

Parliamentary Network

“Women Free from Violence”

NEWSLETTER – October 2013



According to recent WHO figures, violence affects more than one third of women globally. While the violence takes very different forms, it feeds on the sexist and patriarchal images of women in our societies. It can include sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking and violence related to traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages.

In France, one woman in 10 is believed to be the victim of domestic violence. Last year, at least 148 women died following such violence. Victimisation surveys show that

one woman in six claims to have been forced to have sex at some point in her life.

To stem this violence on a lasting basis, it must be effectively punished. The most shocking aspect is that the vast majority of instances of violence are not reported to the police. “Intimacy” can no longer rhyme with “impunity”. The challenge for our countries is therefore to increase the number of cases reported, complaints registered and hence also the number of sentences handed down. In this context, I would like to thank the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for all the work done concerning the Istanbul Convention. I should also like to praise the *Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence*, whose efforts are decisive in ensuring the success of the convention at all levels.

Our country, France, was among the first to sign the convention and I can assure you that it will also be one of the first to ratify it. I have presented a ratification bill in cabinet; the parliamentary process is under way and should be completed shortly. I congratulate those states which have already ratified the convention and I am looking forward eagerly to it being ratified by 10 countries and entering into force.

*Excerpt from the speech by Ms Najat Vallaud-Belkacem,
French Minister for Women's Rights, during the exchange of views
with the members of the Network and the Committee on Equality
and Non-Discrimination on 27 June 2013*

→ FOCUS France

Better protection for women victims of violence – Draft legislation under preparation

- **Gender equality:** strengthening of protection orders, nationwide distribution of telephones with a special alert button, restriction of the use of criminal mediation in cases of domestic violence, giving priority to the victim staying in the family home, rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators;
- **Forced marriage:** introduction of a new criminal offence for the act of tricking individuals into leaving France and forcing them into marriage abroad;
- **Female genital mutilation:** ban on encouraging a minor to undergo mutilation or inciting another person to perform mutilation on a minor.

In January 2013, an interdepartmental task force for protecting women victims of violence and combating human trafficking (MIPROF) was set up with the main objectives of ensuring systematic training for professionals dealing with the victims of violence and co-ordinating action in France to combat trafficking.

→ Spain – Breaking the silence around violence against women



At its joint meeting with the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination on 16 September 2013 in Madrid, the Network held a hearing on the economic dimensions of violence against women.

Ms Blanca Hernández, Spanish Government Commissioner for Gender-based Violence, introduced the meeting by stressing that combating violence against women was about breaking the silence. She highlighted the importance of specific measures targeted at vulnerable groups, such as

the elderly, rural women and women with disabilities and the need to raise awareness on this phenomenon via social networks.

In addition to its weight on the economy, violence against women was too often perpetuated due to the economic dependency of the victims. “Preventing economic violence against women requires active policies and measures aiming at economic equality between women and men, and the empowerment of women”, said Mr Javier Truchero, lawyer and former representative of Spain

“Individual follow-up for every woman who is a victim of violence is essential since each victim is a world of her own.”

*Ms Blanca Hernández,
Spanish Government Commissioner
for Gender-based Violence*

preventing violence against women and domestic violence. “Employers have not only a moral and economic obligation to support their staff, but also have legal requirements in the form of employment laws to protect the health and safety of their staff”, she stressed. “Economic violence, as a form of psychological violence and a conduct directed to depriving the victim of all or any of her economic or financial resources, should be criminalised”, concluded Mr Truchero.

→ Istanbul Convention – updates



Further ratifications

- **Italy:** On 10 September 2013, Maria-Cecilia Guerra, Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Policies, officially deposited the instrument of ratification with the Council of Europe, making Italy the fifth country to ratify the convention. The ratification was the culmination of a process which started in November 2012 at a seminar in Rome, which was held thanks to the efforts of **Ms Deborah Bergamini** and **Ms Anna**

Maria Carloni, members of the Network, and **Ms Federica Mogherini**, former member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. In May 2013, the Italian Parliament unanimously approved ratification.

- **Austria:** On 16 August 2013, the Austrian Parliament, under the impetus of **Ms Gisela Wurm**, a longstanding member of the Network, approved ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

- **Bosnia-Herzegovina:** **Ms Ismeta Dervoz** gave us the same good news concerning the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina (23 July).

The two countries must now deposit their instruments of ratification with the Council of Europe as quickly as possible so as to be among the first countries to ratify it.

Overall, five countries have officially ratified the Istanbul Convention and two are in the process. Is the objective of the 10 ratifications needed for it to enter into force becoming a realistic possibility for 2013?

Other news

- **Switzerland:** On 11 September, **Switzerland** officially signed the Istanbul Convention. An event entitled “Gender violence: international agreements as opportunities for Switzerland” will be organised in Bern by the Ministry of Interior on 22 November 2013.
- **Spain:** **Ms Maria del Carmen Quintanilla-Barba**, Spanish member of the Network and Chair of the Gender Equality Committee in the Congress of Deputies, has indicated that the Spanish Cabinet has given the green light to ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The relevant bill is to be submitted to parliament and will be considered by the Foreign Affairs Committee before being debated in plenary.

→ Network meetings

“Violence against women: is rehabilitation of perpetrators possible?”, Strasbourg , 2 October 2013

In connection with a report being prepared by our member from Cyprus, Ms Athina Kyriakidou, the Network is to consider the issue of the rehabilitation of the perpetrators of violence at its next meeting, in the presence of Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Mr Frédéric Matwies, a former violent spouse, will recount his experience. Ms Thangam Debbonaire, Research Director at Respect, an association in the United Kingdom, will give practical details of the services provided for perpetrators to enable them to escape from the spiral of violence. Lastly, Ms Rosa Logar, founder of the WAVE network, will describe the evaluation of rehabilitation programmes in Europe which the association co-ordinates.

The meeting is open to the public. Please register at: womenfreefromviolence@coe.int

“Women, violence and art”, Strasbourg, 26 June 2013



The guest speakers – Amer Kapetanović, a Bosnian photographer who played 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 Zora Bachmann, director of the “This human world” human rights film festival in Vienna (www.thishumanworld.com) and Chair of the Human Rights Film Network (www.humanrightsfilmnetwork.org) – gave the Network members details of possible lines of action for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

In addition to the hearing, World Refugee Day was marked with the inauguration of an exhibition on Women Refugees and Violence held in co-operation with the UNHCR and the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. A brochure about the hearing can be consulted on our site.

→ Reports under preparation at PACE

Stalking

The report on stalking prepared by Ms Gisela Wurm highlights a phenomenon which is still not widely recognised but nevertheless affects nearly 10% of Europe's population, mainly women. Stalking involves repeated intrusion into a person's life, which becomes more intense as time passes. It may take various forms, such as repeatedly following a person, communicating with them against their will or letting them know that they are being spied on. "Cyber-stalking" is a specific form which involves continuous and threatening online intrusion. Stalking is a type of violence in itself, which may lead to other types of violence, including murder.

Ms Wurm's report will be presented on 22 November 2013 at the Standing Committee meeting in Vienna.



Istanbul Convention – Article 34

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety, is criminalised.

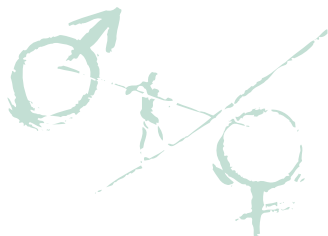
Others reports

For the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Mr Mendes Bota is preparing a report on "Violence against women", while Ms Tina Acketoft is considering "So-called 'honour' crimes in the North Caucasus". Finally, Ms Kyriakidou is the rapporteur on "Focusing on the perpetrators to prevent violence against women".

→ Events

WAVE Conference, Sofia, 10-12 October 2013

The 15th Conference of the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) network will be held in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 10 to 12 October 2013. This year's focus is on the issues of sustainability of state support for women's services and shelters and of protection from violence against women. For further information please contact: iris.golden@wave-network.org



Hearing on "Access to justice for victims of violence", 9 December 2013, Paris

The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission (GEC) and the French authorities are holding a hearing on "Access to justice for victims of violence". The issues addressed will include: equal access to justice for women: trends and standards; access to

justice for women victims of violence: Council of Europe standards and other relevant regional and international standards; evaluation and elimination of obstacles facing women in the judicial system (including legal, procedural, socio-economic and cultural obstacles); and experiences and best practices in Council of Europe member states.

A registration form will soon be available at: www.coe.int/equality

→ 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



Secretariat contacts

Ms Géraldine Grenet and Ms Elodie Fischer

womenfreefromviolence@coe.int
assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/



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