

COMBATING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION



Report of the 2nd Conference
of the Council of Europe
National Focal Points
on Gender Equality

Helsinki,
9-10 October 2014

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Report prepared by Maureen Bohan,
Educational Psychologist, Ireland

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Summary

The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 sets out five strategic objectives, one of which is combating gender stereotypes and sexism. The strategy defines gender stereotyping as *preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex.*

■ The history of gender stereotyping which has led to inequalities between men and women, is long and complex and it is recognised that legislation, though crucial, and positive actions alone do not necessarily achieve *de facto* gender equality. A conscious effort on the part of society to change attitudes and to accommodate difference is a prerequisite for an inclusive society. Education plays a central role in this process. Schools occupy a unique position in society, and the role of the school is fundamental in promoting gender equality. By raising awareness, broadening horizons, confronting misinformation, expanding the knowledge base to include the scholarship of women as well as men, and offering new models of behaviour, the school can be seen as an instrument for positive change.

■ The Council of Europe Conference *Combating gender stereotypes in and through education* covered a wide range of issues which dealt with the complexities associated with the *de facto* achievement of gender equality in societies and the role of education in this process.

■ The Conference brought together representatives of policy-makers, academics, managerial bodies, teacher trainers, educators, parents' and students' unions/associations and other relevant personnel from Council of Europe member states to:

- ▶ raise awareness of the persistence of gender stereotyping in school systems and how this affects girls and boys and their future life chances;
- ▶ to explore the factors that contribute to its persistence;
- ▶ to discuss the relationship between schools and the wider society;
- ▶ to present and exchange examples of good practice;
- ▶ to facilitate the establishment of partnerships and networks among stakeholders;
- ▶ to support member states in implementing existing standards, including the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education (*Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13*); and
- ▶ to make recommendations and propose follow-up activities for the Council of Europe in promoting gender equality in education.

■ The Conference concluded that societies remain strongly gender stereotyped and that the education system, which is a subsystem of the societies they serve, reproduce the values and culture of those societies without challenging their possible limitations on the life opportunities and experiences of their pupils.

■ The purpose of education was questioned: Why do we educate? Who do we educate? What should be taught? How do we educate? The purpose of education differs depending on the perspective and focus of the advisors and contributors to educational policies. However, it became clear to the participants that many of these did not focus on gender as an issue to be included in national educational policies.

■ It was also concluded that knowledge; what is included in curricula and transmitted to pupils as universal knowledge, is for the most part the scholarship and experience of men. Male issues are always present in the curricula and females remain the outsiders. In history curricula, for example, the experiences and contributions of women to historical events have been largely absent. In many education systems, boys continue to be educated mainly for public and economic life while girls are educated to care for others. This is reflected in the choice of courses taken by males and females in tertiary education. Statistics presented at the Conference confirmed this segregation.

■ Participants raised the issue of the influence of technology in the learning environment and in particular the increasing influence of social media on

young people. While the use of information technology in schools can provide pupils with opportunities to enhance their learning experiences and to establish networks with peers in and across other countries, the possible negative influences of social media were highlighted; these include the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and cyber bullying. The conference concluded that the influences of parents and schools on the personal and social development of young people have been diminished by their children's ever increasing use of social media. However, it was stressed that parents and schools do have an important role in creating awareness of and challenging gender stereotyping, and initiatives should be undertaken to assist them in this process. Examples of such initiatives were presented.

■ The conference concluded that the concept of gender mainstreaming is not fully understood by all the actors in educational processes throughout European countries. Policies have not extended down to structures and practices in schools. There is also a disconnect between countries' economic and social needs and the preparation of young people to meet these needs. There is no consistent means of evaluating how schools are dealing with the changing needs of their societies from a gender perspective.

■ The need to establish networks and to share good practice was agreed by participants and it was recommended that the Council of Europe could assist in this process. The Pestalozzi Programme can be expanded to establish networks for the purpose of sharing information and experiences. The Council of Europe should establish a data base of examples of good practice which countries could implement or adapt for implementation in their respective situations. Other international organisations also need to include a gender perspective in their policies on education. The impact on people's lives and life-chances by the perpetuation of gender stereotyping needs to be addressed at both national and international levels.

Key findings

Gender stereotyping continues to be an obstacle to the achievement of equality between men and women. Apart from the personal and social consequences, for both women and men, of gender stereotyping, it also has negative repercussions on countries' economic development and competitiveness. Gender stereotyping places unhealthy demands on both sexes which inhibit their natural talents and interests from developing, and consequently limit economic progress and prevent social cohesion.

■ Gender stereotyping is transmitted to children from babyhood; by parents, social networks, early learning experiences and by media. This is imposed through interactions, expectations, dress, toys, stories, books, television. From a very early age, boys and girls are placed into the blue or the pink 'box' with its associated behaviours and expectations. Children themselves display gender stereotyped attitudes and behaviours as early as pre-school. Parents encourage gender appropriate activities and discourage cross-gender activities. Even where parents cross the gender dividing line in their behaviour and expectations for their boys and girls, the other influences in children's lives compete strongly to stereotype them.

” *Gender stereotypes lead us to avoid, restrict or make difficult the development of some of those potentials but they lead us also to press and force the development of potentials that we believe make part of their person*

Teresa Alvarez, Portugal

■ Modern culture, including social media, are powerful influences in the development of children and young people and convey messages that reinforce rather than challenge gender stereotyping. This very visible reinforcement of gender stereotyping, which defines human traits and characteristics as being either feminine or masculine, with more positive social values assigned to traits seen as masculine, contradicts the present reality of people's lives. This reinforcement of gender stereotyping leads to the perpetuation of discrimination against women, as most of the human traits seen as feminine have less social value.

” *We need to change awareness amongst girls and boys about these gender expectations and stereotypes. And we need to target also teachers and the pedagogues that are unaware of the gender-based behaviours that they are producing. What we want to do is to give the girls and boys a free choice.*

Kira Appel, Denmark

■ Statistics highlighted how the persistence of gender stereotyping continues to lead to more negative consequences for females, while not ignoring its negative impact on males.

■ What is the role of the education system in gender based inequality? In the light of our rapidly changing world, what are schools teaching? How are they preparing children and young people for participation in society? Whose knowledge are they imparting? Who is included in this knowledge? What skills are they teaching? What expectations do they have for their pupils? Are their expectations different for boys and girls?

■ These were some of the questions raised and discussed at the conference. Depending on the perspective of organisations defining the purpose of education, different objectives are listed. The OECD focuses on the need for countries to invest in education to strengthen economic growth. The Council of Europe defines education as having four major objectives: preparation for employment; preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies; personal development; the development of a broad advanced knowledge base. UNESCO adds to these by pointing out that the level of knowledge and skills that individuals need to function as workers, citizens and fulfilled individuals in the global society is increasing. It was questioned whether these objectives are translated into countries' educational policies and whether curricula reflect them in: the subjects they teach; who has access to these subjects; what knowledge is included in subject curricula; what

guidance is given to young people in choosing subjects, further study and careers. For girls and boys attending the same school, are their experiences and outcomes similar?

” *The essential objective is that by using ... concrete tools, gender awareness and promoting gender equality are incorporated into teaching and the national core curriculum. The overall objective is a shift to gender sensitive education.*

**Krista Kiuru, Minister for Education, Science and Communications,
Republic of Finland**

■ The education system is a subsystem of societies, and therefore reflects the culture and values of that society. In many countries, gender differentiation continues to be a key principle in shaping the practices and curricula of schools. Males are educated for public life while girls are educated to be the carers in society. This differentiation is reflected in the choices of courses taken by females and males in tertiary education. Females predominate in courses in education, health care and social sciences, while males predominate in courses in science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM).

■ The perception that subjects can be categorised into ‘boys’ subjects and ‘girls’ subjects still prevails. This is particularly the case in relation to STEM subjects. Subjects and subsequent professions in STEM are very often associated with men and carry their own stereotype as being difficult, dirty or socially uninvolved. Many teachers and guidance personnel in schools either consciously or unconsciously perpetuate this stereotype when advising and interacting with their pupils and through curricula and materials. There is often a disconnect between the curricula taught in schools and the career opportunities available in countries.

” *Changing girls’ and boys’ perception of STEM is therefore extremely important. With our project Talent Viewer we let pupils explore their own talents and we train teachers to show how these talents could be used in all kinds of STEM professions.*

Cocky Booij, the Netherlands

■ In a recent survey carried out in the United Kingdom¹, Over three quarters of 14-16 year old students (78%) interviewed, said they would consider

1. Nestlé Populus UK STEM survey, July 2014

a STEM career. However, 41% of female students, as opposed to 58% of male students, said they knew little or nothing about the type of jobs on offer, or career opportunities in STEM related fields. Over half (52%) of the science and mathematics teachers and tutors interviewed said they did not know what STEM businesses were looking for in recruits.

■ Only half of the countries who responded to the Council of Europe survey² on the extent to which countries were implementing the measures contained in the Recommendation *Gender mainstreaming in education (Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13)*, indicated that schools in their respective country are either required or encouraged to set targets to increase the number of girls taking science and technology subjects in second-level education. All of this is set against a rapidly growing need in most countries for suitably qualified personnel in STEM professions.

■ Initiatives such as that of VHTO, the Dutch National Expert Organisation on Girls/Women and Science/Technology in the Netherlands which focus on assisting young people to explore their talents and training teachers to become aware of how these talents could be used in STEM professions, could be replicated in other countries.

■ The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in schools is now the norm in most countries. Classroom teaching can be augmented by the use of interactive technology and other resources made available through ICT. With so much knowledge available to children and young people through technology, the role of teachers has shifted from that of being the source of all knowledge to that of facilitator of access to different forms of knowledge, both inside and outside the classroom. This brings a new responsibility for teachers which requires them to direct young people to appropriate sources and to assist them in becoming critical thinkers and independent learners.

■ Teachers still play an important role in the holistic development of their pupils and how they engage and interact with them, and their expectations for them can have a profound effect on their self-confidence and achievements. Teachers not only deliver the formal curriculum in schools, they also contribute to the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum, which includes all formal and informal interactions with pupils, language used; unwritten rules; conveys to pupils powerful messages, which influence their self-perceptions and self-confidence. Teachers' behaviour and practices, often carried out unconsciously, can and do contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and to gendered self-perception. Of the 44 countries that participated in the

2. Council of Europe survey on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 October 2007.

Council of Europe survey, only 14 had prepared guidelines that address issues related to the hidden curriculum in schools as part of gender mainstreaming.

■ An initiative commissioned by the government of Flanders designed to create gender aware (and LGBTQI friendly) cultures in Flemish schools, is an example of gender mainstreaming in practice. It focuses on all aspects of school life; organisation, policies, practices, formal and hidden curricula, teaching materials, career guidance, and on all stakeholders - teachers, pupils and parents.

” *I start by studying how the school is organised to find the ways in which we can achieve the most with as little as possible extra workload for the teachers. Instead of bringing gender as a whole new theme, selling it as a new angle of approach for the themes the school is already dealing with does wonders for everyone’s motivation too.*

Steven De Baerdemaeker, Belgium

■ Student teachers as well as practicing teachers and those engaged in school management, should have opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours and should understand the consequences of stereotyping pupils on the basis of gender. During the interventions it was highlighted that school cultures do not change overnight and that time is needed so that teachers do not feel that gender is “something more on their plate again”. It is also very important that schools link gender with other important issues, such as well-being or cultural diversity. Gender stereotyping can not only limit the personal and social development of women and men, it can also limit a country’s economic progress by employers not having access to all of the potential talent available.

■ An ideology of female inferiority and subordination was for centuries so deeply ingrained into the values and cultures of European societies that it was accepted by women as well as men without questioning it.

■ While many European women received an education over the centuries, access to education, particularly higher education, was not generally available to girls and women until the nineteenth century.

” *The more recent democratisation of the educational system has not erased the historical weight of gendered visions of femininity and women’s relationship to knowledge and the public sphere.*

Elisabeth Lønna, Norway

■ Girls continued to encounter many obstacles in their journey through education systems, despite having access to education in most European countries. There are many examples of how education systems weighted curricula in favour of boys. In England, when it became clear that girls did consistently better than boys in the 11+ examinations, the results of which determined access to grammar schools and subsequently to tertiary education, the results were weighted so that fewer girls than boys went on to grammar schools. In Norway, home economics was an obligatory subject in primary school for girls, but not for boys. To allow time on the curriculum for this, girls had fewer lessons in other subjects such as mathematics. However, girls had to take the same examinations as boys when competing to get into lower secondary school.

■ Questions need therefore to be asked as to why systems continue to resist the participation of women in all spheres of education and life. Traditional beliefs and stereotypes about the capabilities and role of women in society have not been fully challenged and eliminated in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

■ The need for countries to have a well-educated workforce to compete in the technological revolution which took hold in the last quarter of the twentieth century and which is developing apace globally in the twenty-first century, has required them to focus on their educational provision. However such analyses are not necessarily being carried out using a gender approach. In their responses to the Council of Europe survey, a majority of countries indicated that they had developed policies, plans or programmes to promote the strategy of gender mainstreaming. However, it was evident from the responses that schools were not the target of these in the majority of cases. Other research (Eurydice)³ supported this "... while countries have implemented various different policy instruments, more general strategies are often lacking... although the list of potential policy measures that aim at changing traditional gender roles and stereotypes is long, only a few countries have put them into action."

■ In the responses to the Council of Europe's survey, almost half of the countries indicated that schools in their respective country were not required to ensure that boys have access to subjects in second-level education which focus on personal and social development, including health education. Countries express concern for the levels of male suicide; the high levels of male school dropout; the high levels of males who experience mental health problems and those who experience social exclusion and unemployment, but do not seem to associate any of these with a lack of educational preparation to deal

3. Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe, *Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2010*

with personal difficulties, nor do they analyse the educational experiences of males, particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who come from ethnic minority or migrant populations.

■ In its 2012 report, *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*, the OECD notes that in member states almost 20% of students do not reach a basic minimum level of skills to function in today's societies and that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are twice as likely to be low performers.

” *It is primarily socio-economic inequalities that are decisive; gender-related inequality has attracted very little attention.*

Bernard Wicht, Switzerland

■ It is of concern that gender differences are not addressed. The long-term consequences of early school dropout are very different for males and females. Many females leave school early because of pregnancy or, in the case of some females from ethnic minority backgrounds, early marriage. In many cases early school leaving leads to pregnancy and the consequent spiral of poverty for those women and their children. Males who drop out of education also experience difficulties which also need to be addressed by governments, but the different consequences and the challenges involved in responding to the needs of such females and males need to be addressed separately. The focus on early school dropout without addressing gender issues is repeated in other international reports.

■ The challenges faced by countries in matching skills development with economic needs and the adaptation of education systems to respond to these needs is not underestimated, but to propose policies without addressing specific gender issues would appear to limit the success of such proposals.

■ Other challenges face the implementation of gender mainstreaming. In terms of subjects often taught as part of core curricula, they are in the main male-centric. It is male knowledge and theory, constructed within the framework of a patriarchal paradigm of human society, which are being passed down as our intellectual inheritance. The experiences, voices, contributions, and perspectives of women, non-dominant individuals and groups have been largely ignored. An example of gender issues in history teaching was presented at the conference. The role played by women has been largely absent from school history teaching, curricula and textbooks. When women appear it is only in a tokenistic, symbolic or stereotypical way. A number of different strategies were examined as a means of making history curricula more inclusive of the

experiences of women throughout history and inclusive of their contribution to historical events. There are risks associated with some of these strategies: for example, by focusing specifically on women's history as part of or a unit of a history curriculum, there is an assumption that the 'other' part of history is 'men's' history.

■ Mainstreaming also carries its own risk if not carefully designed with learning objectives identified. Mainstreaming, without a proper understanding of its objectives, can lead to the disappearance of female's experiences and contributions to the history of societies. These risks also can be associated with other subject curricula.

” *Combating gender stereotypes in the education system should focus on its irreplaceable role: the construction of knowledge.*

Teresa Alvarez, Portugal

■ Traditionally, it was parents, family and local community, including schools, which were the main socialising influences in children's lives. This is no longer the situation. There are new powerful socialisation contributors to the development of children, and their influence on young people's lives is ever increasing. Through social media web sites; pop videos; films; mobile phones; the proliferation of television programmes; pop music, children and young people are subjected daily to influences which may not reflect the values and beliefs of their families and communities. Through many of these media, gender stereotyping is reinforced and perpetuated.

” *Media are not exactly in the habit of asking for permission about what they present to toddlers and children. They decide what they want them to see as 'normal' ways of behaving as girls or boys.*

Maya Chivi, Lebanon/Canada

■ Young children see 'helpless' princesses being saved by 'heroic' knights and 'handsome' princes, and they internalise and copy the behaviour of the characters as they see portrayed. A visit to a toy shop will find a multitude of 'princess' dresses and dolls in the pink aisles and 'hero' outfits in the 'boys' aisles. There is a greater variety of toys, which come in many bright colours, in the 'boys' aisles. From pre-school age, children are socialised to behave in ways aligned with what society expects of their gender and media reinforce this through television, books, toys and games.

Older children see overly sexualised pop videos and magazines where often females are subjected to violence or, in attempts by producers to 'promote' gender equality, females themselves engage in violent acts, displaying traits generally associated with males but not portrayed as being inappropriate for both sexes. There is little attempt to challenge stereotyping or to construct new models of femininity and masculinity, models that incorporate traits and characteristics that define an individual first; that place males and females in equal relationships and that portray them in the many roles that they may have to play throughout a lifetime.

Cyber bullying is one of the more insidious outcomes of social media. While there are many forms of cyber bullying, all of which have serious consequences for victims, gender stereotyping as used in this manner urgently needs to be addressed in policies, strategies and programmes designed to combat this phenomenon.

While children and young people are exposed from early in their lives to many socialising influences, parents and the family setting are the first players in this process. They also continue to influence, either directly or as role models, their children's personal, educational and other choices throughout their years in school and often into early adulthood. Parents also transmit their values, beliefs and cultural traditions to their children. As societies become more egalitarian and governments implement policies to promote gender equality, some parents' traditional beliefs of the roles of men and women, in the home and in society, may run counter to the principles being promoted in education systems. Parents therefore must be included as key players in schools' promotion of gender mainstreaming activities and must be assisted in understanding what is involved in the process. Challenging gender stereotyping in schools without the involvement and co-operation of parents could lead to tensions for either girls or boys in relation to educational, training or career choices. Parents may not be aware of the obligations of schools in relation to compliance with legislation and should be informed accordingly. In the Council of Europe survey, countries were asked if they provided guidelines on gender mainstreaming which were aimed at parents. Only eight countries had developed such guidelines.

The *Irene* programme in Spain is an example of providing information and training for parents outside the school setting, as part of a wider initiative aimed at the prevention of sexual violence committed by young people and teenagers. It is intended for young people and teenagers in secondary level education, vocational training centres and young offender institutions, but it includes specific actions aimed at parents' associations among other groups

and professional personnel. The training aims to challenge gender-based stereotyping and myths underlying sexual violence

” *Education plays an essential role in the training process of future generations. For this reason, the parents of children and youngsters are also commissioned with this practice, since they highly influence the way boys and girls embrace cultural patterns, including gender-based stereotypes.*

Carolina Suarez Garcia, Spain

Conclusions

It is clear from the presentations, research cited and from the debates at this conference, that gender equality has not been achieved in European states, and that it must continue to be addressed.

Gender stereotyping and sexism remain the greatest obstacles to the *de facto* achievement of gender equality.

Gender stereotyping and sexism remain a strong force in the functioning of modern societies and exists in all their structures; organisation; and in the relationships between men and women. Education systems, as part of the subsystems of a country, reflect the traditions and culture of the society they serve.

” All nations have their own traditions, and gender stereotypes are part of it. But it is good to remember that they are made by people and can be reformed by people.

Tarja Halonen, Former President of the Republic of Finland

Most member states have incorporated the principle of equality between men and women into national laws, and other measures have been taken to promote gender equality, however, schools are not the target of policies and programmes in the majority of cases.

There is a divergence between the needs of rapidly changing societies and young people's educational preparation to work and live in those societies. New technological sectors are developing and expanding apace and these will require a suitably qualified workforce. As economies grow, countries will need to draw on the talents of all citizens, not just on half.

■ From the discussions and presentations of the conference, we can therefore clearly conclude that:

- ▶ Schools need support and assistance in implementing gender mainstreaming.
- ▶ School curricula need to be examined and revised accordingly, to ensure that they become more inclusive of the experiences and scholarship of women and of those from diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ Positive actions are needed to augment the gender mainstreaming process throughout education systems.
- ▶ Research, evaluation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in education should be undertaken on a continuing basis.
- ▶ Budgets are required to fund the gender mainstreaming process, specific initiatives, research as well as monitoring and evaluation. These budgets should not be cut in times of economic downturn.
- ▶ All those involved in the education of children and young people - parents, teachers, school managers and other school personnel should have training to ensure that the principle of gender equality is promoted and sustained in educational establishments.
- ▶ All citizens, women and men, are required to share family responsibilities as societies become more diverse. In democratic societies, citizens have a right to personal fulfilment and also have a responsibility to contribute to society and to their local communities. Gender stereotyping, with its ensuing restrictions on people's self-image, expectations and life-chances, militates against women's and men's preparedness to meet the demands of modern societies. Schools should play an active role in preparing all young people to develop the skills necessary to fully participate in all spheres of modern society.
- ▶ International organisations that provide policy advice to governments on education should include proposals that meet the needs of both females and males. These needs can be very different depending on the target area.
- ▶ National Governments must face their obligations and implement the commitments to which they have signed up.

International standards and principles

Access to and participation in education and equality between men and women are human rights enshrined in international conventions, instruments and declarations.

■ In ratifying the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW, 1979), states undertook, *inter alia*:

- ▶ To ensure equal rights for men and women in the field of education (Article 10). In Article 10c it states The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging co-education and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and , in particular by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods.

■ Furthermore **The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** adopted at the United Nations fourth World Conference on Women (1995) urged governments to take action to combat the continuous discrimination against women, which still persisted across countries as they prepared to enter the twenty-first century.

■ Strategic objective B12 of the Platform for Action, *Ensure Equal Access to Education*, outlines a number of actions to be undertaken by governments. These include:

- ▶ The creation of a gender-sensitive educational system in order to ensure equal educational and training opportunities and full and equal participation of women in educational administration and policy and decision-making.

■ At a special session of the UN General Assembly in 2000 a resolution on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. Member states undertook to:

- ▶ Ensure policies that guarantee equal access to education and the elimination of gender disparities in education, including vocational training, science and technology.
- ▶ Support the implementation of plans and programmes of action to ensure quality education and improved enrolment rates for boys and girls and the elimination of gender discrimination and gender stereotypes in educational curricula and materials, as well as in the process of education.

■ Following the 1990 **World Conference on Education for All⁴**, world leaders recognised the urgent priority of ensuring access to, and improving the quality of, education for girls and women, and to removing every obstacle that hampers their active participation. Subsequently the **Dakar Framework for Action** (2005) included among its six goals, one on *Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality*. The text of the Dakar Framework for Action states that: *Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education. Without overcoming this obstacle, Education for All cannot be achieved. Paragraph 40*.

■ In addition it is relevant to mention that the third UN Millennium Development Goal **Promote Gender Equality and Empower women**, includes among its targets, one on *Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015* (Target 3.A).

■ The Council of Europe from its inception has considered equality between men and women in all spheres of public and private life, as a fundamental principle of human rights and democracy. More specifically in the field of promoting gender equality in education, the **Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017** specifies that the Council of Europe action will focus *inter alia* on promoting and disseminating education syllabuses and teaching practices which are free from explicit and implicit gender stereotypes, as well as other measures proposed in the **Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education (CM/Rec(2007)13)**. This Recommendation puts forward a set of comprehensive measures which the member states need

4. Education For All is a global movement led by UNESCO, aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. Governments, development agencies, civil society, non-government organisations and the media are but some of the partners working toward reaching these goals.

to put in place to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in education. The Recommendation also calls for regular monitoring of the implementation of the above measures.

■ **The Resolution, *Bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality to achieve real gender equality***, adopted by states participating in the 7th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men (Baku, 24-25 May 2010) recognises the need to address the role of education in the promotion of *de facto* gender equality by:

- ▶ taking the necessary measures to enhance the role of education in combating gender stereotypes and in promoting *de facto* gender equality (Paragraph 33);
- ▶ providing both boys and girls with an education free from gender stereotypes defending gender equality and to this end implementing the measures proposed in Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education (Paragraph 34).

■ Furthermore the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** (Istanbul Convention), a legally-binding treaty, contains several provisions related to gender stereotypes and sexism as factors which underpin inequality between women and men in all domains, including education. The Convention requires the promotion of gender equality, mutual respect in interpersonal relationships and non-violence as early as possible and highlights the important role of educational establishments in enhancing the promotion of these values. The Convention extends the obligation to promote the principles of equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships in all informal educational facilities, as well as any sports, cultural and leisure facilities as well as the media. The Convention also requires states parties to take the necessary steps to include teaching materials on issues such as non-stereotyped gender roles, and the compilation of good practices to promote an education free from gender stereotypes.

■ States have signed up to the above international agreements and instruments and have committed themselves to take the necessary measures and actions to comply with those commitments. However, as was identified and discussed at the conference, and as statistics show, in the second decade of the twenty-first century no country has achieved gender parity and few have completely eliminated gender stereotyping in all spheres of public life, including education. Gender stereotyping continues to influence the treatment, experiences, expectations and life-choices of women and men alike, and which has negative consequences for large numbers of them.

Recommendations

Based on international legal frameworks and taking into account evidence of the persistence of gender stereotyping in European education systems which leads to a continuation of discrimination against women in all spheres of society, the conference made the following recommendations:

To Governments/regional/local authorities

- ▶ Monitor and evaluate on a regular basis the implementation of national, regional and local gender equality policies.
- ▶ Promote and integrate gender mainstreaming into existing structures and policies at all levels of education.
- ▶ Promote gender proofing of all school policies.
- ▶ Develop indicators at national/regional level to monitor and evaluate the process of gender mainstreaming in schools.
- ▶ Examine and revise school curricula to ensure that they are inclusive of the experiences and scholarship of all female and male citizens within and across societies.
- ▶ Introduce mandatory relationship and sexuality education throughout primary and second level education.
- ▶ Endorse an emphasis on human rights to permeate core subjects on school curricula.

To educational training providers: professional bodies

- ▶ Promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of all teacher pre-service and in-service training courses and school management personnel courses.
- ▶ Put in place policies and incentives to encourage girls to study science and technology subjects in school and to pursue higher level STEM courses and careers in these areas.
- ▶ Put in place initiatives to encourage more males to become involved in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

To relevant public authorities: relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

- ▶ Organise awareness-raising campaigns to inform and educate young people and parents about the powerful influence of social media as a tool for communication and progress.
- ▶ Raise awareness of the links between gender stereotyping and bullying, cyber bullying and violence against women.

To schools: local stakeholders

- ▶ Review school policies and practices on a cyclical basis, as part of self-evaluation, to ensure that gender mainstreaming is being fully implemented throughout schools and educational establishments.
- ▶ Monitor practices (formal and informal) on an on-going basis to ensure that all stakeholders are sensitised to the issues associated with the gender mainstreaming process.
- ▶ Work closely with parents to raise awareness about issues related to gender equality and encourage parents' contribution to schools' gender mainstreaming processes.
- ▶ Educate all children and young people to understand the consequences of cyber bullying, some forms of which are due to gender stereotyping.

To international organisations

- ▶ Assist states in complying with their commitment to promote gender mainstreaming throughout their respective educational systems.
- ▶ Provide exemplar templates, questionnaires, indicators, methodologies.
- ▶ Disseminate successful initiatives and examples of good practice widely throughout member states.
- ▶ Monitor progress in states on a cyclical basis of the implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in Education, and the implementation of the strategic objectives of combating gender stereotypes and sexism and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.
- ▶ Further develop networks, such as the Pestalozzi Programme, to increase the level of networking among stakeholders.

“One book, one pen,
one child and one teacher
can change the world.”

Malala Yousafzai

Women’s Rights Activist, Children’s Activist,
Nobel Peace Prize winner 2014

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