstreaming Team (GMT) is an important component of the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality. It brings together Secretariat representatives from across the Council of Europe institutions and bodies. The GMT met twice in 2017. Such meetings provide an opportunity to exchange information on

⁵ Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), and Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

the implementation of the Strategy, discuss challenges and share good practices in overcoming difficulties. In addition, members of the GMT had an opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023. The table in Appendix I to this report provides information about gender-related activities supported by GMT members in the different sectors within the Organisation.

4. A senior gender equality advisor has been seconded by the Dutch government since September 2016 to support the mainstreaming of gender equality across the Organisation and its different policies. The senior advisor works closely with the Gender Equality Unit and reports regularly to the Council of Europe's Senior Management Board about gender mainstreaming activities and progress.

D. Strategic partnerships with other regional and international organisations to ensure synergies, avoid duplication and strengthen impact, as well as with the **civil society** to increase outreach and visibility.

1. The Council of Europe continues developing and enhancing strategic partnerships with regional and international organisations (the European Union – in particular the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA); the United Nations - in particular UN Women, UN Global Contact, CEDAW and OHCHR, and the Human Rights Council; OSCE, OECD, and OAS); the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet); networks of women's organisations (European Women's Lobby, Women against Violence Europe Network); other international NGOs, the private sector, research and think-tank institutes. Regular exchange, consultation and co-operation have furthered synergies and co-ordination on the basis of the added value of each organisation.
 - The list of high level events is too extensive to be reproduced here. As an illustration, Council of Europe representatives organised, participated and contributed to high-level events during the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (March 2017); the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (May 2017), the European Parliament exchange of views on violence against women (June 2017), the 2017 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (July 2017); UNGA 72 High Level Segment and the UN Global Compact Leaders' Summit (September 2017), the 2nd OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference (June 2017); OECD's Roundtable on Better Governance for Gender Equality (May 2017), and OECD's Roundtable on Equal Access to Justice (May 2017); the EU's Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights "Women's Rights in Turbulent Times" (November 2017); the World Bank Law and Justice Development Week (November 2017) and the Sixth International Conference of Roma Women "Women and Political Representation: The Case of Roma and Traveller Women" (November 2017).
2. An awareness raising event to promote the Istanbul Convention (The *#LoudUnited project*) was organised by the European Women's Lobby (EWL). The event was

preceded by a social media campaign which ran during the 16 days of activism against violence against women and girls and other visibility and communication tools to advocate and promote the added value of the Istanbul Convention. The project was funded by the Finnish government and implemented by the Council of Europe and EWL.

3. The Council of Europe contributes to the three-year programme launched in 2017: "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds". The aim of this initiative is to promote favourable social norms and attitudes to prevent gender discrimination and violence against women; pursue empowerment of women and girls (including those from disadvantaged groups) who have experienced discrimination or violence to advocate for and use available, accessible, and quality services along with full implementation of legislative framework in line with international standards including the Istanbul Convention. The programme is implemented by UN Women in partnership and with the financial support of the European Commission.

II. Conclusions

The fourth year of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 confirmed the prominent global role of the Council of Europe in the field of women's rights and gender equality.

The Council of Europe's transversal approach towards gender equality and its institutions, including the GEC, the GERs, the GMT, the Gender Equality Unit and the seconded Senior Gender Equality Adviser, have continued to make progress in advancing awareness of gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the Organisation and many of its intergovernmental committees, monitoring bodies and partial agreements. The GEC provides a unique forum for exchanging experience and good practices on the implementation of the Strategy and other Council of Europe standards in the field of gender equality not only among member States, but also with non-member States, other international organisations and civil society.

The Council of Europe's comprehensive and extensive body of standards and work, carried out under the Organisation's Gender Equality Strategy, provides important input towards the efforts of member States to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goals 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and 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"). Furthermore, its intergovernmental platforms, notably the GEC, provide unique opportunities for exchanging information and experience on progress made towards the SDGs.

The Council of Europe has engaged in the promotion and evaluation of standards in order to identify gaps and obstacles to their implementation - as well as in the development of activities, tools and co-operation programmes to address such gaps and support member States to apply relevant standards. Regular monitoring and research have shown that progress towards *de facto* gender equality is very slow.

The **challenges** that Council of Europe member States face in the implementation of the Strategy are related to the wider global and regional context, including shrinking resources and a backlash against women's human rights that contributes to widening the gap between gender equality standards and their implementation.

While violence against women remains the most pronounced expression of the unequal power relations between women and men – as both a violation of women's human rights and a major obstacle to gender equality - we continue to face misconceptions about the concept of "gender". Gender equality and women's rights policies and measures are being increasingly attacked under the misleading label of "gender ideology", which is used both to undermine progress towards equality between women and men, to jeopardise the rights of LGBTI persons, and to spread misconceptions about the Istanbul Convention thus deviating attention from its primary goal: to protect women and girls from violence.

The prevalence of gender stereotypes and prejudices within society continues to be a critical challenge hindering progress on gender equality and affecting women and men, girls and boys. Member States are concerned about the impact and consequences of the increasing and widespread online sexist hate speech and other forms of sexual violence, and count on work developed at the level of Council of Europe to counter such threats. Ongoing work to prepare a draft recommendation to prevent and combat sexism online and offline is an example of a co-ordinated response by the member States at the level of the Council of Europe.

As reported in previous years, budgetary cuts and austerity measures affecting gender equality authorities and bodies continue to directly affect the activities and impact of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in implementing relevant gender equality standards and commitments at the national, regional and local level. Member States call for strengthening the governmental institutional machinery for gender equality, as gender equality bodies play a critical role in providing impetus and coherent management of gender equality policy, including monitoring and evaluation of progress, as well as of co-ordination and support to gender equality and gender mainstreaming actions carried out by the rest of government departments and civil society organisations.

In this regard, improving the awareness, knowledge and skills of policy makers to successfully integrate a gender equality perspective in all sectoral policies remains an important challenge shared by national authorities, international organisations and other stakeholders. It is widely acknowledged that success in achieving real equality between women and men will rely to a large extent on making sufficient progress towards gender mainstreaming. This requires political engagement on the part of all relevant actors, as well as adequate investment in time and expertise across policies.

Addressing gender stereotypes in the judiciary, in all fields of law, and including the prosecution and punishment of violence against women, and the redress of victims, will be critical to make progress in preventing and reducing the prevalence of such a violation of human rights. The training manual for judges and prosecutors developed in 2017 is a very practical tool at the disposal of member States to improve the training of legal professionals on women's access to justice.

Other challenges affecting European societies, as highlighted by member States, include: women's economic independence; the barriers to achieving reconciliation between private and public life for both women and men; the difficulties in ensuring that all women benefit equally from gender equality policies; and the need to address the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker women in Europe. These issues will be addressed in the next Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.

The implementation of this Strategy has heavily relied on strategic partnerships and co-operation with and among member States, as well as with other regional and international organisations and civil society, aimed at ensuring synergies, strengthening impact, outreach and visibility, and avoiding duplication.

Moving towards substantive gender equality requires political will, a change in mentalities and in the perception and consideration of both women's and men's roles. A strong commitment to *de facto* equality between women and men at all levels and in all areas, will benefit entire societies, including men and future generations.

Appendix 1 - Overview of activities in 2017

Strategic Objective 1: Combating Gender Stereotypes and Sexism				
Activities	Entity	Budget	Timeframe	Current Status
1. Translation and dissemination of Recommendation CM/Rec (2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality and media: translated into Russian, Bulgarian and Greek	Media and Internet Governance Division	OB+VC	2014-2017	Completed
2. Euro-Med Women Network Platform updated with news, tools and reports on combating gender stereotypes – launch of a database of good practices and main activities of women’s organisations in southeast Mediterranean region	North–South Centre	OB+VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
3. Session on “Women’s Movements and Feminism: Deconstructing Sexist Stereotypes” in the framework of the 18th University on Youth and Development	North-South Centre	VC	2017	Completed
4. Publication of a factsheet on sexist hate speech	GE	OB	2016-2017	Completed
5. Preparation of a draft Committee of Ministers recommendation on preventing and combating sexism	GE + GEC	OB	2016-2018	Ongoing
6. Women and Media – Workshop on women participation and representation in the media	GE (South Med)	VC	2017	Completed
7. Assistance towards the implementation of the Women in the Media Observatory in Morocco	GE (South Med)	VC	2017	Ongoing
8. Training sessions for Tunisian and Moroccan journalists on Gender Equality and the role of the media	GE (South Med)	VC	2017	Ongoing
9. Feasibility study on a standard-setting instrument on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality	Media Division/CD MSI	OB	2016-2017	Ongoing

Strategic Objective 2: Preventing and Combating Violence against Women				
Activities	Entity	Budget	Timeframe	Current Status
1. Annual events at national, regional and international level to promote the Istanbul Convention as a standard reference and tool for change in all areas of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence	VaW + PACE + other entities + regional and international organisations	OB+VC	2013-2017	Completed
2. Prepare studies, collect and disseminate good practices on various specific measures provided for in the Istanbul Convention including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Article 13) conducting awareness raising campaigns on different forms of violence b. (Article 52) introduction of emergency barring orders c. (Article 12) general obligations to prevent violence against women d. (Article 16) the obligation to set up perpetrators' programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and sex offenders e. (Article 17) encouraging the participation of the private sector and the media in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence f. (Article 11) ensuring data collection and research on violence against women 	GE +VaW + PACE (as regards dissemination)	OB/VC	2013-2017	Study a. completed Study b. completed Study c. completed Study d. completed Study e. completed Study f. completed
3. Assistance towards the implementation of a pilot shelter for women victim of violence in Tunisia	VAW	VC	2016-2017	Completed
4. Assistance towards the implementation of the VaW Observatory in Morocco	VAW	VC	2015-2017	Completed
5. Comments on the VaW draft laws in Tunisia and Morocco and the draft law establishing the Authority for gender equality and fight against discrimination in Morocco	GE/VaW	VC	2014-2017	Completed
6. Exchange among Tunisian MPs and the Parliamentary Network "Women Free from Violence	VAW/PACE	VC	2017	Completed

7. Regional Conference – Prevention and Protection of Women against violence in the South Mediterranean	VAW	VC	2017	Completed
8. Prepare and disseminate thematic factsheets on important topics related to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention	GE- VaW	OB+VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
9. Provide legal and other technical expertise to member and non-member states to align national legislation and policies with the provisions and requirements of the Istanbul Convention	GE-VaW	OB+VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
10. Meetings of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence and advocacy activities by the General Rapporteur on violence against women	PACE	OB+VC	2014-2017	Ongoing
11. Parliamentary seminars to promote the Istanbul Convention and achieve further ratifications	PACE	VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
12. Seminars on capacity building on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the monitoring role of parliamentarians, with the participation of parliamentarians, legal experts, lawyers	PACE	VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
13. Awareness-raising campaign aimed at the general public through action taken by parliamentarians on a national level in partnership with NGOs and media	PACE	VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
14. Production of visibility and awareness-raising material addressed to parliamentarians	PACE	VC	2013-2017	Ongoing
15. Awareness raising on the Istanbul Convention by the Gender Equality Expert among NGO network.	INGO	OB	2013-2017	Ongoing
16. Training of Experts in Southern Mediterranean on “The Human Rights-based approach in Combating Violence against Women”	North-South Centre	VC	2017	Completed
17. Events to mark the International day to combat Violence against Women	GE in co-ordination with other entities	OB	2014-2017	Completed
18. Report to map out existing tools against cyber bullying and violence against women and children	Cybercrime Committee/ Information Society Department	OB	2017-2018	Ongoing

Strategic Objective 3: Guaranteeing Equal Access of Women to Justice				
Activities	Entity	Budget	Timeframe	Current Status
<p>1. Project on “Improving Women’s Access to Justice in Six Eastern Partnership Countries” Implemented in six Eastern Partnership countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (2015-2017), and Belarus (2017)</p> <p>a) Development of national mapping studies on barriers, remedies and good practices for women’s access to justice</p> <p>b) Training manual for judges and prosecutors (common part and national chapters)</p> <p>c) Regional conferences</p> <p>d) National training sessions for judges and prosecutors</p> <p>e) Guidebook to assist women in seeking justice/bringing claims on human rights violations</p>	GE	JP	2015-2017	Completed
Strategic Objective 4: Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making				
Activities	Entity	Budget	Timeframe	Current Status
<p>1. <i>Survey to monitor the implementation of the Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making</i></p> <p>a. Analyse and disseminate the findings of the survey</p>	GE	OB	2016-2017	Completed
<p>b. Produce a factsheet on key findings of analytical report of survey</p>	GE	OB	2017-2018	Ongoing
<p>2. Meetings of the Working Group of the Conference of INGOs on “Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes, particularly dealing with conflicts”: awareness raising and exchange of good practice</p>	Conf INGO	OB	2014-2017	Ongoing

3. Workshop on the participatory approach in reforms concerning women's rights: "Strengthening Capacities of Women Organisation: the example of Jordan"	North-South Centre	VC	2017	Completed
4. Regional seminar for senior public officials - UniDem Med "Performance, Merit and gender mainstreaming approach in the civil service"	GE/Venice Commission	PSII	2017	Completed
5. Regional study on "Women's political representation in the Eastern Partnership countries" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus)	Electoral Assistance Division	JP	217	Completed
6. Questionnaire on gender equality within the judiciary circulated among the Council of Europe Consultative Council of European Judges	CCJE	OB	2017	Completed
7. Revision of CAHDI questionnaire on the "Organisation and functions of the Office of the Legal Adviser of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" to include additional questions on gender equality following the recommendations contained in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2014-2017). At present 36 members and non-member states and one international organisation (NATO) have already submitted their responses to this revised questionnaire (see CAHDI database for consultation)	CAHDI	OB	2016-2017	Completed

Strategic Objective 5: Achieving Gender Mainstreaming in all policies and measures

Activities	Entity	Budget	Timeframe	Current Status
1. Training courses on gender mainstreaming for Gender Equality Rapporteurs	GE	OB	2013-2017	Ongoing Three training sessions organised
2. Develop training modules and toolkit for Gender Equality Rapporteurs	GE	OB	2013-2017	Ongoing Toolkit prepared

3. Overview of gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe policy briefs and activities	GE	OB	2015-2017	Updated regularly
4. Develop and disseminate good practices and other relevant information on gender mainstreaming	GE	OB	2013-2017	Ongoing
5. Compilation of gender mainstreaming initiatives in the member states	GE	OB	2017	Completed
6. Mainstream gender equality in all activities on children's rights	CRD	OB	2016-2017	Continuous
7. Prepare a factsheet on gender equality and children's rights.	CRD	OB	2017-2018	Ongoing
8. Resolution 2159 (2017) on protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence	PACE	OB	2017	Completed
9. Ensure that the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe maintain and further develop the presence of gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination issues in their training curricula and their governance (e.g. selection of participants), and make available to them relevant Council of Europe documents and tools for use in their activities	DPP	OB	2014-2017	Ongoing
10. Section on gender equality in the Compendium comparative table on cultural policies in 42 European countries and preparation of a monitoring table indicating trends and developments over the past ten years	DGII	OB+VC	2014-2017	Ongoing activity of the Compendium project (www.culturalpolicies.net)
11. Promote the integration of a gender perspective in pilot activities run by non-governmental youth organisations with the support of the European Youth Foundation. Grant application and report forms include a section on how the NGO included a gender perspective in its project. The EYF is collecting examples of good practices and tools that are shared on its website	DGII-EYF	EYF	2014-2017	Ongoing

12. Creation and management of a network composed of representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, civil society and international organisations from Europe and South Mediterranean aimed at strengthening links and co-operation for gender equality and women	North-South Centre	VC	2012-2017	Ongoing
13. Activity on “introducing gender specific dimensions in drug policies”. Expert Group on “violence, women and rape drugs”, (Rome, June 2017)	Pompidou Group	VC	2016-2017	Completed
14. Activity on introducing gender specific dimensions in drug policies Seminar on “women and drugs: from policy to good practices”, (Rome, June 2017)	Pompidou Group	VC	2017	Completed
15. Activity on introducing gender specific dimensions in drug policies Pompidou Group Conference on “Women, Drugs and Violence, (Mexico, December 2017)	Pompidou Group	OB	2017	Completed
16. Pompidou Group/MedNET “First seminar on Women and Drugs in Algeria”, 8 March 2017 at the occasion of the UN international Women Day	Pompidou Group	VC	2017	Completed
17. Pompidou Group/MedNET “Workshop on Women, Drugs and Violence” (Tunis, September 2017)	Pompidou Group	VC	2017	Completed
18. Recommendation on gender equality in the audiovisual sector	Eurimages	None	2017	Completed
19. No Hate Speech Movement campaign (set up in 2012) will focus on sexist hate speech and address the fact that women and girls are confronted with this phenomenon on a daily basis online and offline	Youth	OB	2016-2017	Completed
20. Contribution to the development and implementation of a UNDP survey on “Men and women in civil service”	GRECO	OB	2013-2017	Ongoing

21. Plans to modify the working methods of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation to mainstream a gender equality perspective into its work	CDCJ	OB	2017	Completed
22. Factsheet on “Women in Prison”	CPT Secretariat	OB	2017	Completed
23. Resolution of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on promoting gender mainstreaming in the work of the Convention and integrating a gender equality perspective in the work of the Convention Secretariat	Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats	OB	2017	Completed

Abbreviations:

CAHDI:	Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law
CCJE:	Council of Europe Consultative Council of European Judges
CDCJ:	European Committee on Legal Co-operation
CDMSI:	Steering Committee on Media and Information Society
CPT:	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CRD:	Children’s Rights Division
DGII:	Directorate General of Democracy
DPP:	Directorate of Policy Planning
EYF:	European Youth Foundation
GEC:	Gender Equality Commission
GE:	Gender Equality Unit responsible for the Transversal Programme on Gender Equality
GRECO:	Group of States against Corruption
INGO:	Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations
JP:	Joint Programme
MedNET:	Mediterranean network for co-operation on drugs and addictions of the Pompidou Group
OB:	Ordinary Budget
ODGP:	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
PACE:	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Pompidou Group:	Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs
VaW:	Division responsible for activities related to the monitoring of the Istanbul Convention
VC:	Voluntary Contribution

Appendix 2 - List of compilations, handbooks and other practical tools⁶

Preventing and combating violence against women

[Emergency barring orders in situations of domestic violence](#): Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention (2017)

Guaranteeing the equal access of women to justice

Regional Project on “Improving women’s access to justice in six Eastern Partnership countries”:

- Training Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women’s Access to Justice (2017): [General Part](#). Country chapters: Armenia in [Armenian](#) and in [English](#); Georgia in [Georgian](#) and in [English](#); Republic of Moldova in [Moldovan](#) and in [English](#); Ukraine in [Ukrainian](#) and in [English](#).
- Country Studies on Barriers, Remedies and Good Practices for Women’s Access to Justice: [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Georgia](#), [Republic of Moldova](#), [Ukraine](#).

Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

- [Analytical report of the third round of monitoring on the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec \(2003\)3 on balanced participation on women and men in political and public decision-making](#) (2017)
- [Sex-disaggregated statistics on the participation of women and men in political and public decision-making in Council of Europe member States](#) (Data as at 15 July 2016)

Promoting gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures in the Council of Europe

- [Activities promoting gender mainstreaming at the national level in Council of Europe member States](#) (2017)
- [Gender Mainstreaming in Council of Europe Activities](#) (October 2017)

⁶ All these documents can be found on the Gender Equality website at: <http://www.coe.int/equality>.

Appendix 3 - Activities and measures in member states towards the achievement of the objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy

Contributions from member states can be found in the document: [Activities and measures in member states towards the achievement of the objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy.](#)