

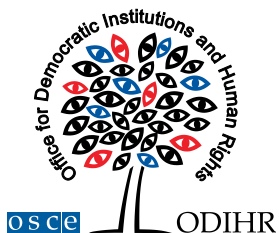
# Engaging Men on Gender Equality



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**WIN –**  
Women & Men Innovating &  
Networking for Gender Equality

## *Engaging Men on Gender Equality*

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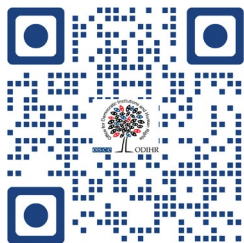
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Designed by Zofia Konarska



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## **Recommendations**

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

Engage men and boys more systematically in preventing and combating violence against women and girls.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

Address the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work through strategies to engage men more fully.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

Make men accountable for preventing, addressing and reversing gender equality backsliding.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

For men in the security sector — build in structural change to promote gender equality.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

For men in politics — address the root causes of inequality.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

For male staff of international organizations such as the OSCE — strengthen work on gender equality.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

For men from religious and traditional communities — become part of the solution.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Use gender-sensitive language and communication.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

Recognize that intersectionality is an important foundation for successfully engaging women and men.



## INTRODUCTION

### The OSCE and engaging men on gender equality

*We are fortunate to have many male allies on gender equality within the OSCE region, and it is vital to ensure that we harness their voices to support the still slowly emerging visibility of women in decision-making.*

Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, ODIHR

*Gender equality is not and cannot be just a fight by women; it is a collective fight for a just and equitable world. We will not succeed if 50 per cent of the population — the male population — does not support women and women's rights.*

Dr Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

In 2024, the World Economic Forum reported that it will take 134 years to reach gender parity globally, with vast differences between countries. This is in the year 2158; five generations away.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there has been little progress — and even some backsliding — in recent years. For example, McKinsey's Global Gender Institute mapped 15 indicators of gender equality in 95 countries. These fell into four categories: equality in paid work, economic opportunity, legal protection and political voice, and physical security and autonomy. In at least half the indicators,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the state of gender parity in 2024 – and what needs to happen to close the global gender gap, World Economic Forum, 21 June 2024.

40 countries had high or extremely high levels of gender inequality.<sup>2</sup> The OSCE's WIN project notes that: "Gender equality is not yet a reality anywhere in the world, including in the OSCE region. We know that an equal society would be a win-win for all, free from violence against women and girls, and more resilient against conflict."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the progress made during decades of work by women's rights organizations and democratic institutions, gender equality is still a long way off. There is a growing understanding that gender equality will only be achieved when men and women work together towards full gender equality and equal respect for the rights of all individuals and groups.<sup>4</sup> Gender equality is not only a women's rights issue, it is a societal one: "If gender equality is to become a reality in any area and at any level of society, both men and women will benefit from such a change."<sup>5</sup>

The role of men is highlighted in other OSCE documents, including Ministerial Council Decision 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, which recognizes "...the importance of actively engaging men and boys in efforts towards [the] elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence and by raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can underlie and perpetuate discrimination and violence".<sup>6</sup> Other sources include Ministerial Council Decision 14/5 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation,<sup>7</sup> Decision

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<sup>2</sup> [The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \\$12 trillion to global growth](#), McKinsey Global Institute, 1 September 2015.

<sup>3</sup> [WIN project webpage](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE \(Moscow Document\)](#), OSCE, 3 October 1991, "... Full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society"; see also, [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 — 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of gender equality](#), Sofia, 7 December 2004, "We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of our policies, both at the level of our States and within the Organization."

<sup>5</sup> OSCE, [2004 OSCE Action Plan](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Ministerial Council Decision Nr. 4/18, Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women on preventing and combating violence against women](#), OSCE, Milan, 7 December 2018.

<sup>7</sup> [Ljubljana Ministerial Decision No. 14/05, Women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation](#), OSCE, Ljubljana, 6 December 2005, "Recognizing that the knowledge,

## INTRODUCTION

No. 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life,<sup>8</sup> Decision No. 10/11 on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere,<sup>9</sup> and Decision No. 7/14 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women.<sup>10</sup>

One of the OSCE's key activities on gender equality is building and sustaining networks, which allows people to share ideas, integrate gender perspective into their activities and increase the impact of their work. This publication is the result of one such activity: a conference, held in Warsaw, Poland, in December 2023, entitled "*Women and Men: working together for equal rights*". This conference brought together 74 stakeholders (49 women and 25 men) from different sectors, including civil society organizations and officials from participating States, all of whom have a shared interest in working on men's involvement in achieving gender equality in the OSCE region. The event was jointly organized by the two main OSCE projects focusing on gender equality: WIN for Women and Men (Strengthening comprehensive security through innovating and networking for gender equality) (WIN); and Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality (CHANGE). The conference sought to:

1. Bring together formal and informal networks working with men on gender equality to exchange good practices on the drivers and bottlenecks in engaging with men on gender equality;
2. Identify opportunities for building better institutional structures and policies, including within the OSCE itself, that reinforce the engagement of male allies; and

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skills and experience of both women and men are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region".

<sup>8</sup> [Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09](#), Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, OSCE, Athens, 4 December 2009.

<sup>9</sup> [Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/11](#) on Promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere, OSCE, Vilnius, 9 December 2011.

<sup>10</sup> [Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/14](#) on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, OSCE, Basel, 5 December 2014, "Take appropriate measures to increase the engagement and participation of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence; Develop programmes to work with the perpetrators of violence against women, both during and after their sentence in order to avoid repeat offenses;".



3. Prepare recommendations on how to progress the engagement of men in advancing gender equality across the OSCE region across the OSCE's three dimensions, ahead of the 20th anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the related decisions. This paper presents nine policy and good practice recommendations identified during the conference. They aim to support diverse audiences, including the policymakers of OSCE participating States, civil society experts, international organizations and others, in their work to include men in building a more gender-equal, peaceful, prosperous and democratic world.

## **Recommendation 1**

### **Engage men and boys more systematically in preventing and combating violence against women and girls**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a human rights violation and a major contributor to gender inequality and insecurity. Women and women's organizations have long campaigned on preventing and ending VAWG, but the statistics remain high. For example, research by the OSCE<sup>11</sup> has found that three in ten women over the age of 15 say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a partner or non-partner.

Over two-thirds of women think that violence against women and girls is common in their communities, and a fifth think it is very common. Just under a quarter personally know someone among their family and friends who has been subjected to violence.<sup>12</sup> Other studies have found that social and traditional media offer easy access to violent content, for young disaffected men in particular, with the line between online and offline violence becoming increasingly blurred.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the violence is perpetrated by men and boys, and they have to be part of the movement to ensure that VAWG is finally ended. In close consultation and

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<sup>11</sup> [Well-being and Safety of Women](#), OSCE, 6 March 2019.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Esteban Morales, [Ecologies of Violence on Social Media: An Exploration of Practices, Contexts, and Grammars of Online Harm](#), *Social Media + Society*, 9(3), 8 September 2023.

coordination with organizations and groups that work with survivors of violence, men need to take a public stand against violence, both as individuals and in their professional capacities; this includes men from the security sector, traditional and religious communities, and those working in politics and government, the public sector, business, civil society, the media and elsewhere.

Conference participants highlighted that stopping VAWG is a prerequisite for comprehensive security and an integral part of gender equality. To achieve this, there has to be a stronger focus on preventing violence. Men and women across all sectors need to be fully engaged in changing mindsets and fighting deeply-rooted stereotypes. ODIHR's *Violence Against Women in Politics Toolkit*,<sup>14</sup> *Gender-Based Hate Crime* factsheet<sup>15</sup> and annual data on gender-based hate crime<sup>16</sup> and OSCE's *Toolkit: Preventing and responding to gender-based violence during the war and in post-war settings*<sup>17</sup> are just some of the resources available to support these efforts.

*We need to continuously add noise. Whenever we see a joke, sexualization or anything that hurts women, we need to raise these issues in order to make progress.*

Elaine Conkievich, International Gender Expert

### **Stakeholders could:**

- ▶ Highlight the urgency of addressing VAWG and achieving real progress in this area, and stress the importance of involving men and boys in these efforts;
- ▶ Strengthen the messaging about violence against women as a national security emergency, ensuring it reaches men as well as women;
- ▶ Ensure consistent messaging about zero tolerance for VAWG;
- ▶ Demonstrate commitment to addressing the causes and contributing factors;

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<sup>14</sup> [Addressing Violence against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region: Toolkit](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 27 November 2022.

<sup>15</sup> [Gender-Based Hate Crime](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 10 March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> [Gender-based hate crime](#), subpage of the OSCE/ODIHR Hate Crime Report website.

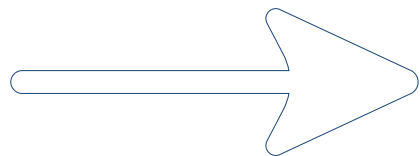
<sup>17</sup> [Toolkit: Preventing and responding to gender-based violence during the war and in post-war settings](#), OSCE, 10 November 2022.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

- ▶ Focus on men and boys as potential allies and not just as potential perpetrators; and
- ▶ Supplement policy frameworks with strategies to prevent violence against women in public and private, including strategies for working with men and boys.

### **Participating States could:**

- ▶ Spend more on the prevention of VAWG and protection of survivors, and allocate extra resources to working with men and boys on the issue. It is important that spending resources on working with men does not mean less work with women and survivors of violence;
- ▶ Use all available planning and implementation tools, such as gender-sensitive data, gender analysis, gender-responsive budgeting and gender competence training, to highlight that violence against women is an issue for both women and men to address;
- ▶ Work on changing the attitudes of youth, particularly young men, to show that violence is not acceptable, whether online or offline. Education systems in OSCE participating States should play a key role in building boys' and girls' skills and understanding about non-violent ways to resolve conflicts;<sup>18</sup> and
- ▶ Work together as a region, with IT/digital experts and others, to tackle the spread of violent content online in order to reduce gender-based intolerance, hate crimes and violence against women.



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<sup>18</sup> See, [General recommendation No. 36](#) on the right of girls and women to education, OHCHR, CEDAW/C/GC/36, 27 November 2017: "Education plays a pivotal transformative and empowering role in promoting human rights values and is recognized as the pathway to gender equality and women's empowerment" and "Rights through education define ways in which schooling shapes rights and gender equality in aspects of life outside the sphere of education. The absence of this right is particularly evident when education, which should be transformational, fails to significantly advance the position of women in the social, cultural, political, and economic fields thereby denying their full enjoyment of rights in these arenas."

**Promising practice: working with young men against violence**

Status M in Croatia is a civil society organization that enables young men to work towards gender justice and a non-violent society. Founded in 2010 by a group of young people who met during informal education, Status M believes that *“Violence is strongly linked to societal expectations and norms about what it means to be a man. The problem of violence is a problem of men, and it starts with the way we raise boys.”* They work with children and young people, especially with boys and young men, to transform the harmful gender norms that justify, tolerate and encourage violent behaviour. They work in schools, student dormitories, educational institutions and local communities, and also raise public awareness and advocate for decision-makers to improve policies and practices in the field of violence prevention.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [Status M website](#).

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **Address the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work through strategies to engage men more fully**

In 1979, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) noted “a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women.”<sup>20</sup> However, there is still no country in the world where men and women share unpaid care and domestic work equally. The fact that women take on the lion’s share of this work is a key contributor to gender inequality, at home, in the workplace and elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men is also an infringement<sup>22</sup> of women’s rights.<sup>23</sup> Many men want to be more involved, especially in caring for their children, but structural barriers and social norms prevent this from happening.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), (CEDAW), OHCHR, New York, 18 December 1979.

<sup>21</sup> [Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#), International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 28 June 2018.

<sup>22</sup> [Unpaid care work blocks women’s rights if not shared by men and States – UN expert](#), OHCHR press release, 24 October 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: Unpaid Care Work and Women’s Human Rights](#), United Nations, 9 August 2013.

<sup>24</sup> [State of the World’s Fathers 2023](#), Equimundo, (no date).

Policies should be strengthened and measures introduced to support the recognition, redistribution and reduction of unpaid work. Examples of good practice in this area include the European Union's Work-life Balance Directive,<sup>25</sup> parental and paternity leave,<sup>26</sup> flexible work arrangements and support services targeting both mothers and fathers.

Parental and paternity leave have been shown to benefit women, children and men, and support the more equal sharing of unpaid care in the home.<sup>27</sup> Yet the use and impact of such policies vary widely between OSCE countries.

Participating States can support men and boys to engage more actively in unpaid care work through a combination of legal interventions, funding for support measures for women and men, educational campaigns, identification of champions and replication of good practices.<sup>28</sup>

*Both mothers and fathers long for more equal parental roles. Fathers have strongly-felt insecurities that they need to be able to share and solicit advice and support. They often question and doubt their own behaviour, but seldom find ways to work effectively on personal development. Support services are needed in this area.*

Visnja Bacanovic, Director, Gender Knowledge Hub.

*Alongside the global women's movement, we need men to act. Men need to vote, call and march for high quality universal child care, for workplace and social protection policies that support all caregivers, whether they are engaged in formal or informal work, and for equitable, universal, and paid parental leave. The pathways to care equality and to gender equality require all of those. And their rewards will be shared by us all also."*

Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women

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<sup>25</sup> [Work-life balance directive](#), inclusion Europe, (no date).

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Equimundo, [State of the World's Fathers 2023](#).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, [MenCare Campaign](#) website.

**Participating States could:**

- ▶ Introduce fully funded and non-transferable paternity leave for fathers when their baby is born, to be taken at the same time as existing parental leave for mothers. Both mothers and fathers should be able to take additional, flexible parental leave in the first year of the baby's life in line with a shared parenthood model;
- ▶ Ensure that access to parental rights reflects the realities of diverse family structures and situations in different cultural and social contexts. Multi-stakeholder dialogue is needed on the role of fathers and what constitutes a healthy and supportive family.<sup>29</sup>
- ▶ Support solutions and services through the use of gender-responsive budgeting as a tool to implement new policies and measures that help redistribute of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men and between individuals and the state.
- ▶ As duty holders, continue to explore incentives for businesses to contribute to work-life balance, especially in male-dominated sectors.

**OSCE/international organizations could:**

- ▶ Analyse parental leave policies across the OSCE region and make recommendations on good practices.

**Businesses could:**

- ▶ Introduce measures that address the under-representation of men in the care economy and tackle the structural causes of the under-representation of men in care and education services.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> According to a 2017 ODIHR survey of all 57 OSCE participating States (unpublished), among the 22 respondents, less than half provided flexible working arrangements to enable armed forces personnel to care for family members. This affects the respect for the right to family life to which personnel of the armed forces are entitled. As stated in the DCAF/ODIHR's [Compendium of Standards, Good practices and Recommendations on the Human Rights of Armed Forces Personnel](#), armed forces should "recognize the right to family life of both women and men serving, as this will help to reduce barriers to the recruitment, representation and promotion of women".

<sup>30</sup> [Men Who Care: a multi-country qualitative study of men in non-traditional caregiving roles](#), Equimundo, (no date).



**Education providers could:**

- ▶ Create and integrate content about balanced distribution of unpaid work into both formal and informal curriculums for all students. School curriculums still fall short on their potential to root out the causes of inequality in this and other areas.<sup>31</sup>

**Promising practice: Roots of Empathy<sup>32</sup>**

Roots of Empathy is an international evidence- and empathy-based classroom programme for children aged five to 13, operating in Canada, New Zealand, the United States of America, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The children are taught by a Roots of Empathy instructor to recognize and connect with the vulnerability and humanity of a baby who visits their classroom throughout the school year with their parent(s). The children's emotional literacy develops as they learn to identify and label the baby's feelings, understand and reflect on their own feelings, and then start to understand the feelings of others. This enables the children to build connections and healthy relationships, leading to improved inclusion and integration.

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<sup>31</sup> CEDAW, [General recommendation No. 36](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Roots of Empathy website](#).

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### **Make men accountable for preventing, addressing and reversing gender equality backsliding<sup>33</sup>**

The UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls “has observed serious backlash against women’s rights and the very concept of gender and gender equality”.<sup>34</sup> Gender equality backsliding, runs counter to the commitments made by OSCE participating States on gender equality and women’s rights,

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Gender equality backsliding’ is here understood to mean adversity, hostility, and resentful reactions to gender-sensitive language and gender equality policies and practices. This covers a range of deliberate and aggressive behaviours, discourses, practices and structures that seek to and ultimately destabilize and undermine the foundation of the human rights framework, stop the implementation of gender equality laws, erode gender equality mechanisms and institutions, and challenge the OSCE and other international commitments on gender equality, as well as reverse gender equality gains in society.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, [A/HRC/WG.11/41/2: Gender equality and gender backlash - Guidance document of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#), United Nations, 31 October 2024, para. 29: “In recent years the Working Group has observed serious backlash against women’s rights and the very concept of gender and gender equality. Since 2010, transnational movements opposing ‘gender ideology’ have formed, drawing conservative government, religious and civil society actors. Almost 30 years since gender was recognized in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as an important tool in combating discrimination against women, the term is now seriously contested, putting in jeopardy many of the hard-fought gains that women have achieved”, and para. 20: “The anti-gender (or anti-gender ideology) movements include three specific groups of conservative actors – governmental actors, religious actors and civil society actors – who have formed various national and transnational alliances with shared strategies and objectives. These strategies include the propagation of anti-gender discourse and the use of direct citizen action, such as petitions, protests and prayers, and governmental mechanisms to influence or change educational systems, legislation and public opinion.”

as well as to the international human rights principle of non-regression/non-retrogression.<sup>35</sup> New initiatives to counter backsliding should stem from a better understanding of gender-transformative work and the methods used by networks seeking to roll back women's rights. Men must be actively engaged in developing and implementing such initiatives. Effective work with men and boys must be accountable to women's movements and other social-justice movements and complement their efforts. Political actors, including political parties and politicians (who are mostly men), should avoid attacks on promoters of gender equality and human rights defenders. Confrontational politics damages human rights in the long run and can lead to instability and a lack of trust, eroding everyone's well-being. Instead, they should seek to defend against attacks by anti-gender equality movements — often externally induced<sup>36</sup> — on feminists and human rights defenders.

“A broad issue-based coalition, which includes men, focused on reversing gender equality backsliding is needed. Once in place, it should seek to network internationally. These efforts can be complemented by breakthrough leadership initiatives that seek to push the boundaries, test new approaches, and mobilize new allies. The impact of individual initiatives and efforts implemented by a small group of advocates should not be underestimated.”<sup>37</sup> Initiatives may include ‘hard’ measures, such as changes in laws and policies, the adoption of agreed principles or additional resources, or ‘soft’ measures, which include opening dialogues, networking and awards programmes.

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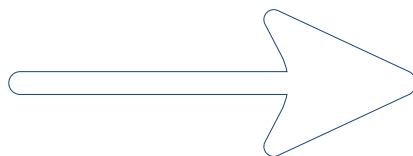
<sup>35</sup> As a signatory to the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR), a state commits to expanding coverage and protection of the Covenant rights and simultaneously assumes an obligation to refrain from annulling or reducing the existing level of protection of recognized rights.

<sup>36</sup> Research shows that anti-gender equality movements usually consist of conservative groups forming national and transnational alliances with shared strategies and objectives. See, for example, Shantel Marekera, [MenEngage Ubuntu Symposium summaries: Backlash and fundamentalism](#), MenEngage Alliance, 2021. See also, [The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality](#), CSW48 Agreed Conclusions (A), United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women, March 2004, “The Commission also recognizes that the participation of men and boys in achieving gender equality must be consistent with the empowerment of women and girls and acknowledges that efforts must be made to address the undervaluation of many types of work, abilities and roles associated with women. In this regard, it is important that resources for gender equality initiatives for men and boys do not compromise equal opportunities and resources for women and girls.”

<sup>37</sup> [Report on the OSCE Study Visit to North Macedonia](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 25 June 2024.

**Participating States could:**

- ▶ Adopt a shared accountability framework for engaging men, with core principles, a code of conduct, and accountability standards, and based on existing frameworks produced by networks such as the MenEngage Alliance;<sup>38</sup>
- ▶ Strengthen laws, policies and tools to prevent and address online discrimination, harassment and abuse;
- ▶ Allocate extra resources to support work on male engagement in gender equality, with the caveat that the funds should not be taken from the already limited support to women's organizations and work on women's empowerment;
- ▶ Improve networking and coalition building between democratic institutions, civil society organizations (including women's rights groups), independent institutions, gender equality organizations and mechanisms, media, and academia;
- ▶ Exchange knowledge about effective tools to prevent, address and reverse gender backsliding in the OSCE region;
- ▶ Explore opportunities to broker multi-stakeholder dialogue on the use of AI and social media to promote human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, and to reverse gender equality backsliding; and
- ▶ Set up awards for positive public support by men on gender equality; for example, the Polish Women's Congress has an award for male allies.



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<sup>38</sup> [MenEngage Alliance website](#).

**Promising practice: The CHANGE Transnational Network to Prevent, Address and Reverse Gender Backsliding**

The CHANGE Transnational Network to Prevent, Address and Reverse Gender Backsliding arose from regular exchanges organized by the OSCE's CHANGE project, including consultation and dialogue meetings, study visits and multi-country participation in events. Human rights defenders (HRDs) and representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on advancing gender equality throughout the OSCE region share similar concerns about gender backsliding. The CHANGE network applies a systematic and streamlined approach to monitoring gender equality backsliding to:

- Strengthen transnational responses to gender equality backsliding by democratic institutions and CSOs/HRDs;
- Fill the gap in the lack of data on gender equality backsliding; and
- Serve as an example of effective transnational practice in countering backsliding.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### **For men in the security sector — build in structural change to promote gender equality**

In the last decade the security sector has made significant progress on understanding gender equality, adjusting policies and rules, and enhancing the participation of women (albeit starting from an exceptionally low base). In some countries,<sup>39</sup> it is now common to see men and women on mission together.

However, there is still a long way to go to ensure the meaningful participation, real representation and leadership of women in the security sector. For example, armed forces remain a male preserve; women still only make up seven to 20 per cent of total numbers in European Union countries' armed forces,<sup>40</sup> and are largely absent at senior levels. Deep-rooted cultural norms and institutional

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Canada, Bulgaria, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States of America.

<sup>40</sup> Written contribution to the Warsaw conference by Emmanuel Jacob, President, European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions, EUROMIL. Other examples from the OSCE region: In Estonia, 35.9 per cent (1,377) of police officers (3,837 total) are women, and 77.6 per cent (688) of the police civilian staff (887) are women. However, only 24 per cent (114) of the 475 police officers in senior management roles are women. In Bosnia & Herzegovina only 20 percent (4,413) of the total number of police force employees are women. The National Police of Ireland has over 14,300 Garda officers and 3330 civilian employees. Women make up 28 per cent of serving police officers, but 97 per cent (3,909) of the 4,019 female officers hold the lowest ranks of Garda or Sergeant. Women make up 72 per cent of civilian police staff. Source: ODIHR-commissioned research on the topic in 2022.

resistance still limit progress. For example, men rarely join gender equality bodies or gender working groups. Equality of access to all positions for men and women in the regulations does not translate into reality on the ground. Harassment, gender-based discrimination, and underused independent reporting mechanisms remain barriers to achieving gender equality.

The armed forces not only need policy changes, but they must also undergo a cultural transformation that challenges the traditional power dynamics and norms within the sector. In practice, because there is sometimes no organizational obligation to act against sexism and for equality, women's male allies can often act only as individuals, and their action (or inaction) depends on the character and ethics of the individual man.

*"We can only integrate gender equality in the peace and security sector by involving women and men equally across the institutions and authorities. We need to strengthen partnerships with women's professional associations, as they can provide considerable support."*

Mariana Carabanov, Association of Women in Police, Moldova.

### **Participating States could:**

- ▶ Provide training, education, flexible work arrangements for all members of the security sector, support executive coaching and mentorship programmes, ensure diversity in recruitment, and include awards for role models. Support measures like these have proven effective in a number of settings across the OSCE region, including in Serbia and Moldova.
- ▶ Apply and integrate human rights-compliant and gender-sensitive<sup>41</sup> approaches and perspectives across the security sector, with full awareness that this involves changing attitudes and understanding about human security and questioning the male-led concept of what 'security' means.

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<sup>41</sup> "Gender sensitivity encompasses the ability to acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities, and incorporate these into strategies and actions. Gender-responsive policies and interventions associate with actions or concrete measures that reflect the unique needs, aspirations and capacities of men and women. Gender-transformative policies and interventions challenge biased and discriminatory policies, practices, ideas and beliefs. It is an approach that addresses the transformation of unequal gender relations through working with both women and men." [OSCE Academy Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for 2020-2025](#).

**The security sector could:**

- ▶ Conduct gender equality and human rights assessments to assess how well they meet human rights and gender equality obligations and commitments, identify gaps in their internal policies and practices, and develop action plans to address the findings.<sup>42</sup>
- ▶ Develop key indicators for monitoring progress on women's and men's employment in the sector, including in applications, recruitment, participation, training, promotion and retention.
- ▶ Introduce flexible work arrangements that accommodate the diverse needs of security sector personnel. Recognize the importance of work-life balance and parental leave, and provide support for both men and women to encourage shared responsibility for caregiving.
- ▶ Establish mandatory training as part of the core curriculum that addresses unconscious bias, stereotypes and the impact of traditional masculinities, and promotes respectful behaviour.
- ▶ Create a culture of accountability and implement transparent mechanisms for reporting instances of harassment, discrimination or unequal treatment and holding individuals accountable for their actions. Ensure that individuals feel safe and supported when reporting incidents, with strict confidentiality and protection against retaliation.
- ▶ Establish coaching, mentorship and sponsorship programmes to support individuals aiming to break gender barriers. Pairing junior security sector personnel with experienced mentors and sponsors can create opportunities for developing skills and career advancement.
- ▶ Leadership plays a crucial role in driving cultural change. This includes meeting regularly with staff associations to discuss gender equality issues. Leaders should demonstrate firm and unwavering commitment to gender equality through both words and actions. They should support those women and men who promote gender equality and speak out against sexual harassment, discrimination and sexism, at any level, facilitating the development, implementation and acceptance of internal policies.

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<sup>42</sup> ODIHR's 2024 [Human Rights and Gender Assessment in the Armed Forces — Facilitators Guide](#) aims to familiarize members of the armed forces with the main features, analytical approaches and techniques of participatory assessment methodology on human rights and gender equality in the armed forces.



- ▶ Policy- and decision-makers should prioritize work on combating harassment and discrimination through multi-faceted approaches that involve both the cultural change and the strict enforcement of policies to ensure accountability. This includes promoting policies that ensure balanced recruitment, retention and promotion of women and men and actively recruiting from diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ Individual men must be made aware of their own, important and constructive, role in achieving gender equality and their accountability for it. It is important to work with men on overcoming any shame or reluctance stemming from gender norms that assign work on gender equality solely to women, and to highlight diverse role models, including women and men who have successfully challenged traditional gender roles.

**Promising practice: Executive coaching and gender mainstreaming training for senior managers in the Ministry of Interior and the Police in Serbia**

In Serbia, the Interior Ministry introduced<sup>43</sup> a two-year training programme on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for senior managers. Twenty-two senior managers took part, including the heads of regional police directorates, the heads of units from the headquarters of the criminal police, border police and others. Almost all were men. Adapted from a programme for the Swedish police, participants received one-to-one coaching from external experts on human rights and gender equality as well as taking part in seminars, holding gender equality analysis meetings with their managers and developing individual action plans. After two years, all participants were dedicated to improving gender equality. They increased the number of women managers in their units, the ministry and in the police. They improved the career advancement of women in the police force, their public visibility, and police cooperation with civil society organizations and the local community. The police began to prioritize topics such as violence against women.

<sup>43</sup> Written contribution to the Warsaw conference by Tatjana Vasic, presenter of the Swedish Police-supported Executive Coaching Programme in Serbia.



## RECOMMENDATION 5

### **For men in politics — address the root causes of inequality**

In 1995, only 11 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs) across the OSCE region were women. This had increased threefold to 31.6 per cent by 2024. Female politicians, women's movements and some international organizations, supported also by a number of male politicians and political leaders, are largely responsible for this progress, although full gender equality in politics is still some way off. Efforts to increase women's participation and amplify women's voices in politics often focus on training and supporting women. Although this is very much needed, it needs to be accompanied by a greater focus on men, to foster equality, pluralism and inclusion within political institutions, addressing the root causes of inequality.

*Men are important agents of change and should be well-educated about gender equality to be able to educate other men. Every activity involving men, or where gender equality programmes work with men, should be consulted with and, even better, approved by women.*

Neda Chalovska Dimovska, President, Center for Equality and Justice, North Macedonia

**Participating States should:**

- ▶ Commit to parity in legislative bodies and decision-making positions, for example, through lower thresholds for signature numbers for candidate registration lists and by using innovative ways to expand the number of stakeholders working on gender equality in politics.<sup>44</sup>
- ▶ Conduct gender audits of political parties and parliaments to identify challenges and match them to solutions. Male as well as female political leaders should lead these audits, making them a real party/parliamentary priority.
- ▶ Issue guidelines on how to engage male politicians to support gender equality in politics.
- ▶ Recognize and address the very real issue of violence against women in politics.<sup>45</sup>
- ▶ Political parties and parliaments should develop Codes of Conduct and training programmes on gender equality to strengthen democratic governance, transparency and constituency support.
- ▶ Parliaments are encouraged to set up gender equality working groups,<sup>46</sup> feminist MP caucuses and/or formal gender equality committees, where male and female MPs participate equally.
- ▶ Parliaments are also encouraged to facilitate the engagement of male MPs in groups already working on gender equality to strengthen gender competence and identify gender champions.
- ▶ At central and local level, efforts should be made to increase the gender competence of civil servants and encourage them to support gender equality. For example, local authorities, including mayors (who are often male) could emphasize and mainstream gender in their activities, aiming to remove barriers to the participation of women.

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<sup>44</sup> See, CEDAW [General Recommendation 40](#) on the Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 25 October 2024.

<sup>45</sup> See, [Addressing Violence against Women in Politics In the OSCE Region: Toolkit](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 27 November 2022.

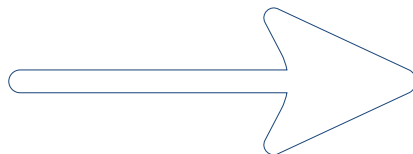
<sup>46</sup> See [Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit](#), Tool 3 – Parliamentary bodies for gender equality, OSCE/ODIHR, 20 December 2024.

**Male politicians should:**

- ▶ Advocate for, and set an example on the accountability of men on gender equality in politics and society, making space for women in decision-making.<sup>47</sup>
- ▶ Continue searching for the most effective ways to balance the incentives for men to support gender equality while ensuring they remain accountable and harness the ‘power of the bystander’ to support gender equality.<sup>48</sup>

**International organizations and gender-equality NGOs are encouraged to:**

- ▶ Include men in training on the implementation of gender equality. Note that women-only training is still needed for specific areas and topics (e.g., violence against women in politics, strengthening participation of women in overall in decision-making where representation of women is low, individual empowerment of under-represented groups of women).



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<sup>47</sup> See MenEngage Alliance [accountability](#) subpage.

<sup>48</sup> Refers to our role as individuals witnessing injustice, conflict, violence or discrimination. As bystanders, people are torn between their impulse to avoid getting involved (bystander effect) and their desire to do the right thing. Using the power of a bystander to focus on the victim, the perpetrator or other bystanders, we can choose to respond directly, to delegate action to mandated institutions, or to distract the perpetrator.

**Promising practices on men in politics<sup>49</sup>**

In some OSCE participating States, men are leading parliamentary gender equality reforms. For example, in Sweden, the First Deputy Speaker chairs the parliamentary gender equality reference group, a body that brings together representatives of all political parties.

ODIHR has conducted gender audits of political parties in Denmark. In one centre-right party, the deputy party president has taken the lead on advocating for the establishment of a statutory gender equality committee.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over several years, male MPs attended a one-year Equality Academy, learning about gender mainstreaming as well as feminist history and approaches to politics. They then applied this to lead or support policy and legislative developments.

ODIHR's *Sarajevo Tool for Engaging Men Politicians in Achieving Gender Equality in Politics* gives practical advice to male politicians as well as political institutions, such as political parties and parliaments, on how to increase men's involvement.

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<sup>49</sup> [Sarajevo Tool for Engaging Men Politicians in Achieving Gender Equality in Politics](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 5 March 2025.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

### **For male staff of international organizations such as the OSCE — strengthen work on gender equality**

The OSCE takes seriously the need to work with men on gender equality, both within and outside the organization, for example, by producing a toolkit for OSCE staff on engaging men.<sup>50</sup> Together with all international institutions, it needs to create more opportunities to involve men, and staff should both support and actively work towards engaging men on gender equality, ensuring accountability for results.

*“Allyship and solidarity with men and boys is a must... Building relationships and solidarity sometimes requires uncomfortable conversations, and we have to take that risk.”*

İlayda Eskitaşçıoğlu, from We Need to Talk, Turkey.

#### **Male staff of international organizations should:**

- ▶ Systematically gather, and include in orientation and training for new hires, knowledge about how to engage men to support gender equality; collaboration and communication on this subject should be strengthened.
- ▶ Raise the bar for ownership and accountability beyond quick, simple and easy actions for engaging men. The OSCE needs to create opportunities to identify, address and break stereotypes through a holistic approach that considers how we do things and how we relate to each other and

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<sup>50</sup> Engaging Men in Gender Equality at the OSCE: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff, OSCE, 29 August 2022.

with greater outreach. Rethinking policies on fatherhood/parenthood is one area where collaborative approaches are particularly well-suited (see Recommendation 2 on unpaid care).

- ▶ Capitalize on engagement with groups of male supporters and find ways to connect them with feminist/women's organizations, identifying opportunities for cooperation and joint initiatives. Activities and communication should emphasize the evidence-based benefits of gender equality for both women and men.
- ▶ Speak up more about gender equality,<sup>51</sup> focusing in particular on men's roles as well as women's, and taking meaningful actions to strengthen gender equality, both with and without women. For stronger impact and accountability, these actions should be coordinated with women's movements.
- ▶ Be more engaged in discussing the challenges that women face that are traditionally labelled as 'uncomfortable', including topics such as menstruation, sexual and reproductive health, pregnancy and child birth, menopause, and violence against women and girls, as well as the challenges that women refugees, women in conflict zones, etc., face due to policies and actions that are not gender-responsive or transformative.
- ▶ Speak out more about men's issues that are often ignored,<sup>52</sup> such as male stereotypes, male emotions, men's insecurities and how men need to be engaged in promoting and supporting women as equals/partners. It is important that men raise points of gender inequality and power imbalance with other men, no matter how small.

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<sup>51</sup> For example, the Human Dimension of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana organized a special session on gender awareness as part of the annual retreat of the staff in 2022.

<sup>52</sup> "Tatamata," [Gender Knowledge Hub](#) research, 2023 (in Serbian); John L. Oliffe, [Connecting Masculinities to Men's Illness Vulnerabilities and Resilience](#), Sage Journals, 33 (14), first published online 30 October 2023; Brene Brown, [Understanding male vulnerability](#), video, Men's Group, (no date).

**Promising practice: See something, say something**

The OSCE Secretariat's 'Men for Gender Equality' group<sup>53</sup> looks at men's shared responsibility for finding and implementing solutions. It seeks to foster gender equality within the OSCE by promoting the equal treatment of women and men, speaking out about gender inequality in everyday organizational settings, discussing internally and working to combat gender-based violence in the OSCE region by raising awareness. OSCE also has a Women's advisory group and these two groups cooperate. One concrete example is when a male manager asked a female colleague to get coffee and water for the group during a meeting. Another group member said, "*We're all okay with getting our own coffee*", and spoke privately to him about its effect. See something, say something.

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<sup>53</sup> OSCE, [Engaging Men in Gender Equality Toolkit](#).





## RECOMMENDATION 7

### **For men from religious and traditional communities — become part of the solution**

OSCE/ODIHR is well-placed to facilitate bridge-building between religious and human rights actors. Cooperation between religious and human rights actors is most successful when it incorporates both considerations of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and gender equality. Cooperation should be based on trust and mutual respect. All participants must understand that there may be different starting points, but that agreement can be found that VAWG needs to be addressed.<sup>54</sup>

Religious<sup>55</sup> and traditional<sup>56</sup> community leaders, who are usually men, often have authority within their communities and can effectively educate community

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<sup>54</sup> OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), [CEDAW](#), Article 5(a).

<sup>55</sup> The term ‘religious community’ is used to designate a group of people of the same religion or beliefs who manifest their religion or belief in four broad areas vital to religious experience, namely worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The terms ‘religion’ and ‘belief’ are broadly construed, and they extend to non-traditional and unpopular belief systems, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. It is noteworthy that some religious settings don’t have a leader, e.g., Pentecostal, Jehovahism, etc. Some groups have female religious leaders and female leaders who are not priests, but active women in religious associations.

<sup>56</sup> The term ‘traditional communities’ is understood as communities where behaviour is governed by custom and where ways of behaviour continue with little change from generation to generation. Affiliation with tradition provides a strong sense of identity for traditional communities, and the expectation is that custom overrides individual choices. Sometimes, religious communities

members, influencing attitudes and behaviours. Some are effective advocates for human rights and gender equality. Others are not. These actors need to be integrated as part of the solution, and should not be overlooked or dismissed, given their influence. Indeed, among other things, they can play a valuable role in directing women and men from their communities towards specialist services. Placing greater emphasis on outcomes and problem-solving through dialogue, rather than on process, helps to strengthen the common ground on which progress can be built. This can best be done through an inclusive process that allows for the integration of different voices, with respectful, culturally sensitive language.

*“To approach religious communities, you need to be non-confrontational and non-judgemental, and aware of your own prejudices. You need to develop trust and see religion as part of the solution. Getting people to talk, you discover you are talking about the same attitudes [to VAWG]. There is more common ground than one had imagined. One must be sensitive with language and open up discussions with meaningful conversations, for example, on how to build alliances against gender-based violence.”*

Prof. UW Dr hab. Wojciech Brzozowski, Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Participating States are encouraged to:**

- ▶ Combine their commitments to joint action and sustainable solutions when supporting the engagement of religious actors in training, dialogue and other activities with human-rights frameworks.
- ▶ Raise awareness among religious leaders of the positive impact of statements against VAWG and the detrimental impact of manifestations of intolerance towards gender equality committed in the name of religion.
- ▶ Call for effective partnerships to counter VAWG, including women and men theologians, human rights defenders, women’s civil society organizations and others.

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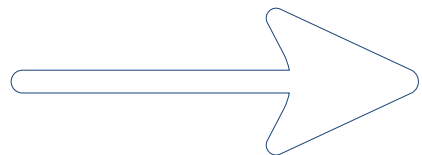
are recognized (by states) as traditional, because they represent a majority religious community or because of their historical and cultural significance.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

- ▶ Acknowledge the role of women in religious life and work with scholars of religious studies on gender equality topics, linking them to the well-being of their communities.
- ▶ Consider generational differences within religious communities in relation to levels of awareness about gender equality when planning and implementing activities.
- ▶ Take additional measures “to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”<sup>57</sup> Customs, traditions, and religious laws may hinder the enforcement of laws prohibiting harmful practices.
- ▶ Deliver training on gender equality that considers religious aspects in a non-confrontational and non-judgmental way, with trainers aware of their own prejudices and biases.

### **Religious and traditional leaders:**

- ▶ Are encouraged to address violence against women in their messages within and outside their communities. They should engage men and boys in violence prevention, cooperate with secular institutions that support victims of VAWG and work with perpetrators of violence.
- ▶ Should know how to react if a woman approaches them as a victim of violence. This includes knowing their own limitations and acknowledging when they do not have the expertise to deal with the issue; for example, when not to say or do anything except direct the woman to the appropriate institutions.



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<sup>57</sup> OCHCR, [CEDAW](#), Article 5(a).

**Positive example: bridging gaps**

The CHANGE project in North Macedonia works to bridge gaps between religious and traditional community leaders and women's movements by identifying areas where it is possible to work in parallel or together on issues around which agreement can be reached (such as the urgency of addressing violence against women), and building on joint successes. For this approach to work, respect of the 'other' and familiarity with their position is necessary. Religious leaders have participated in efforts to address violence against women, supporting the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence annual international campaign<sup>58</sup> and other media campaigns addressing prejudices and stereotypes that harm women.

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<sup>58</sup> An initiative made by the CHANGE project participants at the Consultation meeting in Skopje in July, 2023.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

### Use gender-sensitive language and communication

A culture of equality, tolerance, and non-discrimination is conducive to the implementation of legislative improvements and there are two important elements to this culture: the careful use of language and ensuring that intersectionality is built in from the outset.

Strategic language and mindful communication on gender should be used to communicate the benefits of gender equality for both men and women, honouring OSCE commitments to building a culture of equality, tolerance, and non-discrimination. There are many guides on the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language.<sup>59</sup> At a minimum, the language used in legislation, public policy documents, programmes, information for the public, or other official documents should be gender neutral and preferably gender-sensitive. As explained in ODIHR's 2024 *Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws*, "Gender-sensitive language is the only acceptable standard of legislative expression that promotes legislative effectiveness, equality and inclusivity,"<sup>60</sup> and "Language is the main

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, [Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English](#), United Nations Gender-inclusive language webpage, also available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish; [Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication](#), EIGE, 2019; [Guidelines for the use of language as a driver of inclusivity](#), Council of Europe, February 2024.

<sup>60</sup> [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 16 January 2024, p. 129.

medium for communicating the law, and gender- and diversity-sensitive language should be used.”<sup>61</sup>

In a number of OSCE participating States the use of gender-sensitive language has been contended and even instrumentalized by different groups in society, including some political, religious and traditional community leaders. Given that OSCE participating States have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitments on gender equality, modifications or replacement of agreed language may run counter to these commitments.

### **For participating States:**

- ▶ Gender-sensitive language should be considered in the drafting of laws,<sup>62</sup> policies, public and administrative documents and in the media.<sup>63</sup>
- ▶ Participating States, and public bodies, National Human Rights Institutions, and political parties in particular, should try to ease and defuse tensions between community groups and engage in public education about the importance of internationally agreed concepts and terms that were included in the OSCE commitments.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 223.

<sup>62</sup> See OSCE/ODIHR, [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#), para. 223, meaning that the language of the law should explicitly consider its audiences and make specific linguistic choices; regardless of the language in which laws are drafted, legislation should avoid the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender (gender-specific language) or group, or that they do so only when it serves the effectiveness of the law or a specific reason (for example, the law addresses a specific gender).

<sup>63</sup> For example, the [UN Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language](#), in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, seek to reflect the specificities and unique features of each language, recommending remedies that are tailored to the linguistic context; the European Institute for Gender Equality’s [Toolkit on Gender-Sensitive Communication](#) - A resource for policymakers, legislators, media and anyone else with an interest in making their communication more inclusive, 25 February 2019; [Inclusive communication in the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union](#), Council of the European Union, 2018; [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#), Council of Europe, adopted 21 November 2007, para. 18, recommends the “adoption/existence and implementation of norms imposing an obligation on the public sector to use non-sexist language in official documents, particularly in legal texts, policy papers, programmes, forms and questionnaires” and “a clear mandate of gender equality institutions and other relevant institutions to monitor the implementation of the principle of the use of non-sexist language”.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

- ▶ Participating States should raise public awareness of the importance of the use of the term ‘gender’ as an integral part of OSCE<sup>64</sup> and other international commitments to gender equality.

### **For all stakeholders:**

- ▶ Avoid technical language that can obstruct communication and introduce confusion.
- ▶ Increase collective efforts to minimize harm caused by narratives that seek to halt or reverse progress on gender equality in social media and artificial intelligence- (AI) generated content.
- ▶ Work to counter the perception that gender equality is only a ‘women’s issue’ by increasing efforts to make gender content more directly related to the well-being of both women and men, with specific examples of how gender equality is beneficial for all.
- ▶ Ensure that the word ‘gender’ is not labelled as problematic. Sensitivities about the word ‘gender’ in traditional and religious communities should be acknowledged and addressed, with clear delineation between secular laws and religious dogmas.
- ▶ Gender experts must find language that is not accusatory or hostile when addressing the role of men in the security sector and elsewhere, while ensuring that statistical realities are effectively communicated.

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<sup>64</sup> OSCE gender equality webpage.





## RECOMMENDATION 9

### **Recognize that intersectionality is an important foundation for the successful engagement of women and men**

Adopting a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach remains essential for successful engagement. This is fundamental to OSCE's gender equality work and should be used as a basis for programming by all stakeholders. It should cover all forms of religion or belief, culture, ethnic group, nationality or 'race'.<sup>65</sup> These factors also shape a person's response to the human rights framework as well as their understanding of intersecting inequalities.

*"We will be successful [in our work on gender equality] if we further our outreach to religious and community leaders, to women and men from under-represented groups, including women and men with disabilities, Roma and Sinti women and men, and other minority groups."*

Dr Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, ODIHR.

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<sup>65</sup> The use of the term 'race' here does not imply endorsement by ODIHR of any theory based on the existence of different races. It is a term widely used in international human rights standards, as well as in national legislation. This publication uses the term to ensure that people who are misperceived as belonging to another 'race' are protected against hate crimes.

**Participating States should:**

- ▶ Engage diverse stakeholders in the policy process, since consultation and dialogue, including engaging men, is a prerequisite of any work on gender equality
- ▶ Engage women and men of all ages, and from different groups and cultural contexts, as trainers, experts, content providers and participants in gender equality-related training, to fuel effective message delivery and connect to broader audiences.
- ▶ Prioritize inclusive processes for policies and measures by meaningfully engaging stakeholders. Policies, practices, and tools addressing concerns about online space should also be addressed.
- ▶ Consider generational differences in attitudes of women and men in programme design. Outreach to young men and young women is critical, as indicated by the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES).<sup>66</sup>
- ▶ Build on existing intersectional context-specific research findings, or supplement it with additional research which should form the basis for evidence-based action and better-informed policymaking, including the reversal of gender backsliding.
- ▶ Ensure data are fully disaggregated in order to examine and consider multiple aspects of a person's identity that combine to shape their experiences of advantage and disadvantage, discrimination, and privilege.

**Promising practice: An intersectional approach to hate crimes**

All of the incidents displayed on [hatecrime.osce.org](https://hatecrime.osce.org) were disaggregated by type of crime, by bias motivation and by country. Finally, incidents can include more than one victim but are counted as single incidents.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> [Men and gender equality: a global status report in 15 headlines](#), Equimundo, 2022. The study spans 15 years in 35 countries and found that, in a number of countries, young men have less gender equitable attitudes than their fathers.

<sup>67</sup> [www.hatecrime.osce.org/our-methodology](https://www.hatecrime.osce.org/our-methodology)



## CONCLUSION

### **An equal society would be a win-win for men as well as women**

Men and boys not only make up half the world's population, but deep-rooted patriarchal norms and unequal power relations mean that men are still in many (if not most) countries and contexts the primary decision-makers in all spheres, both public and private. This is why work with men and boys on gender equality must be based on an awareness of structural and individual power dynamics, and the social norms that drive these. Engaging with men and boys also needs to be rooted in human rights and women's rights and be accountable to women's rights organizations. Women, and women's rights groups, have historically led the struggle for gender equality, often at great personal cost. Their contribution must not be forgotten.

The recommendations in this report aim to support participating States and other stakeholders in engaging men and boys in building a better, gender-balanced and less violent world. The Political declaration on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>68</sup> states:

*We the Ministers and representatives of Governments, (...) further recognize the importance of men and boys fully engaging as strategic partners and*

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<sup>68</sup> Political declaration on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, UN Commission on the Status of Women, E/CN.6/2025/L.1, 6 March 2025.

*allies, as well as agents and beneficiaries of change for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including their economic empowerment, and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the need to design and implement national policies and programmes to fully engage men and boys in efforts to achieve the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including by addressing the root causes of gender inequality, such as negative social norms and gender stereotypes, and eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls; ...”*

## Further reading

### Gender equality

- ▶ OSCE CHANGE project (Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality) <https://www.osce.org/odihr.change>
- ▶ OSCE WIN project (Women and Men Networking and Innovating for Gender Equality) <https://www.winprojectosce.org/>
- ▶ European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2024 <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024>
- ▶ McKinsey, The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth-how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>
- ▶ The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, 2004 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/d/23295.pdf>
- ▶ Annual progress report 2023 on the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/572671>
- ▶ OSCE Academy in Bishkek Gender mainstreaming strategy 2020-2025 <https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/GenderMainstreamingStrategy.pdf>
- ▶ OSCE Factsheet on gender equality <https://www.osce.org/resources/factsheets/gender-equality>
- ▶ World Economic Forum 2024, The Global gender gap <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/06/global-gender-gap-2024-what-to-know>

## Men and gender equality

- ▶ Engaging Men in Gender Equality at the OSCE: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff  
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- ▶ Now and Men Podcast <https://now-and-men.captivate.fm/>
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