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Eliminating gender stereotypes in the media

Report[1]
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination
Rapporteur: Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Ukraine, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

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1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15975, Reference 4812 of 24 May 2024.

A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Gender stereotypes, or stereotypes about the characteristics and roles traditionally attributed to women and men in private and family life, as well as in professional and public life, remain pervasive throughout public communication spaces, including in traditional media, such as the press, radio and television, and in modern media, including online platforms and social networks.

2. Such stereotypes do not merely reflect long-standing social traditions; they also perpetuate them by normalising them and, at times, presenting them as appealing, particularly to younger generations. The popularity on social media of so-called "trad wives", who portray an idealised traditional image of domestic femininity, is a clear example of such dynamics.

3. Gender stereotypes hinder progress towards gender equality and undermine women's empowerment by conveying the message that women's position in private and public life is limited and predetermined. They also damage boys and men by presenting them with stereotypes of male behaviours and roles to which they may feel intense pressure to conform, as well as negatively impact societies in general by robbing them of the full range and potential of their populations. These stereotypes should, therefore, be challenged and countered wherever they occur, and, particularly, in communication spaces, which reach large portions of the population.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms that women, in all their diversity, can and do aspire to and successfully fulfil any role or position in society. Empowering women means enabling them to fulfil such potential.

5. As gender stereotypes are an eminently cultural issue, the response should, above all, be cultural in nature, with measures applied to education, mass media and the cultural industry in general.

6. Referring to its Resolution 1751 (2010) and Recommendation 1931 (2010) "Combating sexist stereotypes in the media", the Assembly reiterates that gender stereotypes are a barrier to gender equality and are too frequently trivialised and tolerated under the banner of freedom of expression. Since the adoption of these texts, the media landscape has significantly evolved, with an increase in social media influence, and the negative impact of gender stereotyping has become even stronger.

7. In the current global context of democratic backsliding and increasing attacks on gender equality, preventing and countering gender stereotyping are more relevant and urgent than ever.

8. Gender stereotyping is often exacerbated by intersectionality: young women, women from racialised groups and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women are particularly vulnerable and disproportionally targeted. Transgender women are the victims of severe forms of stereotyping, portraying them as ill, unstable or as a threat to the safety and integrity of others. In view of this, policies to prevent and counter gender stereotyping should be based on a widely intersectional approach.

9. As regards men and boys, the harm caused by societal pressure to conform to traditional roles is compounded by the expectation that they should not seek help or even express vulnerability ("boys don't cry").

10. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the member and observer States of the Council of Europe, and States whose parliament enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly:

10.1. with regard to education, information and awareness raising, to:

10.1.1. ensure that age-appropriate, mandatory school curricula of comprehensive sexuality education address gender equality, consent and critical analysis of gender stereotypes across traditional and digital media;

10.1.2. incorporate media literacy programmes at all educational levels to equip children, young people and adults with skills to recognise and challenge gender stereotypes, disinformation, sexist hate speech and manipulative content in audiovisual, print and online formats;

10.1.3. develop and support teacher training and educational resources enabling educators to address gender stereotypes in the media and promote critical thinking about representations of people in all their diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression;

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 28 May 2026.

10.1.4. launch nationwide public awareness campaigns, with a focus on youth, to highlight the harmful societal effects of gender stereotyping, sexist hate speech and normalisation of gender inequality in media and online environments;

10.1.5. foster co-operation between public education and public service broadcasters and other media outlets to produce and disseminate information campaigns promoting non-stereotypical role models and gender equality;

10.1.6. extend media literacy and gender equality education to non-formal education settings and lifelong learning to reach vulnerable groups and enhance resilience against harmful digital content;

10.2. with regard to co-operation with civil society, to:

10.2.1. provide sustainable funding, institutional support and protection to non-governmental organisations working on gender equality, women's rights, media literacy, youth empowerment and prevention of violence against women and girls;

10.2.2. consider civil society organisations as key partners in designing, implementing and evaluating national policies to combat gender stereotypes in media and digital spaces;

10.2.3. fund civil society research, training and campaigns challenging harmful gender norms and promoting inclusive media representations;

10.3. with regard to online platforms and technology companies, to:

10.3.1. require social media platforms and online services to design and enforce transparent, updated community standards prohibiting gender-based harassment, sexist hate speech, image-based abuse and violence, deepfakes and stereotyping causing demonstrable harm;

10.3.2. strengthen co-operation with online platforms, civil society and fact-checkers to detect, demote and remove harmful content while safeguarding freedom of expression;

10.3.3. mandate regular transparency reports from platforms detailing moderation practices, enforcement timelines, appeals processes and algorithmic impacts on gender-based content amplification;

10.3.4. strengthen user reporting tools on platforms with rapid, effective responses and remedies for victims of gender-based abuse and image-based violence;

10.3.5. compel platforms to audit and mitigate gender biases perpetuating stereotypes or misogynistic content in algorithms, recommended systems and targeted advertising;

10.3.6. promote co-operation with online platforms in the area of preventing and countering deepfakes and manipulated image content targeting women and men in politics and public life;

10.4. with regard to media, public service broadcasting, the advertising sector and other cultural industries, to:

10.4.1. urge media organisations, journalists' associations, the advertising sector and other cultural industries to adopt robust codes of ethics and self-regulatory mechanisms explicitly prohibiting gender stereotyping and sexist representations;

10.4.2. implement gender equality action plans in public service media, including equitable recruitment and career progression, leadership quotas and anti-harassment measures;

10.4.3. enhance women's and diverse voices in news, entertainment, sports and political coverage, as well as in advertising, avoiding stereotypical role assignments;

10.4.4. fund and promote content showcasing women and men in diverse, leadership and non-traditional roles across genres;

10.4.5. condition public funding for film, audiovisual and cultural projects on gender equality targets, balanced teams and inclusive storytelling;

10.4.6. support training, internships and mentoring to encourage women to take on leadership roles in journalism, production and creation;

10.4.7. require media organisations to ensure gender balance among experts, leaders and athletes in public broadcasting schedules and editorial choices;

10.4.8. encourage media regulators to integrate a gender perspective into their standard-setting and monitoring activities, with a view to preventing and countering gender stereotyping in the media and advertising sectors;

10.4.9. encourage cultural institutions and cultural industries to promote gender equality and challenge discriminatory stereotypes in cultural production and dissemination;

10.5. with regard to monitoring, research and data, to:

10.5.1. systematically collect and publish sex- and age-disaggregated data on media representation, online gender-based abuse and violence and stereotyping impacts, in order to track progress;

10.5.2. commission regular research on the prevalence, manifestations and effects of gender stereotypes in traditional, digital and algorithmic media.

11. The Assembly highlights that an intersectional approach is paramount in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of legislation and policies to prevent and counter gender stereotyping. Effective data collection must take into account the intersection of all grounds of discrimination including age, ethnic origin, migration status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk, rapporteur[3]

1. Gender stereotyping: extent, nature and effects

1. Gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched in society, and they are reflected in the media. Stereotyping has a negative impact on society. It perpetuates harmful social norms, normalises inequality and fuels gender-based discrimination. As a result, gender disparities are exacerbated, further hindering progress toward equality.

2. Media in all their forms contribute significantly to shaping people's mindsets and culture. While they are a vital component of democracy, they may become a fertile ground for stereotyping and spreading bias against various groups. Gender stereotypes in the media depict men as dominant, strong and in leadership positions, while portraying women as passive, emotional, and responsible for domestic care. As well as influencing society's perceptions, they affect the equal participation of men and women in both political and public life, consequently limiting women's ability to fully engage in decision making and take on leadership roles.

3. Despite the progress made in recent decades, a global backlash against women's rights and gender equality can be observed, which is a reason for great concern and calls for robust countermeasures. A backsliding in gender equality is reflected in the media, including online platforms and social media.

4. In addition to the broadly negative impact on people's perception and mindsets already mentioned, gender stereotyping in communication may escalate to sexism, for instance in the form of sexist hate speech, targeting specific individuals or entire groups. The risk of producing and propagating sexism is one more reason to prevent and counter stereotyping as a matter of priority.

5. Women are considerably under-represented in the media, which tends to limit the diversity of the roles they play. This applies to entertainment and information alike. Women are also under-represented among the staff of cultural industries. The disproportion is particularly evident at higher levels: in the cinema industry, for instance, comparatively few film directors and producers are female.

6. Gender stereotypes in the media are both a cause and a manifestation of gender inequality. Promoting accurate, positive representation of both men and women would contribute to shaping a more equal and inclusive society.

7. The Parliamentary Assembly has already taken a clear stance on this matter in the past, particularly with Resolution 1751 (2010) and Recommendation 1931 (2010) "Combating sexist stereotypes in the media", stating that gender stereotypes are a barrier to gender equality, and that they are too frequently trivialised and tolerated under the banner of freedom of expression. Since then, stereotypes have not been eradicated, the media landscape has evolved, social media have increased their influence, and the negative impact of gender stereotyping has become potentially even stronger.

8. Recalling Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a new notion of media and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)11 on principles for media and communication governance, the definition of "media" used in this report encompasses all actors involved in the dissemination and production of print, broadcast, online, audio and video-streaming services and content. This includes cinema, a medium that has historically proven extremely influential in shaping people's worldview. In addition to traditional media, this report covers social networks, in view of their strong impact, especially on young people. Studies show that young people and adolescents spend hours daily on social media and a strong link is detected between the use of social media and the perception of gender roles.

9. Gender stereotypes are pervasive in social networks, which are used by a large share of the population and therefore have a considerable impact. The fact-finding visit to Ireland provided interesting information in the way the main platforms regulate their content.

10. Self-regulation by media and journalists' organisations have a role to play in countering the spreading of gender stereotypes, through regulatory tools such as code of ethics and professional standards. These may be instrumental in creating a media environment that advances gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness, which, in turn, would contribute to women's empowerment.

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3. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.

11. Transgender people are the subject of multiple negative stereotypes, presenting them as mentally ill or as a threat to the freedom and safety of others. They are significantly under-represented in positive roles in popular media. Moreover, in the last few years there has been a significant uptick in this harmful representation in the media, including in television and radio shows, in online media, and also in public events. ILGA-Europe's Annual Review 2024 provides worrying information in this respect. Trans women, in particular, are being portrayed, without any basis, as threats to the safety of other women and children, and as predators. This has real consequences for the safety of transgender people, who are already one of the groups most vulnerable to physical and online attacks.

12. I consider gender norms and stereotypes as a product and a manifestation of patriarchy. They are an expression of traditional patriarchal views on people and society, and they are instrumental in perpetuating the inequalities stemming from them. In addition to measures adopted to counter the "symptom", it is therefore necessary to address the root cause of the problem, namely the patriarchal system.

2. Preparation of the report

13. To prepare this report I carried out research on the various forms of stereotyping that can be found in all kinds of media and on its impact, and the measures adopted by media organisations and public authorities to prevent and counter it.

14. The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission (GEC), the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) and the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) prepared relevant documents such as the Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media.

15. In May 2025, I carried out a fact-finding visit to Ireland, which proved relevant and interesting not only on account of the presence in Dublin of the European headquarters or major offices of social media companies such as Meta and TikTok, but also thanks to the important role played by regulators and civil society organisations active in the areas of gender equality and violence against women. I devote an important part of this report to the findings of this visit, as a sort of case study that allows me to discuss, among other things, gender stereotyping in online media.

16. On 2 October 2025, a hearing was held jointly by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, with the participation of Mr Gilles Fontaine and Ms Agnes Schneeberger of the European Audiovisual Observatory of the Council of Europe, and Ms Anne Richardson of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Their presentations and the exchange of views shed light on gender stereotyping in the cultural industry, some of its root causes and possible initiatives to counter it.

17. In the final phase of the preparation of this report I have had the opportunity to co-operate with the Council of Europe's Youth Sector and make use of the valuable resources it provided. I took on board many of its suggestions. Among other things, the Youth Sector's extensive experience on hate speech, gained by managing the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, has helped me to focus on sexist hate speech, which may have particularly damaging effects on girls and young women. This co-operation has also strengthened the youth perspective in the report and draft resolution as a whole, with an increased attention on the impact that media, including social media, have on young people.

3. International standards

18. As far back as 1979, Article 5 (a) of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women called on States parties "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women." In other words, the convention requires all branches of government to adopt appropriate measures to eliminate patterns, prejudices, and practices based on gender stereotypes.

19. Early in 2026, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which monitors the implementation of the convention, adopted its General Recommendation No. 41 on Dismantling Gender Stereotypes and the Unequal Power Relations that Sustain them. This General Recommendation reiterates the importance of eradicating gender stereotypes and provides an updated interpretation of the

convention in this respect. Among other things, it stipulates that "States parties should address gender stereotypes with a holistic and intersectional approach, taking into consideration women's multifaceted identities and their diversity".

20. General Recommendation No. 41 calls on states parties to conduct research to assess the prevalence of gender stereotypes and, most importantly, to identify the ways in which they manifest themselves, which "can be in constitutions, laws, policies, institutions, systems, services, and practices." It also indicates that "States should promote engagement with men and boys in dismantling gender stereotypes. Men and boys are negatively impacted by gender stereotypes and have a critical role in addressing and preventing stereotypes." This is an important indication, a step in the right direction, and entirely in line with the position taken in several texts by the Parliamentary Assembly.

4. Ireland: social media, civil society activism and the role of public authorities

21. On 19 and 20 May 2025, I conducted a fact-finding visit to Ireland. Dublin has established itself as a major hub for tech companies in Europe and a good place to observe current trends in online media. Another reason to choose Ireland for a visit were the recent developments in women's rights and gender issues at large, strongly influenced by the activism of civil society. Two key referendums, respectively on marriage equality and abortion, have demonstrated that civil society can play an important role in fostering social change. Groups and individual activists in Ireland have engaged in work that goes beyond political advocacy, by including a reflection on cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and effective communication strategies for promoting gender equality.

22. Dublin's rise as a major tech hub began in the early 2000s. In 2004, Google established its European headquarters in Dublin's Grand Canal Dock area, which triggered further investments from other major tech companies. Nowadays, Dublin hosts the European headquarters or significant offices of many leading companies such as Meta (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), TikTok, Amazon, Microsoft and X (formerly Twitter). In addition to these tech giants, Dublin supports a thriving startup scene and numerous other global and regional tech companies.

23. Social media play a powerful and complex role in influencing how people perceive gender roles and identities. On the one hand, social media platforms allow individuals to express themselves freely and to challenge traditional norms. On the other hand, they often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, for example through a widespread use of gender-normed body images, portrayal of conventional gender roles, and targeted advertising algorithms that amplify stereotypical representations.

24. Visual content, including edited photos and videos, frequently promotes idealised images of masculinity and femininity, impacting the viewers' self-esteem and attitudes. In addition, social media may expose users, particularly women and girls, to sexist hate speech and misogynistic content.

25. Research shows that greater social media use correlates with more conventional views on gender roles. However, the relationship with these media is complex: some users also exercise agency, for instance using platforms to experiment with non-stereotypical identities. On the other hand, social media environments tend to create echo chambers that intensify existing beliefs. In other words, stereotypes can be challenged or entrenched, depending on the user and the context.

26. In 2024, a study conducted by Dublin City University's Anti-Bullying Centre found that algorithms used by social media platforms rapidly amplified misogynistic and male supremacist content. The study, focusing on YouTube and TikTok, was conducted by creating new accounts on blank smartphones. All the male-identified accounts received masculinist, anti-feminist and male-supremacist content within the first 23 minutes.

27. The visit to Ireland provided interesting insights into gender representation in Irish media. It was also an opportunity to discuss how the cultural and historical context of Ireland, including the influence of the country's Catholic heritage and traditional family values, contributed to shaping gender images. It further allowed me to learn more about how gender representation intersects age, class, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and migration background.

4.1. Social media platforms: challenges and potential benefits

28. According to Susan Moss, TikTok Ireland's Head of Public Policy and Government Relations, this company's community guidelines "reflect our values and establish the kind of behaviour we expect on our platform. TikTok proactively seeks out and removes content which violates these guidelines. We enforce

these rules using a combination of technology and safety experts around the world. In order to support fair and consistent review of potentially violative content, moderators work alongside our automated moderation systems and take into account additional context and nuance which may not always be picked up by technology". She added that TikTok published a quarterly transparency report, in addition to abiding by the reporting obligations under the EU Digital Services Act and the EU code of practice on disinformation.

29. I visited TikTok's office and met with Ms Moss and with Mr Adam Stairs, Outreach and Partnerships Manager. It was an opportunity to discuss several critical issues relating to gender stereotypes, harmful content, and content moderation on social media platforms. I believe that gender stereotypes exist in a "grey zone": they are part of everyday life, and they are often subtle, but they are also connected to more extreme forms of expression, like hate speech, especially when targeting politicians. As a woman politician, I am particularly concerned about how search engine results often seem to prioritise harmful content such as sexual deepfakes, which can have a chilling effect on women in public life.

30. TikTok representatives showed me the technology used to screen contents and detect those that violate the guidelines. Artificial intelligence tools are used to automatically identify signs of violence in the content, for instance the presence of weapons on the screen.

31. Ms Moss acknowledged that potentially harmful content was an industry-wide challenge. For example, TikTok tried to block access to the hashtag "skinnytok", showing content which "idolises extreme thinness" due to concerns about body image or harmful stereotypes. The block was rapidly circumvented and the content resurfaced within hours. She emphasised the importance of having globally consistent policies, rather than fragmented regional rules. TikTok co-operates globally with several partners, such as the German organisation Violence Prevention Network, to improve safety. A real challenge, Ms Moss explained, is posed by the "pipeline content", or material that does not meet removal thresholds but can lead users towards harmful content.

32. To counter harmful or stereotypical content, TikTok adopts a tiered approach. Some material is entirely prevented from appearing on users' feeds. In other cases, users are redirected from potentially harmful content to safer results. Sometimes, they were shown unrelated content to disrupt harmful consumption patterns. The timing of these interventions varies: removal of harmful content can be immediate, but sometimes it takes up to 24 hours, especially when fact-checking is required.

33. I enquired about hate speech targeting politicians, which is often gendered. Women in politics face a staggering amount of online bullying and harassment. Ms Moss explained that TikTok actively monitors elections and verifies politicians' accounts, applying specific restrictions while allowing a higher threshold of criticism.

34. As regards deepfakes, according to my interlocutor, they are rare on TikTok, but the issue remains significant on other platforms. I mentioned that fabricated videos related to the war of aggression against Ukraine were being circulated by the Russian Federation. Ms Moss explained that TikTok works with fact-checkers who have journalistic expertise to verify questionable content. In order to prevent the use of this platform for propaganda purposes, Tik Tok limits the circulation of content posted on a State's account outside the specific country in question. In addition, TikTok has exited the Russian market.

35. We touched on the Digital Services Act (DSA), the EU regulation that aims to reduce the distribution of illegal content and improve transparency between online platforms and their users. TikTok regards the DSA as a positive step but believes that regulators should allow time for it to take effect, before creating new legislation. Ms Moss expressed concern about the complexity of legal frameworks across Europe, which makes innovation in our continent much more difficult than in the United States. One entire floor out of the six of TikTok's Dublin headquarters is for legal officers.

36. At Meta's impressively large Dublin office, I met with Richard Lappin, a member of the team responsible for deciding what content is allowed on Meta platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Threads). Meta's policies are implemented through their platforms' community standards. The same rules apply globally (they are available in over 90 languages) and constantly evolve. Mr Lappin explained that Meta policies are "a living document", they are never considered to be complete and are updated daily. Updates are visible (like "track changes" in a document).

37. Gender-related issues are especially challenging, Mr Lappin explained. Generally speaking, Meta's policies apply across genders. For instance, the harassment policy applies equally to men and women, although women are more frequent targets. There are, however, some specific policies on gender-related

content. For instance, gaps were identified in the policies against violence and incitement thereto, which did not cover intimate partner violence and so-called honour killings. This led to adopting new specific policies to cover incitement to violence. Misogynistic behaviour is also addressed specifically in the policies.

38. Policies on hate content prohibit attacks based on religion, ethnicity, and dehumanising speech (for instance comparing people to animals). Calls for exclusion, for instance "women should not vote", are also banned. Terrorist and hate groups are banned by Meta. Some individuals are banned, for instance Andrew Tate, but the ban is not publicly listed, so as to prevent circumvention.

39. Some policy changes introduced in January 2025 concern gender issues: some forms of gender-based exclusion are now permitted (for instance about military recruitment), and gender-based exclusion is allowed regarding some spaces (for instance bathrooms). I believe that changes in policies in this area should be approached with caution. Gender-based exclusion was banned for a reason, as it may undermine gender equality, and that reason is still valid. Lifting the ban on gender-based exclusion regarding bathrooms looks like a favour to anti-trans rhetoric that is increasingly popular in conservative circles but does not need our support.

40. Deepfakes, Mr Lappin agreed, affect women politicians and female public figures disproportionately. He explained that the same policies apply equally to content created by humans or artificial intelligence, and that most AI misuse involves scams and frauds, for instance targeting military veterans in the United States. Despite this, I believe that the use of artificial intelligence for sexist purposes remains a reason for serious concern. Meta considered labelling AI-generated content, but slowed down on this front, due to the complexity of labelling a vast amount of content. Users can click the "three dots" for more information about content.

41. As regards moderation, the same principle as for TikTok is applied by Meta: machine learning handles many tasks, but content requiring contextual judgment, such as political hate speech, relies more on human moderators. A shift towards community moderation, similar to Wikipedia, with a verification process replacing third-party fact-checkers, is under consideration. On a similar note, Meta is dialling back proactive removals and relying more on user reports.

42. While I found that, generally speaking, Meta policies are sensible and well thought-out, there seem to be shortcomings regarding their enforcement. The timeline for content removal, for instance, is not clear. The information I got during the meeting was that there is no time limit, due to volume and virality. In spite of the "integrity reports" regularly published by Meta, it is difficult to know exactly what happens with community standards behind the company's closed doors. Empirical observation suggests, for instance, that reports of blatant stigmatising and dehumanising language often don't lead to content removal.

43. Following the visit to Dublin, I held an online meeting with Claire Dilé, a representative of X, formerly known as Twitter. Based in Paris, Ms Dilé works within the Public Policy team, focusing on safety and rights. While X does not compare to platforms like Meta in terms of scale, and it offers a single product, its visibility and resonance, particularly in public and political discourse, are remarkable.

44. As concerns gender stereotypes, Ms Dilé highlighted that freedom of expression remains a central commitment for X, which requires that users feel safe to participate in the conversation. X aims to create a space where all users can express themselves provided the content is legal and adheres to the platform's rules. To support this, X offers various safety tools, and efforts are made to improve users' access to these features.

45. Striking the right balance between free speech and content moderation is a challenge. X has a set of public rules, currently available in over 50 languages, outlining what is permitted and what is not on the platform. Notably, the rules prohibit abuse and harassment, including attacks based on personal characteristics, such as gender. Hate speech is explicitly banned, and violations, such as targeting users with threats or degrading language, can result in the immediate suspension of the account.

46. Ms Dilé confirmed that women are disproportionately affected by harmful behaviours such as doxxing and image-based abuse (commonly known as "revenge porn"). Pornographic content is banned from X's timeline, as it contravenes the law of many countries. Users are encouraged to report such material.

47. X shares with all the other platforms the "detection versus reporting" dilemma. In some cases, such as clear instances of criminal activity, X can act proactively. However, in more nuanced scenarios, the platform still relies on user reports. I did not obtain precise information on the timeline for content removal, nor on whether AI tools were able to detect the use of gender stereotypes. However, Ms Dilé indicated that users are encouraged to report misinformation and manipulation of facts, including when such content relates to gender-based issues.

48. X continues to invest in automation, particularly in areas like combating child exploitation. While many believe that moderation on X has diminished, according to Ms Dilé in fact it remains alive. It is worth noting that, just like TikTok and Meta, X issues a public Transparency Report, which provides data on enforcement and updates on policies. Moreover, the platform works to educate users about its rules and enforcement mechanisms.

49. In the light of the discussions held with social media platforms representatives, I can confirm that these actors are multifaceted. They may potentially play a positive role in facilitating expression and communication within society, but they may also amplify harmful voices and attitudes. Moreover, they are markedly autonomous, relying on self-regulation, and difficult to supervise. Their transnational nature makes it difficult even to impose national legal standards on tech giants. Nevertheless, co-operation efforts with these actors should continue.

4.2. Civil society organisations and their crucial role in advancing gender equality

50. The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC), established in 1973, is a leading national representative organisation for women and women's groups across Ireland. It encompasses over 190 member groups and has a large and growing community of individual supporters.

51. Its role includes amplifying women's voices and communicating with politicians on a range of issues such as political representation, barriers to participation (including hate speech targeting female politicians), health, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

52. NWC published Through the Looking Glass: A Guide to Empowering Young People to Become Advocates for Gender Equality. This guide highlights the significant impact of media and marketing – across mainstream television, social media, newspapers, and magazines – on perceptions of women. It points out that women are often portrayed primarily in terms of their appearance, beauty, or "sexiness", while other important qualities and skills are frequently overlooked. This skewed representation profoundly affects how boys, girls, women, and men perceive themselves and one another.

53. I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of NWC and discuss a variety of topics and media. As concerns the latter, talk radio is still very popular in Ireland. NWC conducted a study on the presence of women in talk radio, examining how much airtime women receive, and the types of profiles featured (whether experts, commentators, or something else). They also commissioned a study on the representation of women in music. It is important to know that, while there is anecdotal evidence of some improvements in women's visibility on TV and in advertising, overall conditions have worsened, suggesting a backlash beneath the surface.

54. Political violence is also a reason for concern: in three elections held in 2024 (local and European) there was a noticeable increase in violence against female politicians. The Oireachtas Task Force on Participation produced a report highlighting these challenges in 2022.

55. Another report, Women Beyond the Doll, analysed which women would consider running for office again; abuse, along with lack of childcare and other practical barriers, was often mentioned as a deterrent. The overall feeling of threat has increased compared to 10–15 years ago, with women from diverse backgrounds facing particularly harsh backlash. NWC's role includes highlighting these barriers to government and supporting female candidates. However, while authorities recognise the problem, there is little concrete action. According to NWC representatives, the government discourse refers to "women in politics" but neglects the importance of diversity and intersectional challenges.

56. The NWC explicitly includes social media platforms in the definition of media. As regards representation of women, social media's emphasis on "perfect bodies" is linked to rising eating disorders and mental health issues. The impact of pornography in social media contexts also needs attention. It is unclear whether tech giants are willing to listen to civil society about ways to address these challenges. On the other hand, it is also unclear what interventions are technically possible.

57. The political climate in Ireland around equality issues is becoming more tense. The Council used to rely heavily on X as a key platform for political discussion but has since distanced themselves from it due to changes in climate and platform dynamics. The NWC had to reinforce their office windows for fear of attack, reflecting a worsening security environment.

58. The “Care and Family” referendum, aiming to amend the outdated reference to “woman’s life within the home” in art.41.2 of the Irish Constitution, did not pass. Many thought that communication on this referendum had not been a success. In contrast, the abortion referendum had seen broad public awareness and understanding of the constitutional issues involved, aided by a clear campaign explaining the implications of a “yes” vote.

59. Meeting with NWC representatives confirmed the important role that civil society organisations play in advancing the equality agenda in Ireland. Civil society organisations are crucial interlocutors for legislators and policymakers, and this role should consistently be acknowledged in Council of Europe member States.

60. The mission of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of all forms of sexual violence. Active for over 40 years, it works with and supports people who have been directly affected by sexual violence, including online abuse. The DRCC is committed to eliminating tolerance through education, awareness raising, advocacy and policy analysis. The organisation published a shadow Report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Ireland, submitted to GREVIO.

61. DRCC is a non-public organisation dedicated to preventing sexual violence and supporting survivors in Ireland. Despite progress, male supremacy and misogynistic attitudes remain persistent challenges globally and locally.

62. I met with Rachel Morrogh, the Centre’s CEO. She indicated that under-reporting sexual violence is a major issue in Ireland: only a small percentage of cases are reported, largely due to fear, shame, and victim-blaming. When it comes to breaking the silence, “media is a friend and a foe”, said Ms Morrogh. In other words, the media has played a complex role. On the one hand, it provides a platform for survivors to share their stories and, on the other hand, it may perpetuate stigma. The landmark moment of a survivor publicly waiving anonymity 30 years ago helped initiate change.

63. The progress achieved in countering violence against women in Ireland is considerable, but victim-blaming rhetoric, such as focusing on what survivors were wearing, continues to hinder it. This fight has faced setbacks in the past 15 years. Online content and social media increasingly normalise sexual violence and spread harmful narratives, including glorifying “strong men” in ways that reinforce misogyny.

64. Ireland’s social and economic context is historically difficult. In the past, Irish women were supposed to leave their job when they got married. The recent, failed referendum on “the place of woman in the home” aimed to abolish the last formal remains of that principle. That is why making culture evolve is a priority, and comprehensive sexuality education, Ms Morrogh said, is vital to this end. Years ago, the tobacco ban was a success. This lesson on how to limit smoking amongst the population could also be used to encourage and shape measures to limit alcohol, which is part of the country’s culture but is detrimental to public health and safety, also in terms of increasing the risk of sexual and domestic violence. Public well-being should be prioritised over economic interest.

65. We discussed the challenges of social media: platforms are from outside the European Union, especially from the US, China, and Russia, which delays regulation and makes it difficult to hold them accountable. The European Union’s Digital Service Act offers tools for enforcement, but courage and commitment to confront misogyny and sexual violence online remain limited. We agreed that deepfakes are a real challenge for women in public roles and deter political participation. Violent pornography was also problematic, as confirmed by the numerous women reporting violence, particularly strangulation, which appeared to be inspired by pornographic contents.

4.3. National authorities: the Data Protection Commission and media regulator Coimisiún na Meán

66. The Data Protection Commission (DPC) is Ireland’s independent national authority responsible for safeguarding the fundamental right of individuals within the European Union (EU) to have their personal data protected. The DPC supervises the implementation and enforcement of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Ireland. Additionally, it oversees compliance with related regulatory frameworks such as the Irish ePrivacy Regulations (2011) and the EU Law Enforcement Directive (LED).

67. The statutory powers, duties, and functions of the DPC are outlined in the Data Protection Act 2018, which strengthens the GDPR and implements the LED within Irish law.

68. In Dublin I met with Cathal Ryan, appointed Deputy Commissioner for Consultation and Supervision in January 2023, who is a qualified lawyer with extensive expertise in regulatory and data protection law. Having previously served as Assistant Commissioner at the DPC, he has held senior roles across various public

bodies. He represents the DPC at both national and EU levels and has led the development of guidelines for the EU Codes of Conduct. In his current role, Mr. Ryan oversees critical sectors including technology multinationals, international data transfers, private and financial sectors, insurance, communications, transport, Binding Corporate Rules (BCRs), certification, and codes of conduct.

69. The meeting with Mr Ryan provided valuable insights into the evolving challenges and regulatory landscape of data protection in Ireland and Europe, particularly in relation to emerging technologies and digital platforms. The DPC has a supervisory role that focuses on overseeing technology multinationals, international data transfers, and sectors including insurance, communications, and transport. His remit also covers Binding Corporate Rules, certification and codes of conduct. The Data Protection Commission also has a role in regulating large digital platforms such as TikTok, Meta, and Google, who have designated the DPC as their lead supervisory authority for Europe. This position enables the Commission to enforce ethical policies and ensure these companies' internal cultures align with their regulatory obligations.

70. Data protection law tries to strike a balance between individual privacy rights and exceptions where public interest justifies the dissemination of information. While GDPR upholds data protection as a fundamental right, it recognises exceptions for matters of public interest. However, Mr Ryan noted that the Commission does not have all the tools necessary to intervene comprehensively in all situations.

71. The DPC actively works to enhance protection for children online, aiming to add value beyond the Digital Services Act. The Commission also co-ordinates with European counterparts to handle complaints efficiently, enabling rapid content takedown (often within hours) through established co-operation mechanisms.

72. Among other things, the discussion touched on the regulation of political advertising and digital services platforms. Mr Ryan referred to the Italian data regulator's recent action against Meta as an example of emerging regulatory enforcement. He stressed the complexity of regulating content and advertising, especially as algorithms show users content tailored to their interests, creating echo chambers. Challenges are also posed by political campaigns and election-related information dissemination on platforms.

73. Social media platforms apply self-regulation policies, but at the same time they claim that their ability to control all content is limited. Artificial intelligence may also create issues for data protection and content regulation. Another challenge in this area is the secrecy and competition among tech giants: companies like Google, Meta, and others do not share often insights with each other due to competitive concerns, which complicates regulatory efforts.

74. I was glad to learn that the Commission receives increasing support: it has expanded in the last few years both in terms of budget (from 4 to 30 million Euros) and staff (from 30 to 280). The vast and complex remit of this body requires adequate resources.

75. Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's agency for developing and regulating a "thriving, diverse, creative, safe and trusted media landscape". As the independent media regulator, they are responsible for regulating broadcasters, video-on-demand providers, and online platforms established in Ireland. I had a very interesting exchange with Sinéad Crowley, Director of Media Development. She explained that the Commission regulates both traditional and online media, which are not formally regulated under the existing law, but are encouraged to sign co-operation protocols. Media are evolving and the idea of "online journalism" is transforming into "multimedia journalism".

76. A "Future of Media" Commission was created in 2020 and prepared 50 recommendations, one of which is about tackling gender stereotypes. Ms Crowley highlighted the importance of involving people from diverse backgrounds and letting people speak for themselves. The Commission had carried out a study on women in music, which confirmed a situation of under-representation.

77. A particularly interesting aspect of the activities of the Commission is the funding and support for media diversity. Long-running schemes, such as "Sound and Vision", fund independent TV, films and shows. New funding schemes were introduced to support women in film and television, as well as festivals. Private companies now also receive funding. Digital transformation schemes support media literacy and innovation, including podcasts.

78. The Commission undertakes and supports research on media literacy. It promotes media literacy programmes in schools, including seminars for principals, and YouTube resources. The focus of this type of education is to tackle disinformation and hate speech, which is particularly relevant for women journalists and other women in the media who face online abuse disproportionately often.

79. What Ms Crowley said about gender stereotypes in Irish media was partially reassuring. The situation is changing, if slowly. Gender roles in the media are gradually evolving but tend to persist. While the Commission supported people from diverse backgrounds, the media industry is not as attractive as it used to be in terms of salaries. That is why they fund internships, to help young women join this industry. In addition, abuse against journalists, especially women, has increased.

80. I found the Coimisiún na Meán's holistic and evolving approach to regulating and supporting the Irish media landscape very positive. Their commitment to diversity and inclusion in production, content, and workplace culture and the support through funding and development programmes aimed at marginalised groups and new talent are real good practices that should inspire policies in other member States. This also applies to the engagement in media literacy, particularly in schools, which should prove effective in preventing and countering online abuse, often targeting women. The emphasis on self-regulation combined with legal frameworks to combat sexism and racism also seems to be a realistic and effective approach.

81. The visit to Ireland provided a valuable opportunity to observe current trends and developments in gender equality, how these are represented in the media and how the media, in turn, influence public mindsets and societal progress. The meetings highlighted the different roles played by diverse actors – including state agencies, private sector players, and technology companies such as social media platforms – in advancing gender equality. I am convinced that effective co-operation among these stakeholders is essential and should be actively supported by legislators and policymakers to ensure real progress in this area. While this conclusion was inspired by the Irish experience, it applies to Council of Europe member States at large.

5. A continent-wide perspective: the European Broadcasting Union and the European Audiovisual Observatory

82. The hearing of 2 October 2025 shed light on the role that European media actors can play in preventing and countering gender stereotyping, but also on some of its root causes. The Chairperson welcomed Mr Gilles Fontaine, Head of the Department for Market Information, Ms Agnes Schneeberger, TV and VOD Markets Analyst, Department for Market Information, European Audiovisual Observatory, Council of Europe, and Ms Anne Richardson, Senior Project Manager for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, European Broadcasting Union (EBU) (online).

83. Anne Richardson, Senior Project Manager for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of the EBU explained that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) were considered core value and a strategic priority for Public Service Media (PSM), or national broadcasting companies, across its 55 member countries. This included dimensions such as gender equality, racial and ethnic diversity, disability inclusion, age diversity, and LGBTQI+ representation. Nearly all PSM organisations recognised the importance of diversity and inclusion and many of them had formal strategies and dedicated staff.

84. Significant progress had been made in gender balance within public service media, with women increasingly represented in staff positions and leadership roles, although gaps remained, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and sports departments. Public service media organisations endeavoured to produce inclusive content, representing the diverse societies they serve and mainstreaming inclusion across recruitment, career development, and retention.

85. Data collection and monitoring drive ongoing improvements, while targets and quotas are used to promote workforce and content diversity. Specific initiatives by EBU members (the national broadcasters) include mentoring programmes, media coaching for women experts, support networks for women in STEM, and enhanced visibility of women's sports through increased broadcasting coverage.

86. EBU prepared a series of recommendations in the form of a roadmap that is adaptable to various contexts and aim to combat discrimination while building inclusive cultures within PSM. Overall, EBU's DEI strategy represents a comprehensive, data-driven, and community-engaged approach to enhancing equality and promoting the value of diversity in European public service media.

87. The representatives of the European Audiovisual Observatory, a body created 30 years ago within the Council of Europe, highlighted that gender stereotypes are not only present on screen but are also the result of a gender imbalance within the crew producing the content. The structure and diversity of the production team affected the way gender was portrayed, highlighting that achieving gender equality required addressing both the representation in the content and the workforce behind it.

88. As a former journalist and documentary producer, I can only agree that there is a link between on-screen representation and off-screen industry dynamics. This also means that women's under-representation in the media and pervasive gender stereotyping are systemic issues, which require structural interventions. Late meetings, for instance, can be more difficult to attend for female staff members, who often have a larger share of family care responsibilities. Of course, this in turn highlights the need for a more gender-balanced sharing of care tasks, and better work-life balance across the board.

89. Relevant observations and recommendations emerging from the hearing included a reference to funding disparities between films by women and men directors, showing that financial resources were a critical factor (once again, a systemic issue) and differences in the topics assigned to journalists and TV personalities, with women dealing more often with social topics and men dominating the economic and political coverage. Equality and inclusion strategies need to be embedded in corporate structures.

6. A youth perspective

6.1. The Council of Europe Youth Sector's work on gender stereotypes and media

90. The Youth Department, part of the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe, has developed a body of educational resources addressing gender stereotypes in the media and digital contexts within its broader human rights education work, used widely by youth workers, youth organisations and programmes and activities at the European Youth Centres. These include a manual on gender-based violence providing practical non-formal education methods for youth workers, the Training Kit on Gender Equality in Youth Work, and the Bookmarks manual, designed for educators working with young people aged 13 to 18 on hate speech online, including sexist hate speech and misogynistic content in digital media.

91. Compass and Compasito, the Council of Europe's flagship human rights education manuals for young people and children respectively, address gender equality and media. The European Youth Foundation's Toolbox on Gender Equality provides guidance for youth NGOs on integrating a gender perspective in their activities, including the visual representation of gender roles.

92. The 2017 Guidelines on integrating and mainstreaming gender equality into the intercultural youth activities of the Council of Europe and its partners, adopted by the Joint Council on Youth, establish operational standards for all activities at the European Youth Centres and for organisations funded by the European Youth Foundation. These require that all visual representations used in youth work activities, including social media, event materials and activity reports, must not convey or reinforce stereotypical or discriminatory views on gender, and that gender-neutral language is used consistently in all communication.

93. The No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign (2013-2018), launched at the initiative of youth representatives of the Joint Council on Youth, mobilised hundreds of thousands of young people against online hate speech, with sexist hate speech as a central focus.

94. In 2016, the Youth Department and the Gender Equality Unit co-organised a Seminar on Combating Sexist Hate Speech at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, bringing together youth activists, experts and journalists from more than 30 countries. Among the measures proposed, several were addressed directly to media organisations: providing gender equality training for media professionals and editors, supporting independent and feminist media, and monitoring sexist hate speech in media and advertising. The seminar also drew attention to the particular vulnerability of women journalists and women in public life to sexist hate speech online.

95. The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership is actively developing capacity in this area. A seminar on Supporting Young People's Critical Thinking in a Digital Age, held in April 2026 as part of the Partnership's professional development programme for youth workers, explores how youth work can empower young people to engage critically with digital media environments, including algorithmic design and artificial intelligence. A support tool for youth workers is being developed as a concrete output. The Youth Partnership's research on digitalisation, including Youth Work and TECHLASH (2022) and Insights into Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact on the Youth Sector (2024), provides an evidence base for this work.

96. The Advisory Council on Youth has also contributed, through its ongoing collaboration with the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), to two instruments of direct relevance to this report: the Recommendation on Accountability for Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls, and the Recommendation on Equality and Artificial Intelligence, both approved by the GEC and submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption in late 2025. The GEC has explicitly recognised the importance of intersecting the youth perspective

with its work in these areas, including through a joint youth event with the CCJ in May 2025, the outcome document of which set out key actionable strategies for integration into the future thematic and policy work of the GEC.

6.2. The way forward

97. The Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective, adopted by the 10th Ministerial Conference in Valletta in October 2025, provides a concrete methodology for integrating young people's needs and perspectives into policy instruments.

98. Its main recommendations are: recognise young people as rights-holders in media policy (young people are not only among those most affected by gender stereotypes in media but also among the most active in challenging them); call for age-disaggregated data on gender and media (gender-disaggregated data on media content, online hate speech and technology-facilitated violence are rarely broken down by age, making the specific situation of young people largely invisible in research and monitoring), and invest in non-formal education and youth work as delivery mechanisms for media literacy.

99. The Reference Framework also calls for education that equips young people to critically engage with gender stereotypes in digital media. This is also feasible through non-formal education. These approaches reach young people outside formal schooling and equip youth workers to act as multipliers.

100. I appreciated that the contribution from the Youth Sector is entirely in line with my stance on intersectionality, as it underlines that gender-based discrimination in the media intersects with age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, and it adds that trans and non-binary young people face distinct and often severe forms of stereotyping in the media.

101. Finally, it calls for support to civil society, youth organisations and young people working in the media, arguing that civil society groups, young women journalists and young people active in media production, especially those who work on gender equality, need sustainable institutional support. Once again, based on my professional experience, I can only support this indication.

7. Ukraine's experience with platform abuse during armed conflict

102. Ukrainian NGO Women in Media, with which I had exchanges, analysed the specific features of gender stereotyping and abusive use of social media by the Russian Federation in the context of the war of aggression against Ukraine. This organisation documented how platforms like TikTok and Meta have been weaponised through targeted campaigns against female journalists, activists and public figures, particularly those reporting on Russian atrocities, anti-corruption issues or human rights violations. Key tactics include non-pornographic deepfakes sexualising women journalists to discredit their work and deter participation; systematic impersonation of verified accounts with fake profiles spreading Russian propaganda and disinformation; doxing of female reporters and LGBT+ organisations to enable stalking, threats and physical persecution; and false copyright claims or "inauthentic engagement" flags that swiftly remove time-sensitive war reporting while leaving malicious content untouched for weeks.

103. These practices reveal how gender-based digital violence amplifies wartime disinformation, with algorithms often failing to detect context-specific misogyny, impersonation or slur words in Ukrainian while prioritising automated restrictions on legitimate journalism depicting weapons or conflict evidence. Women in Media called for rapid-response channels for journalists, trusted flaggers programmes enabling civil society input on local content policies, and contextual exemptions from “restricted goods” rules to preserve atrocity documentation. Their experience demonstrates that gender stereotyping in conflict zones is not merely cultural but strategically deployed to silence women’s voices, underscoring the urgency of platform accountability and civil society partnerships in countering hybrid threats to democracy and equality.

104. Evidence from Ukrainian and international sources indicates that gender stereotypes and misogynistic narratives are deliberately instrumentalised by the Russian Federation as part of broader disinformation and hybrid warfare strategies. Such narratives are used to portray women in public life as unreliable, immoral or unfit for leadership, with the aim of undermining trust in institutions and weakening democratic resilience.

105. These patterns demonstrate that, in situations of armed conflict, gender stereotyping may be strategically deployed as a tool for psychological pressure and information warfare, contributing to intimidation, polarisation and the exclusion of women from public and political participation.[4]

8. Conclusions

106. The preparation of this report has led me to address a wide range of issues and to analyse the role of a broad variety of actors, including journalists, newsrooms, media regulators, large digital platforms and social media.

107. Despite progress in legislation and policy on gender equality, and in spite of enhanced awareness of women's rights, I believe that considerable work still needs to be undertaken, both in terms of analysis and awareness raising, to tackle gender stereotypes in the media. The exchanges and research carried out for this report suggest that not everyone understands how widespread these stereotypes are in the media, or how harmful they are for women and society at large. Based on this observation, when drafting the recommendations contained in the draft resolution, I paid particular attention to cultural measures, such as those concerning comprehensive sexuality education, media literacy, and data collection and processing. Another important part of the recommendations concerns the role of media organisations themselves and of social media, as well as the need to co-operate with them.

108. In addition to all the actors I have already mentioned, politicians bear great responsibility and have a significant role to play in this area: on the one hand as legislators and policymakers, and on the other as active participants in communication and in the media. In this capacity, they enjoy high visibility and should use it to dismantle myths and traditional stereotypes, not to perpetuate them.

109. The Assembly is best placed to indicate the way forward, building on its considerable body of texts and activities on gender equality and on culture and media, and thanks to its role as a forum for discussion on human rights and equality, and as a laboratory for new ideas.

4. P. Sottas, *Gendered Disinformation Against Women in Politics: A Factor Weakening Democratic Systems,* Institut du genre en politique, 2023.