

Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media¹

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 July 2013
at the 1176th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

Gender equality is an indispensable condition for the full enjoyment of human rights. The enjoyment of the rights as granted by the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and in its protocols shall be safeguarded without any discrimination, including on grounds of sex. This requirement is strengthened by Protocol No. 12 to the Convention (ETS No. 177), which guarantees the enjoyment of any right recognised by law without discrimination.

Genuine democracy requires the equal participation of women and men in society. Democracy and gender equality are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The inclusion of women and men, with respect for equal rights and opportunities, is an essential condition for democratic governance and sound decision making. Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public life, including the media. The achievement of gender equality is a prerequisite for the achievement of social justice. This is not of interest to women only, but it concerns society as a whole. The Council of Europe has accorded much importance to these matters over the last few decades, demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the 1988 Committee of Ministers' Declaration on equality of women and men and by the 2009 Committee of Ministers' Declaration on making gender equality a reality.

Media freedom (including editorial freedom) and gender equality are intrinsically inter-related. Gender equality is an integral part of human rights. Freedom of expression, as a fundamental right, goes hand-in-hand with gender equality. Furthermore, the exercise of freedom of expression can advance gender equality.

There is a gender dimension to media pluralism and diversity of media content. The Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)2](#) on media pluralism and diversity of media content reaffirms that pluralism and diversity are essential for the functioning of a democratic society, for fostering public debate, political pluralism and awareness of diverse opinions by different groups in society. The media are centrally placed to shape society's perceptions, ideas, attitudes and behaviour. They should reflect the reality of women and men, in all their diversity.

The media can either hinder or hasten structural change towards gender equality. Inequalities in society are reproduced in the media. This is true in respect of women's under-representation in media ownership, in information production and journalism, in newsrooms and management posts. It is even more blatant as regards women's low visibility, both in terms of quality and quantity, in media content, the rare use of women as experts and the relative absence of women's viewpoints and opinions in the media. Media coverage of political events and election campaigns is particularly telling in this respect, as are the persistence of sexist stereotypes and the scarcity of counter-stereotypes. Furthermore, women, as media professionals, often encounter pay inequalities, the "glass ceiling" and precarious conditions of employment.

Media in modern societies hold an immense potential for social change. The potential of media to promote and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and to contribute to their

advancement was acknowledged at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). Ten years later, the UN Commission on the Status of Women recognised that the objectives agreed there had not been fully achieved. To facilitate the implementation of these objectives, in December 2012 UNESCO published the useful "Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media" (GSIM).

Public service media are to be the vanguard of the modern media system and have to serve all communities in society. This calls for particular attention to gender equality both in terms of participation and access to public service media as well as content and the manner in which it is treated and presented. Public service media is, or should be, a reference for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, and has an important role in furthering gender equality within the media and through the media. There is also a considerable potential for community media to promote open and direct dialogue between all social groups, including via digital platforms (see the Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)3](#) on the remit of public service media in the information society, the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue adopted on 11 February 2009, and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)1](#) on public service media governance, adopted on 15 February 2012).

Measures for the effective implementation of the standards adopted can contribute to gender equality and combat inequality. In its Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)17](#) on gender equality standards and mechanisms, the Committee of Ministers underlined that States should encourage effective measures to ensure that gender equality, as a principle of human rights, is respected in the media, in accordance with the social responsibility that is linked to the power they hold in modern societies. In its 2009 Declaration on making gender equality a reality, the Committee of Ministers called for measures to encourage media professionals, and the communication sector generally, to convey a non-stereotyped image of women and men. The gender perspective is emphasised in many instruments of the Council of Europe and is particularly accentuated in relation to the new media ecosystem in Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2011\)7](#) on a new notion of media.

In view of the above, and recognising the need to provide a gender equality perspective while implementing its established standards in the field of media, the Committee of Ministers – under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe – recommends that the governments of member States:

1. adopt adequate policies in line with the appended guidelines which can create the appropriate conditions under which the media can promote gender equality as a fundamental principle of their activities and institutional organisation in the new multidimensional media environment;
2. widely disseminate this recommendation and its guidelines and raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders and the media, in particular about the central role of gender equality for democracy and the full enjoyment of human rights;
3. bring the recommendation to the attention of the media sector, journalists and other actors and their respective organisations, as well as the regulatory authorities for the media and new communications and information services for the preparation or revision of their regulatory and self-regulatory strategies and codes of conduct, in conformity with the guidelines below.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1

Guidelines

A. Member States

1. Unless already in place, member States should adopt an appropriate legal framework intended to ensure that there is respect for the principle of human dignity and the prohibition of all discrimination on grounds of sex, as well as of incitement to hatred and to any form of gender-based violence within the media.
2. Member States should particularly ensure, through appropriate means, that media regulators respect gender equality principles in their decision making and practice.
3. Member States should support awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns on combating gender stereotypes in the media.

B. Media organisations

4. Media organisations should be encouraged to adopt self-regulatory measures, internal codes of conduct/ethics and internal supervision, and develop standards in media coverage that promotes gender equality, in order to promote a consistent internal policy and working conditions aimed at:
 - equal access to, and representation in, media work for women and men, including in the areas where women are underrepresented;
 - a balanced participation of women and men in management posts, in bodies with an advisory, regulatory or internal supervisory role, and generally in the decision-making process;
 - a non-stereotyped image, role and visibility of women and men, avoidance of sexist advertising, language and content which could lead to discrimination on grounds of sex, incitement to hatred and gender-based violence.

C. Measures for implementation

5. The following mechanisms for the implementation of strategies and policies to achieve gender equality goals in the media should be considered:

Review and evaluation of gender equality policy and legislation

- i. Review and update the legal framework on media from a gender equality perspective on a regular basis.
- ii. Mandate media regulators and require the public service media to include an assessment of the implementation of gender equality policy in the media in their annual reports.

Adoption and implementation of national indicators for gender equality in the media

iii. Discuss with relevant stakeholders the opportunity for and adoption of, if appropriate, national indicators based on international standards and good practices; holding public hearings and discussions in connection with this.

iv. Carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of the situation of gender equality in the media at national level, based on the adopted indicators.

v. Update gender equality indicators regularly.

Provision of information and promotion of good practices

vi. Encourage the media to provide information to the public in a clear way (e.g. online) on the complaints procedure in relation to media content which they consider contrary to the principles of gender equality.

vii. Support and promote good practices through the development of networks and partnerships between various media outlets to further gender equality in the various activity areas of the new media ecosystem.

Accountability channels

viii. Encourage non-governmental organisations, media associations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to consistently defend gender equality by bringing their concerns to self-regulatory bodies or other specialised bodies (e.g. press councils, ethical commissions, advertising councils, anti-discrimination commissions).

ix. Encourage the updating of existing media accountability mechanisms and their effective use in cases of violation of gender equality in the media.

x. Encourage the establishment of new mechanisms for media accountability and civic responsibility, for example, fora for public debate and platforms opened online and offline, making direct exchanges possible between citizens.

Research and publication

xi. Promote active research into the issues of gender equality and media, particularly relating to media access, representation, participation (quantitative and qualitative profile) and working conditions in the media; research focused not only on women, but also on the relationship between genders; regularly publicising the outcomes of such projects.

xii. Promote active research from a gender equality perspective on media coverage of certain areas of particular concern in a pluralist democracy, such as reporting on politics and media coverage of election campaigns and publishing the results; organising discussions with a view to improving policy and legislation.

xiii. Promote research on the impact of the media in the shaping of values, attitudes, needs and interests of women and men.

Media literacy and active citizenship

xiv. Promote gender sensitive media literacy for the young generation, prepare young people to approach different forms of media content responsibly and enable them to acquire a critical view of media representations of gender and to decode sexist stereotypes; enhance the gender equality perspective in the media literacy programmes for young people of different ages as a factor for broad human rights education and active involvement in the democratic processes.

xv. Develop specific awareness-raising tools through and about the media for adults, including parents and teachers, as important factors for developing gender education and active citizenship in the information society.

xvi. Raise the awareness and strengthening the capacities of media professionals and media students by offering regular educational and vocational training programmes geared to the acquisition of in-depth knowledge of gender equality and its crucial role in a democratic society.

Reference instruments

Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe

Recommendation [Rec\(84\)17](#) on equality between women and men in the media

Recommendation [Rec\(90\)4](#) on the elimination of sexism from language

Recommendation [Rec\(98\)14](#) on gender mainstreaming

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

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)2](#) on media pluralism and diversity of media content

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)3](#) on the remit of public service media in the information society

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)11](#) on promoting freedom of expression and information in the new information and communications environment

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)13](#) on gender mainstreaming in education

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)16](#) on measures to promote the public service value of the Internet

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

Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, adopted on 11 February 2009

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2011\)7](#) on a new notion of media

Declaration and Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 on public service media governance, adopted on 15 February 2012

Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe

Resolution 1557 (2007) and Recommendation 1799 (2007) on the “Image of women in advertising”

Recommendation 1555 (2002) on the “Image of women in the media”

Resolution 1751 (2010) and Recommendation 1931 (2010) on “Combating sexist stereotypes in the media”

Recommendation 1899 (2010) on “Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system”

Resolution 1860 (2012) on “Advancing women's rights worldwide”

¹ The term “media” in this recommendation refers to the terminology of Recommendation CM/Rec (2011)7 on a new notion of media, adopted on 21 September 2011.