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Gender equality matters!

Understanding and integrating gender equality in intercultural youth activities of the Council of Europe and its partners

1 – 3 June, Strasbourg

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS
Deadline to apply: 25 April 2016

Context and purpose

Gender is defined in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the “Istanbul Convention”) as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”.

For the Council of Europe, gender equality is a principle of human rights and a requirement for the achievement of social justice and a *sine qua non* of democracy¹. The Council of Europe has worked in the field of gender equality and set a solid legal and policy framework that can support member states in achieving *de facto* gender equality. The work of the Council of Europe has focused on several aspects and levels. Firstly, the aim of the Council of Europe has been to change mentalities and attitudes, by combating gender stereotypes, sexism and violence against women. Secondly, a key objective has been to promote balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and encourage the integration of a gender perspective into all programmes and policies.

Another aspects of the work on gender equality has been setting standards, and this includes today two legal treaties: the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (“Istanbul Convention”).

The current work for gender equality of the Council of Europe is based on a Gender Equality Strategy (2014-2017), which guides the activities of the Organisation. The overall goal of the Strategy is to achieve the advancement and empowering of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in the Council of Europe member states through activities around five strategic objectives. For our purpose, it is essential to recall objectives 5, achieving Gender Mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

In parallel, the work of the Council of Europe has also developed standards and mechanisms which seek to promote and ensure respect for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. A landmark in this respect is the Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the youth sector of the Council of Europe, working with young people on issues relating to gender and gender equality, understood as the equality of all genders, is a central part of human rights education, defined as educational programmes and activities that focus on promoting equality in human dignity. The Youth Department works with youth organisations, associations, networks and public institutions active in youth policy to make human rights education a central aspect of European youth work and citizenship. The themes of recent study sessions include a variety of gender related issues, such as the social exclusion of LGBTQ young people and homelessness (2015, in co-operation with IGLYO), understanding and countering multiple discrimination faced by young people with disabilities in Europe (2014, in co-operation with ENIL youth), empowerment of young Roma

¹ Source: Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms.

women (2014, in co-operation with the Forum of European Roma Young People - FERYP), human rights education as a tool to prevent gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence (2014, in co-operation with the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Cross-Cultural Dialogue) etc. Several study sessions in 2016 will analyse gender-related themes.

The Youth Department, particularly through the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and the European Youth Foundation, has acquired a widely recognised expertise for developing and implementing educational approaches, activities and resources that can be adapted to both formal and non-formal educational settings, as well as across different social and cultural realities in Europe. The Youth Department held numerous activities addressing issues surrounding gender equality and involving young people in the prevention of gender-based violence. Beyond programmes whose *topics* were gender-related, in all its programmes and educational activities, the educational team makes *practical considerations* on ensuring gender equality.

In its educational manuals on human rights, in *Compass* and specifically in its manual on gender-based violence affecting young people - *Gender Matters* - the Youth Department has sought to provide educators with tools to address gender and gender equality in activities with young people.

Moreover, through its youth policy, the Youth Department supports the inclusion of gender equality among the themes that youth policy and youth work need to consider. In its Agenda 2020, the aim of the Council of Europe's youth policy is indicated as "to provide young people – girls and boys, young women and young men – with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society". Within its section on "human rights and democracy", the Agenda 2020 states as one priority area for youth policy "effectively implementing gender equality and preventing all forms of gender-based violence". Another example is the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights](#) which affirms the need for member States to develop gender-sensitive approaches in the elaboration of youth policies in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and provide support for the capacity building and equal participation of young women and young men.

As part of its campaign No Hate Speech Movement, the Youth Department, in co-operation with the Gender Equality Unit, organised in February 2016 a seminar on combating sexist hate speech. Inputs and issues raised during the seminar will be considered further in the campaign and present valuable reflections to take into account in future work around gender equality.

As the debate and policy perspectives on gender equality are developing, the time has come for the Youth Department to examine its current activities and to explore the following aspects related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming:

- What should gender equality and gender mainstreaming mean in youth policy and specifically in intercultural youth activities today?

- How should gender equality be promoted in youth activities, conceptually, educationally and practically?
- Are the mechanisms in place fit to mainstream gender equality in youth activities?
- What new or revised tools are needed for furthering and ensuring gender equality in youth activities?

The seminar to be organised in June 2016 will explore these matters with the main stakeholders of the Youth Department, youth organisations, governmental representatives, trainers and youth work practitioners.

The seminar will be an opportunity to strengthen synergies between the Youth Department and other sectors concerned in the Council of Europe, particularly the Gender Equality Unit and the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (Department of Human Dignity and Equality).

Aims and objectives

The seminar will contribute to further mainstreaming gender equality in the activities and policies of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and its partners.

The seminar has the following objectives:

1. To explore the meanings of gender equality in intercultural non-formal education youth activities, within the context of the gender equality policies of the Council of Europe.
2. To review how current practices from the activities of the Youth Department apply gender equality and gender mainstreaming concerns and identify possible gaps.
3. To propose guidelines for the conceptual, educational and practical implications of promoting gender equality in the activities of the Youth Department and its partners.
4. To identify additional measures for promoting gender equality in the policies and activities of the Youth Department and its partners.

Call for participants

The seminar will bring together some 30 participants:

- a) representatives of youth organisations holding activities in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- b) policy makers and practitioners involved in youth policies, gender related policies and youth work with experience and interest in exploring the themes of the seminar
- c) representatives from the Advisory Council on Youth and the European Steering Committee on Youth
- d) trainers and experts involved in the activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

All participants should:

- Be active and have some experience in youth activities and youth policy, particularly, but not exclusively in the activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.
- Have a good understanding of gender and gender equality matters, particularly in educational activities.
- Be motivated and committed to contribute to the seminar and its outcomes.

- Be able to work in English.
- Be available for the whole duration of the seminar.

Application procedure and deadlines

All interested candidate must apply online, completing the application form through this link: <http://youthapplications.coe.int/Application-forms>

The application must be submitted **by 25 April 2015, at midnight Central European Time.**

Practical and financial conditions

Timetable

The conference will begin at 09:00 on the 1 June 2016 and finish on the 3 June 2016 at 17.00. Selected participants should arrange their travel in order to arrive at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg on the 31 May and leave either on 3 June 2016, after 17.00 or on 4 June.

Venue and accommodation

The conference will take place at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. Accommodation and meals will be provided by the Council of Europe.

Travel and subsistence expenses

Travel expenses to and from Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe.

Working language

The working language will be English.

Visas

Visa costs will be reimbursed by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe secretariat will issue invitation letter that should facilitate the delivery of visas to attend the conference.

Further information

For further information about the seminar, please contact Mara Georgescu, mara.georgescu@coe.int