



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Recommendation adopted on 27 June 2012
CONF/PLE(2012)RECS**

“Gender Equality: a universal value, principle and human right to be respected and promoted in all fields”

The Conference of International Non Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg on 27 June 2012

Recalling that

substantive, real, gender equality is a universal value, principle and human right, women and men being equal holders of human rights;

it is proclaimed and imposed in all fields by international and European binding instruments;

these instruments are not limited to prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex; they moreover require the promotion of gender equality in every area;

therefore, substantive, real, gender equality, is a principle of proactive nature the implementation of which requires adequate positive measures.

Referring to

the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights; the European Social Charter; the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; the Treaties of the European Union and the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union; the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 in Vienna (Vienna Declaration); the Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Beijing Platform) and the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe.

Recalling that

these instruments stipulate the universal and non-negotiable character of human rights, including gender equality, and **absolutely exclude**

that ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic traditions or customs may be invoked to prevent the exercise of human rights including gender equality;

that violations of human rights, including discrimination and violence of all forms on grounds of gender, as early and forced marriages, "honour crimes", female genital mutilation or violation of sexual and reproductive rights, be justified by social, cultural, religious or other traditions and customs;

these instruments, which are invoked by peoples and individuals of all cultures, require

that States shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudice and social, customary and other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex or stereotypical roles of men and women leading to violations of human rights, in particular women's rights.

Stressing the Council of Europe's essential role and work in promoting the development in law and in practice of gender equality.

Deeply concerned

by the increasing tendencies of cultural relativism and by constantly growing and often violent attempts to hinder or destruct the democratic principles and the rule of law, which emerge at international, European, national and local level, threatening the equal enjoyment of human rights by women and men, girls and boys;

by the failure of the 56th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (27/02-15/03/2012) to reach "Agreed Conclusions" due to some governments opposing previously agreed women's rights on the basis of religious, cultural or traditional arguments.

Request urgently that the organs of the Council of Europe and the Member States

strongly oppose these tendencies and attempts, so that the universal *acquis* in human rights is safeguarded and the **universal application** of the above instruments is promoted;

support the incorporation of gender equality in the Constitution and the legislation of all countries, the withdrawal of reservations to international treaties protecting women's rights, in particular the CEDAW, and the ratification of its additional Protocol by all countries;

train the personnel of public services in human rights.

Invite the INGOs enjoying participative status with the Council of Europe to strive for the implementation of the above mentioned instruments and conduct training on real gender equality as a universal value, principle and human right to be respected and promoted in all fields.

Recommendation proposed by the Human Rights Committee