

# OUR GENDER APPROACH

Gender refers to the way thoughts about expectations, values, images, behaviors, belief systems and roles regarding women and men are constructed socially. For example, gender constructions of different nations, ethnic communities or countries can be based on what is suitable and what is not for individuals of different genders. Therefore, construction of gender varies not only from one culture to another but also over time or during crisis times of a society. Construction of gender-based relations is related to how reproduction, caregiving and production roles are shared based on gender. Therefore, dominant and stereotyped social expectations about roles and behaviors assumed by genders prepare the ground for inequalities and discriminatory practices that may occur in case these expectations are not met. Differentiating behaviors and attitudes and inequality in accessing financial resources are the signs or the consequences of gender-based social differentiation. Gender determines not only relations between women and men but also social power relations in every segment of society and the inequality conditions created by imbalances in these power relations. That is because individuals in a society are not in a solo state of being a woman or man; for example, individuals may face various inequalities and discrimination due to both their gender positioning and being poor or disabled. Although gender-based inequality is experienced in different ways and dimensions, it is a phenomenon with horizontal and vertical character that penetrates into all cultures, communities, sectors, layers and fields. The way gender has been treated in history has evolved in different characteristics and scopes through many conventions and declarations since 1954, when the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women was adopted, followed by protection of personal rights (1970s), equal opportunities based on positive discrimination (1980s) and gender mainstreaming (1990s) that fall into the scope of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In this framework, we think and know that the checks and balances approach should take gender equality as the basis so that freedom, equality, and rights can be exercised in a fair and balanced way, and administrative actions can be controlled in this framework, regardless of traits or differences of individuals or groups based on gender-attributed roles. In order to realize this, we take universal human rights documents as the basis and believe that the Gender Equality Strategy of the European Council and the recommendations developed by the Committee of Ministers provide a clear guidance to us in the gender mainstreaming process:



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# OUR GENDER APPROACH

- Legal protection against gender-based discrimination (REC 2/1985)
- The elimination of sexism from language (REC 4/1990)
- Gender mainstreaming (REC 14/1998)
- Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making (REC 3/2003) and gender equality standards and mechanisms (Rec/2007)
- Measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender (Rec 5/2010) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) recommendation number 1899 (2010)<sup>1</sup> on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system
- PACE recommendation number 1413 (1999)<sup>1</sup> on equal representation in political life
- PACE recommendation number 288 (2010) on achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

## Our Purpose

We dream of a Turkey where justice and equality are secured in social life, rights and freedoms are guaranteed, government is accountable, free thinking and humane life are possible. For this, we try to build a system with well-established checks and balances. We believe that the system will not survive if gender understanding and goal are not joined with plan, policy and program targets. We therefore know that, looking from gender equality perspective as a priority, we should face ourselves and relate to everyone we interact with by taking this perspective as the basis.

Our most fundamental purpose in this subject is to develop a gender mainstreaming program that will be applied in both internal functioning of the Checks and Balances Network and in the processes of its interactions with the external world. In the context of this program, we want the gender equality to be treated from a checks and balances perspective, be adopted at every level of the network, be concrete and visible, with enhanced accountability. We know that achieving this is possible by developing fields of advocacy regarding gender equality.



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# OUR GENDER APPROACH

## Our principles and values

- We consider gender equality as a universal human rights issue beyond domestic politics and as an important element of democratic governance field. We feel responsible and obliged to exert efforts to enable gender equality understanding to be treated in the framework of universal human rights, without taking care of women rights only, and the international conventions to which Turkey is a party.
- We find it important to develop our gender equality understanding from a checks and balances perspective by having a scientific stance that covers all the intersectional dimensions where gender is built socially (social class, nationality, ethnical origin, skin color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender traits). We think we can generate realistic solutions to common problems only by having such a comprehensive approach.
- In the process of building gender equality on a scientific stance, we think it is a priority to accept that it is important to face stereotypes in society, develop our self-awareness, cooperate, exchange knowledge and experience. We consider this as an important basis to maintain our impartiality.
- We base our gender equality understanding on the principles of non-discrimination and equality described in international and national legislation. In the light of these principles, we position ourselves against all acts and discourses that are discriminatory, sexist, phobic, violent and detrimental to personal rights.
- We accept that no one is independent from socially constructed stereotypes, and consider positive and non-discriminatory communication and mutual sincerity as our main style of criticism in the face of acts and discourses that may generate inequality.
- We find it important to carry out planning, implementation and monitoring processes of gender mainstreaming in a participatory and transparent way by consulting internal and external stakeholders, benefitting from their expertise, and to be accountable.



# OUR GENDER APPROACH

## Our agenda

- Develop a gender mainstreaming program that will, through fundamental criteria, enable gender equality to be treated from a checks and balances perspective, adopted, implemented and monitored at every level (reform groups, secretariat, coordination group, internal assessment group, communication group, local structures, HR processes) and in every process (membership, decision-making, content creation, activities, budgeting) of the network.
- Prepare an action plan to be applied in the framework of the Checks and Balances Network gender mainstreaming program, to respond to the needs to secure gender equality in the network's relations with internal and external systems, and to be audited through impact indicators.



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