

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (90) 4

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON THE ELIMINATION OF SEXISM FROM LANGUAGE

*(adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 February 1990,
at the 434th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15b. of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the ideals and principles which are their common heritage;

Considering that equality between women and men falls within the scope of those ideals and principles;

Welcoming the fact that the principle of equality between the sexes is gradually becoming part of law and practice in Council of Europe member States;

Considering, however, that the achievement of real equality between women and men is still being hindered by social, cultural and other barriers;

Stressing the fundamental role of language in forming an individual's social identity, and of the interaction between language and social attitudes;

Convinced that the sexism characterising current linguistic usage in most Council of Europe member States - whereby the masculine prevails over the feminine - is hindering the establishment of equality between women and men, since it obscures the existence of the women as half of humanity, while denying the equality of women and men;

Noting also that the use of the masculine gender to denote people of both sexes is, in today's social context, a source of uncertainty about the people - men or women - involved;

Aware of the importance of the role played by education and the media in shaping attitudes and behaviour;

Welcoming the initiatives already taken at national and international level to adapt language to the social and psychological trends towards equality between women and men;

Having regard to its Recommendation No. R (85) 2 on legal protection against sex discrimination;

Having regard also to the Resolution on policy and strategies for achieving equality in political life and in the decision-making process and to the Resolution on policies to accelerate the achievement of real equality between women and men adopted respectively by the 1st (Strasbourg, 4 March 1986) and the 2nd (Vienna, 4-5 July 1989) European Ministerial Conferences on equality between women and men;

Bearing in mind its Declaration on equality of women and men, adopted on 16 November 1988,

Recommends that governments of member States promote the use of a language reflecting the principle of equality of the women and men and, take all measures they consider appropriate with a view to:

1. encouraging the use, as far as possible, of non-sexist language to take account of the presence, status and role of women in society as current linguistic practice does for men;
2. bring the terminology used in legal drafting, public administration and education into line with the principle of sex equality;
3. encourage the use of non-sexist language in the media.