
As prepared

**Institutional gender equality mechanisms
in the Council of Europe Member States
Speaking Points for the Chairperson of the Council of Europe
Gender Equality Commission, Mr.Sergiy Kyslytsya**

**Gender Equality Review Conference on the implementation of OSCE gender
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- Awareness of the role and importance of national mechanisms for equality between women and men has been a constant **in the context of the Council of Europe work and activities to achieve *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality**. The first study on the matter was published as early as 1982.
- The need for effective national machinery was further highlighted at the **2nd European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men here in Vienna in 1989**. The Ministers recommended that Governments of Council of Europe member states should establish or strengthen national machinery for the promotion of gender equality, according it the necessary powers and resources.
- In 2001, as part of its work and activities to support member states achieve gender equality, the Council of Europe published a **“Handbook on National Machinery to Promote Gender Equality and Action Plans – Guidelines for establishing and implementing National Machinery to promote equality, with examples of good practice”**.
- At the **3rd Council of Europe Summit (Warsaw, May 2005)**, the Heads of State and Government of member states confirmed their political commitment to achieving real equality between women and men in all spheres of society and undertook to "strengthen gender mainstreaming in national policies, elaborate guidelines and methods for further progress in equality between women and men, **promote the setting up of national equality mechanisms**, and enhance the implementation of the United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action".
- **The Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2007)17** to the member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms requests governments to take, or reinforce, measures to implement gender equality in practice, taking into account existing principles and standards. The recommendation can be considered as a checklist to assess progress made in the achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality.
- It is a comprehensive text containing: general standards on gender equality; standards on specific issues and strategies, mechanisms and tools to achieve gender equality.
- The Recommendation highlights the fact that there are **no ideal or fixed models of institutional mechanisms** within government structures valid for all countries. Economic, social, cultural and political realities differ and institutional mechanisms must fit into the national context.

- The Recommendation includes **a list of basic requirements for the creation, reinforcement or effective functioning of institutional mechanisms/national machinery for GE** such as:
 - **full implementation of the strategic objectives and actions** in particular regarding institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;
 - **gender equality mechanisms** should be set up at **the highest political level**;
 - **institutional mechanisms** should have the **necessary authority, visibility, political recognition, necessary funding and human resources**, and that their **action is fully supported by political power** at the different levels of its exercise;
 - the **mandate of institutional mechanisms** should have a **clear legal basis with well-defined functions and responsibilities**;
 - **institutional mechanisms** should develop **gender expertise** as well as **training on gender equality**;
 - **resources for the core operational costs of institutional mechanisms** – staff, facilities, regular functioning of the institution – are the **sole responsibility of the state**;
 - **institutional mechanisms** should **establish formal and informal links of co-operation with other public institutions and administrations** and a **wide range of civil society organisations** as well as with **international and European organisations** pursuing gender equality objectives;
 - **mechanisms for gender equality** should be **established at parliamentary level**, as well as independent agencies and other bodies, such as ombudspersons.
- During the 2010 Baku Ministerial Conference “Taking up the challenge of the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality” Ministers agreed on the **strategies for achieving gender equality**. They recommended governments, parliaments and all institutions and groups concerned, in particular **national gender equality mechanisms**, NGOs and other representatives of civil society to implement them, including through:
 - Removal from national legislation of all discriminatory provisions that run counter to equality between women and men and **setting-up the necessary mechanisms to implement and monitor the implementation of this legislation** in line with the standards set by the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender equality standards and mechanisms.
- The Council of Europe Study “**National machinery, actions plans and gender mainstreaming in the Council of Europe member states since the 4th World Conference on Women** (Beijing, 1995)”, was published in 2010¹. It analyses developments in the member states and highlights some of the key findings, notably:

¹ [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/standards-mechanisms/EG\(2009\)2_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/standards-mechanisms/EG(2009)2_en.pdf).

- The **positive influence of the Beijing Conference** on equality policies in CoE member States resulting in **increased political importance** given to equality between women and men, leading to the setting up of bodies/institutions in those countries where no machinery existed at that time.
- It notes however that the **political momentum did not always result in meaningful and active policies** to promote gender equality. Most countries complained about the **lack of adequate financial and human resources** to make national machineries function properly.
- Other problems include **unclear mandates, limited authority and a marginalised position in the government** structure, which results in little influence.
- A **decentralisation trend** was observed regarding the location of the national institutional machinery: Federal, regional and local bodies to promote equality have been set up and sometimes they function independently from the central power. Decentralisation is also clear at the central level, as focal points for equality have been created in various ministries to deal with the integration of issues related to equality in their fields.
- In the past, equality machineries were mainly preoccupied with redressing the status of women, while **their mandate has broadened to take into account men's concerns**. This is recognition of the fact that equality cannot be achieved only by giving women legal rights, as it is above all a question of the social relations between women and men.
- With regard to **gender mainstreaming, progress is slow**, even if there is increasing interest from the member States to adopt methodologies for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming. It is **not yet understood** everywhere what gender mainstreaming means, and it is still mixed up with specific equality policies. Experience shows, that even the most committed member States, are finding it difficult to achieve gender mainstreaming.

On a concluding remark:

- Standards and guidelines on institutional gender equality mechanisms have been developed at international, regional level and national level. Good practices are available throughout the member states at both European and international level. However, **implementation in practice, efficient setting up and functioning of gender equality mechanisms remains a challenge**. Pooling resources and expertise, strengthening cooperation and synergies between international and regional organisations and working closely with the member states remain a **priority**. The Council of Europe is seeking to achieve this through the work and activities of its Transversal Programme on Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Strategy which has gender mainstreaming as one of its five objectives. In meeting the Strategy objectives, we look forward to continued successful cooperation with the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention!