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Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2157 (2019)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2157 \(2019\)](#) “Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality” which it forwarded to the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) and to the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), for information and possible comments.
2. Action to promote gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls remains a priority for the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers confirms its commitment to this. It recalls that a number of successive chairs have provided increased support for gender issues, two recent examples being the Finnish and French presidencies, which in particular paved the way for more active efforts to promote Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)1](#) on preventing and combating sexism as well as the process of ratification of the Istanbul Convention and commitment to the values it represents; in the same vein, the current Georgian Presidency has taken the initiative of an informal exchange of views on cyberviolence against women and girls.
3. The Committee of Ministers nevertheless shares the view of the Assembly that, despite the progress made in combating discrimination against women and girls, “gender equality remains far from a reality in practice” and that the Council of Europe must make “renewed efforts” in this area. To this end, the Organisation devised the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, which constitutes a framework for its role and action in such matters and provides policy guidance and support for member States in this area.
4. Gender mainstreaming in all Council of Europe policies and activities, to which the Assembly refers in its recommendation, is among the basic objectives of the Strategy. This applies to the policies of States as well as to the bodies of the Council of Europe and their various activities. As part of its review of the intergovernmental structures proposed for 2020-2021, the Committee of Ministers has taken care to ensure that each steering committee appoints a gender equality rapporteur and/or takes due account of a gender perspective in the performance of its tasks. It notes that with respect to the Committee of Ministers, the Chair of its Rapporteur Group on Human Rights monitors the work carried out and the matters referred to the Committee in the field of equality.
5. Protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls became a high priority in 2018 and has been included as a sixth new objective in the Gender Equality Strategy. In order to give full effect to this objective, for the 2020-2021 biennium, the Committee of Ministers has tasked the GEC with preparing a new legal instrument in this area. The Assembly likewise emphasises the importance of a better gender balance and promoting the place of women in political and public decision-making bodies. The Committee of Ministers underlines that these principles constitute too a strategic objective of the Council of Europe. That is why, for instance, in the context of decisions on the selection and election of judges to the

1. Adopted at the 1364th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (15 January 2020).



European Court of Human Rights, it “invited all stakeholders to give due attention to this objective where gender balance is insufficiently ensured in the various bodies involved in the selection and election process as well as in the composition of the Court itself”.

6. With regard to the question of non-sexist language, the Committee of Ministers refers to the Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism, which devotes a full chapter to non-sexist language and communication. In the light of these provisions, it notes that Instruction No. 33 of 1 June 1994 on the use of non-sexist language in the Council of Europe now appears to be lagging behind the practices that apply in many countries where the official languages of the Organisation are spoken. It therefore seems appropriate to consider updating the relevant texts and to encourage the use of inclusive vocabulary and language, and to ensure that any text updating Instruction No. 33 is adequately promoted and taken into account.

7. In conclusion, the Committee of Ministers wishes to assure the Assembly that the Council of Europe is actively promoting equality issues, including at the global level. It regularly participates in events organised by partner organisations active in this field. During the 2020-2021 biennium, furthermore, the GEC will be called upon to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regard to Goal 5: Gender equality and Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.