

# 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls:

The Council of Europe's contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals





## UN 2030 AGENDA AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

On 1 January 2016, the World started implementing the “UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, an ambitious and universal vision, based on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, which are all integrated, indivisible and interlinked.

They apply universally to all and are highly relevant for the Council of Europe; countries are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 goals. Most, if not all, of the Council of Europe’s activities are relevant and contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

Recognising the intrinsic links between sustainable development and the protection of human rights, the Council of Europe is committed to working with and supporting its 47 member States in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda through a wide range of actions:

- ▶ providing States and other stakeholders with a platform to discuss achievements and to identify and address challenges in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda in Europe, including by supporting the development of benchmarks and indicators at national level to measure progress;
- ▶ promoting the implementation of European and global standards, in particular through changes to national legal frameworks and the adoption of integrated policies and other measures;
- ▶ providing guidance and support for the implementation of these standards, through recommendations, guidelines and resolutions of its various mechanisms and bodies;
- ▶ assisting in the collection of data, know-how, information and good practice for the promotion and review of progress towards the SDGs;
- ▶ promoting accountability and ascertaining States’ level of implementation and compliance through monitoring bodies and committees;
- ▶ funding co-operation projects and activities that contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs.

## UN 2030 AGENDA SDGS AND THEIR TARGETS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment is both a stand-alone goal – SDG 5 – and also an intrinsic part of all the other goals. It is recognised both as an enabler and an accelerator for the achievement of all the other SDGs.



## Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- 5.1:** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- 5.2:** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and in private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.3:** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.
- 5.4:** Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- 5.5:** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- 5.6:** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- 5.a** Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- 5.b** Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- 5.c** Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

The following goals and targets are also relevant for the achievement of gender equality:

- ▶ **Goal 1:** End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere
- ▶ **Goal 3:** Good Health and Wellbeing
- ▶ **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all
- ▶ **Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- ▶ **Goal 10:** Reduced inequalities
- ▶ **Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- ▶ **Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- ▶ **Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- ▶ **Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND GENDER EQUALITY

■ For the Council of Europe, the European Continent's leading human rights organisation, achieving gender equality is central to its core business: the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law, economic growth and sustainability.

■ The Council of Europe's comprehensive and extensive body of standards and work related to gender equality, as well as regular monitoring of the implementation of these standards by the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission and the Committee of Ministers, provide important input towards the efforts of the member States to achieve the UN SDGs.

■ From the 1980s onwards, the Council of Europe has played a major role in the development of norms and concepts such as parity democracy, gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming, that have been providing a new approach to gender equality, shaping its development in Europe and at global level. [Preventing and combating violence against women](#); [Combating gender stereotypes and sexism](#); [Guaranteeing the equal access of women to justice](#); [Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making](#); [Protecting the rights of migrant and asylum-seeking women](#); [Promoting gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures in the Council of Europe and the member States](#) are priority areas of the Council of Europe.

■ The Council of Europe publications and other practical tools such as factsheets, compilations of good practices, training manuals, handbooks, studies and research on priority strategic areas are a source of information, know-how and inspiration for States striving to adopt a holistic approach to achieve gender equality.

■ The Council of Europe has three **ground-breaking, unique and comprehensive conventions** in the area of **gender equality and human dignity** that are all of relevance to the SDGs:

1. [Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#).
2. [Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#).
3. [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#).

■ These conventions have a global outreach. They were drafted with the understanding that measures to address the global problems related to gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of children should not be limited to a particular geographic area. Their provisions inspire normative and policy changes in all regions of the world and all States can become parties to these conventions. For non-States parties, they provide a comprehensive blueprint for action at both global and national level. They provide platforms for international co-operation, review and exchange of experiences, and offer unique guidance in the design of national policies and legislation. Through them, the Council of Europe and its member States can support and contribute to the implementation of Goal 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and Goal 16 ("Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels").

■ The Council of Europe's work and activities, including on socio-economic issues through the European Social Charter and on education policies, link directly with Goals 1, 4, 8 and 10.

■ The 14 indicators agreed upon at the UN-level to measure the implementation of the nine targets included in Goal 5 (gender equality) cover priority areas of the Council of Europe

work to achieve gender equality. The Council of Europe's gender equality strategic documents directly address many of the targets of Goal 5, including the fight against gender inequality and all forms of violence against women; the promotion of the full and effective participation of women in society; the need to guarantee equal access of women to justice, the fight against gender stereotypes; and the need to work in partnerships.

■ Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) is also relevant to the Council of Europe's work on gender equality as it refers to providing "access to justice for all". The Council of Europe addresses this through its work to guarantee women's equal access to justice. Furthermore, Goal 16 includes targets to reduce physical, psychological and sexual violence and related deaths, and to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against girls and boys – areas covered by Council of Europe conventions and addressed through activities and co-operation with the 47 member States and the South-Mediterranean countries.

## EXAMPLES OF RELEVANT FRAMEWORKS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



### Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls

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The overall goal of the [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#) is to achieve the effective realisation of gender equality, to empower women and men in the Council of Europe member States, by supporting the implementation of existing instruments and strengthening the Council of Europe *acquis* in the field of gender equality. It follows a dual-track approach including:

1. specific policies and actions, including positive action when appropriate, in critical areas for the advancement of women and for the realisation of *de facto* gender equality, and
2. the promotion, co-ordination, monitoring, review, co-ordination and evaluation of the process of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, whereby gender mainstreaming refers to the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making.

The [Gender Equality Commission](#) guides the implementation of the strategy. The Council of Europe is playing a leading role in setting standards, promoting legislative and policy measures and practical tools to advance the gender equality agenda and prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. Progress towards the implementation of Council of Europe legally-binding and non-binding standards listed below provides a sound basis to measure progress in the member States towards the achievement of the SDGs.

The [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (Istanbul Convention) is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. It requires States to condemn all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including girls under the age of 18, and to take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent it. It also requires States to take steps to include teaching materials on matters of gender equality (Article 14(1)). Follow-up on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention is ensured by its monitoring bodies, the [Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (GREVIO) and the Committee of the Parties.

The [Convention on action against trafficking in human beings](#) aims at preventing and combating trafficking in women, men and children for the purpose of sexual, labour or other types of exploitation, as well as at protecting the victims and prosecuting traffickers. It includes a non-discrimination provision in Article 3, and the obligation for parties to promote gender equality and use gender mainstreaming in the development, implementation and assessment of measures to implement the convention. The convention set up an independent monitoring mechanism to assess how its provisions are put into practice by States parties. This monitoring mechanism consists of two pillars: the independent [Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties.

The [Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#) (Lanzarote Convention) is the first treaty to criminalise all forms of sexual offences against children. The convention notably criminalises engaging in sexual activities with a child, child prostitution, child pornography, the solicitation of children for sexual purposes (“grooming”) and “sex tourism”. The Lanzarote Convention establishes that individuals can be prosecuted for certain offences even when the act is committed abroad. Preventive measures outlined in the convention include the screening, recruitment and training of people working in contact with children, making children aware of the risks and teaching them to protect themselves, as well as monitoring measures for offenders and potential offenders. The Committee of the Parties to the convention ([Lanzarote Committee](#)) is the body established to monitor its implementation.

## Other standards and mechanisms

[Recommendation No. R\(79\)10](#) on women migrants

[Recommendation No. R\(85\)2](#) on legal protection against sex discrimination

[Recommendation No. R\(90\)4](#) on the elimination of sexism from language

[Recommendation No. R\(96\)51](#) on reconciling work and family life

[Recommendation No. R\(98\)14](#) on gender mainstreaming

[Recommendation Rec\(2002\)5](#) on the Protection of Women against Violence

[Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3](#) on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

[Recommendation Rec\(2007\)13](#) on gender mainstreaming in education. The [compilation of good practices](#) shows how to promote an education free from gender stereotypes and identifies ways to implement the measures which are included in the recommendation. The factsheet [“Combating gender stereotypes and sexism in and through education”](#) is a useful tool to measure progress based on standards and benchmarks in this area.

[Recommendation Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms

[Recommendation Rec\(2008\)1](#) on the inclusion of gender differences in health policies

[Recommendation Rec \(2010\)10](#) on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building

[Recommendation Rec \(2012\)6](#) on the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities

[Recommendation Rec \(2013\)1](#) on gender equality and media and a [handbook](#) to help member States with its implementation

[Recommendation Rec \(2015\)2](#) on gender mainstreaming in sport

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)9](#) on gender equality in the audiovisual sector

## Studies, research and practical tools

- ▶ A collection of papers on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- ▶ The study on Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services.
- ▶ The CSW 57 Agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls uphold the holistic response of the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention and the CEDAW framework.
- ▶ An Overview of studies on the costs of violence against women and domestic violence.
- ▶ The Amnesty International and Council of Europe [guide on the Istanbul Convention as a tool to end female genital mutilation](#) and the Steering Committee for Human Rights Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage (FM) provide a strategic guide to the principles, features and characteristics of an integrated response in preventing, combating and addressing FGM and FM. They also outline promising initiatives to end FGM and FM. FGM is also considered a form of torture under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and thus subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.



## Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The right to life is protected under Article 2 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#), while freedom from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment is encompassed by Article 3. Access to justice is a human right and an integral element of promoting the rule of law. Respect for and protection of human rights can only be guaranteed by the availability of effective remedies, adequate reparation and/or compensation. While accessing justice may be difficult for everyone, it is even more so for women due to gender inequality in society and in the justice system. There are a multitude of obstacles: taboos, prejudices, gender stereotypes, customs, ignorance and sometimes even the laws themselves. The Council of Europe is working to address the gender imbalance in the justice system as equal access to justice is fundamental to ensuring the equality of women and men, not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. Some of the studies, research, good practice and other tools by the Council of Europe include:

- ▶ [factsheet on guaranteeing equal access of women to justice](#);
- ▶ [compilation of case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on gender equality issues](#);
- ▶ [factsheet of the European Court of Human Rights on case-law related to gender equality](#);
- ▶ [equal access to justice in the case-law on violence against women before the European Court of Human Rights](#);
- ▶ [compilation of good practices from member States to reduce existing obstacles and facilitate women's access to justice](#);
- ▶ [training manual for judges and prosecutors on ensuring women's access to justice](#);
- ▶ [HELP online course on violence against women and domestic violence](#).



[www.coe.int/equality](http://www.coe.int/equality)  
[www.coe.int/violence](http://www.coe.int/violence)  
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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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