Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 15678
06 January 2023

The role and responsibility of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence against women and girls

Report[1]
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination
Rapporteur: Ms Petra STIENEN, Netherlands, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Summary

The fight against gender-based violence has been led for decades by women and women's rights movements. However, men and boys also have an important role to play, as underlined in the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the "Istanbul Convention"). They should be more aware that they are part of the solution – as well as being part of the problem. They have a responsibility to act to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and girls.

The rejection of harmful masculinities and the promotion of mindful masculinities are essential steps. Men can be positive role models, act as agents of change and use their influence among peers. They can speak out against harmful practices and challenge sexism. Gender equality education lays the foundations of a society free from violence.

All genders, including men in all their diversity, can and should be allies and partners in the fight for gender equality and against gender-based violence. By deconstructing systems of patriarchal privileges, they can also create an environment that will contribute to ending impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15290, Reference 4589 of 21 June 2021.

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A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Gender-based violence against women and girls, which finds its origin in profound gender inequalities and is their expression, is widespread and harmful. It affects society as a whole and should be recognised as a global human rights issue. In Europe, it is estimated that one in three women is a survivor of gender-based violence. No country and no sector are immune to this violence. A few years ago, the #metoo movement went viral and contributed to a lifting of taboos. It created more consciousness of the urgency of preventing and combating gender-based violence.

2. The fight against gender-based violence has been historically led by women and women's rights organisations. However, men and boys, in all their diversity, also have an important role to play. Men can be agents of change by speaking out against harmful practices, acting as role models and challenging sexism. They are often the best placed to call on other men to be active in the fight against gender-based violence, and to set an example for future generations. All genders, including men in all their diversity, can and should be allies and partners in the fight for gender equality and against gender-based violence.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises the responsibility of men and boys in preventing and stopping gender-based violence against women and girls and urges them to be proactive in this regard. It acknowledges that not all men are perpetrators of gender-based violence but that the majority of perpetrators are men. It welcomes the adoption of the Dublin Declaration on the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence on 30 September 2022 by thirty-eight Council of Europe member states, which committed to "ensuring that strategies aimed at preventing and combating violence against women also address the specific role of men and boys in preventing violence against women" and to develop specific measures aimed to involve them. It recalls its Resolution 2027 (2014) "Focusing on the perpetrators to prevent violence against women", its Resolution 2274 (2019) "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment" and its Resolution 2405 (2021) "Revision of the Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly: introducing the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct". The Assembly's #NotInMyParliament awareness-raising initiative was launched to prevent and combat sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments.

4. Men and boys are not a homogeneous group and masculinities are multiple. Actions targeted at men and boys need to take this diversity into account. The Assembly stresses that promoting mindful masculinities and respectful relationships, as well as the equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, will be a step towards more gender equality and will be beneficial to society. Education and awareness-raising of men and boys can play an important part to this end. Talking about the pyramid of violence could also be a starting point of discussion.

5. The Assembly recognises that men and boys can also be affected by gender stereotypes and models of harmful masculinity and stresses the importance of adopting a gender perspective that is inclusive. Men, including men in positions of political, economic or social power, must be part of the response and participate in changing mindsets, behaviours and social norms in order to prevent and combat gender-based violence. Parliamentarians, as influential public figures and legislators, hold a special responsibility for contributing to gender justice and society's mobilisation against gender-based violence.

6. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention") states in its article 12.4 that all members of society, especially men and boys, should be encouraged to contribute actively to preventing violence. The Assembly has relentlessly called for the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention. It recalls that the fight against gender-based violence is closely connected to the fight against gender-based stereotypes and patriarchal values, and reiterates its full support for the convention. The deconstruction of systems of patriarchal privileges will be a key step to reaching gender equality and ending impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence. The Assembly deplores the development of anti-gender movements which deny the reality of gender-based violence, and calls for a resistance against the backlash.

7. The Assembly welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Human Rights Council of Resolution A/HRC/5/10 "Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls". It supports the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe and welcomes its work towards adoption by the Committee of Ministers of guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women.

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 1 December 2022.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and Observer States, as well as on all States whose parliament enjoys observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to:

8.1. if it is not yet the case, ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention;

8.2. adopt strategies or national action plans to prevent and combat gender-based violence and include action with dedicated budget to address the responsibility and role of men and boys;

8.3. adopt legislation on defining rape by the absence of consent, if not yet the case, in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention which indicates that "consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person's free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances" (Article 36);

8.4. implement Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism;

8.5. launch awareness-raising campaigns on the responsibility of men and boys in preventing and combating gender-based violence, including as bystanders;

8.6. promote a gender-balanced representation in cultural, economic, media, public and political sectors;

8.7. create, if it is not yet the case, preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators of gender-based violence against women and girls, based on existing international standards in this area;

8.8. provide comprehensive training for professionals, including members of the police, lawyers, judges, prosecutors, health care professionals and social workers, on all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, detecting and responding to gender-based violence, on assistance to survivors and on the rights of victims;

8.9. adopt policies and measures encouraging the equal participation of men in care activities;

8.10. improve data collection on gender-based violence in line with existing standards and good practices in this area;

8.11. support research on the costs of harmful masculinity for society and on the costs of gender-based violence;

8.12. communicate on the harmful effects of gender-based violence on survivors and on society in general;

8.13. adopt an intersectional approach, taking into account all diversities and intersecting forms of discrimination, in the fight against gender-based violence;

8.14. encourage discussions on gender equality, sharing of care responsibilities and combating sexism and gender-based violence in workplaces;

8.15. support male role models engaged in the fight against gender-based violence and in the promotion of mindful masculinities;

8.16. provide financial support to non-governmental organisations working on preventing and combating gender-based violence, including assistance to survivors, and additional financial support to non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality through combating harmful masculinities and launching activities on the responsibility of men and boys in this fight.

9. With regard to preventing and combating gender-based stereotypes, the Assembly calls on these States to:

9.1. invest in education on gender equality from the youngest age, and in the training of teachers on gender equality, and ensure that gender equality will be discussed at school on a regular basis;

9.2. develop toolkits questioning stereotypical gender roles;

9.3. ensure the provision of comprehensive sexuality education including discussions on gender-based stereotypes, the meaning of consent and respect in intimate relationships;

9.4. ask sports clubs and federations to contribute to the fight against gender-based stereotypes and to promote gender equality;

9.5. encourage the production of cultural programmes reflecting on gender roles and masculinities;

9.6. encourage media outlets to react to sexist remarks and behaviours, take responsibility and step up prevention efforts.

10. The Assembly calls on national parliaments to ensure that they are free of gender-based violence and sexism and encourages them to organise awareness-raising events on the responsibility of men and boys in preventing and stopping gender-based violence and on mindful masculinities.

11. The Assembly calls on political parties to make the fight against gender-based violence a political priority and to promote the participation of women in their decision-making bodies. It also calls on them to adopt a zero-tolerance policy on gender-based violence and initiate seminars on preventing and combating it.

12. The Assembly calls on all its members, including men, in all their diversity, to speak up against manifestations of gender-based violence, to be pro-active in prevention and fight against gender-based violence, to counter misogyny in politics and to initiate debates on gender equality in their national parliaments.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Petra Stienen, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Gender-based violence against women and girls finds its origin in deeply rooted gender inequality. It is a human rights issue, not a women's rights issue. Addressing this violence collectively has become all the more urgent as gender-based violence has increased because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the number of survivors of gender-based violence is generally underestimated.

2. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has estimated that the cost of gender-based violence was €366 billion a year across the European Union.[3] It would be timely to have an updated estimation of this cost for society in all Council of Europe member States.

3. Most perpetrators of gender-based violence are men but not all men are perpetrators. Throughout the world, however, there are men who think they can beat, stalk, rape, exploit, and mentally and physically abuse women. Margaret Atwood has stated that "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them". Patriarchy, as it gives power and privilege to men and creates profound gender inequalities, can be seen as a root cause of this violence. Tolerance for this violence and society's lack of mobilisation allow perpetrators to continue. In her book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love* (2004), bell hooks stressed that "To end male pain, to respond effectively to male crisis, we have to name the problem. We have to both acknowledge that the problem is patriarchy and work to end patriarchy. (…) If men are to reclaim the essential goodness of male being, if they are to regain the space of openheartedness and emotional expressiveness that is the foundation of well-being, we must envision alternatives to patriarchal masculinity. We must all change."[4]

4. It is important to investigate the underlying reasoning or explanations by these men for their abusive attitude towards women. It is high time for the Parliamentary Assembly to address the role and responsibility of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence and make concrete proposals to encourage them to join this fight. Engaging men to combat violence sends a powerful message. It is coherent, inclusive, and ensures more efficient prevention, protection and policies.

5. Men also become victims through men-to-men violence. In this report, I have decided to focus on violence of men against women. I also would like to emphasise that this is not an anti-male report as I strongly believe that many men are willing to change and become allies in ending violence against women.

6. In its Resolution 2027 (2014) "Focusing on the perpetrators to prevent violence against women", the Assembly called on NGOs active in the fight against gender-based violence to "stress the importance of the role of men in combating violence against women and domestic violence and to encourage their participation in awareness-raising activities". I believe it is now time to go a step further and urge men and boys to take responsibility and participate in changing mindsets and behaviours.

7. The Assembly has relentlessly called for the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"). A report prepared by Zita Gurmai entitled "The Istanbul Convention: progress and challenges", will be debated in January 2023.[5] Article 12.4 of this Convention states that all members of society, especially men and boys, should be encouraged to contribute actively to preventing violence. The text emphasises the importance of combating stereotypical images of men and women and the need for a cultural change so that there is no room for violence against women in our society.

8. In its Resolution A/HRC/RES/35/10 entitled "Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls",[6] the United Nations Human Rights Council called on States to take action to prevent violence against women by fully engaging men and boys. It called on them to address the causes of gender inequality and highlighted that "men and boys, by taking responsibility themselves and working jointly in partnership with women and girls at

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3. "Gender-based violence costs the EU €366 billion a year", European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 7 July 2021.
4. bell hooks, "Understanding Patriarchy", in *The will to change: men masculinity and love*, Washington Square Press, 2004.
5. Voir Doc. 15673 "The Istanbul Convention: progress and challenges".
6. United Nations Human Rights Council, "Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls", A/HRC/RES/35/10, resolution adopted on 22 June 2017, United Nations, 12 July 2017.

all levels, are essential to efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls". At its 38th session in June 2018, the Human Rights Council also considered a report on promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and UN and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women.

9. Men can be agents of change in multiple ways. They can speak up, be role models and challenge sexism. They can work on preventing and combating "harmful masculinities". Men are the best placed to call on other men to be active in the fight against gender-based violence, and to set an example for future generations.[7] They have a fundamental role to play in educating their sons on healthy masculinity and respectful attitudes towards the women in their immediate surroundings and beyond. According to Abhijit Das, former co-Chair of the MenEngage Alliance, positive masculinity can be promoted by "encouraging men who do not agree with harmful practices and attitudes to speak out".[8] Movements such as #heforshe and international organisations such as Promundo and MenEngage show how to engage men and boys through the conviction that we can achieve gender equality only by involving all genders.

2. Scope of the report

10. In my capacity as rapporteur on the gender dimension of foreign policy,[9] I carried out a fact-finding visit in October 2019, during which I met a variety of interlocutors to discuss the Swedish feminist foreign policy. During this visit, I had the opportunity to meet with researchers who had worked on the concept and the norms of masculinity. Erik Melander, Professor at Uppsala University, presented research work on the masculine honour ideology, which may explain, but not justify, some behaviours or decisions. Elin Bjarnegård, Associate Professor at Uppsala University stressed that having male allies was crucial for the success of the feminist foreign policy. When reporting back to the committee, I recommended we work both on masculinity and on the role of men to combat gender-based violence. Three years later, I see that these concepts have emerged more in the public debate and I am grateful for having had the opportunity to work in depth on them for this report.

11. The motion for a resolution at the origin of this report stresses that the Assembly should examine the different national approaches to engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and women's rights, in order to prevent all forms of violence. I have tried to identify and promote inspiring initiatives and good practices on this topic, with special attention to parliamentary initiatives. I have looked into awareness-raising campaigns, such as the "Don't be that guy campaign"[10] by Police Scotland. This campaign calls on men to hold each other to account and prevent abuse. It presents concrete situations and what men can do.

12. The motion also calls on male parliamentarians to set an example. Men in leadership positions, including in politics, sports, culture, media and the police, have a responsibility to speak out.[11] This has led me to organise bilateral meetings with the leaders of political groups in the Assembly and with male chairpersons of committees.

13. With this report, I have also tried to emphasise the importance of the bystander approach, which is the role played by witnesses in challenging reprehensible behaviour.[12]

14. I have discussed with various interlocutors on overcoming the barriers of men's resistance to be engaged on this topic. How can we make preventing gender-based violence matter to men? The objective of this report is to contribute to raising awareness of the fact that men and boys have a responsibility to fight against gender-based violence and promote concrete tools to encourage their engagement on this issue.

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7. World Forum for Democracy 2018, "LAB 10 – Masculinities reexamined: are men the key to greater gender equality?", Council of Europe, 20 November 2018.
8. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Men and boys in the fight to eliminate violence against women", United Nations, 30 June 2017.
9. See Doc. 15122.
10. Kevin Rawlinson, "Don't Be That Guy: activists praise campaign tackling sexual violence", *The Guardian*, 14 October 2021.
11. Stephen Burrell, Nicole Westmarland and Sandy Ruxton, "How men can be allies to women right now", *The Conversation*, 15 March 2021.
12. Sirin Kale, "The time for men to step up is right now!: what all men can do to help end violence against women", *The Guardian*, 17 March 2021.

15. After a sexual misconduct scandal involving jury members and a band member of the Voice of Holland programme, there was a week-long debate in the Netherlands on the responsibility of employers and companies in the entertainment industry and beyond to provide for a safe working environment.[13] In this debate, there was a strong interest from men to contribute actively to preventing and combating gender-based violence.

16. In addition to desk research, I have conducted virtual bilateral meetings with experts. On 14 February 2022, I held virtual bilateral meetings with Johanna Nelles, Executive Secretary to the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and Clara Alemann working for the organisation Promundo. In addition, I held on the same day consultations with Ilse Wermink (PAX), Dean Peacock (MenEngage/Promundo), Anthony Keedi, ABAAD (via PAX), Katinka Moonen (Oxfam Novib), Coba Hordijk (Emancipator), Shirodj Raghoenath (Emancipator), Quirine Lengkeek (CHOICE), Sabine Herbrink (NIMD), Marlene van Benthem (Soroptomist International), Lisa de Pagter (Rutgers), Anne-Floor Dekker, Anika Snel and Nadia van der Linde (WO=MEN) and Jan Reynders (MenEngage). I also held a bilateral meeting with Jens van Tricht who is the director of Emancipator and MenEngage global board member.[14]

17. The Committee held a joint hearing with the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence on 12 April 2022 with the participation of Giovanna Lauro, PhD, Vice President of Programs & Research, Promundo-US, Teresa Schweiger, Austrian member and Co-Coordinator of MenEngage Europe – A Regional Network within the Global Alliance MenEngage, Ivan Jablonka, Professor of History at University Sorbonne Paris Nord, member of the University Institute of France, and Chris Green, founder of White Ribbon UK.

18. I met with Dr Erik Melander on 23 May 2022 to discuss his work on masculinities. On 10 June 2022, I held an online bilateral meeting with UN Women representatives: Khamsavath Chanthavysouk, Policy Specialist on EVAW Knowledge Management and Prevention (based in New York); Yolanda Iriarte, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul; and Edward Wageni, who works for the programme HeforShe in New York. They shared with me key UN recommendations on this topic. On the same day, I held a virtual meeting with Cécile Gréboval, Senior Gender Equality Adviser within the Gender Equality Division, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe. On 30 June 2022, I met with Tryggvi Hallgrímsson, seconded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland as Policy Advisor to the same Division. On the same day, I also held a meeting with Carlien Scheele, EIGE Director, and Agata Szypulska, Seconded National Expert at EIGE on gender-based violence.

19. On 16 September 2022, the committee held an exchange of views with the participation of Maxime Ruszniewski, CEO of Remixt, to discuss concrete ways of engaging men in the fight for gender equality and against gender-based violence. On 29 and 30 September 2022, I carried out an inspiring fact-finding visit to Madrid, during which I had the opportunity to discuss national awareness-raising campaigns to promote mindful masculinities, the engagement of civil society to promote the role of men and boys in combating gender-based violence and commitment at the highest political level to the fight against gender-based violence.

20. On 14, 16, 17 and 21 November 2022, I held virtual bilateral meetings with several male members of the Assembly who are chairpersons of political groups or committees, or who are active in the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination: Mr Iulian Bulai (Romania, ALDE), Mr Titus Corlăţean (Romania, SOC), Mr Damien Cottier (Switzerland, ALDE), Mr Even Eriksen (Norway, SOC), Mr George Katrougalos (Greece, UEL), Mr Momodou Malcolm Jallow (Sweden, UEL), Mr Christophe Lacroix (Belgium, SOC), Mr Aleksander Pociej (Poland, EPP/CD), Mr Theodoros Rousopolos (Greece, EPP/CD) and Mr Frank Schwabe (Germany, SOC). I also held a virtual meeting with Mr Tiny Kox, President of the Assembly on 21 November 2022. I would like to thank them for taking the time to discuss the role and responsibility of male members of parliament to prevent and combat gender-based violence.

3. Recognition of the importance of the role and responsibility of men and boys

21. The importance of the role of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence against women and girls has been recognised in Europe and beyond, in particular by the United Nations. During the drafting process of the Istanbul Convention, there was strong consensus about the need to assign an active role to

13. Tim Gallagher, "Dutch media mogul apologises amid #MeToo scandal that took singing competition off the air", *Euronews*, 21 January 2022.
14. Author of 'Why Feminism Is Good For Men' [Tricht, J van (2018), Waarom feminisme goed is voor mannen, Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, Amsterdam, ISBN 9789045034492].

men and boys in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and its Article 12.4 consecrates this role. They can be positive role models, act as agents of change and use their influence among peers.

22. As perpetrators of violence, they can also change their behaviour and thereby bring forward change. Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention stresses the importance of programmes for perpetrators of violence, which can help them to understand and realise the need to alter their attitudes.

23. During our meeting, Johanna Nelles indicated that GREVIO received information about campaigns on the role of men, awareness-raising activities and programmes during its country visits or beforehand. However, the information received on programmes related to the promotion of men's involvement in preventing and combating violence against women remains limited.

24. The Istanbul Convention is being challenged in several countries, which often criticise the fact that it highlights gender inequality as a root cause of violence. Recognising this is a first step towards effective action against gender-based violence. However, we need to be aware that recognising men's role in preventing and combating gender-based violence seems difficult in places where gender inequality is not denounced nor seen as an important problem, and where anti-gender movements are very active.

25. Anti-gender narratives might lead to violence by supporters of this narrative. The behaviour of involuntary celibates ('incels'), who promote violence against women, should also be analysed.[15]

26. Men who engage with the protection of women's rights and in the fight against gender-based violence can also be criticised as "not legitimate" spokespersons since they are not women. In my view, all genders can join forces and the role of men is essential to prevent and combat gender-based violence.

27. During the bilateral meetings held with male members of the Assembly, they all supported the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and recognised the responsibility of men and boys in the fight against gender-based violence against women and girls. We also discussed the positive impact parliamentarians can have by speaking up against violence and creating a context where gender equality would be further promoted and gender-based violence would no longer be tolerated. Some of them did express their willingness not to take space from women and recognised that their participation in debates on combating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality was too low. One colleague shared his feeling of discomfort when talking about combating gender-based violence. Almost all mentioned the importance of higher participation of women in politics at local and national levels. Gender equality should be further mainstreamed in the work of the Assembly and within political parties.

28. They also supported the #notinmyparliament initiative launched by former Assembly President Liliane Maury-Pasquier, and expressed a willingness to go beyond statements on preventing and combating gender-based violence with concrete actions. Sharing care responsibilities at home and publicly talking about it, as well as inclusive policy making on preventing and combating gender-based violence were other topics discussed. Gender equality education was presented as a priority by most members interviewed, in order to have both men and women engaged in the fight against gender-based violence. We also talked about masculinities, injunctions on men, the fight against gender-based discrimination, intersectionality[16] and the important contribution politicians could have in the deconstruction of gender stereotypes. One member highlighted the fact that male parliamentarians could be the ambassadors of positive masculinity.

29. The Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission was mandated by the Committee of Ministers to draw up guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women by the end of 2022. It adopted the draft guidelines at its 22nd meeting on 18 November 2022. Involving men in the promotion of gender equality is a first step to their active involvement in preventing and combating gender-based violence.

30. In March 2022, the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions, recognised "the importance of the full engagement of men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change, and as strategic partners and allies in the achievement of gender equality

15. "Involuntary celibates ('incels') refers to men who believe they are unable to access consensual sexual relationships due to their perceived physical unattractiveness": European Commission, "Incels: A First Scan of the Phenomenon (in the EU) and its Relevance and Challenges for P/CVE", European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, p. 4.

16. I would refer to the definition provided by EIGE: "analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination".

and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes in order to combat and eliminate the gender stereotypes, sexism and negative social norms that fuel discrimination and all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, and undermine gender equality, while noting the ongoing need to educate children from a young age regarding the importance of gender equality, human rights, treating all people with dignity and respect and promoting a culture of peace, non-violent behaviour and respectful relationships".[17]

31. In the Netherlands, the government created the position of government commissioner for combating inappropriate behaviour and sexual violence. Ms Mariëtte Hamer was appointed to this position and I have been informed that she will look into the role of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence.[18]

4. Addressing harmful masculinities and promoting mindful masculinities

32. I would like to stress that this report does not aim to present men as a homogenous group – we need to understand men in all their diversity. As a consequence, actions to promote the role of men and boys in preventing and combating violence against women should take into account their differences. During our meeting, Dean Peacock highlighted that mental health, trauma, economic stress, violence as a child and alcohol could intersect with masculinity to explain violence. He advised focusing on men in positions of political power and the need to keep them accountable whenever they took action to undermine gender equality, as he did with his organisation in South Africa.

33. In its General Recommendation No. 35, the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women recognised "gender-based violence against women as being rooted in gender-related factors, such as the ideology of men's entitlement and privilege over women, social norms regarding masculinity, and the need to assert male control or power, enforce gender roles or prevent, discourage or punish what is considered to be unacceptable female behaviour".[19] Strategies to prevent and combat gender-based violence need to tackle those root causes. They should take into account the fact that root causes can be multiple and therefore need to be tackled with various measures.

34. Professor Erik Melander described harmful masculinities as the result of "patriarchal values" combined with "masculine toughness" (a kind of honour ideology, leading to think that men must show strength but not show weakness or emotions). These two elements form what is called "masculine honour ideology". So-called honour thinking makes one believe that a certain behaviour is acceptable for men but not for women. Understanding that men can experience violence through expected cultural behaviours is also important.

35. Getting men involved is a first challenge, which can often be overcome by speaking about the risk of violence faced by the women in their lives, such as sisters, mothers and daughters. The pyramid of violence shows how seemingly innocent jokes might lead to stalking, rape or femicide. "This pyramid represents a continuum of abuse, highlighting the ways in which common attitudes and beliefs uphold and form the basis for more extreme acts of violence."[20] Men can play a more active role in the fight against gender-based violence only if they stop letting it happen and reject harmful masculinity. Another way to start the conversation with men is to highlight a quality of life perspective. Women and men can all benefit from more gender equality.

36. Men should be addressed directly in order to ensure their participation in programmes. Jan Reynders indicated during our meeting that 99% of men who did not speak up against violence were afraid of not "fitting in" to society and being seen as losers. The way other men (or women) looked at them, living up to the so-called traditional concept of masculinity, had an impact on men's behaviours. According to Jens von Tricht, patriarchal structures lead to the dehumanisation of men, who are told they should not be kind, feel or show insecurity or express their feelings. "There is an enormous fragility around masculinity, which can lead to toxic behaviours. Encouraging men to participate in the fight against gender-based violence also contributes to their emancipation". Our work goes beyond promoting the role of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence, with the intention to also raise awareness about the diversity of masculinities.

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17. CSW66(2022), Commission on the Status of Women.
18. "Government sets up new role of 'MeToo' government commissioner", *DutchNews.nl*, 9 February 2022.
19. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19", CEDAW/C/GC/35, United Nations, 26 July 2017.
20. VAWnet, Pyramid of Discrimination and Violence, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, January 2012.

37. The United Nations Human Rights Council called upon States to prevent violence against women and girls by "engaging, educating, encouraging and supporting men and boys to be positive role models for gender equality and to promote respectful relationships, (…) to take responsibility and be held accountable for behaviour, including behaviour that perpetuates gender stereotypes, including misconceptions about masculinities that underlie discrimination and violence against women and girls, to increase their understanding of the harmful effects of violence for the victim/survivor and society as a whole, and to ensure that men and boys take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour".[21] When we talk about the role of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence, I believe we should also talk about their responsibility to do so, towards women and girls, and towards society in general. Changing behaviours and making healthy masculinities a reality rests largely on the shoulders of men. However, women can also perpetuate the negative consequences of harmful masculinities in the way they bring up their children, interact with the men and boys in their intimate circles and how they react to other women standing up for their rights.

38. Most persons I have spoken to highlighted the importance of investing in gender equality education from an early age. This means investing in the training of teachers on gender equality, ensuring each pupil has regular opportunities to discuss gender equality in the classroom, several times a year and not only once. Clara Alemann (Promundo) advocated for guarantees that systematic work be undertaken with young boys on this theme. She also stated that the promotion of healthy masculinities contributed to a reduction of violence. It is crucial to work with men and boys from the moment they are shaping their role as young boys, teenagers or first-time fathers. A change of culture is needed and one-off actions will not be enough. Transforming social norms about what healthy masculinity entails is essential.

39. There are different ways to make change happen. I was very interested in one activity carried out by the NGO Emancipator. A training week-end aimed at men is organised every year. 20 participants from diverse groups sit together, discuss and start deconstructing masculinity together, at a personal level. Participants feel there is a safe space to share questions and doubts. The emancipation of men does much to support the emancipation of women. This NGO wished it could organise more trainings of this kind, but its budget is limited.

40. Discussing gender equality means discussing what the notion of spatial occupation means for both women and men, about who is "taking space" and how it can be shared. Men are almost never told that they are taking space from women while women are told so very often. This raises the question of how the division of space is made and what kind of space sharing is expected. One can also wonder why women are often sent to do training on how to speak up while men are hardly ever trained to listen better.

41. UN Women is working on transforming patriarchal masculinities, which emphasise the power of men over women and aim at maintaining gender inequalities and hierarchies. During our meeting, the representatives indicated that patriarchal masculinities were expressed individually in attitudes and behaviours, institutionally in policies and practices and ideologically in social norms and cultural narratives. Transforming patriarchal masculinities goes beyond simply engaging men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. UN Women therefore recommends changing the narrative. Challenging patriarchal masculinities is now considered a priority with the rise of political leaders opposed to gender equality in several countries. UN Women recommendations include mobilising men to challenge and transform patriarchal practices and cultures of institutions, use an intersectional approach and recognise diverse masculinities, acknowledge the centrality of women's rights organisations in social change for gender equality, and to highlight men's accountability as leaders in social, economic, cultural and political life. UN Women also recommends reacting to anti-gender movements, countering misogyny in politics and resisting backlash.

42. During our meeting, we also discussed the importance of working with everyone whose social norms might support patriarchal masculinities. Mothers, for instance, may promote this kind of masculinity by teaching "boys to be boys". According to Khamsavath Chanthavysouk, there is evidence that certain norms are harmful. The whole society can be an instrument of masculinity. Edward Wageni stressed that men also had an interest in transforming patriarchal masculinities as not all men enjoyed the so-called privileges of being a man. I would like to add that family connections, good education and high level of income can make some men more privileged than others. Yolanda Iriarte spoke of the importance of investing in transformative parenthood. Having more men assuming their parental responsibilities also means a different distribution of power.

21. United Nations Human Rights Council, A/HRC/RES/35/10, op. cit.

43. French philosopher Ivan Jablonka, who reflects on the role and representation of men in society, participated in a hearing with the committee on 12 April 2022. According to him, gender inequality is deeply rooted in our societies and gender privileges are endemic. He invites everyone to reconsider traditional roles and expectations. Education gives a gender privilege to men in societies, and this has been internalised in our cultures. He also underlines that men have been at the forefront of every battle except for gender equality. In his view, "new solidarities" means refusing male complicity such as misogynist jokes in the locker room and instead taking sides for women's rights. He considers that a "gender new deal" could lead to an equal division of powers and responsibilities.

44. He also stressed the responsibility of men to change and escape from their "gender prison". Men could accept their vulnerability and insecurity. He suggested the concept of "counter-masculinity", an examination of conscience and a reflection about the upbringing received. In his book *Des hommes justes* (2019), he calls for an evolution from patriarchy to new masculinities, with gender justice as the new project for society. Ivan Jablonka believes that men should take on the responsibility of taking part in the social shift since the #MeToo movement broke out.

45. Teresa Schweiger presented the work of MenEngage Europe to the Committee. In her view, men and boys have to become aware of male privileges and structural power relations. A typical gender stereotype for boys is to be sexist in order to be a boy. She is convinced that changing sexist attitudes could lead to a system change. She also presented the so-called "man box" which included stereotypical labels and requests such as "be a real man" or "boys don't cry".

46. Giovanna Lauro underlined that a feminist-centred perspective should be used to engage men and boys in the prevention of gender-based violence. The voices of men already embodying a non-violent, caring, nurturing way of living should be amplified. Often, work with men and boys targeted the most underprivileged groups and rarely the men in positions of power, although both were essential. She presented the International Men and Gender Equality Survey. Its results showed that men who had witnessed violence against their own mothers when they were children were 2.5 times more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence on becoming adults. Investing in prevention was therefore crucial. Promundo had launched the "Global Boyhood Initiative" to work with boys, starting as early as four years old, and with their caregivers, parents, teachers, and coaches, and change the ways in which they were raised. It also created the "MenCare" campaign, now active in fifty countries, with a view to promoting a more equitable approach to caregiving.

47. Chris Green, who created the White Ribbon campaign, regretted that the engagement of men and boys was not yet high on the political agenda. He considers that incentives and recognition could encourage men to be active in this field. Social education can lead to societal change.

48. In her book *For the Love of Men: A New Vision for Mindful Masculinity* (2019), Liz Plank describes traditional masculinity as a barrier to gender equality. She underlines the importance of the notion of "mindful masculinity" for men to be active in the promotion of gender equality. She intends to look for solutions rather than presenting a problem. She calls on men to redefine masculinity. In the weekly podcast "Man enough", together with actor and director Justin Baldoni and music producer Jamey Heath, she discusses "what does it mean to be a man today? More importantly what does it mean to be human".[22]

5. Case study: Iceland

49. I have looked more specifically at the situation in Iceland,[23] known to have a high score on the gender equality index for more than a decade. Women have reached the highest levels as decision makers and power appears to be equally shared in Iceland. This could be an indicator that men are willing to play a more active role in the promotion of gender equality. However, while rating highly with regard to gender equality, Iceland also has high rates of domestic violence and sexual abuse.[24] In its report on Iceland, GREVIO indicates there has been a steady increase in reporting. In 2021, the police registered around 1 000 reports of domestic violence.[25]

22. The Man enough podcast: manenough.com/podcast/.
23. Global Gender Gap Report 2021, World Economic Forum, 30 March 2021 (weforum.org).
24. Sigrún Sif Jóelsdóttir, "The Misogynist Violence of Iceland's Feminist Paradise", *Foreign Policy*, 15 July 2020.
25. GREVIO (Baseline) Evaluation Report – Iceland (adopted on 13 October 2022), GREVIO/Inf(2022)26, Council of Europe, 14 November 2022.

50. Iceland adopted a roadmap for ending gender-based violence for the period 2021-2026, including 23 commitments. It includes actions aimed at eradicating gender-based violence both in the country and projects at international level. There is a clear emphasis at increasing the participation of men and boys in activities promoting gender equality. Iceland plans to engage men and boys actively to become agents of change and co-operates with the United Nations to this end. In 2022-2023, Iceland committed to support UN Women in its work on masculinities and engaging men and boys. It made a commitment to allocate 1 million US$ to "enhance work on prevention and response to gender-based violence through engaging men and boys and transforming harmful masculinities".[26]

51. Iceland also actively promotes at international level the involvement of men in campaigns to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender-based violence. The country is co-leading an action coalition on gender-based violence in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum.

52. During the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (March 2021), former Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson, stressed that engaging men and increasing awareness was a key contributor in making inclusive decision-making processes and equal opportunities the new normal.[27] He mentioned the utmost importance of involving male decision makers in this dialogue.

53. A concrete commitment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to hold annual barbershop conferences with international organisations and other partners. These events encourage men and boys to become actively engaged in promoting gender equality. The Ministry indicates that "the Barbershop concept looks at innovative ways for men to mobilise and motivate other men to address discriminatory stereotypes of masculinity. It identifies ways for men to talk about gender equality in comfortable and safe environment, and addresses how male leaders can drive this dialogue forward".[28] According to Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson, "Barbershops are known to be a safe place for men to speak freely and be more open about what is on their mind, much like the locker room. Let's bring the discussion here, let's talk amongst ourselves about what we can bring to the table, how we can play an integral part in the movement of change, be champions of HeForShe".[29] Iceland played an important role in creating a Barbershop Toolbox for the HeForShe campaign. It is nevertheless also important to be aware that there might be risks with this kind of initiatives.

54. The first Barbershop conference was held in the New York Headquarters of the UN in January 2015 and was hosted by the Governments of Iceland and Suriname. Women's rights campaigners criticised the concept, with the argument that an event to discuss women's rights that was solely aimed at men and attended by men would do little to change the status quo.[30]

55. Since 2015, Iceland participated or co-organised numerous Barbershop conferences, in Reykjavík (May 2017),[31] Paris (OECD Barbershop Conference on Engaging Men for Gender Equality, October 2018)[32] or Copenhagen (Womenomics Nordic Business Conference, May 2019)[33]. Barbershop events are considered eye opening sessions but do not necessarily lead to long-term work.

56. There can also be ways to engage men on social media. Þorsteinn V. Einarsson started a social media campaign (on Twitter, Instagram[34], or with podcasts[35]) under the title "Karlmennskan" (literally, "Masculinity"), encouraging men to talk about their vulnerability and women to share stories of mansplaining and misogyny. Mr Einarsson is now a highly sought-after lecturer in schools, universities and workplaces in Iceland. He had the idea of the campaign after conversing with Sóley Tómasdóttir, an Icelandic feminist gender and diversity

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26. UN Women, "Global leaders advocate for male accountability in the fight to end violence against women at the Generation Equality Forum", UN Women, 2 July 2021.
27. Statement by H.E. Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson at the 65th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women, Government of Iceland, 15 March 2021.
28. "Barbershop", Government of Iceland.
29. Idem.
30. Liz Ford, "UN Barbershop conference aims to get men talking about women's rights", *The Guardian*, 14 January 2015.
31. Barbershop at the Nordic house – Mobilizing Men and Boys for Gender Equality, Government of Iceland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 12 April 2017.
32. Statement at the OECD Barbershop Conference, engaging men for gender equality, Government of Iceland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2 October 2018.
33. Statement at Womenomics Nordic Business Conference, Government of Iceland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 May 2019.
34. www.instagram.com/karlmennskan/.
35. @karlmennskan.

advocate. The campaign's goal is for men to share how the traditional conception of masculinity harmed them or those around them, by using the hashtag #karlmennskan and telling their stories. One objective of the campaign is to normalise men and boys expressing their feelings and emotions.

6. Case study: Spain

57. I went on a fact-finding mission to Madrid on 29-30 September 2022, where I had the opportunity to meet with Irene Montero, Minister for Equality, members of the Equality Committee at the Congress of Deputies and representatives of the government delegation against gender-based violence, of the Institute of Women, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of NGOs. It was an inspiring visit, during which we held exchanges on the Spanish strategy to prevent and combat gender-based violence, a priority for the Spanish Government.

58. The organic law of 2004 on combating gender-based violence takes a comprehensive approach, with a series of preventive measures (education, awareness-raising, health), assistance services, the establishment of specialised courts for cases of violence against women and a specialised service in the Prosecutor's office. This law focused on gender-based violence between intimate partners. Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, legislation was extended to cover all forms of violence included in the convention. Regions in Spain have their own laws on gender-based violence and some of them had aligned their legislation with the Istanbul Convention before it was done at national level. A State pact against gender-based violence was adopted in 2017 and provides an important level of funding for related programmes. A 24/7 freephone number (016) providing assistance has been available since 2017. This number was called more than one million times during 2021. A new strategy is currently being developed and will include the theme of new masculinities. I wish to stress that important changes came from tremendous social pressure among others after the "wolf pack" case.[36] In 2016, five young men raped a young woman. They bragged about it after on WhatsApp and shared pictures and videos. They were sentenced to 9 years to jail for sexual abuse, but not for rape, which sparked protests throughout Spain. At the time, the qualification of rape was only used if there had been violence. In 2022, Spain passed a law on sexual consent clearly indicating that only yes means yes. In November 2022, it became clear that this new law is being used by judges to lower the sentence of convicted perpetrators.[37]

59. The idea that men and boys should be involved was taken up by the authorities recently. The Ministry for Equality actively promotes the co-responsibility of women and men as carers. A video "el hombre blandengue" (soft man) shows Spanish men taking care of their children and being engaged for gender equality. Minister Montero stressed during our meeting that sharing the responsibility for the provision of care will contribute immensely to promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence. She also underlined that a feminist society free from violence, where care and wealth are equally distributed, would be better for everyone. She mentioned that more men wanted to live their masculinity in a different way and take care of children and dependants. We also discussed the importance of the provision of sex education for teenagers as a way to promote healthy relationships and prevent violence. Combating the denial of gender-based violence by anti-gender movements was highlighted as another priority.

60. Two parliamentarians members of the Equality Committee spoke about the importance of preventing violence against children and the need to extend data on gender-based violence to family courts dealing with divorce and guardianship. Representatives of the Government Delegation against gender-based violence stressed that training on preventing and combating gender-based violence to security forces and law-enforcement was a priority.

61. The municipality of Madrid has created "equality spaces" for discussion and training in its districts. Despite these encouragements, the director of the centre we visited regretted that the commitment of men to preventing and combating gender-based violence still remained quite passive in general. Dedicating a lot of attention to publicising events was essential to encourage men to participate.

62. In my view, the Spanish experience could be a source of inspiration for other countries. In Spain, some men have publicly spoken out about not wanting to be a stereotypical man, to be presented as macho and categorised as such. They claim the diversity of masculinities and talk openly about men's participation in care, for instance. Since 2006, men who are feminist and engaged in the fight against gender-based violence hold annual demonstrations in different Spanish cities on 21 October.

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36. Victoria Rosell, "The 'wolf pack' case showed the world how Spanish law is mired in misogyny", *The Guardian*, 26 June 2018.
37. Laurence Peter and Guy Hedgecoe, "Spain's new sex abuse law sparks jail terms row", *BBC*, 19 November 2022.

63. In Spain and in some other countries, there is a controversy in the feminist movement about the allocation of resources for programmes addressing men's role in the fight against gender-based violence. Resources allocated to women's rights organisations should not be reduced, but additional funding should be foreseen.

64. Most interlocutors spoke about the need to break the "gentlemen's agreement" about gender-based violence. As per this agreement, men do not contradict or react when other men are making sexist comments or are violent. My interlocutors called on men to react to stop the violence rather than remaining passive bystanders ("silence makes us co-responsible"). The association AHIGE was created to provide discussion spaces for men.

65. During our meeting, Miguel Lazaro, representing Masculinidades Bêta, underlined that there had been important changes in past years as women now no longer accepted certain types of behaviour from men. He stressed that all men should be outspoken against gender-based violence and take a stance in favour of equality policies. Some men might see themselves as victims and do not want to give up the privileges they have as men. Bystanders are not innocent if they do nothing about the violence. Politicians have an additional responsibility to speak against gender-based violence.

66. Interlocutors underlined the importance of creating specific public policies and programmes directed at men. Men should be involved in designing programmes directed at men.[38] Mr Lazaro also referred to the "man box" which is an important tool to show to men how they are stuck in the prison of stereotypes.[39] Another important element is the language used to talk about gender-based violence. Passive language is often used to stress that women have been victims of gender-based violence. One could work actively on involving men as allies through new language on masculinities, and highlight that men are responsible for preventing and stopping gender-based violence.

7. Recommended actions to address the responsibility of men in preventing and stopping gender-based violence against women and girls

67. Men should become more aware that they are part of the solution as well as being part of the problem. As fathers, brothers, family members, practitioners, law makers or teachers, to name a few, all men, in their diversity, hold a responsibility to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and girls. They can act at home, in the street, at school, university, in public transport or in a parliament. For too long, the fight against gender-based violence was led mainly by women, and an inclusive approach could be beneficial to all. I am of the opinion that the feminist discourse will be stronger with the participation of men and women in all their diversity.

68. We need to look at the construction of masculinity and boyhood and to all the injunctions imposed on men and boys. Sharing emotions, as an example, is neither masculine nor feminine but a human feeling. Men and women can both be in a "gender prison" and it is time to deconstruct gender-based stereotypes and let people be who they are. Men are not a homogeneous group and the different power situations should also be taken into account.

69. Working on gender equality education from a young age and throughout school years should be a priority. Education is one of the keys to long-lasting change and lays the foundations of a society free from violence.

70. Communicating on the costs of gender-based violence and on the negative impact of harmful masculinities on men and on society in general could also lead to social transformations. Activities directed at men and boys for the fight against gender-based violence should address them in their diversity. The rejection of harmful masculinities and promotion of mindful masculinities can be part of the public debate. Awareness-raising campaigns could be a useful contribution.

71. Working with perpetrators of gender-based violence against women and girls is very important as they could share their experience and inspire change. Developing programmes for perpetrators of gender-based violence is essential in the fight against gender-based violence and in order to ensure that the violence will not be repeated.

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38. "International comparison in masculinity policies, Executive Summary", Foundation CEPAIM, 2022.
39. "The man box".

72. Professionals welcoming and assisting survivors of gender-based violence should receive comprehensive training. According to Maxime Ruszniewski, not all men were similarly responsible in the prevention and fight against gender-based violence. Police officers and general practitioners are often men and the first persons women survivors of violence are in contact with.

73. It is crucial to have male role models who show that they share care responsibilities, that it is OK to show emotions, take care of children, and promote gender equality within the family and at work. Politicians need to speak up about their responsibility to prevent and combat gender-based violence.

74. Public administrations and private companies could also be more engaged in the fight against gender-based violence. Trainings on preventing and combating sexism and gender-based violence could be organised directly on the workplaces.

75. Without the involvement of men and their understanding of the importance of their involvement, there will be only limited progress in the fight for gender equality and against gender-based violence. Calling on men to participate in equality debates and to be more active for the promotion of gender equality, with positive messages showing that men can be allies and be part of the solution, could have concrete outcomes. Cinema, theatre, music, video clips and social networks could be used to change mentalities.

8. Conclusions

76. I sincerely hope we are at the beginning of a change of mindsets as we see more men questioning harmful masculinities and willing to embrace a mindful masculinity. I am hopeful when I see younger generations investing time in caring for their families and partners, and I count on these exceptions to become mainstream in the near future. There is indeed a strong connection between the involvement of men in unpaid care work and their personal commitment to the fight against gender-based violence.

77. I am also hopeful when I see the attention paid to exploring masculinities and the vulnerabilities of men in popular culture, such as in film and series, in addition to literature. Men are increasingly showing their vulnerabilities on screen, questioning their education and the role of their fathers in building up their masculinity. This could encourage some changes in real life. Popular culture can be a powerful means of changing mindsets.

78. While it has not been the main topic of this report, I am also interested in discussing the topic of masculinities and international relations and would encourage further work on this topic by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. Gender-based violence is undeniably a threat to democracy and I believe our committee could usefully discuss masculinities, conflict and their impact on women and girls.

79. Feminism and the fight for gender equality are beneficial for society as a whole. Men who are engaged in the fight against gender-based violence do not take space away from women. Their participation can be a positive contribution towards the general objective of keeping more women and girls safe from violence. Men and women, in all their diversity, can be allies in the fight against gender-based violence and join forces for the transformation of social norms.