
Recommendationⁱ on Equality between Women and Men: The Conference of INGOs calls on member States to respect and defend this essential Human Rights asset

Adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 30 October 2019
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The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg,

Referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948), the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (CoE 1950) and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the revised European Social Charter (1996), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU 2000), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CoE 2011), the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (UN 1979), the Declaration and Platform for Action of the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women, (Beijing 1995);

Referring to the Council of Europe's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2018-2023 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2018), the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation to member States on preventing and combating sexism CM/Rec(2019)1, the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation to member States on equality between women and men in the audiovisual sector CM/Rec(2017)9;

Reiterating its Resolution on the use of the expression "Human Rights" instead of "Rights of Man" in languages using this last expression (CONF/PLE(2018)RESI), its Recommendation on "Gender-based violence as a political weapon" (CONF/PLE(2014)RECI), its Recommendation on "Gender equality, value, principle and universal fundamental right to be respected and promoted in all fields" (CONF/PLE 2012 REC5);

Recalling that equality between women and men is a universal value, enshrined in international and European treaties, which prohibit all discrimination, inequality and violence based on gender and require the promotion of a real equality between women and men in all fields;

Recalling that these instruments affirm the non-negotiable nature of human rights, and exclude that ethnic, cultural and religious traditions and customs may be invoked to harm women and prevent the exercise of human rights, including equality between women and men;

Recalling that these instruments require States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate social, customary or any other prejudices and practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex and the stereotyped roles of men and women, thus leading to serious violations of human rights; that States have undertaken to repeal any domestic law contrary to equality between women and men and to apply the texts in favour of equality with the means required and specific budgets;

Stressing the essential role of the Council of Europe in promoting, de jure and de facto, the development and effective implementation of equality between women and men;

Gravely concerned to note an increasingly active opposition to the international, European and national achievements in the field of the fundamental rights of women that underpin our European democratic civilisation,

By the increasingly widespread, and often violent, attempts to restrict women's right to control their bodies, by direct attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights,

By the forced exploitation of women's bodies,

By sexist hate speech and cyber-violence, of which girls and young women are the main victims,

By domestic violence, femicide, which is a scourge that calls for an emphasis on prevention and a review of criminal policies,

By the rights of which the most isolated, the oldest, the poorest, the most vulnerable, the disabled, migrant women are often deprived,

By a transmission of history that forgets women, by an education too sexist,

By a drift of artificial intelligence, with its gender bias, that is uncontrolled, reproducing by increasing inequalities between women and men, the sexist abuses probably linked to the lack of women in science,

By an increase in genital mutilationⁱⁱ and forced marriages of girls as well as selective abortions of girls' embryosⁱⁱⁱ, including on the European continent^{iv},

By violating the right to equal pay for equal work between women and men and by widespread discrimination depriving women of real empowerment, keeping them under a glass ceiling in the workplace in all member States but also in decision-making places,

By asphyxiation, due to the lack of funding for women's rights movements,

By the reluctance to apply the various European texts in the member States, even if they are signed and ratified by governments,

Urgently **requests** the organs of the Council of Europe and the member States, in view of this very worrying situation for Women's Rights, to take all measures to preserve the existing achievements in the field of equality between women and men, the fundamental rights of women, to act for their effective application, a condition for democracy and the rule of law on the European continent and in the world,

To this end, **calls** on all INGOs enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe to unite and work for the defence, application and development of equality in law and in practice between women and men, this universal fundamental right to be respected and promoted in all fields.

ⁱ This recommendation was proposed by the Vice-President in charge of Equality with the participation of: Association of Women of Southern Europe (AFEM), University Women of Europe (UWE), and support by: European Centre of the International Council of Women (ECICW), European Network church on the Move (EN/RE), European Union of Women (EUW), Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS), International Alliance of Women (IAW), Soroptimist International Europe (SIE), Zonta International (ZI), European Buddhist Union (EBU), ANDANTE Europa, European Action of the Disabled, (AEH), Conference of European Churches (CEC)

ⁱⁱ [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the need to intensify the effort to prevent and combat female genital mutilation and forced marriage in Europe](#) (as adopted at the 1293rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, 13 September 2017) ; Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage (as adopted by the CDDH at its 87th meeting, 6-9 June 2017)

ⁱⁱⁱ [PACE Resolution 1829 \(2011\) on prenatal sex selection](#)

^{iv} « *La masculinisation des naissances en Europe orientale* » de Christophe Z. Guilmoto et Géraldine Duthé, Population & Société, n° 506, décembre 2013