



AIMING FOR  
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BY 2020

**Gender Equality in the  
Audiovisual Sector –  
a new Council of Europe  
Recommendation**





## GENDER EQUALITY? WHAT EQUALITY?

Gender equality is a vital component of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which in turn requires equal access to rights, visibility, autonomy, resources and responsibilities for women and men. This prerequisite for the achievement of social justice benefits not only women, but society as a whole. In 2018, data and evidence demonstrate that equality between women and men has not been achieved in Europe.

## WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S ROLE?

For over 40 years, the Council of Europe has been pioneering in this sector by laying down standards and instruments aimed at promoting gender equality, organising awareness-raising initiatives and issuing declarations. It recently renewed its firm commitment by adopting its second Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023. **The Council of Europe Recommendation on Gender Equality in the Audiovisual Sector** draws on many of these important objectives, e.g. combating gender stereotypes and sexism and preventing violence against women, among others.

## WHY THE AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR?

As the **Recommendation** makes clear, the audiovisual sector includes cinema, television, and video games, among other fields of activity. All of these have a powerful role in shaping, building and perpetuating the dominant norms in society, including gender-based norms and roles. Owing to its broad reach, the audiovisual sector can play a decisive role in perpetuating gender-based inequalities both on screen (i.e. in images) and off-screen (e.g. access to the industry) but also in positively influencing perceptions and promoting gender equality.

## EURIMAGES AND GENDER EQUALITY

Since 2012 Eurimages has had a gender equality working group striving to ensure that gender equality in the film industry is high on the Fund's agenda. In 2017, the Fund's Board of Management emphasised its commitment to this objective by adopting the **2018-2020 Gender Equality Strategy – "Aiming for 50/50 by 2020"**, a goal echoing the ambition of institutions such as the Swedish Film Institute whereby public funding should be distributed equally between male and female directors.

■ As part of its action plan, Eurimages has a dedicated website section on gender equality and carries out a range of initiatives, including:

- ▶ supporting female directors attending a number of residencies (Cinéfondation, Berlinale-Nipkow and Venice Biennale);
- ▶ offering a €30 000 prize for the Best Female Director (the Audentia Award) which is awarded at different festivals every year (Istanbul 2016, Locarno 2017, etc.);
- ▶ organising outreach events bringing together professionals and gender equality experts to raise awareness and give increased visibility to the contribution of women professionals;
- ▶ collecting information about the gender of those applying for support (all gendered roles must be identified during the application), and many more measures.

## HOW TO PROGRESS TOWARDS GREATER GENDER EQUALITY IN THE AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR?

■ Gender-based inequalities have been identified at all levels of the industry, be it gender pay gaps, the glass ceiling, (sexual) harassment, lack of distribution of female-driven content, the list goes on. Despite their contribution to the sector women are often under-represented, and treated and described in a manner contrary to respect and dignity.

■ **The Sarajevo Conference Declaration** (14 August 2015) was a first step in showing the Council of Europe's commitment to change in this area. However, it was the landmark **Recommendation on Gender Equality in the Audiovisual Sector**, adopted on 27 September 2017 by all 47 member states of the Council, which put forward practical measures to bring about positive change in this sector. The **Recommendation** was drafted by a wide range of international experts from funding bodies and broadcasters, with feedback from representatives of prominent industry bodies and academics.

## CALLS FOR CHANGE AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL

■ The **Recommendation** invites member states to:

- ▶ review their legislation and policies;
- ▶ collect, monitor and publish data;
- ▶ support research;
- ▶ encourage the ongoing development of media literacy; and
- ▶ enhance accountability processes.

■ It provides substantial details on how to carry out these objectives, including offering an extensive list of links to relevant studies, documents and policies.

■ The **Recommendation** also provides a detailed series of monitoring methods and performance indicators to assist all sectors in the audiovisual sector in collecting sex-disaggregated data and taking coherent action on their findings. It also encourages member states to monitor results on a five-year basis.

## ACCESS TO POWER STRUCTURES

■ One of the biggest obstacles to gender equality in the sector is the lack of presence of women on decision-making bodies (e.g. as artistic directors of film festivals and commissioning editors), and the risk of simply repeating traditional opinions as to what constitutes quality. Unconscious bias training is one means of countering this problem and questions should be raised when no women or very few women sit on decision-making panels.

## BUT THEY STILL MAKE FILMS!

■ Despite all the obstacles confronting them, women film-makers still make a constant and striking contribution to the industry. Although their films tend to be selected less frequently in official competition at some of the major festivals, they nevertheless receive proportionately more awards. On the small screen, there are an increasing number of women protagonists in popular TV dramas written by women.

■ There is also a proven link between the contribution of women to audiovisual productions and the more positive representation of women, although this is not systematically the case. Encouraging female creativity is acknowledged as having an undeniable impact in promoting gender equality, both within this sector and in society at large.

## WHAT IS NOT MEASURED REMAINS INVISIBLE

It is vital that progress now be measured and made visible through publications, debates and other communication channels. Hence the **Recommendation's** support for research and studies on gender inequalities in the sector and for wide dissemination of these results, as well as for initiatives involving collaboration or partnerships between different networks.

Through this **Recommendation** a wide range of institutions directly or indirectly connected to the audiovisual sector, whether European institutions, juries or commissioning bodies, NGOs or universities (to name but a few), are encouraged to contribute to information and data collection in order to monitor the number of women and men in the industry, analyse and publicise these figures and also attain and foster awareness of issues of gender inequalities and sexism, while working to achieve the equal representation of women and men on all bodies.



*CPP-ESA Recommendation Working Group – March 2017*

## MOVING TOWARDS 50/50 BY 2020 AND BEYOND

Thanks to the work done by Eurimages, Council of Europe member states, and indeed countries around the world, as well as policy makers, now have access to a large number of documents, studies and guidelines to help them draw up new regulations, policies and legislation aimed at implementing this new **Recommendation** on gender equality and ensuring that women and men have an equal position on the playing field that is the audiovisual sector.



[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

