

# Human Dignity

## 1. Violence against women

### I. In brief

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights and both a cause and a consequence of the inequality of women and men. It is widespread in all Council of Europe member states and beyond. The Council of Europe has been addressing this phenomenon through various co-operation projects, action plans and recommendations. These activities culminated in the adoption of the [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#) which opened for signature in May 2011.

### II. Background

As Europe's leading human rights organisation, the Council of Europe has undertaken a series of initiatives to promote the protection of women against violence. Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence provided the basis to undertake a Europe-wide action which ultimately led to significant progress in preventing and combating violence against women.

To step up activities at a national level, a major Campaign on the same topic was run in all Council of Europe member states (2006-2008). The campaign helped obtain an in-depth picture of the situation and showed the need to develop a comprehensive set of international legally-binding standards likely to boost much-needed action at national level to prevent violence, protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

The [Istanbul Convention](#) is the response to that need. It is the first legally-binding instrument in Europe in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, and, in terms of scope, the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. The Istanbul Convention is currently being signed and ratified by Council of Europe member states and is also open to accession by non-member states. Activities to support this process are being carried out in member states and in international fora. The Convention entered into force on 1 August 2014.

### III. Comparative advantages and added value

- Profile and credibility;
- Political leverage;
- Existence of legally-binding instruments;
- Implementation capacity: proven track record in the implementation of standards;
- Proven track record of successful co-operation and support provided to various stakeholders;
- Existence of well-developed networks (of national and international experts, practitioners, NGOs, etc.);
- Expertise of staff;
- Knowledge of the local context;
- Guarantees of sustainability.

### IV. Geographic contextualisation

- Strategic advice and capacity-building activities in EU member states (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia under the EEA and Norway Grants).
- Regional seminars and conferences on the promotion and implementation of the Istanbul Convention in member states, and in the Council of Europe neighbourhood (Batumi, Bratislava, Helsinki, Rabat, Sarajevo). Such events bring together several member states represented at government, parliamentary, local and regional level, as well as national and

international NGOs, media, other regional and international organisations and international experts. They provide fora for raising awareness, discussing benefits and the challenges of ratifying the Istanbul Convention and the sharing of experiences.

## **2. Action against trafficking in human beings**

### **I. In brief**

Trafficking in human beings has become a major problem in Europe. Each year, an increasing number of people – women, men and children – fall victim to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, illicit criminal activities, removal of organs or other forms of exploitation.

Since the late 1980s, the Council of Europe has adopted a variety of initiatives in the field of action against trafficking in human beings. Initially activities aimed to raise awareness and encourage action. The Council of Europe considered that it was necessary to draft a legally binding instrument which goes beyond recommendations or specific actions. On 3 May 2005, the Committee of Ministers adopted the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197). The Convention entered into force on 1 February 2008, following its 10th ratification. As of 1 October 2012, the Convention is in force in 37 Council of Europe member States, and has been signed, but not yet ratified, by another six member States.

### **II. Background**

While other international instruments already exist in this field, the Council of Europe Convention is a comprehensive treaty focussing mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. The

Convention clearly defines trafficking as being first and foremost a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and integrity of the human being; greater protection is therefore needed for all of its victims. The Convention also aims to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers and promote partnerships and international co-operation to these ends.

The Convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking (whether national or transnational, linked or not linked to organised crime) and taking in all persons who are victims of trafficking (women, men or children, whatever the form of their exploitation).

In addition, the Convention provides for the setting up of an effective monitoring mechanism capable of controlling the implementation of the obligations contained in it. This monitoring mechanism is composed of:

- the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), composed of 15 independent and impartial experts from a variety of backgrounds linked to the areas covered by the Convention. GRETA draws up country-by-country evaluation reports, following a procedure divided in rounds.
- the Committee of the Parties to the Convention, a political structure which may adopt recommendations concerning the measures to be taken to implement GRETA's conclusions.

The Convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member States; non-member States and the European Union also have the possibility of becoming Party to the Convention.

### **III. Comparative advantages and added value**

- Existence of a legally-binding instrument;

- Independent monitoring of obligations;
- Detailed country-by-country reports identifying gaps and good practices;
- Political leverage;
- Existence of well-developed networks (of national and international experts, practitioners, NGOs etc.);
- Proven track record of successful co-operation and support provided to various stakeholders;
- Expertise of staff;
- Knowledge of the local context.

#### IV. Geographic contextualisation

Since 1991, the Council of Europe has organised a series of anti-trafficking activities to increase the awareness of governments and civil society and promote the Convention. Studies and research have also been carried out to apprehend the problem of trafficking from its many different angles.

Targeted seminars and meetings of experts have taken place in many member states, providing them with both the necessary technical assistance for drawing up or revising legislation in this area and assisting them to adopt the necessary measures for combating this scourge. One example is the *LARA Project* to support the reform of criminal legislation in South-East Europe as a means of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. This project, implemented within the framework of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, enabled countries to adapt and review their national legislation in this field. As a result of it, nearly all the participating countries adopted national action plans against trafficking in human beings, covering prevention, prosecution of traffickers and protection of the victims.

### 3. Children's rights

#### I. In brief

The transversal programme "Building a Europe for and with children" was set up in 2006 to promote Children's Rights and to eliminate all forms of violence against children. Results include the adoption of standards and guidelines to fight sexual violence against children, to develop integrated national strategies against violence, to promote child friendly justice, child friendly social services, positive parenting and child friendly health care. Awareness raising and training tools have been developed to promote children's rights and to address specific forms of violence (violence in schools, sexual violence, violence in cyberspace and corporal punishment) and to empower children in vulnerable situations (such as children without parental care, migrant children or children with disabilities).

The Programme also promotes the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (the Lanzarote Convention) and assist the "Lanzarote Committee" which supervises the implementation of the Convention.

#### II. Background

The Programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" is a transversal programme. This means that it:

- mainstreams children's rights in almost all Council of Europe policies and actions
- mobilises all Council of Europe bodies, actors and partners (including governments, parliamentarians, local authorities, civil society, professional networks, child rights advocates and children ) ;
- combines all Council of Europe tools (standard setting, policy development, monitoring, awareness raising and co-operation activities).

In order to set priorities, the Programme elaborates multi-annual strategies. The main objective of the current strategy (2012-2015) is to achieve effective implementation of international and European children's rights standards. This includes the promotion of a reach body of legally binding texts adopted by the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe [ONE in FIVE Campaign](#) to stop sexual violence against children aims to achieve further signature, ratification and implementation of the Lanzarote Convention, and to equip children, their families/carers with the knowledge and tools they need to prevent and report sexual violence against children.

Further aims of the current strategy include promoting child-friendly services and systems, eliminating all forms of violence against children, guaranteeing the rights of children in vulnerable situations, and promoting child participation. Activities proposed to member states are always guided by the results of various monitoring mechanisms and developed in close consultation with international partners, in particular with UNICEF, OHCHR and the European Commission.

### III. Comparative advantages and added value

The Council of Europe is in permanent contact with governments, parliaments, local authorities, civil society and professional networks. This allows the Council of Europe to remain aware of trends, opportunities, challenges and risks and to act as a forum for exchange of good practices, raise awareness and to influence policies and legal texts at international and national level. It is in this context, thanks to its rich experience and its network of experts, that the Council of Europe can advise and support its partners.

The key comparative advantages of the Council of Europe are therefore the following:

- Profile and credibility;
- Political leverage;

- Existence of legally-binding instruments;
- Implementation capacity: Proven track record in the implementation of standards;
- Proven track record of successful co-operation and support provided to various stakeholders;
- Existence of well-developed networks (of national and international experts, practitioners, NGOs etc.);
- Expertise of staff;
- Knowledge of the local context;
- Guarantees of sustainability.

### IV. Geographic contextualisation

Strategic advice and capacity-building activities in member states and its neighbouring regions.

Regional seminars and conferences on the promotion and implementation of the Lanzarote Convention.

Co-operation activities with member states and Council of Europe neighbourhood on: violence against children, including sexual violence and violence in schools, promoting child-friendly justice, health and social services.

European Union co-operation on child-friendly justice.

UNICEF/UNSRSG co-operation on violence against children.

For more information:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dgi/overview\\_dgi\\_jhd\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dgi/overview_dgi_jhd_en.asp)  
<http://www.coe.int/children>

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