

Resolution 2290 (2019)¹

Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality

Parliamentary Assembly

1. As long as women and men do not enjoy the same empowerment, participation, visibility and access to resources, we cannot consider human rights to be respected, or democracy and the rule of law to be achieved. Gender equality is therefore central to the mission of the Council of Europe. In turn, peace, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are key points without which it would be impossible to build the institutional infrastructure required to achieve gender equality.
2. The Council of Europe has promoted equality and tackled discrimination since its foundation seventy years ago. Since 1979, when the first relevant text of the Committee of Ministers was adopted, and particularly in the last three decades, the Organisation has stepped up efforts to promote gender equality and combat discrimination on grounds of sex. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that gender equality has been a priority for successive presidencies of the Committee of Ministers, including the present French presidency.
3. The European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and its additional protocols, the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35) and other legally binding texts – including the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, “Istanbul Convention”) and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197) – have built a solid human rights protection system enshrining the principle that women’s rights are an integral part of human rights. These conventions have also established violence against women as a human rights violation and recognised that the realisation of *de jure* and *de facto* equality between women and men is a key element in the prevention of this scourge. They contain a compelling call for gender mainstreaming and gender equality, and provide unique and valuable guidance in this domain.
4. In addition, several non-binding texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe have contributed to promoting and guiding efforts towards greater gender equality in areas such as economic empowerment, participation in public life and political representation, women in the media, the rights of migrant women, gender mainstreaming in sport and the rights of women with disabilities. Most recently, these texts have also contributed to preventing and combating sexism.
5. Equal participation is about more than numbers. Women’s empowerment is crucial to achieving gender equality: it makes women aware of unequal power relations and equips them to overcome inequalities in all fields of life.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly, bringing together parliamentarians from all the member States of the Council of Europe, has played a leading role in the work of the Organisation in this area. It has triggered progress in combating all forms of discrimination against women and has recommended measures to tackle it, such as gender quotas in politics, policies to increase women’s participation in the economy, and the balancing of professional and private life. The Assembly has adopted a firm political stance against all forms of violence against women through its resolutions and recommendations calling for legally binding standards on preventing, protecting against and prosecuting the most severe and widespread forms of gender-based

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2019 (22nd Sitting) (see [Doc. 14907](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Elvira Kovács). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2019 (22nd Sitting). See also [Recommendation 2157 \(2019\)](#).



violence, ultimately leading to the preparation of the ground-breaking Istanbul Convention. The Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence has supported the implementation of the convention by raising the awareness of legislators, policy makers and the public of the scourge of gender-based violence and by providing practical solutions and guidance on how to address it.

7. Despite achievements, recent years have witnessed an increasing opposition to, and erosion of women's rights worldwide, including in several Council of Europe member States. Certain government forces and non-State actors are targeting long-acquired rights and previously agreed language is being questioned. This calls for heightened vigilance in defending the progress achieved in gender equality and strong political commitment and leadership to secure further advances.

8. The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 sets out the priorities for joint action by all stakeholders. It states that the overall goal of the Organisation in this area is to achieve the effective realisation of gender equality and to empower women and men in Council of Europe member States. The six priority areas of the strategy (preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism; preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; ensuring the equal access of women to justice; achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making; protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls; achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures) should be the guiding principles for the Council of Europe agenda for gender equality.

9. The Assembly emphasises that achieving the strategy's goals requires concerted efforts by all players within the Organisation and in member States, as well as external partners, including the private sector and media. It commits to continue to provide consistent political support for their achievement.

10. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the subsequent outcome documents adopted at the United Nations, as well as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (adopted in 2015), guide the action of the Council of Europe in this field. The Council of Europe's comprehensive and extensive legal framework represents a unique contribution to the process of supporting its member States in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and notably Goal No. 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

11. Substantial progress towards such ambitious goals requires strong political will, adequate resources, institutional mechanisms and a change of mindset to challenge patriarchal attitudes, counter emerging narratives that distort reality and attack women's rights, and to challenge behaviour that normalises and trivialises violence against women. Eradicating all forms of sexism and sexist stereotypes, including in language and communication, is an important part of this process. Role models, both women and men, can be greatly beneficial in capturing the attention of the public.

12. The Assembly is convinced that the efforts to reach gender equality must not be understood as a battle between women and men, but as a quest for justice, peace and progress. It is therefore critical to involve men and boys in the planning and implementation of strategies and measures to achieve gender equality, especially those that aim at changing mindsets and attitudes. Our institutions should embrace gender democracy: a system based on the equal distribution of power and influence between women and men.

13. The Assembly believes that a gender mainstreaming approach in all policies and measures, alongside specific policies for the advancement of women, is increasingly necessary to achieve gender equality and resolves to ensure that its own activities and policies are gender-sensitive.

14. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment and commits to achieving a harassment-free Assembly by 2020.

15. The Assembly endeavours to ensure gender balance in expert panels and other bodies with two or more members.

16. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as States enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to:

16.1. as regards gender stereotypes and sexism:

16.1.1. take adequate measures to implement the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism, with a focus on non-stereotypical representation of women and men and on countering online sexism, including sexist hate speech;

- 16.1.2. strengthen co-operation with journalists' associations, traditional and online media organisations and advertising federations with a view to promoting gender equality and preventing and countering the use of sexist language and communication, particularly through self-regulation, incentives and the targeted use of subsidies;
- 16.1.3. make use of role models, including men, in changing mindsets and attitudes;
- 16.1.4. adopt and enforce guidelines on non-sexist language and communication for institutional information and communication activities;
- 16.2. as regards violence against women and domestic violence:
 - 16.2.1. sign, ratify, and efficiently implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;
 - 16.2.2. pay due attention to and implement recommendations put forward in evaluation reports concerning their countries and ensure the involvement of their parliaments in this process;
 - 16.2.3. ensure the implementation of relevant texts adopted by the Assembly, including [Resolution 2084 \(2015\)](#) on promoting best practices in tackling violence against women, [Resolution 2101 \(2016\)](#) on systematic collection of data on violence against women and [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment;
- 16.3. as regards women's political representation:
 - 16.3.1. introduce legislation and policies to implement Assembly [Resolution 2111 \(2016\)](#) on assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation;
 - 16.3.2. implement Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;
 - 16.3.3. promote gender parity in decision-making bodies, including through positive measures to ensure that women and men are equally represented in both elected and non-elected bodies;
 - 16.3.4. set a target of achieving equal gender representation in decision-making bodies by 2030;
- 16.4. as regards women's economic empowerment:
 - 16.4.1. introduce legislation and policies to implement Assembly [Resolution 2235 \(2018\)](#) on empowering women in the economy, particularly as regards gender equality and equal opportunities at work, women's access to funding for the creation of businesses, and promoting studies and careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM disciplines) among women and girls;
 - 16.4.2. implement anti-discrimination legislation on remuneration and effectively ban salary inequalities for work of equal value, with a view to eradicating the gender pay gap by 2030;
- 16.5. as regards access to justice:
 - 16.5.1. ensure the implementation of Assembly [Resolution 2054 \(2015\)](#) on equality and non-discrimination in the access to justice, with a focus on women, notably victims of gender-based violence; migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women; women from ethnic minorities; Roma women; women with disabilities; elderly women and other women in vulnerable situations;
 - 16.5.2. make use of the efficient online tools provided by the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), in particular the online course on violence against women and domestic violence;
- 16.6. as regards sexual and reproductive health and rights:
 - 16.6.1. mainstream mandatory, comprehensive and inclusive sexual and relationship education, conveying unbiased, age-appropriate information on sexuality, relationships and reproductive rights;
 - 16.6.2. guarantee access to affordable and modern methods of contraception, with a level of reimbursement equal to other services provided by national health systems, and adequate, comprehensible information made available to the general public;

16.7. as regards the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls:

16.7.1. ensure the implementation of relevant texts adopted by the Assembly, including [Resolution 2159 \(2017\)](#) on protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence, [Resolution 2167 \(2017\)](#) on the employment rights of domestic workers, especially women, in Europe and [Resolution 2244 \(2018\)](#) “Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration”;

16.7.2. ensure that policies and measures with respect to migration, asylum and the integration of migrants fully integrate a gender-sensitive perspective;

16.8. make use of gender-impact assessment tools and procedures on a regular basis when designing legislation, policies, programmes and projects;

16.9. implement a gender mainstreaming approach when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all policies and measures at all levels of administration, including gender-responsive budgeting;

16.10. ensure the full implementation of existing standards and the adequate resourcing of gender equality policies and mechanisms, as well as civil society organisations working on these topics.