

Parliamentary Network

“Women Free from Violence”

NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2014

The Istanbul Convention will come into force on 1 August 2014



The entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, for which we have all been striving, will finally take place on 1 August 2014.

The drafting, adoption, signature, ratification and entry into force of the Istanbul Convention are the fruits of a collective effort, which has mobilised resources and the energy of all those involved in combating violence against women: the Council of Europe and its different bodies and structures, national authorities, other international organisations, including the United Nations, NGOs, civil society, and, of course, national parliaments.

All these institutions, and the people running them, firmly believe that this convention provides an effective response to the distress suffered by the victims of violence.

Before it even comes into force, the Istanbul Convention has become the authoritative instrument in this field, not only in our member states but across the world. From the very moment it was adopted, the convention fostered an unprecedented awareness of the unacceptable character of violence against women and domestic violence.

The Istanbul Convention is a groundbreaking convention from several points of view. It acknowledges that violence against women is a human rights violation and a form of discrimination. It asks states to make female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and forced abortion and sterilisation, criminal offences. It focuses attention on the victims of violence.

Its many other advances make it a “gold standard” instrument, which supplements existing legal measures and enlarges the international framework with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The forthcoming entry into force of the convention is therefore to be welcomed but our efforts must also continue. First of all we must ensure that the convention is implemented. The GREVIO, the group of experts set up by the Istanbul Convention, will play a key role in this respect. The Parliamentary Assembly will also play an essential new role: for the first time ever national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly will be given some responsibility in monitoring a Council of Europe convention. Finally it will be necessary to make sure that other countries join the list of 11 states which have ratified the convention.

This entry into force is a moment we have all been waiting for. It is an important step on the road towards achieving our common goal: that of ensuring that every woman can live free from violence.

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



→ Istanbul Convention – News

The Istanbul Convention will come into force on 1 August 2014!



Andorra and **Denmark** have joined the nine other countries (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia and Turkey) which have, through their ratification of the convention, undertaken to combat violence against women.

Thanks to these 11 ratifications, the Istanbul Convention will come into force on 1 August 2014. This would not have been possible without the commitment of the members of the Network and the many NGOs throughout Europe, which, by means of citizen-led campaigns, have supported this groundbreaking convention.

The aim of the Istanbul Convention is now more than ever to have a positive impact on the everyday lives of women who have been subjected to violence. Although it is never easy to change ingrained attitudes, the entry into force of the convention is a promising sign.

San Marino and **Georgia** signed the Istanbul Convention and the **French and Swedish parliaments** approved the ratification of the convention.

Network members and friends Ana Birchall, Deborah Schembri and Robert Biedron have good news to share concerning the Istanbul Convention: **Romania** should sign the convention in the next few weeks, the **Maltese parliament** has started the second reading of the bill of ratification and the **Polish parliament** will begin examining the ratification during its next session. Let's hope that the recent announcement of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention next August will encourage other states to join.

→ Network meetings

Violence and disability, 24 June 2014

"States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects."

Article 16 – UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

A report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, published in March 2014, revealed that women with disabilities were almost twice as likely to be victims of physical or sexual violence by their partner as other women (34% compared to 19%).

The members of the Network will address this problem, which is widespread but still very much taboo, at their meeting in June. They will have the pleasure to welcome Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe; Emeritus Professor Gill Hague, Professor of Violence Against Women Studies, Centre for Gender and Violence Research, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, United Kingdom; and Ms Ana Peláez Narváez, member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Director of International Relations at the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind (ONCE) by video conference. The hearing will contribute to the preparation of Carmen Quintanilla Barba's report "Equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities".

"Wounded to death": the parliamentarians are on stage!



Najat Al-Astal, Network member (Palestine); Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe; Gülsün Bilgehan, PACE member (Turkey); Anne Brasseur, President of the PACE; Serena Dandini, author, writer and television producer (Italy); Ismeta Dervoz, Network member (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Maria Edera Spadoni, PACE member (Italy); Carole Mathieu Castelli, director and photographer (France); Maura Misiti, author (Italy); Tatiana Pârvu, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe; Carmen Quintanilla Barba, Network member (Spain); and Fatiha Saïdi, Network member (Belgium).

Well done to all the readers for their commitment and enthusiasm. This event will remain one of the highlights of the Network.

Consult our Facebook page to view the live version of the play!

"Wounded to death is a theatre play written and directed by Serena Dandini, a well-known Italian TV personality, in collaboration with Maura Misiti, a researcher at the CNR. The project consists of a series of monologues, which, in a quite unprecedented manner, give a voice to women who have lost their lives at the hands of a husband, partner, lover or an "ex". They tell their own stories, which are always dramatic but sometimes told with a few touches of irony. The women come from all parts of the world and from very different cultural and social backgrounds but they all have the same tragic destiny. Although the facts are not recognisable, all these stories are based on things that really happened."

Source: www.feriteamorte.it

→ Our members in action

“Wounded to death” in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Serena Dandini's project has inspired others: Ismeta Dervoz, member of the Network, helped organise a conference on the protection of women who are victims of domestic violence on 20 May 2014 in Sarajevo. The conference concerned more specifically the application of the Istanbul Convention and best practices in establishing and managing shelters for victims. Our Bosnian Network member included a performance of “Wounded to death” at the conference.

#BringBackOurGirls

Members of the Network have joined the international appeal asking for the release of the Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram.

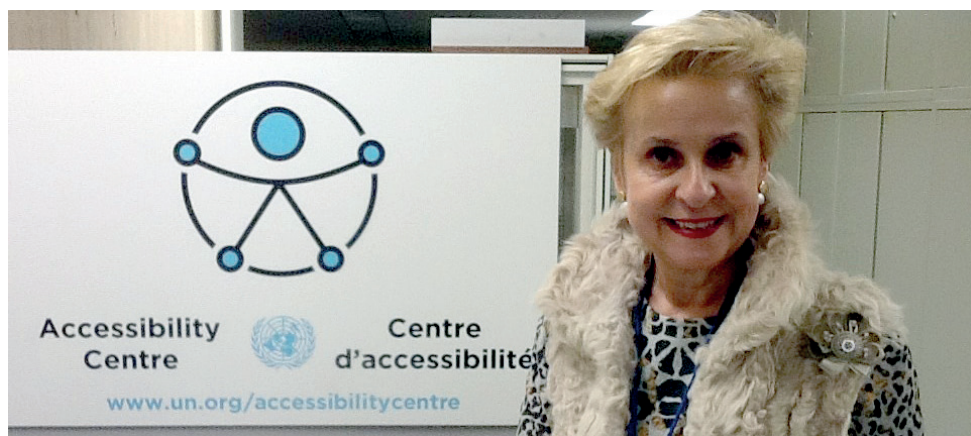


→ Reports being prepared by the PACE

Focusing on the perpetrators to prevent violence against women

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has for years been working on how to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. It has, for the first time ever, decided to prepare a specific report on the perpetrators of violence with a view to discussing a global approach involving all the parties concerned. It is impossible to find a lasting solution to violence against women without targeting specific action at the perpetrators of such violence. The report is being drafted at the initiative of Ms Athina Kyriakidou (Cyprus, Socialist Group).

Equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities



People with disabilities are members of the largest minority in the world. They represent 10 to 15% of the population in Europe and are confronted with multiple challenges in their daily life as well as various forms of discrimination. Carmen Quintanilla Barba, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, is currently preparing a report on equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities. The report will assess the progress made with regard to the rights of people with disabilities and will focus on accessibility, legal capacity and violence against people with disabilities.

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 15 different languages, together with visual material (posters, leaflets, newsletters), and to organise a series of hearings, seminars and conferences to promote the Istanbul Convention.

The Network needs your support to speed up the entry into force of the convention and to ensure that it is effectively implemented. If you wish to support us with a voluntary contribution, please contact us.

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

Mr Mendes Bota

Political Co-ordinator of the Network,
General Rapporteur on Violence against Women

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