

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence



Monitoring
mechanism

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The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence,

also known as the **Istanbul Convention**, entered into force on 1 August 2014. It establishes a comprehensive set of legally binding obligations to ensure a holistic response to all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. It combines detailed provisions concerning:

- ▶ **preventing** violence,
- ▶ **protecting** and supporting victims, and
- ▶ **prosecuting** perpetrators

with the obligation to develop a set of **comprehensive policies** that are to be implemented in a co-ordinated manner.

— The convention sets up a monitoring mechanism to assess how its provisions are put into practice and to provide guidance to the parties. It consists of two distinct, but interacting 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**, which is composed of representatives of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention.



GREVIO

GREVIO is an independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention by the countries that have ratified it. It draws up and publishes reports evaluating legislative and other measures taken by these countries to give effect to the provisions of the convention (**evaluation procedure**). In specific circumstances, it may initiate special inquiries (**inquiry procedure**).

GREVIO may also adopt general recommendations on themes and concepts of the convention.

Who are the members of GREVIO?

GREVIO members are **independent and impartial experts** of high moral character, known for their recognised competence in the fields of human rights, gender equality, violence against women, or assistance to and protection of victims, or having demonstrated relevant professional experience in these fields.

GREVIO is composed of **15 members** who are elected by the Committee of the Parties among nationals of the parties to the convention, taking into account a gender and geographical balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise. They come from various professional backgrounds, such as the criminal justice sector and law enforcement, social work, civil society and women's rights organisations or academia, and serve on GREVIO for a mandate of **four years, renewable once**.

How does GREVIO carry out evaluations?

Working on a country-by-country basis, GREVIO carries out a first (baseline) evaluation of each country that has ratified the convention. GREVIO initiates this procedure by addressing its **questionnaire** to the country concerned, inviting the authorities to respond by way of a comprehensive report. GREVIO also collects **additional information from various other sources** including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other members of civil society, national human rights institutions, Council of Europe bodies (Parliamentary Assembly, Commissioner for Human Rights and other pertinent bodies) as well as other international treaty bodies.

GREVIO then carries out an **evaluation visit**. A delegation consisting mainly of two GREVIO members and a member of the Secretariat of the convention organise a series of meetings with different interlocutors from the government and civil society and non-governmental organisations working in the area of violence against women. The content of the meetings between GREVIO's delegation and its interlocutors remains confidential.

GREVIO subsequently draws up its draft evaluation report and sends it to the relevant government for comments. These comments are taken into account by GREVIO when drawing up its **final report** which, once again, is transmitted to the authorities for any final comments. After its adoption, **GREVIO's baseline evaluation report is made public** together with any comments received from the party concerned.

GREVIO's reports, upon adoption, are transmitted to the Committee of the Parties which adopts specific recommendations concerning the measures to be taken to implement the conclusions of GREVIO.

Upon completion of its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO will launch thematic evaluation rounds.

How does GREVIO initiate inquiries?

GREVIO may initiate an inquiry procedure when there is **reliable information** indicating that action is required to prevent a **serious, massive or persistent pattern of any acts of violence** covered by the convention.

GREVIO may request the urgent submission of a **special report** by the country concerned.

Taking into account the information made available, GREVIO may designate one or more of its members to conduct an **inquiry**. Where warranted, and with the consent of the authorities concerned, the inquiry may include a visit to the country.

What does GREVIO not do?

GREVIO is not a complaints body. The only Council of Europe body entitled to process individual complaints of human rights violations in relation to violence against women and domestic violence is the European Court of Human Rights.

GREVIO does not intervene in legal proceedings at national level but may intervene as a third party in proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights.



COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES

— The Committee of the Parties is composed of representatives of the parties to the convention. As part of its monitoring function, it adopts country-specific **recommendations** based on GREVIO's reports in relation to each state party. Reflecting not only the findings made but also the priorities indicated by GREVIO for further implementation of the convention, the Committee's recommendations draw attention to the action needed most urgently while at the same time calling for the implementation of all of GREVIO's detailed findings.

— The Committee of the Parties supervises the measures taken in implementation of its recommendations by setting a three-year period for their implementation and requesting written information from the party under review, which may be supplemented by submissions from NGOs, civil society organisations and national human rights institutions. As a result of this process, the Committee adopts **conclusions** in respect of each party, welcoming progress made and indicating areas for further action.

— In addition, the Committee of the Parties is tasked with the election of the members of GREVIO.

PARLIAMENTARY INVOLVEMENT IN MONITORING

— One major innovation of the convention is the obligation placed on the parties to invite their **parliaments to participate in the monitoring process** and to submit GREVIO's reports to them.

— The convention also foresees a significant **role for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**, which is invited to take stock of the implementation of the convention at regular intervals.

THE ROLE OF NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

— NGOs active in preventing and combating violence against women are **key actors** in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, which is why, under the convention, state parties have a legal obligation to recognise, encourage and support their work and to establish effective co-operation with them (Article 9). NGOs are also **major partners** in monitoring the implementation of the convention.

— When starting the evaluation procedure of a particular country, GREVIO may invite NGOs and civil society to give relevant information. Its delegations also hold **meetings with NGO representatives** during visits. NGOs are strongly encouraged to give their input and share their concerns at any time.

For contacts and further information

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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