



# THESSISMUN

## 2018

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

**Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

*Topic area B: Promoting gender equality and  
combating stereotypes through educational  
policies.*



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## *Topic Area B: Promoting gender equality and combating stereotypes through educational policies.*

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## 1. Welcoming Letter by the Board Members

Distinguished Ministers,

We warmly welcome you to ThessISMUN 2018. We, the Board of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, will be your supervisors and assistants, while you, the Ministers of the Council, will designate this year's outcome. Every one of you is a unique and vital part of the Council and we expect you to surprise us with your diplomatic skills and abilities. In order to ensure best experience possible, we will provide you with some necessary guidelines.

The present Study Guide will contribute to making your preparation more efficient until we proceed with our sessions. However, we strongly encourage you to conduct your own research prior to the conference. We would like to point out that it is your duty to be aware of the policy of your country regarding both agenda items. The topics that will be discussed are of great importance, and they constitute a priority for the international community. This means that you need to study in-depth the issues so that you can prepare yourself for a fruitful debate.

In order to ensure Council's success, it is crucial for every minister to participate prior and during the sessions, while we will always remain at your disposal for any possible inquiry. Do not hesitate to contact us and we will willingly assist you regarding every query you may have. Last but not least, we need to remind you that punctuality is an essential requirement so as to fulfill your diplomatic duties. We hope that you will respect the deadlines posed. Once again, we welcome you to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of ThessISMUN 2018! Let us make wonderful memories together.

Best Regards,  
Krystallenia Manavi, President,  
Anna-Maria Pekridou, Vice – President,  
Hercules Aravidis - Secretary General.

## 2. Introduction to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is a regional intergovernmental organization that was founded in 1949 by the Treaty of London. It is based in Strasbourg, France and it consists of 47 members. Of them, 28 are members of the European Union and 6 have observer status. The Council of Europe has three main areas of focus: Democracy, Human

Rights and the Rule of Law. It has two decision-making and statutory bodies, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. According to the Article 1(a) of its statute: “*The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its Members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress.*”<sup>1</sup>

The Committee of Ministers acts on behalf of the Council of Europe and each state must have one representative. This representative is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the country and is entitled to one vote. Each member state will be chairing the Committee for a period of six months in alphabetical order. The chairmanship changes each year in November and again in May.

The CoE has the responsibility to adopt common policies for particular matters that concern every single member state. To be more specific, it promotes human rights by signing international convention. Additionally, it monitors the progress of member states in the aforementioned areas and their compliance with their undertakings. It has the authority to recommend ways in which the member states can improve with the use of independent expert monitoring bodies. The decisions of the Committee of Ministers need a two-third majority of votes so that they can pass. Simple majority can only ensure the implementation of procedural issues.<sup>2</sup>

The other statutory body of the Council of Europe, apart from the Committee of Ministers, is the Parliamentary Assembly, which is composed of members of the national parliament of each country. Also, there is the Commissioner for Human Rights which is an independent institution within the Council of Europe, with its mandate being the promotion of human rights in the member states. The Secretary General heads the secretariat of the organization. Other major CoE bodies include the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines.

### 3. Introduction to Topic Area B

It is widely accepted that there are many stereotypes related to men and women. Each gender is regarded in a very specific way in different societies. In fact, the definition of term “gender” refers to the social roles that are attributed to an individual based on his/her gender; same applies to opportunities and aspirations based on gender. For many centuries the social structure of female gender resulted in every woman to be

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<sup>1</sup>Rm.coe.int. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680306052> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

<sup>2</sup> Statute Of The Council Of Europe (2017). *STATUTE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE I*. [online] Available at: [https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/RoP/Statut\\_CE\\_2015-EN.pdf](https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/RoP/Statut_CE_2015-EN.pdf) [Accessed 24 Dec. 2017].

seen as a mother and a housekeeper. Nowadays, in the 21st century, after the acceptance of the fact that men and women should be treated as equals, gender equality is a priority for almost every international organization, since it is the only way in order progress and prosperity to be ensured for international community.<sup>3</sup>

Gender stereotyping constitutes an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. Apart from the personal and social consequences of gender stereotyping, it also has a negative impact on countries' economic development and competitiveness. The negative impact comes from the fact that gender stereotyping sets certain limits to each gender, something that stops the talents of many individuals and thus their abilities to evolve professionally as much as they could, something that turns out to be a loss long term for the society and the economy.<sup>4</sup>

Council of Europe has always been a protector of human rights. The Organization has always been deeply committed to promote gender equality and tackle stereotypes that have a serious impact on both men and women. It is an advocate of non-stereotyped education at all levels of the school system, including through the elaboration and adoption of measures that will be extremely beneficial towards this direction.<sup>5</sup> The values and the principles of the Committee of Ministers, when it comes to promoting gender equality in education, can be found in multiple Recommendations that have been adopted concerning our topic. It is a fact that gender stereotyping and sexism are still a considerable matter of modern societies and exist in all their structures including education systems.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that education is a key factor for change, since it can challenge genders' roles and create a different mind-set, especially for younger generations. Both short term and long-term benefits are guaranteed by educational policies that promote gender equality. Apart from establishing a more creative environment for young girls and boys, these people will grow up with respect for the opposite gender, without having in mind the existing stereotypes. An important aspect of the topic under discussion is that educational policies do not only apply to children from the age of five to eighteen, but also to older ones, such as people attending universities, work training, and public life, as well as teachers with an aim to shutter

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<sup>3</sup> Un.org.(2017).*OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Combating gender stereotypes and sexism in and through education. (2016). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>5</sup> Anon, (2017). [online] Available at: [http://Conference on "Combating gender stereotypes in and through education"](http://Conference on ) [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>6</sup> Anon, (2017). [online] Available at: [http://Conference on "Combating gender stereotypes in and through education"](http://Conference on ) [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017]

gender based stereotypes. It is fundamental that the Council of Europe will not only insist on actions that have already been taken, it will also focus on tools to support member states in their work to eradicate gender stereotypes in education.

#### 4. Definitions of key terms regarding the topic area

**a) Gender Equality:** The term gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.<sup>7</sup>

**b) Gender Stereotyping:** Gender stereotyping is the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics or roles on the sole basis of her or his membership of the social group of women or men.<sup>8</sup>

**c) Educational Policy:** An educational policy is an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions, which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions in the field of education.<sup>9</sup> In other words, it constitutes a group of rules and laws that are the base of the operation of an educational system. Educational policies and education in general are implemented in several stages of education, including kindergarten, high school, university, professional education, adult education and job training. The target of an educational policy is to specify the goal that aims to reach, how it will achieve it and the measures that are needed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Un.org. (2017). *OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>8</sup> EIGE. (2017). *gender stereotyping*. [online] Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1223> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>9</sup> Unesco.org. (2018). *Education policy-planning process: an applied framework*. [online] Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11\\_200.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11_200.pdf) [Accessed 7 Jan. 2018].

<sup>10</sup> Definitions.net. (2017). *What does education policy mean?* [online] Available at: <http://www.definitions.net/definition/education%20policy> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

d) **Sexism:** Sexism is the prejudice or discrimination based on sex; especially discrimination against women. It includes behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex.<sup>11</sup>

e) **Holistic Education:** Holistic education is a form of education that has as a priority each individuals' identity. Its aim is to educate students in the context of the academic curriculum, to define themselves as a part of society, as well as to develop their emotional intelligence.<sup>12</sup> Through holistic education, students will be able to shatter gender stereotypes and comprehend their repercussions.<sup>13</sup>

f) **Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender Mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, to ensure that a gender equality perspective is incorporated at all levels and stages of all policies by those normally involved in policy making.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Historical Background

The first step towards the inclusion of both genders in education took place in the 19th century. It is in the 1800's when women started to become a part of the educational process, entering a field that was previously forbidden for them. At that period, major opportunities were given to young girls, since they could enroll to schools as students, in higher education as well, while many women became active professionals in the learning procedure as teachers. This was just the beginning of the equal presence of women in education, leading to transforming education into a tool of promoting gender equality.<sup>15</sup>

The first actions towards the implementation of strategies that will promote gender equality in the field of education took place in the 1960s. To be more precise, in regional, national and international level, measures were taken and initiatives were promoted, in order to ensure that women were contributors and beneficiaries to the

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<sup>11</sup> Merriam-webster.com. (2017). *Definition of SEXISM*. [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexism> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Holistic-education.net. (2017). *Holistic Education: An Introduction*. [online] Available at: <http://www.holistic-education.net/visitors.htm> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>13</sup> The Holistic Education Organisation, UK. (2017). *What is holistic education?* [online] Available at: <http://www.holisticeducationuk.org/whatholisticeducation/> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>14</sup> Standard.gendecop.com. (n.d.). *What is gender mainstreaming? | European Standard on Gender Mainstreaming in the ESF*. [online] Available at: <http://standard.gendecop.com/about-the-standard/what-is-gender-mainstreaming/index.html> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

<sup>15</sup> HEPG.org. (n.d.). *The History of Women in Education - HEPG*. [online] Available at: [http://hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-67-issue-4/herarticle/the-history-of-women-in-education\\_202](http://hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-67-issue-4/herarticle/the-history-of-women-in-education_202) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

development process of every society. Several states formulated strategies focusing on the aforementioned goal, and either signed on ratified relevant conventions.<sup>16</sup>

A very important step was made in 1985, when the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Women took place in Nairobi. The results were reflected in the Final Report of the Conference indicating that “*women should be an integral part of the process of defining aims and shaping development*”. It should be pointed out that despite the fact that this report referred neither to gender nor to mainstreaming, it can undeniably be regarded as the cornerstone in the development of the strategy.<sup>17</sup>

In 1994, another crucial step towards gender equality was made. The Council of Europe created the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG), which took up officially the concept of Gender Mainstreaming at the level of the Council of Europe for the first time. This Committee reports directly to the Council of Ministers and is constantly pushes towards measures to promote equality.<sup>18</sup>

Two years later, in 1996, the European Commission declared its commitment to the strategy of Gender Mainstreaming. According to the European Commission, Gender Mainstreaming means “*that in all phases of the political process – planning implementation, monitoring and evaluation – account is taken of the gender perspective. The goal is the promotion of gender equality between women and men. Under the Gender Mainstreaming concept, all policy measures must constantly be monitored for their effects on the life situation of women and men and, if necessary, revised. Only in this way can equality of the sexes become a reality in the lives of women and men. All people – within organisations and communities – must be given the opportunity to make their contribution to the development of a communal vision of sustained human development and to the realisation of this vision.*” After two years, in 1998, the Council of Europe issued an official definition of “Gender Mainstreaming”, making clear to every member state the importance of incorporating the strategy to their policies.<sup>19</sup>

A few years later, in 2006, the European Union published the Report on the equality of men and women. It encouraged Member States to take further action to support

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<sup>16</sup> Hall, G., Quinn, L. and Gollnick, D. (n.d.). *Introduction to teaching*.

<sup>17</sup> Genderkompetenz.info. (2018). *History of Gender Mainstreaming at international level and at EU level* — GenderKompetenzZentrum. [online] Available at: <http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Bases/history/international/index.html/> [Accessed 1 Jan. 2018].

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

women on their position in the work field, combining career and family, as this combination already exists for men. It pushed for the implementation of policies towards this way, such as availability of child care facilities and flexible working conditions. Last but not least, it requested to eliminate the income gap between the genders, and balance the career opportunities they have.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. Legal Framework

### **6.1. United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is described as the most concrete bill of international level concerning the rights of women. It defines “discrimination against women” as “*any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field*”. The importance of the Convention is extraordinary, since it highlights the root of the problem, the general discrimination that women face, covering in that way all the levels that inequality must end.

It provides guidelines for both national and international action in order to tackle any forms of discrimination based on gender. All states that have ratified or acceded the Convention have the legal responsibility to put it into force, and are committed to provide national reports, every four years, to present the measures taken so as to comply with the treaty obligations. The fact that a document with a legally binding character is focusing in a great depth on the matter of the discriminatory behavior that all women face is quite important.<sup>21</sup>

### **6.2. Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**

The Council of Europe’s Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is based on the understanding that violence against women is committed against them only because they are women. Each state is obligated to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect the victims of these crimes and prosecute the ones responsible. If this will not happen, the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Un.org. (n.d.). *Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm> [Accessed 28 Dec. 2017].

responsible one is the state. The convention declares that there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence and state agencies and officials turn a blind eye. The reason that there is a focus on the female victims of domestic violence is simply the fact that the majority of them are women. Therefore, since it is not only women and girls who suffer domestic violence, parties to the convention should apply a framework protecting the male victims, who are exposed to violence.<sup>22</sup>

### **6.3. *European Convention on Human Rights***

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is the protector of human rights of the states that are members of the Council of Europe. The complete name of it is “Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”. Every member of the Council has signed the Convention. The Convention secures specific rights and freedoms and prohibits unfair and harmful practices. It is important to know that it protects the most basic rights and freedoms, such as the right to life, to liberty, the right to a fair trial, freedom of thought and religion, freedom from slavery, freedom of expression, the right not to be discriminated against and the right to education. Thus, it can be applied in many cases. It has been a guide of equality and when we discuss issues of gender equality, it is one of the most useful tools, since it refers to equality between sexes as a fundamental human right. Additionally, there are several fields that women must be protected in, such as the freedom of religious expression, a sector that right now is under fire, with the hijab and burka being commonly forbidden. So, in many ways the Convention is able to protect women and young girls.<sup>23</sup>

### **6.4. *Convention on the Political Rights of Women***

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was established in 1954. The Convention focuses on the involvement of women in the political participation and also their representation in every stage of the political process. It ensures women’s right to vote, their eligibility to participate in elections as candidates and to exercise all public functions, established by national law. Also, the Convention makes clear that

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<sup>22</sup> Convention, A. and Europe, C. (2017). *About the Convention*. [online] Istanbul Convention Action against violence against women and domestic violence. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/about-the-convention> [Accessed 28 Dec. 2017].

<sup>23</sup> Equalityhumanrights.com. (n.d.). *What is the European Convention on Human Rights? | Equality and Human Rights Commission*. [online] Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/what-european-convention-human-rights> [Accessed 28 Dec. 2017].

women must be contributors to the political scene in every form, and it recognizes the importance of their presence in public office.<sup>24</sup>

## 7. Actions that have already been taken

### 7.1. *The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017*

The Council of Europe Transversal Programme on Gender Equality aimed to set higher gender equality standards and support the implementation in member states of many applicable and realistic measures. The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2014-2017) is a balanced and flexible document, which builds upon the values of the Council of Europe, and it has been a valuable guide in the area of gender equality for the last four years. The overall goal of the Strategy was to achieve the advancement and empowerment of women. By adopting it, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, wished to show the commitment to advance the gender equality agenda.<sup>25</sup>

### 7.2. *Beijing Platform for Action*

Beijing Platform for Action has been a resolution that covered many areas that women face inequalities and has provided many applicable measures and suggestions that can lead the way towards a better position for women and girls. More specifically, it has covered subjects such as women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the Girl-child.<sup>26</sup>

### 7.3. *Seminar on "Combating Sexist Hate Speech" jointly organised by the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Movement campaign and the Gender Equality Unit (10-12 February 2016)*

The Council of Europe Seminar, Combating Sexist Hate Speech, had 60 participants among them human's rights and women's rights activists, journalists and policy

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<sup>24</sup> Un.org.ua. (n.d.). [online] Available at: [http://www.un.org.ua/images/Convention\\_on\\_the\\_Political\\_Rights\\_of\\_Women\\_eng1.pdf](http://www.un.org.ua/images/Convention_on_the_Political_Rights_of_Women_eng1.pdf) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

<sup>25</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017). COUNCIL OF EUROPE GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2014-2017. [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680590174> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>26</sup> Un.org. (2017). *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

makers to challenge sexist hate speech, and find solutions to counter it. The Seminar was organised by the Youth Department and the Gender Equality Unit of the Council of Europe, which tried to address an issue that touches upon core topics for both sectors. For the Youth Department, the Seminar considered an occasion to value and re-assess the role of youth work to consolidate achievements in gender equality and support young men and women to promote human rights online.<sup>27</sup>

#### **7.4. Recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers**

##### **7.4.1. Recommendation No. (90)4 on the elimination of sexism from language**

This Recommendation focuses on the issue of sexism in language. Sexist language is commonly used in our everyday lives, in the media and in official papers. An example is that when it comes to referring to professions such as doctors or directors, the pronoun “he/him” is used, providing no option of a female pronoun. By definition, sexist language is the language that either excludes one gender or presents one as superior to the other.<sup>28</sup> Through R (90)4, the Committee of Ministers wishes to emphasize on the presence and the role of women in humans’ history and society, as current linguistic practice does for men.<sup>29</sup> In addition, it addresses the role of media and the eradication of sexist language. Last but not least, it brings attention to legal and other official documents, so as to ensure that the language used reflects gender equality.<sup>30</sup>

##### **7.4.2. Recommendation No. (85)7 on teaching and learning about human rights in schools**

In Recommendation No. (85)7, it is underlined that human rights education should constitute a priority in the school curriculum and that the students should be adequately prepared in order to live in a pluralistic democracy. Thus, this Recommendation verifies that school should be a supporter of human rights and equality, since gender equality is a humanitarian issue of major importance.<sup>31</sup>

##### **7.4.3. Recommendation No. (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making**

As it has been previously stated, educational policies can both be applied in schools and public life. According to R (2003)3, the Council wishes to ensure that women

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<sup>27</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017). SEMINAR COMBATING SEXIST HATE SPEECH. [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cac1f> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>28</sup> Dictionary, S. (2017). *Sexist language - English Grammar Today - Cambridge Dictionary*. [online] Dictionary.cambridge.org. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/people-and-places/sexist-language> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>29</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017) [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680505480> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017) [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16804c2d48> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

will play an important role in shaping politics and participating in society. The Committee of Ministers commits to promote balanced representation of women and men in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it aims to promote the importance of equal representation to many organs of the community, such as political institutions, public and private bodies, in particular national parliaments, local and regional authorities, political parties, civil service, public and semi-public organisations, enterprises, trade unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations.<sup>32</sup>

#### *7.4.4. Recommendation No. (2007) 13 on gender mainstreaming in education*

R. (2007)13 targets to the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all levels of education. According to the Recommendation, achieving de facto gender equality will improve the quality of education. It emphasizes on the importance of guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities at school for boys and girls. Moreover, the Committee wishes to organise awareness-raising initiatives on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for the staff of education ministries, as an additional measure towards gender equality in the field of education. In other words, this Recommendation is a very detailed guide on how teachers, officials in education and the state in general should incorporate the achievement of gender equality as a priority in the educational system.<sup>33</sup>

#### *7.4.5. Recommendation No. (2007) 17 on gender equality standards and mechanisms*

This Recommendation is a practical guide of applicable measures on how gender equality will be achieved and sexist stereotypes will be tackled, taking into account human rights and the integration of a gender perspective in legislation. It sets high standards of equality in many aspects of life, such as private life, education, science, culture, economy, social welfare and reproductive rights. It puts forward strategies, mechanisms and tools, such as the implementation of complementary strategies, strong institutional mechanisms/national machinery for gender equality, studies and instruments to evaluate progress, and the establishment of cooperation and partnerships, in order to achieve gender equality.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017). [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680519084> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>33</sup> Search.coe.int. (2017). [online] Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5287](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5287) [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>34</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017). [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168058feef> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

## 8. Discussion of the Topic

### *8.1 The role of schools and the educational system in the implementation of educational policies in order to combat gender stereotypes*

The stereotypes regarding genders have resulted in many inequalities between women and men. The stereotypical perception of females and males has an extremely long history, and in order to achieve gender equality, it needs more than the adoption of relevant legislation that recognizes gender equality. Targeted action and cooperation is needed in order to deal with the root of the problem. Education plays a vital role in this process, since school holds a unique position in modern societies, as well as raises awareness and confronts misinformation to children from an early age, protecting and deterring them from the sexist behaviors that they are likely to face.<sup>35</sup>

Are schools preparing youth to get integrated in society? Are they providing students with values and principals? What kind of expectations have the teachers for students? Are they different for boys and girls? The four major goals of education according to the Council of Europe are: a) to prepare the students for employment, b) to help them become active citizens, c) to develop their personalities, and d) to expand their knowledge.

The education system is a reflection of the society, including its values, traditions and culture. As a result, gender stereotypes not only continue to exist, but also thrive in classrooms. Men are mostly seen as the leaders and the problem-solvers and women as the cares, the ones that will be devoted to the family and this becomes obvious from the courses that girls and boys are encouraged to attend. Females predominate in courses regarding education, health care and social sciences, while males predominate in courses, such as science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM). Unfortunately, even today, the subjects are still categorized into “boys’ subjects” and “girls’ subjects”.<sup>36</sup>

There is an urgent need for schools to incorporate more gender inclusive activities for subjects related to sciences, such as physics and math, educating the teachers on how to promote the participation of both girls and boys in this process.

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<sup>35</sup> 201, 9. (2017). *COMBATING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION*. [online] Available at: <https://odh-office.eu/files/Combating%20Gender%20Stereotypes%20In%20and%20Through%20Education.PDF> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Teachers can play a very important role to change this situation. With a more holistic approach in education, they can actually interact with the pupils, help them explore their true talents and abilities, which can drastically change their self-esteem and achievements. Thus, a drastic change in teachers' education is vital. Educating the professionals is the base of creating progressive environment for children, so each state should ensure methods applicable to schools, in order to promote gender equality will be a part of teachers' education and training.

### ***8.2 Educational policies after school: university and work field***

There has been a lot of discussion about the way that progress that has been made in gender equality in higher education should be evaluated, with UNESCO's World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education being probably the most accurate guidance, since 2012. The latter provides details about access, participation and progression from pre-primary to tertiary education.<sup>37</sup> The incorporation of special subjects in university level will be a first step towards this way. The new entry in many institutes, the subject of Gender Studies is a key in order for young adults to understand at first the forms of discrimination and sexism that both men and women face and then ways that can overcome these stereotypes.<sup>38</sup>

Universities are the perfect area to empower young females. That can be done with several ways. First of all, either through national education laws or local initiatives, the percentage of women students must be increased and have access to a larger spectrum of specialties. Attention must be paid to inclusion, by having gender inclusive language and improving the educational atmosphere in the classroom. Another important initiative is the absolute intolerance in cases of sexual harassment. Last but not least, the promotion of gender sensitive research in education, and having women in decision making position will improve the gender gap in higher education.<sup>39</sup>

When it comes to educational policies in the work field, in order to promote gender equality, there are several contributing factors to the inequality between men and women, thus the strategies that need to be followed should be very targeted. One of the most applicable policies that will have a beneficial impact on both the sexes in the

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<sup>37</sup> Unesco.org. (2017). *The World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/gender-and-education/resources/the-world-atlas-of-gender-equality-in-education/> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>38</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017). [online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680505480> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>39</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001261/126179eo.pdf> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

work field, is the issue of parental leave. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance, as well as to social security. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, includes special protection for mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth, including paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits. The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, calls for special measures to guarantee maternity protection, recognized as an essential right and addressed consistently in all aspects of the Convention.<sup>40</sup> By legally protecting maternity, women are able to have equal opportunities in employment, which leads to economic independence for women and a healthy economy in general. Unfortunately, even though officially and legally maternity is respected and protected, in many ways, it remains a reason that women are not treated equally in the work field. The possibility of a female employee's pregnancy is a factor that a woman in a young age will not be hired or be promoted in a more demanding position. Both paternal and maternal leave should be provided equally, as well as options and flexibility.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the previous point, sexual harassment of women in the workplace is a major problem. There is a vital need for policies, which will be applied in both public and private sector to protect the employees, and action plans in the interest of prevention, support, mandatory training, respect, and dignity at work, so as to ensure that a zero-tolerance approach becomes the norm.<sup>42</sup>

### ***8.3 Implementing educational policies in public life***

Gender equality can be promoted in many ways in public life. There are several measures that can be implemented, and many aspects to be taken under consideration. To begin with, having equal and balanced participation of both women and men in political and public decision-making process has been one of the five objectives of the Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality 2014-2017, since for women being able to express their voices and declaring their positions was neglected for a very long time and it must not be tolerated any more.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ilo.org. (n.d.). [online] Available at: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_242615.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

<sup>41</sup> Ec.europa.eu. [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/web7-jacobsson\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/web7-jacobsson_en.pdf) [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>42</sup> Europarl.europa.eu. (2017). *Motion for a resolution on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU - B8-0578/2017*. [online] Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B8-2017-0578+0+DOC+XML+V0/EN> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

<sup>43</sup> Rm.coe.int. (2017).[online] Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806b6c87> [Accessed 26 Dec. 2017].

To continue with, social policies, for example policies related to social protection, education, health or unemployment are important tools for the promotion of gender equality, since they affect conditions of people's life. However, there are still many and important inequalities between women and men in areas covered by social policies. This notably concerns employment, as women predominantly feature in part-time work and lower-paid occupations, and continue to face different types of inequalities (e.g. in relation to remuneration, pensions, promotions and access to decision-making). As a result of many combined inequalities, women have lesser income than men. All these aspects should be taken into consideration so that social policies contribute to real equality between women and men.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, all the member states should strengthen oversight mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives across and within government bodies. Additionally to it, they must ensure the balanced representation in decision-making positions in public life by encouraging greater participation of women in government at all levels, as well as in parliaments, judiciaries and other public institutions. An encouraging first step will be for all states to strengthen their international co-operation through continuously sharing knowledge, lessons learned and good practices on gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives in public institutions.<sup>45</sup>

## 9. Conclusion

Achieving gender equality should be one of the top priorities for modern societies. However, it does not constitute an easy task, since gender stereotypes can be traced back in centuries. The Council of Europe, an organization focusing on human rights' protection should efficiently contribute to the eradication of these stereotypes and promotion of gender equality. There is no better way to do that but educating every person in our society, either that person is a pupil, a college student or co-worker. Educational policies can be applied in every stage of our lives, either as official guidelines, with the form of rules and laws or in a more direct way as campaigns and classes. The road towards gender equality is still long and full of obstacles, but none of them is too hard to overcome. Especially, when it comes to education, a basic human right, we have an excellent opportunity to ensure that women and men, girls and boys have equal access to learning opportunities, as well as fair treatment in all

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Oecd.org. (n.d.). 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life - en - OECD. [online] Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/2015-oecd-recommendation-of-the-council-on-gender-equality-in-public-life-9789264252820-en.htm> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2018].

spheres of life.<sup>46</sup> The implementation of measures that will empower women in higher education and the work field may look as a challenging procedure. Nevertheless, it is almost unanimously accepted that a great result can be achieved through gradual and constant changes.

## 10. Points to be Addressed

- What further measures should the Council of Europe take and which actions must be done in order to promote gender equality in education?
- What can be done to encourage more women to study subjects, such as science and engineering?
- How are the gender equality dimensions in teacher education covered by the Council?
- What realistic improvements must be suggested to eradicate gender stereotyping in higher education?
- What kind of educational policies can be applied in the workplace so that men and women receive equal treatment?
- Which are the main causes of gender inequality in the work field?
- Is sexual harassment a factor that holds women back in the workfield? If so, how can it be eliminated?
- Are women and men equally represented in public life? If not, what measures need to be taken in order to have a balanced percentage?
- Are member states implementing the already existing measures of CoE in order to tackle gender related stereotypes?

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