

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Report on the Study of the Implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Vinnytsia City Territorial Community





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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This study is a comprehensive analysis of the practice of implementing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in the Life of Local Communities in Vinnytsia city territorial community for the period 2019-2024. The European Charter for Equality is a voluntary instrument developed by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in 2006, which provides local governments with a structured approach to implementing gender equality in all areas of municipal activities.

Vinnytsia became the first Ukrainian city to join the Charter, signing it on June 23, 2017. Fulfilling its commitments, Vinnytsia City Council developed and is implementing the "Community for Equality" Program to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men until 2023, the implementation period was extended until 2026. The Program is a practical tool for implementing the Charter's principles at the local level.

The purpose of the study is a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in the Life of Local Communities (hereinafter the Charter) in Vinnytsia city territorial community and the formation of practical recommendations for strengthening gender equality policy at the local level in the context of Ukraine's European integration. The study aims to identify both successful practices and systemic barriers that hinder the full implementation of commitments under the Charter, as well as to develop specific, practically oriented recommendations for local governments. The study is directed both to strengthen implementation measures in those communities that have joined the Charter and for those considering such a possibility.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study is based on triangulation of methods, which ensures the validity of conclusions through cross-verification of data from different sources:

Systematic document analysis: detailed study of the "Community for Equality" Program in the 2019 and 2023 editions, analysis of six annual reports on program implementation (2019-2024), study of the uniqueness and informativeness of report content using artificial intelligence tools.

Requests for public information: 12 detailed requests were prepared and submitted to local government, covering issues of official training, activities of coordination bodies, monitoring indicators, gender statistics, information campaigns, involvement of public organizations, and international cooperation.

Comparative analysis: comparison of Vinnytsia's practices with the requirements of the European Charter for Equality and the experience of leading European cities (Munich, Graz).

Focus group studies: two focus groups were conducted with representatives of the public sector and city residents, as well as with representatives of local authorities.

### **3. KEY FINDINGS**

#### **3.1. Program Compliance with Charter Requirements**

The analysis showed that the "Community for Equality" Program covers most articles of the European Charter for Equality, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to implementing gender policy.

The Program is particularly strong in areas traditionally associated with gender policy – combating violence, social services, political representation, awareness raising.

At the same time, critical gaps were identified in areas that are less often considered through a gender lens, but are no less important for ensuring equality in the daily lives of citizens – public procurement, urban planning, transport, healthcare, childcare.

#### **3.2. Successful Practices**

##### **Combating gender-based violence:**

Creation and operation of a comprehensive system for combating domestic violence. Since July 2019, a mobile brigade of social and psychological assistance has been operating in Vinnytsia, since January 2021 a Day Center for victims of violence has been operating, crisis rooms for temporary accommodation of women and children in dangerous situations are functioning, and a hotline is operating.

##### **Education and awareness raising:**

Systematic training of Vinnytsia City Council officials on gender equality, non-discrimination, and diversity management. In July 2021, the Code of Ethical Conduct for Local Government Officials of Vinnytsia City Council was approved.

##### **Gender budgeting:**

Over three years, the share of programs with a gender component has almost tripled. 15 departments-budget managers have integrated gender aspects into their programs (according to the 2024 report), demonstrating the systematic nature of gender-responsive budgeting implementation. Since 2020, an Instruction on the implementation and application by budget process participants of a gender-oriented approach during planning, execution, and reporting on the execution of the budget of Vinnytsia city territorial community has been in effect, a working group on implementing gender-responsive budgeting has been created, and a series of trainings for chief budget managers has been conducted.

#### **3.3. Systemic Challenges and Gaps**

##### **Quality of monitoring and reporting:**

Lack of clear, measurable program implementation indicators, which complicates the assessment of real progress.

High level of text copying between different reports, which reduces informativeness and indicates a formal approach to reporting.

Focus on quantitative indicators (number of events, participants) without analyzing quality and real impact on citizens' lives.

**Financing:**

Absence of a budget directed exclusively to the implementation of the "Community for Equality" Program.

**Absence of a coordination mechanism:**

The lack of a coordination mechanism leads to fragmented program implementation, when each department acts independently without coordination with others, to duplication of efforts or, conversely, to gaps in the implementation of measures, to the impossibility of promptly responding to new challenges or problems, to the absence of a common vision and strategic approach to implementing gender equality. In fact, this means that the program is implemented inertially, each department reports on its work, but there is no body that would assess the overall picture, identify gaps, initiate new measures, ensure synergy between different areas of activity.

**Transparency and accountability:**

The phenomenon of "formal transparency," when information seems to be available (posted on the official website of the city council), but is actually unavailable for meaningful analysis due to the lack of structure, specificity, and comparability of data.

Absence of mechanisms for public discussion of results and citizen involvement in setting priorities.

Almost complete absence of systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data in all areas of city council activity, except for basic information on the gender composition of employees of executive bodies.

Incomplete provision of information on public requests, which complicates independent assessment of program effectiveness.

#### **4. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

To increase the compliance of Vinnytsia City Council program documents with the European Charter to a level of 90-95% and ensure real program impact on community life, a number of urgent and systemic measures must be implemented.

1. It is necessary to allocate and approve a budget directed exclusively to the implementation of the "Community for Equality" Program.
2. It is necessary to resume the work of the working group on implementing the "Community for Equality" Program or create a similar coordination mechanism with approval of the group composition (representatives of all key departments, public organizations, gender experts, representatives of target groups), clear mandate and powers, work plan with regular meetings at least quarterly, budget for performing functions, and mechanism for public reporting on the group's work.
3. It is necessary to develop and approve a system of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound indicators for monitoring program implementation in all key areas. Annual reports on indicator implementation should be published in a format understandable to the public with visualization of dynamics.
4. It is necessary to conduct an independent expert assessment of Program implementation for 2019-2024 with detailed analysis of reasons for non-implementation of individual measures, identification of most effective practices, formulation of specific recommendations for further work, and consideration of the results of this study. Assessment results should be publicly discussed with involvement of public organizations, experts, representatives of target groups, and city council deputies.
5. It is necessary to introduce systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data as standard practice for any statistical information of the city council. This requires appointment of a responsible person or creation of a unit for coordinating the collection and analysis of gender statistics, development of methodology and standards for data collection, provision of training for employees of various departments on gender statistics, publication of an annual consolidated report on gender statistics in all areas of activity.
6. Develop and approve Program measures on integrating gender aspects into public procurement, which should include development of methodological recommendations on gender-sensitive procurement, training for employees of the procurement department, inclusion of gender criteria in tender documentation for procurement of social services, conducting annual audit of gender impact of procurement.
7. Monitor existing city council programs for compliance with the Charter, including visualization in public space of women's contribution to public life.
8. Study and consider the experiences of successful Charter implementation in European municipalities, particularly Munich (Germany) and Graz (Austria), see appendix.
9. Report on Charter implementation according to its provisions.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

The study shows that Vinnytsia city territorial community demonstrates significant progress in implementing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men, especially in the areas of combating violence, education, and social support for vulnerable groups. The city has created basic infrastructure for implementing gender policy and has accumulated valuable experience that can be useful for other Ukrainian communities.

At the same time, the identified systemic challenges indicate the need to transition from a predominantly event-based approach to systematic integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of municipal governance. This requires qualitative improvement of institutional mechanisms, implementation of new tools (gender budgeting, gender expertise, systematic gender statistics), and strengthening of transparency and accountability.

Vinnytsia's experience confirms that joining the European Charter for Equality is an effective tool for structuring local government work in the field of gender equality and ensuring a systematic approach to implementing European standards. The Charter provides a clear guideline, methodology, and opportunities for international exchange of experience.

In the context of Ukraine's European integration, mass accession of Ukrainian communities to the Charter can become a powerful mechanism for transformation at the local level, where the daily experience of citizens is formed. This will contribute not only to improving the quality of life of the population through more effective and fair public services, but also to the development of administrative capacity of local governments – a critically important element of successful European integration.

Mass accession of Ukrainian territorial communities to the European Charter for Equality has strategic importance for Ukraine's successful European integration for interrelated reasons:

Joining the Charter is a voluntary political act that demonstrates the community's readiness to take on commitments that go beyond minimum legislative requirements.

This is the most effective way to institutionalize gender mainstreaming – a key concept of European policy enshrined in Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Gender equality is an economic necessity and a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Combating gender-based and domestic violence is a matter of national security and European integration.

Mass accession creates a movement for European values "from below," from communities, which is extremely important for the sustainability and irreversibility of reforms.

Gender budgeting, which is a key instrument of the Charter, is not only a tool for equality, but also a tool for increasing the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public finances.

The Charter integrates sustainable development principles with a gender perspective, which corresponds to the European Green Deal and the requirement for a just transition to a climate-neutral economy.

Moreover, the experience of implementing European standards in the conditions of full-scale war will be extremely valuable for other EU candidate countries, demonstrating that transformation is possible even in the most difficult circumstances, requiring only political will, organization, and faith in the values you are fighting for.

The recommendations outlined in this report are aimed at strengthening both Vinnytsia's practice and providing guidelines for other Ukrainian communities that have already joined the Charter or are considering such a possibility. Their implementation will ensure the transition from declaring intentions to real transformation of the urban environment based on equality, justice, and respect for the dignity of every person.

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*This summary is an abbreviated version of the full research report*

## **Background information**

The Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (UNP) (<http://eap-csf.org.ua/>) is a network of more than 150 non-governmental organizations in Ukraine that advocates Ukrainian interests within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The platform is part of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region and boost pluralism in public discourse and policy-making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms. The EaP CSF is a non-partisan bona fide non-governmental organisation”.

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