

→ Call for funds

I wish to thank the parliaments that have contributed to the funding of the activities of the Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”. This is a tangible sign of their determination to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

These voluntary contributions have enabled us to produce a handbook for parliamentarians on the Istanbul Convention available in 14 different languages, together with visibility material (posters, leaflets, newsletters); and to organise a series of exchanges of views and parliamentary seminars to promote the Istanbul Convention.

The Network needs your support to speed up the entry into force of the convention. If you wish to support us with a voluntary contribution, please contact us.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and support.

Mendes Bota

Political Co-ordinator of the Network, General Rapporteur on violence against women

→ A manifesto against rape, 27 June 2013

The film *Viol, elles se manifestent* by Andrea Rawlins-Gaston and Stéphane Carrel will be screened at the Council of Europe, at the initiative of the French delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly. The documentary gives voice to women of different ages and backgrounds who have been victims of rape.

The screening is open to the public. It will take place at 1 p.m., in the Council of Europe cinema room. To participate, please contact womenfreefromviolence@coe.int.

→ Exchange of views with Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, 27 June 2013



At the meeting of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, the French Minister for Women's Rights, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, will explain the efforts undertaken by France to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

The meeting is open to the public (upon registration). The Minister's intervention is foreseen at 2.45 p.m. To participate, please contact womenfreefromviolence@coe.int.

→ Exhibition “Refugee women and violence”, World Refugee Day



On the occasion of World Refugee Day, the UNHCR and the Network “Women Free from Violence” will organise a cartoon exhibition by the Belgian illustrator Aelys during the Parliamentary Assembly session in Strasbourg. It recounts the true story of Indira Mila,* a female victim of domestic violence who fled her country to seek refuge with her daughter, a journey fraught with fear and obstacles. Her story portrays the daily lives of thousands of refugee women who end up experiencing violence twice.

This exhibition follows a Network meeting held in January 2013, where refugee women who were victims of violence shared their dramatic experiences with the audience.

To attend the opening, please contact womenfreefromviolence@coe.int.

* The name has been changed.

→ “Women, violence and art” – Network meeting on 26 June 2013



In view of the “International day for the elimination of violence against women and girls” and the 16 days of activism, the Network will hold a meeting on 26 June 2013 on the topic of “Women, violence and art”. The main objective of the meeting is to gather creative ideas in order to organise awareness-raising events for 25 November 2013. The guest speakers will be Amer Kapetanović, a Bosnian photographer who took an active part in the 2011 UN campaign on youth and men's

engagement in ending violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (www.16dana.ba/en/about-the-campaign/), and Ms Zora Bachmann, director of the human rights film festival “This human world” (www.thishumanworld.com) in Vienna and Chair of the Human Rights Film Network (www.humanrightsfilmnetwork.org).

The meeting is open to the public. To participate, please contact womenfreefromviolence@coe.int.

Photos©Amer Kapetanovic/UN Women campaign “16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women” 2011.



Secretariat contacts
Ms Géraldine Grenet and Ms Elodie Fischer
womenfreefromviolence@coe.int
assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/



www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/

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Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”

NEWSLETTER – June 2013

The Italian Parliament has ratified the Istanbul Convention



The Italian Parliament has finalised the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention, making Italy one of the first European Union member states to do so. This is the first piece of legislation approved by the new parliament, whose members were elected earlier this year. It is also the outcome of a broad, cross-party coalition which identified tackling violence against women and domestic violence as a priority.

We must now ensure that the convention is implemented – that violence against women is no longer acknow-

ledged solely when physical violence occurs, that adequate funding is allocated for women's shelters, that victims receive the support they need and that migrant women who are affected by domestic violence are not marginalised further or discouraged from seeking redress and assistance due to their immigration status.

However, we must also tackle some of the root causes of violence against women. In my country, Italy, women are depicted in the mainstream media as scantily clad objects or as housewives, intent on cleaning the bathroom or cooking for their idle children and husbands. We must also act to ensure that women are able to lead independent lives by boosting female employment – too many are afraid of breaking out of abusive relationships because they lack the means to support themselves. Finally, we must strengthen international co-operation on these matters, so that women who are protected by restraining orders against those who want to harm them, for instance, stay safe if they travel to or live in another country.

Italy is taking an important step forward in the fight against violence directed at women. I sincerely hope that many more European countries will join the ranks of those which have ratified this important treaty. Women across Europe – and beyond – will support and encourage their efforts.

Laura Boldrini

President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies



→ **Hearing on prostitution and trafficking, 24 April 2013**

“My story is about wrong trust in bad people”

“I am Iva from Bulgaria and I am a victim of trafficking. I was in a two-year relationship with my boyfriend back in Bulgaria when he told me I could find a good job in the Netherlands. A woman was supposed to wait for me, but there were two men. They brought me to an unknown place, took my passport and waited one month for the pimp to make my working papers. It was not possible to call my family. They threatened to kill my family. So I started to work.”

demand for sexual services, there is no market for it. And this is why, by decreasing the number of sex clients, the Swedish law has also resulted in a decrease in prostitution according to official figures. “How can it be free will when many of these women only have one choice?” he asked.

This position is not the general consensus among all European countries and was not shared by the second guest speaker. Ms Ilonka Stakelborough, the founder of Stichting Geisha, a trade union for sex workers, has been a voluntary sex worker for 25 years in the Netherlands, where prostitution has been legal and regulated since 2000. Ms Stakelborough insisted that a distinction should always be made between prostitution and human trafficking. She would like to see the regulation of voluntary prostitution. If the authorities could establish a dialogue with sex workers, it would be easier for them to identify and help victims of trafficking.

“The Council of Europe’s commitment to condemn forced prostitution and trafficking

Iva worked for five years and had only stopped two months before taking part in the Network hearing. Like many women, she was forced into prostitution. She is now living in a shelter and trying to get her life back on the right track.

The hearing was an opportunity to discuss the impact that different policies have on trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, based on the Swedish and Dutch experiences.

Mr Simon Häggström, a police officer from the Prostitution Unit of the Stockholm Police, presented the consequences of Sweden’s Sex Purchase Act of 1999, which makes it illegal to purchase sexual services but not to sell them.

According to Mr Häggström, the biggest problem related to prostitution and trafficking is the demand. Indeed, if there is no

in human beings dates from many years ago and the Parliamentary Assembly has played an important role in this,” declared Mr Mendes Bota. “In addition to being the General Rapporteur on violence against women, I am also responsible for a report on ‘Criminalising the purchase of sex to combat the trafficking of people for sexual exploitation’. I know how difficult a problem this is to tackle and I will do my best to ensure that it will be placed at the top of the political agenda,” he added.

➤ “Trafficking for the purpose of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation remains a vast problem in Europe. The majority of victims are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. And the victims of sexual exploitation are nearly all women. ... The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – the Istanbul Convention – takes a ... strong stance on violence against women, and it sets out a comprehensive legal framework to combat all forms of violence against women. This violence includes some of the most heinous experiences a woman may be subjected to, like sexual violence, domestic violence, forced marriage or female genital mutilation. But it does not explicitly prohibit prostitution.

The approach to prostitution varies significantly among our member states. While some states authorise the selling and buying of sex, others prohibit such acts. Prostitution is a complex issue and attempts at regulating this will have to address a wide range of factors, none of them easy.”

Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni,
Deputy Secretary General,
Council of Europe

➤ **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197)**
Entry into force: 1/2/2008 – As of today: 40 ratifications

➤ **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210)**
Open for signature in 2011, 4 ratifications. It will enter into force with 10 ratifications including 8 by member states



➤ “The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings has already reached 40 ratifications. The Expert group on action against human trafficking (GRETA) constantly stresses the need for states to address human trafficking as a form of violence against women and to take account of gender-specific types of exploitation. Among the main difficulties to fighting human trafficking are the lack of comprehensive, reliable and comparable data; the need to co-ordinate the efforts of all relevant actors, including NGOs; the importance of providing regular training for relevant professionals and adequate funding for the implementation of all these measures.”

Ambassador Tatiana Pârvu,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova and Council of Europe Thematic Co-ordinator on Equality and Trafficking

→ **Seminar in Baku, Azerbaijan, 7 May 2013**



A parliamentary seminar on the Istanbul Convention, organised by Sahiba Gafarova, a friend of the Network, took place on 7 May in Baku, Azerbaijan. This initiative was positively welcomed by Azerbaijani parliamentarians, government representatives and NGOs. The seminar also saw the launching of the handbook on the Istanbul Convention in Azerbaijani. “I am pleased to see that this seminar raised interest among Azerbaijani parliamentarians and far beyond. Violence against women is a scourge in Azerbaijan, as anywhere else in the world. I truly hope this initiative will bring positive results in the near future. Azerbaijani women demand it,” declared Ms Gafarova.

Mr Mendes Bota, who participated as a guest speaker in the seminar, also had the opportunity to meet with several officials during his stay in Baku, including Ms Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee on Family, Children and Women’s Affairs and Mr Ogtay Asadov, Chairman of the National Assembly. “Following several meetings I had in Baku, I am confident that Azerbaijan will soon join the signatory states,” said the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly’s General Rapporteur on violence against women.

→ **Stop Violence against Women by Implementing International Standards, 30 May 2013, Geneva**



A side event at the 23rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council was co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations Office at Geneva. The objective was to present the Istanbul Convention as a global tool to end gender-based violence. Keynote speakers included Ms Marja Ruotanen, Director, Justice and Human Dignity Directorate, Council of Europe; Ms Mona Rishmawi, Head, Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; H.E. Mr Oğuz Demiralp, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations Office in Geneva; and Ms Gauri van Gulik, Global Advocate, Women’s Rights Division, Human Rights Watch.

→ **Lithuania signs the Istanbul Convention**

On 7 June 2013 Lithuania officially signed of the Istanbul Convention, bringing the number of signatory states up to 30.