



Resolution 2658 (2026)¹

Enhancing co-operation between parliaments and equality bodies

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Equality and non-discrimination are cornerstones of democratic societies and essential elements of the rule of law. Equality is one of the most sensitive barometers of democracy, and gender equality is a particularly pertinent indicator. Regressions in women's rights may serve as an early warning sign of broader democratic backsliding.
2. National equality bodies, which are established in the vast majority of Council of Europe member States, are independent institutions that play a central role in promoting equality and combating discrimination. They provide assistance and legal support to victims of discrimination and advise public authorities, including legislators and policy makers, on the design, implementation and evaluation of equality policies.
3. The structures, mandates and powers of equality bodies vary significantly across Council of Europe member States. These bodies may cover a single ground or multiple grounds of discrimination and may operate as stand-alone institutions or as part of institutions that have multiple mandates. Legislation should clearly define the mandates of equality bodies and create a system that covers all prohibited grounds of discrimination, including ethnic origin, language, religion or belief, citizenship, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, as well as multiple and intersectional discrimination.
4. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with concern that human rights, equality and non-discrimination face increasing pressure across Europe from both domestic and external actors, including foreign governments and forces opposing equality, such as anti-gender movements. Public authorities must ensure that national equality bodies are able to operate independently in this context. The independence and effectiveness of equality bodies require adequate financial and human resources, protection from political interference and a legal framework that guarantees their autonomy.
5. The Assembly strongly believes that co-operation between parliaments and equality bodies should be strengthened, including by consistently seeking or accepting the contributions of these bodies in legislative processes and duly taking their opinions and recommendations into account. Such co-operation should be clearly defined, structured and based on transparent and established procedures.
6. Civil society organisations, particularly those active in equality and non-discrimination, are closely connected to the realities on the ground and may contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Public authorities should regularly engage in dialogue and strengthen co-operation with these organisations. Ensuring a safe and sustainable environment for their work is essential to democratic life.
7. Evidence-based policy making depends on access to reliable, independent and transparent data on equality and non-discrimination. Council of Europe member States and their national statistical institutes should step up efforts to ensure that comparable data are collected, processed and made available at the European level. Co-operation with academic institutions in this area should also be strengthened.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 22 May 2026 (see [Doc. 16400](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Tuula Haatainen).*



8. The Assembly is concerned about the risk that digital technologies, especially artificial intelligence, may be misused, leading to increased discrimination, hate speech and disinformation. At the same time, technological advances, when responsibly applied, can support equality, improve monitoring of discrimination and define policy making.

9. The Assembly welcomes the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225). This landmark convention establishes common standards to ensure that artificial intelligence systems are consistent with fundamental rights and democratic principles.

10. In the light of the above, the Assembly calls on member States:

10.1. with regard to equality bodies, to:

10.1.1. establish, where they do not yet exist, one or several independent equality bodies with a clear mandate to promote equality, prevent and combat discrimination and support diversity and inclusion;

10.1.2. ensure that equality bodies' mandates cover all relevant grounds of discrimination, including ethnic origin, language, religion or belief, citizenship, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, as well as multiple and intersectional discrimination;

10.1.3. empower equality bodies to assist victims of discrimination, provide independent advice to public authorities, monitor the implementation and impact of legislation and policies, and, where appropriate, facilitate or initiate legal proceedings;

10.1.4. guarantee the independence, autonomy and effectiveness of equality bodies, including through adequate and sustainable financial and human resources, as well as protection from political interference;

10.1.5. engage in sustained dialogue with national equality bodies and take into account their recommendations on legislation, policies, procedure and programmes;

10.1.6. fully implement General Policy Recommendation No. 2 "Equality bodies to combat racism and intolerance at national level" of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as revised in 2017;

10.2. with regard to co-operation with parliaments and public authorities, to:

10.2.1. strengthen co-operation between equality bodies and national parliaments, including through regular exchanges, hearings, reporting mechanisms and systematic consideration of recommendations of the equality bodies in legislative and oversight processes;

10.2.2. ensure that governments, parliaments and other public authorities consult and co-operate with equality bodies, taking their expertise into account when designing, adopting and evaluating legislation, policies and programmes;

10.3. with regard to civil society, to:

10.3.1. ensure an enabling environment for civil society organisations working on equality and non-discrimination, including gender equality and women's rights, by safeguarding their freedom of operation and providing adequate and sustainable support;

10.3.2. promote structured co-operation between public authorities, equality bodies and civil society organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of equality policies;

10.4. with regard to data, monitoring and early warning, to:

10.4.1. ensure the availability of reliable, comparable and transparent data on equality and non-discrimination, including by strengthening national statistical institutes and supporting relevant academic research;

10.4.2. ensure that equality bodies can act as independent "alert mechanisms" by identifying emerging patterns of discrimination and communicating risks to public authorities;

- 10.4.3. consider the establishment of a Europe-wide early warning mechanism on equality and non-discrimination in order to identify and respond to risks of backsliding in a timely manner, based on measurable indicators developed in co-operation with national statistical institutes and European and international bodies with expertise in equality and non-discrimination and data collection;
- 10.5. with regard to artificial intelligence and the digital environment, to:
 - 10.5.1. sign, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law;
 - 10.5.2. take effective measures to prevent and combat the misuse of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to spread hate speech and discrimination;
 - 10.5.3. encourage the responsible development and use of artificial intelligence as a tool for promoting equality, including in monitoring discrimination, and for improving access to rights and defining public policies.