



CoE's work on gender equality: an overview

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Gender equality at the Council of Europe

- ✓ Equality between women and men has been an **important area** for the CoE for a long time
 - ✓ CM Recommendations since 1979
 - ✓ Conventions (VaW, THB)
 - ✓ Gender Equality Strategies: 2014-2017 and current one: 2018-2023
- ✓ **Legal status** of women in Europe has greatly **improved**, but **no de facto equality** between women and men (*no country on Earth*)



• **Key points on gender equality and VaW:**

- **Root causes of violence against women and girls** : gender inequality (discrimination, gender stereotypes, sexism)
- **CoE tools** to prevent and combat violence against women and girls and promote GE: GE Strategy, CoE Conventions, Recommendations, gender mainstreaming tools, courses, awareness-raising materials, co-operation activities, studies...
- **Opportunities and challenges** to make further progress (political will, legal commitments, social demand, CoE support vs. “backlash “, populism, misogyny, attacks on the IC, sexist hate speech, specific “online challenges” ...)
- Until/unless we have **gender equality**, we will have violence against women and girls(online and offline)
- A **double approach is needed** to achieve gender equality and combat VaW: specific and targeted actions + budgets **PLUS** a gender mainstreaming approach in all policies and measures

CoE Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

Six strategic objectives :

1. Combat **gender stereotypes and sexism**;
2. Preventing and combating **violence against women**;
3. Guaranteeing women's **equal access to justice**;
4. Achieve balanced **participation in political and public decision-making**;
5. Protect the rights of **migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls**
6. Achieve **gender mainstreaming** in all policies and measures.

Gender equality standards of the Council of Europe

- ✓ **European Convention on Human Rights:** Art. 1, 14 and Protocol 12 (no discrimination) + case-law of the European Court of Human Rights
- ✓ **Istanbul Convention** to prevent+ combat **violence against women** and **domestic violence**
- ✓ **Convention on Action against Human Trafficking**
- ✓ **European Social Charter**
- ✓ **CM Recommendations** (adopted since 1979) on many topics: education, media, sexist language, sport, education, political participation, audio-visual policy, health...

The 2019 Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism

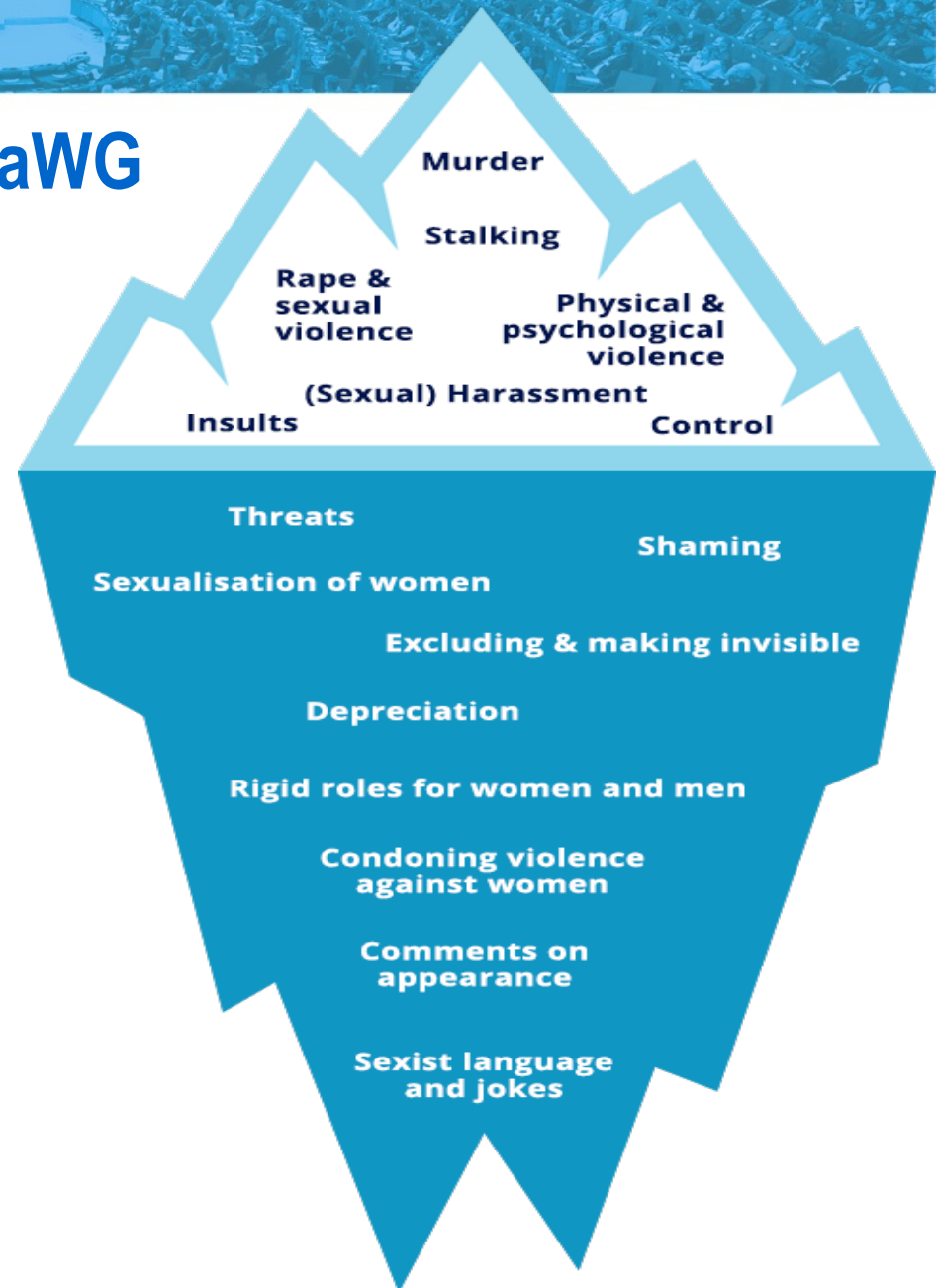
- Stemmed from work under the first Gender Equality Strategy of the CoE (2014-2017) on hate speech
- Adopted by the Committee of Ministers in **March 2019**
- Includes the **first ever internationally agreed definition of “sexism”**
- Recommends member states to:
 - Take measures to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in the public and private spheres
 - Monitor progress in implementing its guidelines and to inform the CoE’s Gender Equality Commission
 - Ensure that the Recommendation is translated and disseminated

The 2019 Recommendation on sexism

- ✓ Puts forward a common understanding of concepts & helps to identify sexist behaviours
 - Ex: Mansplaining, silencing behaviour, « benevolent » sexism
- ✓ Proposes concrete measures to prevent and eliminate it (Guidelines in an Appendix covering 9 sectors)
- ✓ Larger and different impact on women than men
- ✓ Identification of particularly vulnerable groups of women
- ✓ Intersectional approach

Links between sexism and VaWG

- ✓ Movements such as **#metoo** have heightened the awareness on sexism
- ✓ The negative impact of **gender stereotypes**
- ✓ Widespread and prevalent in **all sectors** and **all societies**
- ✓ Feeds the **continuum** of violence



Violence against Women

- **Istanbul Convention** of the Council of Europe:
 - VaW is a **violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women** (and girls under 18)
 - all acts of **GBV** resulting in physical/sexual/psychological/economic harm or suffering to women
 - **Including threats** of such acts, **coercion** or arbitrary deprivation of liberty
 - Ocurring in **public or in private life** (online: stalking)
 - **10th anniversary** of signature: 11 May -33 P. /12 s.
 - **GREVIO's** work: 17 evaluation reports published (7 underway + first Gral. Rec. on the digital dimension of VaW - *under preparation in 2021*)

Sexism

- ***“Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of:***
 - *i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or*
 - *ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or*
 - *iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or*
 - *iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or*
 - *v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.”*

9 topics included in the CoE Recommendation:

- Language and communications
- Internet, social media and online sexist hate speech
- Media, advertising and other communication products and services
- Workplace
- Public sector (public services, elected assemblies)
- Justice sector
- **Education**
- Culture and sport
- Private sphere

Education institutions

(section II.G of the Guidelines included in the Appendix of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1)

- Sexist messages shape our society and are imbued with and reproduced by education systems, where they should be challenged.
- Children and young people assimilate gender stereotypes through curricula/teaching materials/behaviour/language.
- Embedded forms of sexism may influence subsequent education, career and lifestyle choices.
- States also bear responsibility for ensuring the accountability of private institutions for their actions, and there should be no exclusions for religious education institutions.

- Recommended measures in the 2019 Rec.:
 - Fully implement the provisions of CM/Rec(2007)13 on **gender mainstreaming in education (59 measures)**
 - Ensure the **inclusion of GE and non-discrimination** and the elimination of sexism and sexist behaviour throughout all aspects of the educational process
 - Implement and/or support **prevention campaigns** regarding sexism and sexist behaviour in education establishments - **ensure zero tolerance** for such phenomena: gender stereotyping and (cyber-)bullying, sexist insults and gender-based violence
 - Integrate a gender equality perspective in all aspects of **teacher preservice and in-service training** courses
 - Specific measures re. **teaching methodology, tools and curricula**

CoE tools to prevent and combat sexism

CoE campaign « *See it. Name it. Stop it* »

- An action page: www.coe.int/stop-sexism (*available in 21 languages*)
 - A video « *sexism exists everywhere* » (*in 20 languages, with subtitles and/or dubbed*)
 - A quiz – take it to check your level of awareness about sexism! ;-)
- A new brochure explaining the content of the 2019 Recommendation in accessible terms
- CoE webpage with info on combating sexism
- The CM Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism is now available in 27 languages

Some conclusions

- ✓ **Progress remains slow**
 - *“sexism remains widespread and prevalent in all sectors and all societies”*
 - *“sexism and sexist behaviour are rooted in and reinforce gender stereotypes”*
 - *“sexism is linked to VaWG, acts of “everyday” sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating intimidation, fear..”*
- ✓ Gap between gender equality standards and their implementation in practice - **more action is needed**
- ✓ Gender equality requires a **holistic approach**, addressing inter-connected issues/sectors: education/media/law enforcement, justice...

Some conclusions (cont.)

- ✓ Importance of **training and awareness-raising** to **prevent and combat stereotypes/sexism/VaW**
- ✓ **Some national-level initiatives against sexism** (but this remains limited) and many more **against VaW**
- ✓ **Growing threats to women's human rights:** populist governments, extreme conservatism, attacks on women's rights defenders, all aimed at pushing an "anti-gender equality agenda" to backtrack on past achievements and existing rights + **attacks on the IC...**
- ✓ We need to continue making progress, and **work together (more and better)** to make gender equality a reality across Europe and beyond

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<https://www.coe.int/equality>

<https://www.coe.int/stop-sexism>

