



CHAIRMANSHIP OF
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Council of Europe 2015



Conference

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION: NEW SYNERGIES

Organised in the context of the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the
Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 20 October 2015

Concept Note

Background

The Istanbul Convention is the Council of Europe response to repeated calls for European legally-binding standards in the area of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and subsequently opened for signature in May 2011 in Istanbul. It entered into force on 1 August 2014 and has so far been ratified by 18 States Parties (Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey). Its monitoring mechanism consists of two bodies: an independent expert body, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and a political body, the Committee of the Parties. The Committee of the Parties held its first meeting on 4 May 2015 in order to elect the first ten members of GREVIO. The first meeting of GREVIO will take place in September 2015.

Effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention will largely depend on the willingness and capacity of governments to co-ordinate the action of their various agencies involved in ending violence against women and domestic violence. To this end, the Istanbul Convention requires Parties to designate or establish official bodies responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government policies and measures. These bodies will become important interlocutors of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism.

One major innovation of the Istanbul Convention is the parliamentary dimension in the monitoring of its implementation. The role of national parliaments in the monitoring process is formally recognised and Parties to the Convention are required to submit the reports of GREVIO to them. Similarly, and for the first time in a Council of Europe treaty, it foresees a significant role for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which is invited to take stock of its implementation at regular intervals.

The Istanbul Convention also stresses that non-governmental organisations and national human rights institutions may be important sources of information for GREVIO and would therefore have a role to play in contributing to the monitoring process.

Objectives of the Conference

The objective of the Conference – which is organised in the context of the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – is to engage in a reflection process on new synergies at different levels: (i) at government level, with newly designated or established official co-ordinating bodies; (ii) at parliamentary level, with the involvement of parliamentarians in the monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention; and (iii) at the level of civil society and national human rights institutions. Exploring ways of bringing these levels of interaction together could also help ensuring that the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism has at its disposal comprehensive information on the manner in which the Convention and future recommendations for improvement are implemented on the ground. The Conference will provide a platform for the exchange of experiences, know-how and networking among participants.

Targeted Participants

Participants will include representatives of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, notably members of its Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, the Parliamentary Assembly's General Rapporteur on Violence against Women, representatives of government structures and members of national parliaments, including from the States Parties to the Convention as well as some of its drafters. Representatives of GREVIO and of the Committee of the Parties will also participate. Finally, members of international parliamentary organisations, NGOs and other members of civil society will be invited.