

# 1st GENERAL REPORT ON GREVIO'S ACTIVITIES



**GREVIO**  
Group of Experts on  
Action against Violence  
against Women and  
Domestic Violence

covering the period from  
**June 2015 to May 2019**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Convention du Conseil de l'Europe  
sur la prévention et la lutte  
contre la violence à l'égard des femmes  
et la violence domestique

Convention d'Istanbul

## Foreword by the first President of GREVIO

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This First General Report on the activities of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) covers the period from September 2015 to May 2019 and provides a comprehensive summary of the results of GREVIO's first eight reports as well as the findings emerging from final draft reports adopted as of May 2019. I have served as the President of this body during this period and it is my distinct honour to present this First General Report on behalf of GREVIO.

The dynamics that led to the creation of GREVIO and the organisational environment it functioned in during this period have determined to a large extent this body's role in ensuring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention (the convention).

### The convention

The Council of Europe 2006-2008 campaign on ending violence against women highlighted the critical prevalence of such violence in member states and the absence of a uniform and consistent set of legal and policy requirements at the European level capable of effectively addressing this phenomenon. A task force was thus instituted by the Council of Europe to call for a regional treaty that would provide well-substantiated and legally binding standards in this area. As a result, the Ad Hoc Committee for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO) was appointed by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to negotiate and draft the convention.

Following lengthy and intense deliberations, the convention's text was adopted, first by CAHVIO and then by the Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011. The convention was opened for signature on 11 May 2011 during the 121st Session of the Committee of Ministers in Istanbul and came into force on 1 August 2014, with the ratification by the first 10 states. Clearly, one of the distinctive features of the convention is its insistence on a multi-pronged comprehensive approach encompassing prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies ("the 4 Ps") in order to ensure the successful eradication of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as its clearly stated premise that violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. The convention places the many forms of violence against women, ranging from female genital mutilation to domestic violence, under the banner of "gender-based violence against women", pointing to gender inequality as their common structural cause and calling for states' comprehensive response to combat all of these different manifestations of power inequality between women and men.

### **GREVIO and the evaluation process**

GREVIO is the independent expert body mandated to monitor the implementation of the convention and has been operating since September 2015. At its inception, it included 10 independent experts originating from different countries with various professional backgrounds, nominated by their states and elected by the states parties to the convention for a four-year term, renewable once. The number of independent experts rose to 15 following the 25<sup>th</sup> ratification of the convention.

As mandated by the convention, GREVIO conducts its monitoring on the basis of the information it receives from the state authorities as responses to the baseline questionnaire<sup>1</sup> it formulated in the first year of its formation and sent to the states; the dialogues it holds with authorities in the states being evaluated; the observations GREVIO members make in the evaluation visits they undertake; and the information it receives from NGOs and other sources in the process of monitoring. The reports of other international monitoring bodies and processes (such as those of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, etc.) also feed into the process.

Such information is analysed to form the basis of GREVIO's draft baseline evaluation report for the state party under review, including specific recommendations to the state. Following the state's comments on GREVIO's draft report, GREVIO adopts its final baseline evaluation report. This text is published – along with the state's comments on it – as a public document.

The existing practice in the period covered in this First General Report has been that the Committee of the Parties, the political organ of the monitoring/evaluation

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1. Please see the [Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) for more information.

process, endorses GREVIO's report and formally communicates it to the state concerned, with the specific recommendations as prioritised by GREVIO.

From the outset, in its evaluation reports, GREVIO has been keen to highlight the extent of a state's overall adherence to the fundamental principle of the convention: the interdependence between gender inequality and violence against women. It has thus carefully upheld the convention's priority requirement for the state to adopt a comprehensive, integrated policy approach to preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence against women. Close and careful monitoring of the "on-the-ground" existence and functioning of specific legal and other measures, services and mechanisms of prevention, protection and prosecution has complemented this approach.

GREVIO's thorough country-specific evaluation reports have been based on its meticulous evaluation of compliance with each and every one of the convention's specific provisions covered by GREVIO's questionnaire. Such analysis has resulted in the production of an all-encompassing and detailed evaluation of the state of affairs in each case. Thus, in its reports, GREVIO has been providing states not only with general, principled guidance but practical, operational and time-framed "recipes" for responding to concrete problem areas. As they elaborate on the principles of the convention, GREVIO reports have also been of significant interest and even sources of inspiration for other states and civil society organisations elsewhere.

GREVIO's own evolution to a fully functioning monitoring body in such a short time period has made it a respected and effective mechanism whose work and recommendations are closely followed and emulated by other regional and global mechanisms in women's human rights. As such, GREVIO's experience has clearly constituted a "best practice" of institution building at the international level.

GREVIO has been a productive and leading member of the platform of United Nations and regional women's human rights mechanisms, convened with the initiation of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against Dubravka Šimonović.<sup>2</sup> Since 2017, the Istanbul Convention has been "the guiding light" for this group and GREVIO has significantly contributed to its efforts to ensure that common standards are adopted in responding to violence against women, worldwide.

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2. The platform is an initiative launched by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and is aimed at further enhancing co-operation between international and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women and girls, as well as encouraging all international organisations, United Nations entities, governments, national institutions and stakeholders to take more advantage of the tools that the participating mechanisms have at their disposal. The platform brings together the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; the Chair of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; the President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe; the Inter-American Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women; the Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa; and the President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention. More information is available at: [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx).

GREVIO's work is based on the mandate it received from the convention in its relevant articles (Articles 66 to 69). Thus, from the very beginning, the convention's well-defined scope and comprehensive approach to addressing the issues at hand has been the basic guiding light for GREVIO. The history of the making of the convention, including the long and critical negotiations among member states on many of its provisions, has also given direction to GREVIO, helping it define priorities and impacting its working methods. While remaining fiercely loyal to the convention's standards as yardsticks against which existing conditions in the parties under evaluation were gauged, GREVIO adopted a flexible, constructive as well as a country-specific and nuanced approach to its country evaluations.

## **Results and impact**

The reader of this report will find a detailed account of the state of affairs in the implementation of the convention and the challenges existing in the parties that have been evaluated by GREVIO in the period covered.

The conclusions of GREVIO's monitoring of the implementation of the convention in these eight states illustrate the successful functioning of a brand-new regional monitoring mechanism of an ambitious legal instrument in the area of women's human rights. As such, it is a testimony to the Council of Europe's commitment to women's human rights and to member states' willingness to protect these rights in the face of violence against women.

While a detailed description and analysis of the situation is to be found in the ensuing baseline evaluation report itself, it is important to highlight here that in the period covered, in all cases, GREVIO reports have been very well-received by states and civil society alike.

The extent to which GREVIO's recommendations are effectively implemented will only be fully judged in time. However, there is initial evidence of progress on the ground particularly with respect to improvements in the laws and policy documents, with many states expanding their legal norms of violence against women and domestic violence in line with the provisions of the convention and adopting required action plans.

It is also clear that there are efforts to create national co-ordination mechanisms in line with Article 10 of the convention, as a first essential step for developing accurate data and information and informed responses. However, the picture is less encouraging with regards to ensuring the necessary political and financial support for making these mechanisms effective.

Similarly, in almost all states reviewed, some improvements – albeit limited in scope – in the support structures for the victims and in the area of public awareness raising and training of professionals have been taking place.

In general, in the countries monitored, GREVIO has observed strong support, particularly in respect of the need to protect women from violence. Yet, recognising the structural link between gender inequality and violence against women remains a fundamental challenge, thereby limiting the extent and effectiveness of measures

to counter violence against women. In some societies, lack of awareness and/or outright denial of this structural connection impedes effective implementation or is even the reason for failing to develop comprehensive policies.

Overcoming resistance of this nature requires a change of attitudes, mindsets and gender stereotypes. This, in itself, is admittedly a difficult and lengthy process in virtually all societies. Lately, the overall progress in gender equality and women's rights has provoked a "backlash" in many societies. It is no surprise that the convention, as the most advanced and promising text on the matter – a "gold standard" – has been facing the brunt of this retrogressive impulse. The deliberate spreading of false narratives about the aims of the convention has been spearheading these efforts in Europe. Unfortunately, such movements in some member states that in reality target women's equality with men have unhinged the discussion from facts and truths about the roots and nature of violence against women. They distort the aims of the convention, making it a hostage to irrational fears and particular domestic political agendas. Regrettably, such reactions tend to impede or slow down the convention's ratification and implementation.

However, history has shown time and again that values and principles of equality, inclusiveness, diversity, tolerance, and promotion and protection of human rights have always outlived very strong reactionary currents that have tried to repress these values, including women's human rights.

I believe the Istanbul Convention and the work of GREVIO in the first four years of its existence are notable efforts that will take their due place in history and will pave the way for further efforts and improvements in women's human rights in the future.

The sincere commitment in these early years of the members of GREVIO, and everyone that has contributed her or his knowledge, experience and expertise in a most selfless manner to ensure that the goals and standards of the convention become reality in the states parties, will be remembered as a momentous achievement.

The approval and reinforcement received from states parties to the convention as reflected by the decisions of the Committee of the Parties during these early years has also been a strong influence behind GREVIO's dedicated work in this period.

The Secretariat of the Council of Europe, at all levels, has been an unwavering source of support all along. Much of what has been accomplished in these first four years of GREVIO's life and the solid foundation that has been built has largely been possible because of the excellent work of the GREVIO Secretariat.

I present this First General Report of GREVIO, expressing my sentiments of gratitude to all who contributed to what is contained in it and with the hope that GREVIO's experience and output during its formative years will prove valuable for all combating violence against women.

Professor Dr Feride Acar  
First President of GREVIO  
(June 2015 to May 2019)



## Preface

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Violence against women is a structural and global phenomenon that knows no social, economic or national boundaries. Recognising the seriousness of the phenomenon and its impact on victims and on society, as well as the need for harmonised legal standards to ensure that victims benefit from the same level of protection everywhere in Europe, the Council of Europe decided in 2009 to draft a legally binding treaty in this field. The Istanbul Convention was drafted over the course of just over two years and was opened for signature on 11 May 2011 in Istanbul, the city after which it is often named. Following its 10th ratification the treaty entered into force on 1 August 2014.

By May 2019, the convention had been ratified by 34 Council of Europe member states and signed by all other member states, with the exception of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. It has also been signed by one international organisation, the European Union. Reservations to this convention were made by 22 states parties. Five states parties adopted declarations, one of which, by Poland, had been objected to by six states parties. Further ratifications are awaited, and certain states that are not Council of Europe members are already considering acceding to the convention, as allowed under this legal instrument.

Since its entry into force, the convention has garnered significant support at all levels: national, regional and local governments, the public, parliaments, other national, regional and international human rights organisations, civil society organisations, the media and academia. It has been awarded national and international prizes for its vision to keep women and girls safe from violence.

Drawing on international and European standards and case law, as well as best practices and lessons learned at national level, the convention is the most advanced and comprehensive international legal instrument in this field to date. It aims to “protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence”. It applies to “all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, which affects women disproportionately”.

Referred to by the United Nations as the “gold standard” of legislation on gender-based violence, the convention is the first treaty to provide a legally binding definition of violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, and to integrate the due diligence standard by defining it as the obligation of states “to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for acts of violence perpetrated by non-state actors”.

The convention is also the first international treaty that 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.

In order to ensure the adoption and implementation of adequate policies to fight violence against women in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner, the convention requires the states parties to allocate appropriate financial and human resources and to provide for a specific institutional set-up, including national co-ordinating bodies, data collection and research, NGO involvement and multi-institutional co-operation.

As concerns the prevention of violence, the convention expressly links violence against women and domestic violence to harmful gender stereotypes. The measures articulated in the convention are firmly based on the premise that violence against women cannot be eradicated without investing in greater equality between women and men and that, in turn, only real equality between women and men and a change in power dynamics and attitudes can truly prevent violence against women. The convention aims therefore at changing attitudes and eliminating stereotypes not only at the level of individuals but also at the level of institutions, by placing the obligation on states parties to conduct regular awareness-raising campaigns, introduce teaching material at all levels of education, regularly train all professionals in contact with victims, including legal professionals and the police, set up perpetrator programmes, and involve the private sector and the media as partners in tackling violence.

To overcome the various consequences of violence, the convention stresses the need to support, assist and protect victims from any further act of violence, secondary victimisation and economic dependence by setting up specialist support

services for victims and their children that are able to provide medical assistance and psychological and legal counselling, as well as providing shelters in sufficient numbers, rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres and introducing round-the-clock telephone helplines.

The convention provides for the prosecution of perpetrators of any type of violence covered by the convention. In this respect the states parties are obliged to criminalise and punish all the forms of violence against women covered by the convention, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation and to take a range of measures to ensure the effective investigation of any allegation of violence against women and domestic violence.

Given the transnational nature of some of the forms of violence against women (such as forced marriage), the convention takes a “cross-border approach”. It requires states parties to extend their jurisdiction to cover crimes committed abroad by their nationals, and even make it possible to prosecute their residents. Conversely, the convention creates the framework for greater access to justice for nationals or residents of parties who become victims of crimes of violence against women while abroad.

The convention requires states parties to ensure that gender-based violence may be recognised as a form of persecution when establishing refugee status or international subsidiary protection for women who may be fleeing from rape as used as a weapon of war, female genital mutilation or a life of domestic violence.

Of particular relevance in the international context is the fact that the convention applies not only in times of peace but also in situations of armed conflict.

The convention sets up a monitoring mechanism to assess how its provisions are put into practice and to provide guidance to states parties. This monitoring mechanism consists of two pillars: the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), an independent expert body, and the Committee of the Parties, a political body composed of official representatives of the states parties to the convention.

The monitoring mechanism of the convention represents a unique platform for progress both at national and international levels. It generates very valuable data, advice and support thanks to the in-depth analysis of the various national contexts and the mobilisation of expertise and exchange of good practices. Devising strategies for tackling problems and developing solutions, the monitoring process offers a vital forum for co-ordinating and setting a global agenda to eliminate violence against women, of which this report aims to provide an overview.



## Establishment of the procedural and organisational framework of GREVIO's activities

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1. The monitoring mechanism of the Istanbul Convention has been set up to assess and improve the implementation of this innovative instrument by states parties. It consists of two distinct but interacting pillars: the **Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)**, an independent expert body, and the **Committee of the Parties**, a political body composed of official representatives of the states parties to the convention.

### Membership

2. GREVIO's mandate and composition requirements are set out in Article 66, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the convention and expounded in the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on rules on the election procedure of the members of GREVIO (hereafter referred to as Resolution CM/Res(2014)43). GREVIO members must be nationals of different states parties to the convention. They are nominated by the states parties and elected for a four-year term, renewable once. The composition of GREVIO must reflect the main legal systems, gender and geographical balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise.

3. GREVIO members' eligibility criteria and the election process have been established in Article 66, paragraphs 4 and 5, and Article 67, paragraph 2, and are further developed in Resolution CM/Res(2014)43. GREVIO members' impartiality and independence in the exercise of their function remains one of the core principles of the convention as set out in its Article 66, paragraph 4. Moreover, GREVIO members must be chosen transparently, based on their recognised competences or experience in the fields of violence against women, gender equality and human rights. Concerning the election process, Article 67, paragraph 2, and Rule 1 of Resolution CM/Res(2014)43 provide that the Committee of the Parties is the body in charge of electing GREVIO members.

4. The Committee of the Parties elected the first 10 GREVIO members on 5 May 2015, at its first meeting, held in Strasbourg. In accordance with Article 66, paragraph 2, of the convention, their term of office was defined as running from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2019. The first GREVIO brought together highly respected professionals known for their wide range of expertise in the field of violence against women, rooted in years of civil society advocacy, victims' assistance, academic research and legal practice. After the ratification of the convention by Germany on 12 October 2017, which brought the number of states parties to 25, a procedure was set in motion to fill five additional seats within GREVIO. Subsequently, at its fifth meeting on 24 May 2018, the Committee of the Parties elected five new members whose mandate started on 1 September 2018. In view of the termination of the first mandate of GREVIO's initial members on 31 May 2019, the election of 10 members of GREVIO was organised at the seventh meeting of the Committee of the Parties, on 3 May 2019.<sup>3</sup> Following these elections, six former GREVIO members were reappointed and four new members were elected.

5. At its first meeting, on 21 September 2015, GREVIO elected, by secret ballot, Feride Acar as its President, Rosa Logar as its First Vice-President and Marceline Naudi as its Second Vice-President, for a term of office of two years, renewable. At the 12th GREVIO meeting on 12 October 2017,<sup>4</sup> by secret ballot, GREVIO re-elected Feride Acar as its President. Marceline Naudi was elected as its First Vice-President and Simona Lanzoni as its Second Vice-President. They served their term of office from 13 October 2017 to 31 May 2019.

6. At its sixth meeting, from 23 to 26 May 2016, GREVIO appointed Biljana Branković and Simona Lanzoni as its Gender Equality Rapporteurs.

### Internal Rules of Procedure

7. In accordance with Article 66, paragraph 6, GREVIO adopted its Rules of Procedure at its first meeting held in Strasbourg from 21 to 23 September 2015. During the period covered by this report, GREVIO's Rules of Procedure have been amended three times, in February and October 2017 and in February 2018. While generally drawing on those of other Council of Europe independent human rights monitoring bodies, they include several innovative features, such as the encouragement of

3. For an overview of the elections of GREVIO members please see Appendix 1.

4. For a list of GREVIO meetings please see Appendix 1.

national parliaments to become involved in the evaluation procedure. They govern GREVIO's functioning as well as the specificities of GREVIO's evaluation and special inquiry procedures and the adoption of general recommendations. Moreover, they lay out general rules on the communication and protection of persons and organisations interacting with GREVIO, the co-operation between GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties, and the provisions on the suspension, amendments and entry into force of the Rules of Procedure. The following features of GREVIO's Rules of Procedure should be highlighted.

### a) General Rules (Rules 1-27)

8. GREVIO members are required to exercise their function impartially and independently (Rule 2). GREVIO holds meetings at its seat in Strasbourg but may, on occasion, decide that meetings will take place elsewhere (Rule 13 (1) and 13 (2)). During the period covered by this report, **GREVIO held a total of 17 meetings, two of which took place outside Strasbourg**. To maintain confidentiality, GREVIO meets in camera, unless decided otherwise (Rule 17). Decisions are usually taken by consensus. Where voting is required, decisions of GREVIO are taken by a majority of the members present (Rule 24). A list of the decisions adopted during the meeting is made public afterwards to ensure the transparency of GREVIO's work (Rule 25).

9. With a view to ensuring close co-operation between GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties, the President of GREVIO periodically meets with the Committee of the Parties to keep it informed of the state of developments. The Chair of the Committee of the Parties may also be invited to GREVIO's meetings (Rule 26).

### b) GREVIO's relationship with parliaments (Rules 55-60)

10. As a pioneering international human rights treaty, the convention, with its Article 70, is the only one to grant a specific monitoring role to parliaments both at national and international levels. In order to render this meaningful in practice, GREVIO's Rules of Procedure set out ways in which GREVIO may ensure the perspective of parliaments in the evaluation of the convention's implementation (Rules 55 to 60). For example, GREVIO may encourage states parties to enter into a dialogue with their parliaments during the preparation of the state report in replying to the questionnaire (Rule 55). GREVIO may also choose to meet with parliamentarians during the evaluation visits carried out in the context of its first evaluation procedure (Rule 56). **During the period covered by this report, five evaluation visits (Albania, Austria, Monaco, Portugal and Montenegro) led by GREVIO included meetings with national parliamentarians.**

11. Once GREVIO's baseline evaluation report is adopted, GREVIO may invite parliaments, within their mandate and through appropriate channels, to take action in the light of its report and conclusions (Rule 57). It is thus of utmost importance to ensure the transmission of all GREVIO baseline evaluation reports to national parliaments, which GREVIO regularly requests states parties to do along with the request to have them translated into their official national language(s) (Rule 59). A report

adopted in 2019 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)<sup>5</sup> has highlighted the active role played by national parliaments in the monitoring of the convention. Over the last few years, new parliamentary committees have been set up (in Italy, Portugal and Turkey) and existing ones have adopted action plans (in Albania) to monitor and foster the domestic implementation of the convention.

## Human and financial resources

12. To support the operability of the monitoring mechanism of the convention, GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties are assisted by a Secretariat composed of the Executive Secretary and other staff members appointed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The Secretariat was set up in 2014 and is now part of the Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department within the Directorate General for Democracy (DGII). To respond to the growing number of ratifications of the convention and the subsequent increase in the workload of the Secretariat, the number of A grade staff was increased from two to three in April 2016, and then to four in April 2019, in addition to the Executive Secretary. The Secretariat also includes two B grade staff.<sup>6</sup> GREVIO wishes to thank very warmly all staff that have served and currently serve in the Secretariat for their contribution and support.

13. During the period covered by this report, the financial resources allocated to GREVIO's operational activities enabled it to complete 13 evaluation procedures. They covered the costs of the different steps of the evaluation procedure, including the evaluation visits and the publication and dissemination of GREVIO's first baseline evaluation reports. It enabled GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties to offer high-quality output in both official languages of the Council of Europe. They also allowed GREVIO members and the Secretariat to present the convention and GREVIO's monitoring work at conferences, round tables, training sessions and meetings in Strasbourg and abroad. These contributions are essential to enhancing communication about GREVIO's activities, promoting ratification and encouraging engagement with the convention's monitoring mechanism.

14. The importance of completing GREVIO's tasks in line with the high standards set by the Council of Europe's other monitoring mechanisms cannot be overestimated. The initial results of GREVIO's work form the foundation for its reputation and credibility. It is therefore essential that adequate human and financial resources continue to be provided to the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism in the future, responding to the growth in volume of its activity and reflecting its priority nature for the Council of Europe. In this respect, GREVIO notably welcomes the initiatives aiming at ensuring that non-member states becoming party to the Istanbul Convention contribute to the financing of its monitoring mechanism. GREVIO also wishes to thank member states who supported the work in this area through voluntary contributions, scholarships and other schemes, and to encourage states to continue providing such support, including where appropriate under the form of staff secondments.

5. PACE (2019), the convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges, Doc. 14908, 8 June, Strasbourg: PACE.

6. See Appendix 5 for the list of the Secretariat members from June 2015 to May 2019.



## GREVIO's working methods

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### Baseline evaluation procedure

15. In line with Article 68, paragraph 3, of the convention and Rule 30 of GREVIO's Rules of Procedure, GREVIO launched its first (baseline) evaluation procedure in 2016. It covers the convention in its entirety, leaving aside only Chapter VIII of the convention, and consists of a comprehensive analysis of states parties' level of compliance. The evaluation process of each state party, from the first transmission of the questionnaire (see under letter b. below) to the publication of GREVIO's findings in the baseline evaluation report, can take up to 18 months. The baseline evaluation procedure is made up of several steps, each of which allows GREVIO to obtain critical information upon which to base its reports.

16. To maintain the rate of evaluation procedures underway, bearing in mind the limited financial and human resources and the increase in the number of states parties, adjustments to GREVIO's working methods were decided during its 13th meeting held in Strasbourg from 20 to 23 February 2018. For example, instead of considering the state report with the representatives of the state party concerned at a GREVIO meeting in Strasbourg, GREVIO decided to carry out the consideration of the state report foreseen in Article 68, paragraph 3, of the convention at a round table opening meeting with high-level state representatives in the framework of its evaluation visits. The round table opening meetings that were held during the subsequent evaluation visits were considered very useful by all interlocutors because of their inclusive approach.

17. The main steps of the baseline evaluation procedure are thus the following:

- ▶ **Reporting to GREVIO and information gathering.** A state party under review is expected to submit to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe a report based on the GREVIO baseline questionnaire. This report presents information on existing measures in law and policy covered by the scope of the convention. GREVIO may, in addition, receive confidential information from civil society organisations and national institutions for the protection of human rights. GREVIO also screens all other available sources, in particular the work of other regional and international treaty bodies of relevance.
- ▶ **Evaluation visits: Consideration of the state report and other information.** With a view to arriving at an in-depth understanding of the efforts made in the implementation of the comprehensive provisions of the convention, GREVIO decided, at its first meeting, to carry out evaluation visits to all parties undergoing the first baseline evaluation procedure. The evaluation visit allows GREVIO to meet with all relevant state representatives, including where appropriate at regional and local level, and it offers room for exchanges with civil society representatives, in particular women's rights organisations and specialist support service providers. A round table opening meeting with high-level state representatives allows GREVIO to consider the state report as foreseen in Article 68, paragraph 3.
- ▶ **Preparation of the first draft baseline evaluation report.** A draft report containing GREVIO's findings and conclusions from the evaluation procedure is drafted by the appointed rapporteurs with the support of the Secretariat and then approved by GREVIO in plenary. This draft report is treated as confidential and sent to the state party concerned for comments that are taken into account in the drafting of the final report, if they have been submitted within the time limit set by GREVIO.
- ▶ **Preparation and adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report.** GREVIO's final reports are adopted by consensus, or otherwise by a two-thirds majority of votes cast. Once adopted, the baseline evaluation report is sent to the state party under review for final comments that have to be submitted to GREVIO within one month.
- ▶ **Publication and dissemination of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report.** Together with any final comments submitted by the state party under review, GREVIO's evaluation baseline reports are made public and subsequently transmitted to the Committee of the Parties.
- ▶ **Recommendations by the Committee of the Parties.** Pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 12, of the convention and Rule 2, paragraph 2, of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee of the Parties may adopt, on the basis of the report and conclusions of GREVIO, recommendations addressed to the state party concerning the measures to be taken to implement the conclusions of GREVIO, if necessary setting a date for submitting information on their implementation, and aiming at promoting co-operation with that party for the proper implementation of the convention.

## Questionnaire

18. The need to base GREVIO's monitoring of the convention on a standardised questionnaire stems from the convention itself (Article 68, paragraph 1). GREVIO adopted the questionnaire for its (first) baseline evaluation round on 11 March 2016, less than six months after its first meeting organised in September 2015. GREVIO's main objective was to render the provisions of the convention meaningful by developing standardised approaches to reviewing their implementation. Another core objective was the desire to avoid duplication with the work of other monitoring bodies. The GREVIO questionnaire thus highlights novel aspects of the convention such as, *inter alia*, its **emphasis on an integrated approach, the need to avoid women's secondary victimisation, victims' access to justice and women's empowerment**. Additionally, GREVIO also requests states parties to provide **intersectional up-to-date statistics**, in particular any available administrative and judicial data disaggregated by sex, age and type of violence as well as the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, geographical location and any other relevant factors (e.g. disability).

19. During the period covered by this report, GREVIO received **15 state reports**, further to requests sent to the relevant states parties.<sup>7</sup> No significant delays have been incurred in this process, and all state reports have been published on the convention's website in accordance with Rule 33 (6) of GREVIO's Rules of Procedure.

## Evaluation visits

20. By virtue of the convention, GREVIO may carry out evaluation visits in the territory of the state party under review where additional information is needed to monitor the implementation of the convention. In adopting its Rules of Procedure, GREVIO decided to include, as a mandatory step in the first baseline evaluation procedure, an on-site visit (Rule 39 (1)). In view of the complex task of monitoring the implementation of the convention as a whole, GREVIO considered this additional step essential for its initial country assessment. It allows a more in-depth understanding of the normative framework in place, its implementation in practice and for valuable direct exchanges with state and non-state actors around gaps and challenges. It is also an occasion for GREVIO to visit services provided to victims such as domestic violence shelters, counselling services, rape crisis centres or other types of specialist services. GREVIO may also request to visit facilities for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees in order to assess states parties' level of implementation of Articles 60 and 61. Moreover, exchanges with representatives of civil society active in the field of violence against women (NGOs, lawyers, academics, journalists) and other relevant interlocutors such as ombudsman institutions and/or national human rights institutions form a significant part of the visit's programme.

21. At its sixth meeting (23 to 25 May 2016), GREVIO adopted internal guidelines for visits and its relations with the media while on visits, offering valuable guidance to the

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7. Austria, Monaco, Denmark, Albania, Turkey, Montenegro, Portugal, Sweden, France, Finland, Serbia, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Belgium.

members of GREVIO. These guidelines, which are confidential, are intended to be living documents, capable of evolving on the basis of the experience gained by GREVIO.

22. During the period covered by this report, GREVIO conducted 13 evaluation visits.<sup>8</sup> Their duration varied from three to eight days depending on the size of the state party under review. In 2016, GREVIO conducted two baseline evaluation visits, to Austria and Monaco, followed by visits to Albania, Denmark, Turkey and Montenegro in 2017. In 2018, four evaluation visits were organised, to Sweden, Portugal, Finland and France, and an additional three, to Serbia, the Netherlands and Italy, in early 2019.

## Other sources of information

23. In joining the ranks of international and regional monitoring bodies, GREVIO is expected to take into consideration, as much as possible, information made available to and by other monitoring bodies (Article 68 (6) of the convention). Moreover, it may request these bodies to provide it with information on complaints presented to them and their outcome, or any other information related to the implementation of the convention in the states parties (Article 68 (8)).

24. GREVIO has collected information, as appropriate, from various United Nations (UN) instruments and bodies, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. It has also consulted studies from bodies of the European Union such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the EU Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), or studies requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). GREVIO may also consider information and reports from other European organisations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Additionally, GREVIO has taken into account information from the European Court of Human Rights (the Court), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) and other treaty-based Council of Europe bodies such as the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) and the European Committee of Social Rights and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

25. GREVIO also examines information published by European networks of NGOs (for example, Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), the European Women's Lobby, the End FGM Network and the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)), and national NGOs working in the field of violence against women. GREVIO also pays attention to published articles and research from

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8. Austria, Monaco, Albania, Denmark, Turkey, Montenegro, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, France, Serbia, the Netherlands, Italy.

other civil society organisations, academia and other practitioners. This conscientious review of existing information provides a solid basis for conducting GREVIO's baseline evaluation visits and devising GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports.

### Civil society's contribution to the evaluation procedure

26. Civil society organisations, in particular independent women's rights organisations, are an important source of information for GREVIO. GREVIO maintains close ties with NGOs that are relevant to any of the provisions covered by the convention. This inclusive approach is provided for under Article 68 (5) of the convention. On this basis, GREVIO has established its practice of reaching out to national and regional NGOs and their networks, inviting them to contribute to the evaluation procedure by submitting information on the implementation of the convention. This information may be provided in the form of "shadow reports" or "alternative reports" and may be drawn up on the basis of GREVIO's questionnaire to states parties under review.

27. Through these reports, civil society organisations are able to share their practical expertise that frequently lies in the provision of specialist support services, including legal advice and representation. This intimate knowledge of the practical implementation of law and policy provides an essential input to the evaluation procedure – both in planning the evaluation visit and in drawing up the report.

28. GREVIO treats information received from civil society as confidential, with the exception of formally submitted information in the form of shadow or alternative reports, which will be published if so requested.

### Reservations

29. The possibility for states parties to enter reservations to the convention is strictly regulated under its Article 78. Under this article, reservations may only be entered with respect to the following provisions of the convention:

- ▶ Article 30 (2) related to **state compensation**;
- ▶ Article 44 (1.e), (3) and (4) related to **jurisdiction**;
- ▶ Article 55 (1) regarding **ex parte and ex officio proceedings** and with respect to **minor offences only**;
- ▶ Article 58 regarding the **statute of limitation** with respect to the offences of Articles 37 (forced marriage), 38 (female genital mutilation) and 39 (forced abortion and forced sterilisation);
- ▶ Article 59 on the right of migrant victims to an **autonomous residence status**.

30. Moreover, states parties may reserve the right to provide for **non-criminal sanctions** instead of criminal sanctions, for behaviours referred to in Article 33 on psychological violence and Article 34 on stalking.

31. To promote uniformity in states parties' implementation of their obligations, the convention aims at encouraging them to consider withdrawing and/or reviewing their reservations. Besides foreseeing the possibility for states parties to withdraw their reservations at any time by a declaration addressed to the Secretary General

of the Council of Europe (Article 78 (4)), Article 79 subjects reservations to a limited period of validity (five years from the entry into force of the convention in respect of the party concerned) and to a system of compulsory renewal (Article 79 (1) and (2)).

32. Moreover, the convention provides that any state party that makes a reservation is under the duty to provide GREVIO with an explanation on the grounds justifying its continuance, before its renewal or upon request (Article 79 (3)).

33. As of May 2019, 21 states parties had submitted reservations to the convention (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Reservations made by parties to the convention as of 31 May 2019**

State parties	Article 30 (2) (State compensation)	Article 44 (1.e, 3 and 4) (Jurisdiction)	Article 55 (1) (Ex parte and ex officio proceedings)	Article 58 (Statute of limitation)	Article 59 (Residence status)	Articles 33 and 44 (Non-criminal sanctions for offences under Articles 37, 38 and 39)
Andorra	X					
Croatia	X					
Cyprus	X	X			X	
Czech Republic		X				
Denmark		X				X (with respect to Article 34)
Finland			X			
France		X				
Georgia	X					
Germany					X	
Greece		X				
Ireland	X	X				
Latvia			X			
Malta	X	X			X	
Monaco	X	X			X	
North Macedonia	X	X	X		X	
Poland	X	X	X	X		
Romania	X	X	X	X	X	X
Serbia	X	X				
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	
Sweden		X		X		
Switzerland		X	X		X	

34. It should be noted that the declaration made by Poland upon its ratification in April 2015, stating that it will apply the convention “in accordance with the principles and the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland” has prompted objections from a number of states parties (Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) who consider that this declaration might be tantamount to a reservation.

35. During the evaluation procedure, GREVIO considers whether states have reserved the right not to apply, or to apply only under certain conditions, the provisions of the convention and adapts its assessment accordingly. At the same time, the evaluation procedure offers an opportunity for GREVIO to enter into a dialogue with the countries under evaluation regarding the impact of reservations on their response to violence against women.

36. Denmark, for example, has made a reservation to Article 34 (non-criminal sanctions for stalking) and offers protection to stalking victims on the basis of the Danish Act on Restraining Orders. In light of the high number of breaches and the possibility of granting exceptions to contact bans for communication around shared parental responsibilities, GREVIO has questioned the level of effectiveness of such a restraining order regime as well as the dissuasiveness of non-criminal sanctions, encouraging the authorities to analyse and address the underlying causes of the high number of breaches of such orders.

37. In their report to GREVIO, the Monegasque authorities explained that their reservation to Article 59 on autonomous residence permits for migrant women reflected “the specific nature of residence status as granted in Monaco, whereby having a Monegasque spouse has no direct impact on entitlement to a residence permit”. GREVIO nevertheless observed that, in practice, if a marriage or a relationship is dissolved, a foreign woman may run the risk of being unable to renew her residence permit if she finds herself without the means to prove sufficient financial resources. It therefore invited Monaco to ensure that the conditions governing the right of residence and renewal of residence permits are enforced so as to take into account the difficulties, particularly financial, that foreign women who are victims of violence may experience when they no longer have the resources of their spouse or partner.



## Focus section: first trends and challenges emerging from country monitoring

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38. In the period under review, GREVIO has published first baseline evaluation reports on Albania, Austria, Denmark, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. On-site evaluations of Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Serbia have also been carried out. As indicated earlier, the evaluation reports assess states parties' implementation of the convention, looking at the normative framework, as well as at states' policies and practices. The growing corpus of these evaluation reports indicates that the convention has already had a tangible and positive impact. It has, for one thing, propelled gender-based violence to the forefront of public debate and increased victims' and society's awareness of the urgent need to combat it. It has also introduced higher legislative and policy standards at the national level in a number of countries. It is also clear through the on-site evaluation visits that the convention is extremely well regarded by women's organisations, victims' associations and state authorities alike. It is looked on as a beacon that sheds much needed light on the legislative and practical measures required to prevent violence against women, protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

39. On the other hand, from the body of evaluation reports it is also apparent that insufficient resource allocation and the lack of a co-ordinated and systematic approach, as well as the continued deliberate circulation of ingrained misconceptions about the convention, still stand in the way of its full integration and effective implementation in states parties.

## Shortcomings and challenges in the implementation of the provisions of the convention

40. In countries such as Albania,<sup>9</sup> Denmark<sup>10</sup> and Finland,<sup>11</sup> GREVIO has criticised the gender-neutral approach of legal provisions and policy documents that address domestic violence. While under its Article 3, the convention provides a gender-neutral definition of domestic violence that encompasses both victims and perpetrators of both sexes, it also spells out with great clarity that domestic violence affects women disproportionately and is therefore a form of violence that is distinctly gendered. The gender-neutral approach taken by states parties fails to address the specific experiences of women that differ significantly from those of men thus hindering their effective protection. Such an approach deflects the focus away from persisting challenges to the safety of women and children who predominantly suffer domestic violence at the hands of male perpetrators.

41. Moreover, the gender-neutral approach fails to recognise domestic violence as a social mechanism that helps keep women in a subordinate position to men, thus countering the convention's fundamental emphasis on the need for a comprehensive, holistic approach and coordinated policies to effectively combat violence against women.

42. Furthermore, where domestic violence is defined and criminalised at the national level, it unfortunately does not always capture all its manifestations. In Portugal<sup>12</sup> and Austria,<sup>13</sup> for example, the definitions of domestic violence did not encompass economic violence, as required by Article 3b of the convention.

43. An additional common feature that has emerged is the insufficient allocation of financial and human resources for the implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the convention. This is particularly true for states' financial support to specialist support services as well as NGOs active in this area at national, regional and local level, as provided for under Article 8 of the convention. Where this is the case, it indicates states' limited degree of commitment to the implementation of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to preventing and combating violence against women. It must therefore be addressed as a matter of priority.

44. Notwithstanding the welcome initiatives taken in states parties (see below) in developing integrated policies addressing violence against women through national action plans, GREVIO has noted that in many cases the national action plans consisted in project-based initiatives. These initiatives were limited in duration and therefore not conducive to building a sustainable, comprehensive and holistic approach to the problem and fell short of ensuring integrated structural policies to address violence against women. More importantly, the national action plans do not always address all forms of violence against women or they prioritise certain forms of violence over others. As such, these rarely offer a comprehensive set of measures on more than

9. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 8, p. 13.

10. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraph 6, p. 13.

11. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraphs 4-5, pp. 10-11.

12. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 8, p. 11.

13. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 8, p. 13.

one form of violence. This results in the compartmentalisation of approaches and impedes the holistic implementation of the convention.

45. Under Article 7, the convention calls for comprehensive and co-ordinated state-wide policies addressing measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the convention and requires effective multi-agency co-operation in the implementation of such policies (including government agencies, national, local and regional parliaments, national human rights institutions and civil society). Furthermore, Article 10 provides that such policies should be co-ordinated, implemented, monitored and evaluated by one or more official co-ordinating bodies. Yet, many national co-ordinating bodies have a limited mandate and inadequate powers vested in them. Others struggle to fulfil their goals for lack of sufficient and/or dedicated financial and human resources. Thus, GREVIO has found that mechanisms to ensure the effective co-ordination of integrated policies, measures and programmes among the relevant stakeholders tend not to be sufficiently robust. In its reports GREVIO has interpreted these provisions of the convention and clarified that the role of co-ordinating body should be assigned to one or more fully “institutionalised entities” with clear mandates, powers and competences and equipped with the necessary human and financial resources. It has also explained that the monitoring and evaluation of policies is best vested in one or more separate bodies in order to ensure objectivity in such evaluation.

46. Instead, GREVIO has found that the mechanisms put in place in the states parties reviewed do not satisfy these standards. In those countries in which the co-ordinating bodies take the form of an interministerial ad hoc committee (i.e. Austria<sup>14</sup> and Denmark<sup>15</sup>) these structures are not sufficiently institutionalised; their mandates lack clarity and are not resourced with a dedicated budget and staff. In Albania,<sup>16</sup> on the other hand, while the co-ordinating body is an institution, its purely advisory role and insufficient decision-making powers limit its ability to exercise effectively its functions as a co-ordinating body and its capacity to obtain commitment from the political decision-making bodies. GREVIO has also found that relevant NGOs are not systematically involved in the design and co-ordination of policies, contrary to the requirements of Article 7, paragraph 3, of the convention.

47. GREVIO reports have also highlighted public authorities’ inadequate collection of data. Under Article 11 of the convention, states parties are requested to collect disaggregated statistical data at regular intervals on cases relating to all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention, for a number of reasons, including to ensure the design and implementation of evidence-based policy making. The judiciary, police, social welfare and health-care services therefore need to set up data systems that go beyond the internal recording needs of their respective agencies/ services and as a minimum collect data on victims and perpetrators disaggregated by sex, age, type of violence, the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator and geographical location. Recorded data should also contain information on conviction rates of perpetrators of all forms of violence against women. Furthermore, institutions responsible for processing and deciding on asylum claims should also collect

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14. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraphs 34-39, p. 19.

15. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraphs 34-39, p. 19.

16. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraphs 33-36, p. 21.

data on the granting of refugee status on the basis of gender-related persecution. Moreover, GREVIO reports have highlighted the relevance of collecting data for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the convention: as an example, judicial data on custody and visitation rights of child witnesses are necessary to assess how the requirements of Article 31 are taken into account when determining custody and visitation rights.

48. States parties are increasingly establishing systems to disaggregate data by type of violence, sex, age and relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. However, only very few collect data disaggregated on the basis of all of the categories mentioned in the preceding paragraph, allowing only a partial picture to emerge. Moreover, data collection systems often vary from one public body to another and are not harmonised, preventing any case flow to surface – particularly in the criminal justice sector. Furthermore, no state party has set up a data collection system that allows recording the granting of refugee status on the basis of gender-related persecution.

49. Data collected by states parties show worrying rates of violence resulting in the death of a woman. Where the authorities had prior knowledge of the woman's exposure to violence, such fatal outcomes raise the question of whether the victims might have been saved if proper, immediate and efficient measures of protection had been applied to ensure women's safety. In its reports,<sup>17</sup> GREVIO has recommended conducting systematic post-homicide reviews with the aim of identifying possible systemic gaps in the institutional response to violence.

50. While progress has been achieved in many states parties (see below), nevertheless, the number of specialist support services for victims of violence against women is still insufficient and its funding extremely volatile. In countries such as Albania,<sup>18</sup> Denmark,<sup>19</sup> Austria<sup>20</sup> and Turkey,<sup>21</sup> the geographical reach of specialist support services is also problematic, as support services are missing in rural areas, leading in practice to the exclusion of segments of the population. Whereas counselling services and shelters for victims of domestic violence are better serviced, specialist support services that address different forms of sexual violence are often insufficient. Several countries, including Albania,<sup>22</sup> Montenegro,<sup>23</sup> Monaco<sup>24</sup> and Turkey,<sup>25</sup> for instance, have not established a rape crisis centre or referral centre for victims of sexual violence, as required by Article 25 of the convention. GREVIO has also observed that telephone helplines set up in Albania,<sup>26</sup> Monaco,<sup>27</sup> Portugal,<sup>28</sup> and Turkey<sup>29</sup> either did not meet the standards provided under the convention – notably the provision of advice regarding all forms of violence covered by the convention,

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17. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 205, p. 57.

18. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 103, p. 39.

19. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraph 114, p. 33.

20. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 105, p. 32.

21. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraph 144, p. 54.

22. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 109, p. 40.

23. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 135, p. 36.

24. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Monaco](#), paragraph 86, p. 25.

25. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraph 186, p. 65.

26. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 107, p. 40.

27. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Monaco](#), paragraph 82, p. 24.

28. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 140, p. 42.

29. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraph 181, p. 64.

round the clock, free of charge and with due confidentiality – or were not fully operational. The helpline in Portugal,<sup>30</sup> for instance, did not expressly target women victims of different forms of violence, other than domestic violence, whereas the helpline established in Monaco<sup>31</sup> did not operate round the clock.

51. Lacunae with regards to the protection afforded to women victims of domestic violence and their children, including in the context of custody and visitation decisions, as well as regarding the ban of obligatory mediation in civil procedures have also consistently been noticed. One such shortcoming concerns the provision of protection and support to child witnesses when violence occurs in the family unit. Under Article 26 of the convention, whenever children have witnessed domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment or other forms of violence covered by the convention, the services provided to direct victims must also be equipped to address the needs and rights of any children who were present (i.e. age-appropriate psychological counselling). By way of example, the GREVIO report on Portugal<sup>32</sup> found that policies and measures addressing child witnesses tended to focus more on their procedural rights with respect to their participation in criminal proceedings (hearing them in separate rooms) than on providing them with support and protection as of their own right as indirect victims of violence.

52. Likewise, insufficient measures to ensure the safety of mothers who are victims of domestic violence and their children in the decision on and exercise of child custody and visitation rights have been observed in all parties reviewed to date. States parties tend to give priority to the presumed best interest of the child, which is deemed to be to maintain contact with both parents at all costs, regardless of the violence he or she had witnessed. The joint exercise of parental authority is generally maintained even in the event of a final criminal conviction for violence committed against the other parent and the withdrawal of parental authority of the violent parent remains the exception, despite the persistence of the danger to the mother and child.<sup>33</sup>

53. Moreover, practices requiring mandatory mediation in civil procedures and divorce proceedings that address child custody matters have also been reported. In Turkey,<sup>34</sup> for instance, existing bans on reconciliation in family disputes and divorce proceedings, in cases where there is a history of domestic violence, are not being implemented. In Denmark,<sup>35</sup> quasi-mandatory mediation between two parents in disagreement over custody and visitation arrangements is required through the state administration with a view to reaching mutually acceptable outcomes. While this procedure is not formally recognised as a mediation process, individual meetings on custody arrangements are rarely granted in practice – even in cases where the parent has a legitimate reason to avoid encounters with an abusive ex-partner. Parents who do not attend may face serious repercussions, such as being considered unfit for parenting.

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30. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraphs 140-141, p. 41.

31. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Monaco](#), paragraphs 82-85, pp. 24-25.

32. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraphs 147-148, pp. 43-44.

33. The need to consider intimate partner violence as an essential factor in the determination of child custody is at the heart of the joint statement issued on 31 May 2019 by the Platform of the United Nations and regional independent mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights.

34. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraphs 271-272, p. 91.

35. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraphs 183-186, pp. 47-48.

54. A further trend that has been noted is the lack of adequate implementation of legal frameworks providing for protection measures and/or protection orders, as well as inadequate enforcement of such orders by the relevant authorities. Articles 52 and 53 of the convention require that the competent authorities have the power to order fast legal remedies to protect persons at risk. These encompass both emergency barring orders against the perpetrators, thereby removing the perpetrator from the home, as well as restraining or protection orders for victims of all forms of violence covered by the convention. While the possibility of being granted protection orders in the form of a contact ban or eviction order is increasingly made available in states parties, the legal regimes vary significantly, as does their level of implementation and their appropriate enforcement. As concerns the varying legal regimes, exceptions to protection orders are provided by law in Denmark,<sup>36</sup> Sweden<sup>37</sup> and Finland<sup>38</sup> to allow for communication on children and enable visitation rights. These exceptions are criticised by GREVIO as the aim of protection orders is to ensure the safety of the victim. Regarding the implementation of protection orders in practice, their application is weak in many countries as law-enforcement officials and judicial actors often lack the necessary awareness about the positive effects of such orders. As concerns the enforcement of such protection/emergency barring orders, very few countries monitor their enforcement through electronic means, leaving most law-enforcement agencies to resort to more traditional practices such as an increase in police patrols around the areas where the order has been issued.

55. GREVIO has also identified several gaps in the non-discriminatory implementation of the provisions of the convention (as foreseen under Article 4 (3)) and has noticed the absence of effective measures addressing the needs of women from vulnerable groups. Indeed, the evaluation reports highlight that women victims of violence who belong to vulnerable groups (women with disabilities, women from national minorities including the Roma community, LBT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) women, women from rural areas, migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women without a residence permit, and women with addiction) frequently face specific barriers with regards to the application of the convention and experience intersectional discrimination in their access to protection and assistance. In Sweden,<sup>39</sup> even though extensive policy attention is given to combating violence against women, such policy does not always extend systematically to groups of women who belong to national and other minorities, such as the Sami, whose circumstances, life options and cultural context differ significantly from those of the majority women. Moreover, this is coupled with a lack of specific research into the prevalence rates of domestic or sexual violence experienced by these groups and a general lack of awareness among the authorities of the cultural specificities, constraints and barriers that these women face in seeking support. Similar concerns can also be found in the reports on Turkey,<sup>40</sup> Austria,<sup>41</sup> Montenegro<sup>42</sup> and Albania<sup>43</sup> with respect to women

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36. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraph 210, p. 53.

37. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraph 228, p. 55.

38. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraph 224, p. 54.

39. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraphs 13-16, pp. 13-14.

40. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraphs 15-22, pp. 17-19.

41. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 106, p. 32.

42. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraphs 18-20, p. 14.

43. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraphs 16-17, pp. 15-16.

belonging to other vulnerable groups. As regards more specifically discrimination in access to support services, a recurrent problem is the limited support services for women without a residence permit. In Denmark<sup>44</sup> and in Sweden,<sup>45</sup> for example, the support available to these women is extremely limited as they cannot access any of the general social services or other support services such as shelters. Access to shelters is also problematic for women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities, as several GREVIO baseline evaluation reports indicate.

56. As concerns asylum, GREVIO has consistently highlighted difficulties experienced by states parties in ensuring gender-sensitive asylum determination procedures and gender-sensitive reception facilities. Under Article 60 of the convention, the asylum procedures should allow women victims of gender-based persecution to put forward their claims in an informed and dignified manner with the help of same-sex case managers and interpreters that are trained to recognise women's specific reasons to flee their country of origin. GREVIO has noted that women who lodge asylum requests are often ill-informed about the procedure, their rights, the support available to them and about how to bring a successful case. GREVIO reports have found that cultural and gender bias are still a reality and training of asylum case managers on the different forms of violence against women and gender-based persecution is necessary. While legal aid is provided in countries like Austria,<sup>46</sup> Finland<sup>47</sup> and Sweden,<sup>48</sup> asylum-seeking women are often unaware of the possibility to request a lawyer. Furthermore, in Finland the quality of legal aid available to women seeking asylum was particularly problematic, as was the ability of lawyers to take on cases at short notice as a result of accelerated asylum procedures.

57. Although efforts have been made by states parties to receive the ever-increasing number of asylum seekers, nonetheless, GREVIO has observed difficulties in ensuring gender-sensitive reception facilities. Women-only accommodation and hygiene facilities are in effect not always provided, creating safety concerns for single women, as well as girls and women travelling with their families. This has led to many cases of sexual harassment as well as physical and sexual violence, including isolated cases of women killed, as observed in Sweden for example.

### **Improvements and valuable practices identified in the course of the baseline evaluation procedure**

58. From the completed baseline evaluation and those that are currently underway, it is possible to identify a number of valuable practices and/or steps taken by states parties to improve the implementation of the convention.

59. One of the steps taken to improve the implementation of the Istanbul Convention is the criminalisation of more forms of violence against women and the introduction of new criminal offences. It is important to recall that the convention requires states parties to criminalise particular intentional conduct that amounts to violence

44. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraph 11, p. 14.

45. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraph 16, p. 14.

46. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 207, p. 50.

47. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraph 251, p. 60.

48. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraph 257, p. 61.

against women, and not necessarily introduce new dedicated provisions for every specific type of conduct. Where the provisions in place at the national level do not sufficiently cover the conduct provided for by the convention, then new offences should be introduced in the legal framework. Harmonisation of domestic law in this field facilitates action against crime at the national and international level.

60. Further to the ratification of the convention, the crime of stalking has been introduced in Albania,<sup>49</sup> Portugal<sup>50</sup> and Montenegro.<sup>51</sup> A new offence of female genital mutilation has also entered into force in Portugal<sup>52</sup> and Montenegro,<sup>53</sup> although the act of inciting, coercing or procuring a girl or woman to undergo the procedure is not criminalised under the Montenegrin criminal code as required by the convention. Furthermore, the offence of forced marriage has been newly introduced in Portugal,<sup>54</sup> and the offence of forced sterilisation introduced in Montenegro.<sup>55</sup>

61. GREVIO has also welcomed in a growing number of states parties the amendment of provisions on sexual violence so that they are no longer founded on an approach based on coercion but reflect instead an approach based on consent. These legal changes depart from previous narrower definitions of sexual offences that required proving the offender's use of force or threats. Under Article 36 of the convention, the central element of the definition of sexual violence is the lack of consent given voluntarily by the victim; Article 36 therefore does not require proof of the use of force or threat by the perpetrator, nor proof of the victim's physical or verbal resistance. This position is in line with the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the landmark case *M.C. v Bulgaria*, which stated that:

[A] rigid approach to the prosecution of sexual offences, such as requiring proof of physical resistance in all circumstances, risks leaving certain types of rape unpunished and thus jeopardising the effective protection of the individual's sexual autonomy.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Article 36 paragraph 2 requires that the prosecution of sexual offences is based on a context-sensitive assessment of the evidence in order to establish on a case-by-case basis whether or not the victim has freely consented to the sexual act. This enables the recognition and the acknowledgement of the wide range of behavioural responses to sexual violence and rape that victims exhibit.

62. A particularly significant example of good practice is provided by Sweden.<sup>57</sup> With a recent amendment to the criminal code, Sweden has moved away from an approach requiring the use of force, threats or the taking advantage of the vulnerable situation of the victim as constituent elements of the offence of rape and sexual abuse, to an "only yes means yes" approach, criminalising all non-consensual sexual acts. More specifically, Sweden has introduced two new offences, "negligent rape"

49. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 129, p. 46.

50. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 170, p. 48.

51. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 170, p. 42.

52. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 170, p. 48.

53. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 170, p. 42.

54. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraphs 170-171, p. 48.

55. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 7, p. 12.

56. European Court of Human Rights, *Case of M.C. v Bulgaria* (no. 39272/98), 4 December 2003, paragraph 166.

57. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraphs 181-183, pp. 45-46.

and “negligent sexual abuse”, which aim to ensure criminal liability in cases in which sexual acts and intercourse are carried out without any reasonable measures taken to establish the victim’s consent. With these amendments, passivity cannot be per se considered a sign of voluntary participation. These amendments bring Sweden in full compliance with Article 36 of the convention and represent a good practice that should pave the way for similar reforms in other countries. Austria,<sup>58</sup> Portugal<sup>59</sup> and Montenegro<sup>60</sup> have also passed new laws to criminalise non-consensual sexual acts and depart from previous narrower definitions of sexual offences that required proving the offender’s use of force or threats. However additional steps would be required to bring the legislation fully in line with the convention. More specifically, Austria<sup>61</sup> provides for the criminal offence of rape, which requires the use of force, deprivation of liberty or a threat to life or limb, as well as the separate offence of “violation of sexual integrity”. This new provision covers instances of sexual intercourse or equivalent conduct “against the will of a person”, “under coercive circumstances” or “following an act of intimidation”. While this represents a step in the right direction, it may not allow for the prosecution of cases where the victim remains passive and has not expressed her opposing will verbally or otherwise, and therefore does not bring the provisions in line with the convention. Similarly, Portugal<sup>62</sup> amended its criminal provisions on sexual coercion and rape to cover sexual acts committed without violence or threat, and without having suppressed the victim’s ability to resist. Nonetheless, GREVIO noted in its report that the wording used to qualify these sexual offences (the term “constraint”) was not sufficient to break away from the longstanding practice of Portuguese courts to require proof of the victim’s resistance in order to sentence the perpetrator.

63. As indicated earlier on, Article 7 of the convention calls for comprehensive and coordinated policies, encompassing a multitude of measures to be taken by different actors, which, taken as a whole, offer a holistic response to violence against women. Many states parties are successfully developing national action plans (NAPs) and public policies that address more forms of violence against women. In Portugal,<sup>63</sup> for instance, three consecutive NAPs on Female Genital Mutilation (2007-2017) have been adopted and implemented, whereas Turkey<sup>64</sup> has adopted a Draft National Strategy and Action Plan on Combating Early and Forced Marriages (2019-2023). Denmark,<sup>65</sup> on the other hand, has implemented since 2014 NAPs and strategies on domestic violence, so-called honour-related conflicts, stalking and rape, whereas Austria<sup>66</sup> has adopted an NAP on the Protection of Women from Violence (2014-2016) and an NAP on the Prevention of Violence in schools (2014-2016). Nonetheless, GREVIO in its reports has also noted the limitations to the current approaches taken with regards to the NAPs (please see section above).

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58. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 140, p. 39.

59. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 173, p. 49.

60. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 179, p. 45.

61. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 140, p. 39.

62. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 173, p. 49.

63. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 26, p. 16.

64. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraph 44, p. 26.

65. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Denmark](#), paragraph 16, p. 15.

66. See [GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 16, p. 14.

64. Under Article 15 of the convention, states parties are required to ensure that systematic initial and in-service training are provided to relevant professionals in contact with victims and perpetrators of all acts of violence against women. In Austria, domestic violence, including its gender-based dimension, are encompassed in the two-year basic initial training of law-enforcement officers. In Denmark, GREVIO has underlined that professionals working in specialist support services (shelters, perpetrator programmes and support services for victims of sexual violence) were particularly well trained and have reached a high level of expertise that ensures the respect of victims' and perpetrators' rights and needs. With a view to guaranteeing continuous training for professionals, various states have passed laws introducing mandatory training. In Monaco, a legal provision (Law No. 382) stipulates that regular training for professionals who deal with victims of violence shall be organised. To implement this provision, a consultation was held between representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Police department, the Department of Justice, the Fire Brigade and the sole public hospital, which resulted in the creation of new teaching modules on victim support, demonstrating a multi-agency approach. Turkey's Law No. 6284 introduces mandatory training for professionals dealing with victims. The Turkish co-ordinating body that led the effort to systematise training is responsible for providing in-service training on gender equality and violence against women to various state employees. However, some barriers remain regarding the effectiveness of training in Turkey, such as the lack of monitoring procedures and mechanisms ensuring the continuity of this training. In Sweden, GREVIO has noted positively that starting from the academic year 2018-2019, through the amendment of the Higher Education Ordinance, men's violence against women became a compulsory subject for university students within various fields of study.

65. The convention calls for support services for victims of violence against women in the form of general and specialist support services, including shelters and telephone helplines. While general support services provide long-term help in a variety of areas and are not specifically designed for victims of violence against women, specialist support services provide support that is tailored to the specific and immediate needs of these victims. Notwithstanding the continuing shortage of specialist support services for victims of violence against women described in section I of this chapter, further to the ratification of the convention by states parties an increase in support structures for victims of violence against women and domestic violence, or the improvement of existing ones, has been noted, in particular those run by women's rights NGOs. By way of example, Portugal<sup>67</sup> has focused on providing extra support to specific vulnerable groups, by opening a new shelter for women victims of domestic violence that belong to the LGBTI community. Montenegro,<sup>68</sup> on the other hand, has decided to address the existing shortage of shelters in the northern part of the country and fund an NGO-run and licensed domestic violence shelter in that area. GREVIO has further recorded a dramatic increase in shelters in Turkey<sup>69</sup> for women victims of violence against women.

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67. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 133, p. 41.

68. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 129, p. 35.

69. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Turkey](#), paragraph 169, p. 61.

66. Some states parties such as Albania<sup>70</sup> have increased the funds allocated to support services/shelters assisting victims of violence against women and domestic violence. Finland,<sup>71</sup> in particular, has significantly increased the funding allocated to shelters to ensure higher levels of service provision, including in remote areas of the country. Furthermore, the legislation has been amended so that the funding of shelters is no longer dependent on municipalities' budgets – it is now made available by the central government, in advance, for a period of twelve months, irrespective of service use. The new method of financing offers more funding stability by moving from per capita funding to a lump sum annual funding system.

67. As concerns rape and sexual violence, Article 25 of the Istanbul Convention requires that states parties adopt a holistic and sensitive response by setting up and ensuring specialist support services, including rape crisis centres that offer long-term help, counselling and therapy, and sexual violence referral centres, which provide immediate medical care, forensic practice and crisis intervention. In line with this provision, support services for victims of sexual violence have been established or increased in a number of countries, including in Portugal<sup>72</sup> and Austria.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the need for high-quality sexual violence referral centres is increasingly gaining recognition. Finland, for example, has set up a sexual violence referral centre in its capital and is launching a roll-out (replication) of such a centre, accompanied by satellite support centres in each province to fill the existing gap in service provision for victims of rape and sexual violence. Across Denmark, 10 centres for victims of rape and sexual violence have been established. They are located within hospitals and provide medical, forensic, residential and non-residential services to women victims above the age of 15. Offering a highly professional service, they provide crucial support to victims of sexual violence regardless of their willingness to report the act of violence to law-enforcement agencies. In Turkey, GREVIO has commended the setting up of 31 Child Monitoring Centres (CMCs), which are hospital units specialising in assisting child victims of sexual abuse and/or forced marriage. The Turkish authorities are considering how to replicate the model of CMCs for the purpose of creating sexual violence referral centres or rape crisis centres for adult victims that match the requirements of Article 25 of the convention. In its final comments on GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, the Austrian Government recognised the need to step up specific counselling services for victims of sexual violence and expressed its intention to continue its efforts to improve availability.<sup>74</sup>

68. Notwithstanding the concerns indicated above, the fact that some states parties have set up new telephone helplines should be welcomed as a positive development per se. Montenegro<sup>75</sup> has introduced a single national helpline for women and children victims of domestic violence that is free of charge and available round the clock, albeit not addressed to all victims of violence against women. Albania,<sup>76</sup> through an agreement between the government and a feminist NGO, also set up

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70. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 24, p. 18.

71. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraphs 112-115, pp. 33-34.

72. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Portugal](#), paragraph 142, pp. 42-43.

73. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Austria](#), paragraph 100, p. 100.

74. See [Comments submitted by Austria on GREVIO's baseline evaluation report](#), p. 18.

75. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 132, p. 36.

76. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Albania](#), paragraph 107, p. 40.

a women's helpline in 2016. Finland<sup>77</sup> introduced its Nollalinja helpline in 2016 in response to the entry into force of the convention. It is important to also recall the anonymous, free-of-charge helpline launched by Monaco<sup>78</sup> for victims of domestic violence.

69. The inclusion of gender-based persecution as a ground for the recognition of refugee status in asylum law in a number of states parties also represents a tangible outcome of the application of the convention. Indeed, one of the many ground-breaking features of the Istanbul Convention is that it departs from the gender blindness that has often characterised the application of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the 1951 Convention). More specifically, Article 60 of the convention requires that states parties ensure that gender-based violence is recognised as a form of persecution when establishing refugee status or international subsidiary protection. States should thus recognise that rape and other forms of gender-related violence, such as female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence, domestic violence or trafficking, are acts that have been used as forms of persecution, whether perpetrated by state or non-state actors. Paragraph 2 of Article 60 also requires that states parties ensure that a gender-sensitive interpretation is given to each of the 1951 Convention grounds.

70. Official recognition of women's specific experiences as refugees is gaining ground in asylum law in states parties. Sweden<sup>79</sup> and Finland,<sup>80</sup> in particular, have broadened the grounds on the basis of which refugee status can be granted to encompass persecution based on gender and sexual orientation, while Montenegrin legislation<sup>81</sup> now expressly considers "acts of persecution specifically related to sex" as persecution within the meaning of the 1951 Convention, thus enabling women asylum seekers subjected to certain forms of gender-based violence to lodge an asylum request on the basis of membership of a particular social group. This will greatly facilitate the implementation of Article 60 of the convention and allow for more systematic training of asylum case managers and the collection of data on the number of cases granted on the basis of gender.

### **Challenges in promoting and securing support for the Istanbul Convention in the context of the backlash against women's rights**

71. As stated earlier in this report, the convention is widely recognised as the most far-reaching legal instrument to prevent and combat violence against women and has been awarded national and international prizes for its comprehensive approach, ground-breaking features and vision. While it has inspired and brought changes to legislation and practices in states parties (see section above), in many ways, it has also fallen victim of its own success, giving rise to intense criticism, misinterpretation or, at times, downright distortion of the founding principles on which it is based.

77. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraph 118, p. 34.

78. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Monaco](#), paragraph 82, p. 24.

79. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden](#), paragraphs 254-255, p. 60.

80. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Finland](#), paragraph 248, p. 59.

81. See [GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro](#), paragraph 256, p. 59.

# La Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la prévention et la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes et la violence domestique (Convention d'Istanbul) : Questions et réponses



More specifically, over the last few years, very vocal opposition to the convention has emerged in some countries where some political parties, religious institutions and ultra-conservative groups have led a movement using, as ammunition, false narratives about the convention. Against a backdrop of a general regression in the area of gender equality and women's rights in the world, including back-tracking in the area of reproductive health and rights and the cutting of funds for women's rights NGOs and support structures, this movement has attempted to make the convention a scapegoat for its unfounded accusations about what it claimed was the convention's "hidden agenda". Detracting attention from the phenomenon of violence against women, its root causes and the ways to tackle it, this discourse has gained some support, which in some cases has resulted in a delay or rejection of the ratification of the convention by creating domestic political debates.<sup>82</sup>

72. Some of the objections that have been levelled at the convention include that the concept of "gender" is foreign to many legal systems and is therefore incompatible with domestic legal norms; that the convention attempts to recognise a third gender or to legalise same-sex marriage; that it challenges traditional gender roles that are beneficial for families and public life/society and thus represents a direct threat to the family institution and to society; and that it has an unjustified focus on women.

73. GREVIO has addressed all of these objections by demystifying the myths and misconceptions around the convention with very clear messages and in an equally vocal manner (see the booklet and other action taken described below). It has clarified that the convention does not require an adaptation of the national legal systems to incorporate the use of the term "gender" but uses it to explain the purpose of the measures that it asks states to adopt and implement. Moreover it has explained that the purpose of this term is not to replace the biological definition of "sex", nor the terms "women" and "men", but to emphasise how much inequalities, stereotypes and – consequently – violence do not originate from biological

82. In two countries, Bulgaria and Slovakia, the ratification process was suspended recently. In Bulgaria, the suspension resulted from the decision of the Constitutional Court (Решение № 13, 27 юли 2018 г) finding a contradiction between the Istanbul Convention and the Constitution of Bulgaria. In Slovakia, on 29 March 2019, the National Council voted by a large majority against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention requesting the government to discontinue the ratification process.

differences, but rather from attitudes and perceptions of how women and men are and should be in society, namely stereotypical roles. Defining the term gender also helps understand the definition of “gender-based violence against women”, which means violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.

74. As regards the convention’s position on gender identity and sexual orientation, including the recognition of same-sex couples, GREVIO has clarified that the convention does not set any new standards in this respect. It simply enounces the principle of non-discrimination on an open-ended list of grounds, including gender identity and sexual orientation, in the application of its provisions. Furthermore, its provisions that ensure protection from domestic violence apply to legally married partners, and also extends to all partners, married or not, whether these are of the same or of different sex.

75. As concerns the allegation that the convention is a threat to traditional families and societies, GREVIO has clarified that the convention does not regulate family life/family structures and does not promote a certain type of family institution or setting; it simply requires governments to ensure the safety of victims who are at risk at home or are threatened by family members/spouses/partners. Moreover, its call to eliminate gender stereotypes doesn’t mean imposing life choices on women/men. Nor does it imply overturning all traditions and customs. What the convention opposes are those traditions that are discriminatory; that confine women and men to stereotyped roles limiting their developments and life opportunities; that justify patriarchy and sexist attitudes that prevent gender equality; and that are harmful to women and put them in harm’s way. Lastly, regarding the criticism that it has an unjustified focus on women, GREVIO has clarified that the convention applies mostly to women because it covers forms of violence that only women experience because they are women, or that women experience much more often than men. These forms of violence are a result of unequal power relations between men and women and a consequence of discrimination against women. However, the convention and GREVIO recognise that, albeit less often and frequently in less severe forms, men can also experience some forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, such as domestic violence, rape and forced marriage. Therefore, the convention encourages its states parties to apply its provisions to all victims of domestic violence, including men, children and the elderly.

76. Members of GREVIO and of the Committee of the Parties have been active in countering disinformation campaigns against the convention at public events. On 30 November 2018, an exchange was organised by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the form of a round table with NGOs from Eastern European countries. The event provided an opportunity for participants to identify specific challenges faced in the implementation and ratification of the convention as well as strategies to counter misconceptions. The PACE Rapporteur of the report “The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges”<sup>83</sup> recalled during the round table that parliamentarians and politicians have to actively promote the added value of the convention and counter attacks against it. In addition,

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83. See [Doc 14908](#) of 8 June 2019.

GREVIO joined forces with other global and regional women's rights treaty bodies and issued a press release in March 2019, joining the Secretary General in the call for strengthened efforts to fight against pushbacks on women's rights in all regions of the world.<sup>84</sup>

77. GREVIO has also published the booklet "Questions and Answers" on the Istanbul Convention in 20 languages, presenting arguments (see above) on how to counter recurring misrepresentations of the convention and recalling its real aim – preventing and combating violence against women through multi-agency action.

78. Furthermore, GREVIO collects information, including through national and international NGOs, for each country experiencing a backlash against the convention and gender equality policies and works with governments, parliamentarians and civil society to counter such phenomena. The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention and GREVIO also regularly follow the evolution of the debates on the backlash, with a view to assessing the need for a possible intervention on their part to clarify misconceptions and provide necessary information on the subject. Moreover, GREVIO continues to strengthen partnerships with regional and international partners to keep gender equality and the ratification of the convention high on the political agenda.

79. Finally, states that have benefited from being party to the convention or that have been evaluated by GREVIO have been invited to take a more active stance in support of it by showing, with facts and real results, what the convention addresses and the change it can produce on the ground. As a result, many state representatives and parliamentarians have denounced the spread of misguided beliefs related to the convention. Along this line, when the government of Poland, upon its ratification of the convention, introduced a declaration stating that the Republic of Poland would apply the convention in accordance with the principles and the provisions of its constitution, various states parties registered formal objections to that declaration. The objections were raised on the grounds that by referring to the principles and provisions of its constitution, the declaration amounted to a reservation of a general and indeterminate scope that did not clearly define the extent to which the state with the reservation had accepted the obligations of the convention. The objections were raised further on the grounds that the declaration was incompatible with the object and purpose of the convention.

80. Through collective action, the strength and importance of the convention has been reiterated. As a result, the European Union signed the convention on 13 June 2017. Furthermore, on 12 June 2018, Croatia ratified the Istanbul Convention despite demonstrations against the convention organised by national "conservative" groups. Above all, regardless of the backlash, the number of parties to the convention has increased steadily since its entry into force: three states ratified the convention in 2016, six states ratified it in 2017, five states ratified it in 2018 and one state ratified it in 2019, bringing the number of states parties to a total of 34 as of May 2019.

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84. See: "Joint statement: Independent women human rights mechanisms are part of the solution to 'push back the pushbacks and keep pushing back'".



## Relation with the Committee of the Parties

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81. Through their complementary and co-operative actions, GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties represent the two vital branches of the monitoring mechanism of the convention. Rule 26 of GREVIO's internal Rules of Procedure stipulates in its first paragraph that the President (of GREVIO) shall periodically meet with the Committee of the Parties to inform it about the state of the work of GREVIO and progress in preparing GREVIO's reports and conclusions concerning the measures taken by the Parties to implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, as well as any other issue relating to the good functioning of the monitoring mechanism of the convention. The second paragraph of this rule foresees that "GREVIO may decide to invite the Chair of the Committee of the Parties for exchanges of views".

82. During the period covered by this report, robust and regular channels of communication have been built between the two pillars of the monitoring mechanism of the convention. At GREVIO's first meeting in September 2015, an exchange of views was organised with the First President of the Committee of the Parties of the convention, Erdoğan Işcan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe. The close relationship between these two bodies was maintained under the subsequent presidency of Elisabeth Walaas, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe. During the period covered by this report, five exchanges of views between the President of GREVIO, Feride Acar, and the Committee of the Parties took place.<sup>85</sup>

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85. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of the exchanges of views held between the President of GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties.

83. These regular meetings focused on the state of implementation of the convention and on GREVIO's reports and conclusions on measures taken by the states parties to comply with the provisions of the convention. These discussions were also an opportunity for state representatives to provide feedback on their experiences of the monitoring process as a transparent, co-operative and constructive dialogue aimed at delivering expertise based on mutual goodwill and the willingness to facilitate national progress in eradicating violence against women. Furthermore, the exchange of views served to discuss GREVIO's needs in terms of financial and human resources, and to strengthen the co-ordination between the monitoring mechanism of the convention and other regional and international mechanisms (such as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), in order to avoid overlap between the different monitoring processes.

84. At its fourth meeting, the Committee of the Parties agreed on how to proceed in the adoption of its recommendations on the basis of GREVIO's reports, in accordance with Article 68 (12) of the convention: 1) the Committee of the Parties recommends that the state party concerned takes measures to implement all the conclusions in GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports; 2) in addition, the committee requires the state party concerned to report back within a three-year period on progress made in implementing GREVIO's proposals falling under the category "GREVIO urges", as well as all the proposals referring to Chapter 1 and 2 of the convention that have been considered by GREVIO as falling under the category of "GREVIO strongly encourages".<sup>86</sup>

85. On 30 January 2018, the Committee of the Parties adopted its four first recommendations on the implementation of the convention by Albania, Austria, Denmark and Monaco. A year later, on 28 January 2019, the Committee of the Parties adopted its second round of recommendations on the implementation of the convention by Montenegro, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey.

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86. In formulating its suggestions and proposals, GREVIO has adopted the use of different verbs which correspond to different levels of urgency, noting that all levels are important. These are, in order of priority, "urges", "strongly encourages", "encourages" and "invites". GREVIO uses "urges" where it considers that immediate action is required to bring the party's legislation or policy into compliance with the Istanbul Convention, or to ensure its implementation. "Strongly encourages" is used where GREVIO has noted shortcomings that need to be remedied in the near future in order to ensure a comprehensive implementation of the convention. A third level of urgency is indicated by the use of "encourages", which is used for shortcomings that require attention, though possibly at a later stage. Lastly, the verb "invites" points to small gaps in implementation that the party is requested to consider closing or to proposals made to provide guidance in the implementation process.



## Co-operation with other Council of Europe bodies and institutions

### Committee of Ministers

86. Constructive synergy between GREVIO and the Committee of Ministers and a common ambition to give political priority to the convention have been developed through regular exchanges. During GREVIO's first mandate, frequent exchanges of views were organised between the President of GREVIO, Feride Acar, and the Committee of Ministers.<sup>87</sup> These encounters provided the opportunity for the President of GREVIO and the ministers' deputies to share their experiences and/or opinions regarding the monitoring procedure of the convention. During these exchanges, many delegations took the floor to thank GREVIO for its constructive approach over the monitoring process.

87. Additionally, initiatives organised within the framework of the Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers have given an impetus to the promotion of the standards of the convention, often with the participation of GREVIO members. On 25 October 2015, the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina organised a high-level conference called "Monitoring implementation of the convention: new synergies", to which Marceline Naudi, the Second Vice-President of GREVIO at the time, took part. The conference allowed an exchange of experiences among governmental

87. Three exchange of views were organised between the President of GREVIO and the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg during the 1295th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 27 September 2017; the 1328th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 24 October 2018; and the 1347th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, on 29 May 2019. Please see Appendix 1.



and parliamentary representatives, civil society and international organisations, and promoted the signature, ratification and implementation of the convention. On 3 and 4 May 2018, the Danish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers launched the international conference “Gender Equality: Paving the Way”, the objective of which was to present the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023. The President of GREVIO, Feride Acar, attended the part of the event dedicated to the implementation of the convention, ending impunity for violence against women and ensuring gender equality. On 24 May 2019, the conference entitled “Women’s rights at the crossroads: strengthening international co-operation to close the gap between legal frameworks and their implementation” was organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and with the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. Several members of GREVIO participated actively in this large-scale meeting aimed at fostering co-operation, synergies and co-ordination in combating violence against women among relevant stakeholders, including other members of the Platform of independent United Nations and regional expert mechanisms on violence against women. Overall, these high-level initiatives have demonstrated the state representatives’ commitment to maintaining gender equality and ending violence against women as key issues on the political agenda of the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

## Parliamentary Assembly

88. As already noted, an innovative feature of the convention is the role that it grants to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and national parliaments during its monitoring process. Over the evaluation process, GREVIO can suggest to the Committee of the Parties to invite the Parliamentary Assembly to take stock of the implementation of the convention (Rule 60). PACE delegates can indeed act as a conduit between GREVIO and national parliaments by fostering the national ratification and implementation of the convention. For instance, after supporting the ratification

process, the Finnish delegation to PACE prepared a seminar on the implementation of the convention on 31 March 2016, in Helsinki.<sup>88</sup> It also presented an annual report, which details concerns about violence against women, to the Finnish parliament. These commendable initiatives demonstrate PACE delegates' ability to facilitate national parliamentary debates about states parties' application of the convention.

89. During the period covered by this report, PACE has also adopted several resolutions calling for the ratification and the effective implementation of the convention in relation to data collection (Article 11), forced marriage (Articles 32 and 37), female genital mutilation (Article 38) and gender-based asylum claims (Article 60), namely:

- ▶ Resolution 2135 (2016) Female genital mutilation in Europe
- ▶ Resolution 2101 (2016) Systematic collection of data on violence against women
- ▶ Resolution 2159 (2017) Protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence
- ▶ Resolution 2233 (2018) Forced marriage in Europe
- ▶ Resolution 2290 (2019) Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality

90. Moreover, GREVIO has nurtured effective working relations with the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, which acted as interlocutors with national parliaments during the convention's ratification, implementation and monitoring phases. The President of GREVIO took part in a first exchange of views with the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence on 11 March 2016, in Paris.<sup>89</sup> On 12 and 13 May 2016, the joint meeting of the Sub-Committee on Gender Equality and the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence in Berlin illustrated the willingness of PACE and GREVIO to advance the ratification of the convention by building connections with national parliaments but also government officials and civil society organisations.<sup>90</sup> Rosa Logar, First Vice-President of GREVIO at the time, participated on the same occasion in discussions on Germany's upcoming ratification of the convention with representatives of the German parliament, government and civil society organisations. The President of GREVIO also attended a joint meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence on 24 January 2019 in Strasbourg, where discussion focused on the commitment to overcome the backlash against women's rights.<sup>91</sup>

91. The last exchange of views between the President of GREVIO and the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on 1 March 2019 in Paris, provided an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and future perspectives regarding GREVIO's co-operation with PACE.<sup>92</sup> While commending PACE's

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88. Handbook for parliamentarians, Understanding the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) – what it is, what it isn't, and why and how parliamentarians should promote it (forthcoming publication).

89. [Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination Activity report 2016](#), AS/Ega/Inf (2016) 13rev.

90. [Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination Activity report 2016](#), AS/Ega/Inf (2016) 13rev.

91. Please see Appendix 1 for a full list of exchanges between the members of GREVIO and the Parliamentary Assembly.

92. [Activities of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly between the first and the second part of the 2019 Ordinary Session](#), Doc. 14857.



contribution to breaking new grounds for women's rights, Feride Acar evoked the wide range of actions that parliaments can take to encourage national compliance with the convention, including by intervening in the ratification process, exercising scrutiny over the formulation of reservations and contributing to the transposition of the convention's provisions into domestic laws. Feride Acar emphasised that GREVIO will continue to count on PACE's support to ensure the promotion and implementation of the convention at the national, regional and global levels.

### Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

92. Substantial endeavours have been made to promote a comprehensive and consistent approach and regular exchange of information between GREVIO and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, especially within the framework of their respective country visits. At its ninth meeting, from 14 to 17 February 2017, GREVIO invited Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights from 2012 to 2018, for an exchange of views where the commissioner emphasised that gender equality and violence against women were a core matter of his work and his country visits, and offered to promote the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention and to give visibility to issues of concern to GREVIO.<sup>93</sup> In May

93. In line with this engagement, in his country visits to Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia and Malta, the Commissioner referred to the need for national authorities to pursue the ratification or implementation process of the convention. As a follow-up to his visits to [Ukraine](#), [Latvia](#) and [Croatia](#), the commissioner also addressed letters to national parliaments and governments of the three countries encouraging them to ratify the convention, while making great efforts to dispel misconceptions about the convention and the understanding of the term "gender". The willingness to counter the backlash against women's rights was reaffirmed in his message on the occasion of the International Women's Day 2018, where he recalled that "politicians and opinion makers have the duty to promote an honest and well-informed public debate about the convention and focus on its potential to help states increase women's safety and liberty". The effort to promote the convention was continued by the new Commissioner, Dunja Mijatović, who took up the post in April 2018. During her country visits, she recommended that Hungary and Armenia ratify the convention, and that Poland, Romania and Estonia ensure its effective implementation.

2019, Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe as of 1 April 2018, took part in the conference organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against its causes and consequences, and with the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, entitled “Women’s rights at the crossroads: strengthening international co-operation to close the gap between legal frameworks and their implementation”. In January 2019, GREVIO and Commissioner Dunja Mijatović pursued their co-operation with the participation of the President of GREVIO at a panel discussion organised by the commissioner and the Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers to mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

## Gender Equality Commission

93. In light of the central focus on gender equality in their respective mandates, natural synergies were established between GREVIO and the Gender Equality Commission (GEC). The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, which was adopted for the periods 2014-2017<sup>94</sup> and 2018-2023,<sup>95</sup> sets out “preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence” as one of its main objectives, including the promotion of the ratification and implementation of the convention within and beyond Europe. Four of its other objectives are directly interwoven with the elimination of violence against women, namely: preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism (objective 1); ensuring the equal access of women to justice (objective 3); protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls (objective 5); and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures (objective 6). As such, the strategy represents a strong framework for co-operation between the two bodies.

94. During the GEC meetings, regular exchanges of views were organised between GREVIO and the GEC members. From November 2015 to May 2019, the President of GREVIO took part in four GEC meetings,<sup>96</sup> in addition to the regular attendance of the meetings ensured by the Secretariat of GREVIO. Throughout her various interventions, the President of GREVIO has always stressed the need to strengthen close and sustainable co-operation between GREVIO and the GEC, including by having the GEC feed into GREVIO’s monitoring procedure through the transmission of information, and by ensuring that GEC members disseminate information to member states and assist them in complying with the convention requirements. These exchanges were therefore an opportunity to discuss the state of ratification and implementation of the convention, progress and challenges and to take stock of the work carried out by the GEC, such as publications related to the different articles of the convention.

94. [The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

95. [The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, March 2018.

96. Report of the 8th Gender Equality Commission (GEC) meeting, 18-20 November 2015; Report of the 9th GEC meeting, 27-29 April 2016; Report of the 11th GEC meeting, 5-7 April 2017; Report of the 15th GEC meeting, 22-24 May 2019.

## European Court of Human Rights

95. Since its entry into force, the convention has provided new international law standards to the European Court of Human Rights (“the Court”) when issuing judgments related to states’ legal obligations to prevent and prosecute violence against women, including domestic violence, with respect to Article 2 (the right to life), Article 3 (the prohibition of torture), Article 8 (the right to respect for private and family life) and Article 14 (the prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights. In several cases on sexual violence and domestic violence,<sup>97</sup> the Court has begun to use the Istanbul Convention as a major instrument to interpret states’ positive obligations arising from the European Convention on Human Rights. In different judgments, the Court refers explicitly to the preamble or/ and various articles of the Istanbul Convention. For instance, the Court’s judgment in *Talpis v. Italy* (2017) emphasises that:

special diligence is required in dealing with domestic violence cases and considers that the specific nature of domestic violence as recognised in the Preamble of the (Istanbul) convention ... must be taken into account in the context of domestic proceedings.<sup>98</sup>

96. Considering the increasing interaction between the Istanbul Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, GREVIO has taken initiatives to build co-operation with the judges of the Court. At its 12th meeting, from 9 to 13 October 2017, GREVIO organised an exchange of views with Işıl Karakaş, the Turkish judge at the Court at the time. She underlined the landmark case *Opuz v. Turkey* (2009), which marked the first time that Article 14 (the prohibition of discrimination) was considered as a violation alongside Article 2 (the right to life) and Article 3 (the prohibition of torture). Referring further to the jurisprudence of the Court, Judge Karakaş confirmed that violence against women, including domestic violence, is a violation of human rights, and that the due diligence principle requires states to establish a criminal system to prosecute perpetrators of these forms of violence. The discussion was expanded to include Court cases dealing with issues of child custody and gender stereotypes. This meeting represented a first step in the common effort of GREVIO and the Court to establish sustainable co-operation between the two bodies.

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97. For Court judgments on cases of domestic violence that refer to the Istanbul Convention, see *Bâlşan v. Romania* (2017), *Talpis v. Italy* (2017), *Z.B. v. Croatia* (2017), *Halime Kilic v. Turkey* (2016, French only), *Civek v. Turkey* (2016, French only). For Court judgments on cases of sexual violence that refer to the Istanbul Convention, see *M.G.C v. Romania* (2016) and *Y\_v. Slovenia* (2015).

98. Case of *Talpis v. Italy*, application no. 41237/14, 2 March 2017, paragraph 129.



## Co-operation with civil society and national institutions for the protection of human rights

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97. Civil society has long played an important role in preventing and combating violence against women, initiating progress in this area and shaping political and public awareness. Vital services for women victims of violence are provided by the non-governmental sector, and many organisations have built up expertise and knowledge over several decades. The Istanbul Convention duly recognises the importance of involving NGOs in all efforts to end violence against women at national level. It also sets out the opportunity for NGOs and national human rights institutions to contribute to the monitoring work of GREVIO, which a growing number of them are doing (see Section 3.c and below).

98. It is thus to no surprise that, from its inception, GREVIO has actively co-operated with NGOs and civil society actors – at national, European and international level. The proactive approach that GREVIO adopted in this regard means that, at the beginning of each evaluation procedure, it actively reaches out to relevant NGO and civil society entities in order to encourage their contribution – in the form of a written submission or participation in meetings held during the evaluation visit. GREVIO pays particular attention to the need to involve organisations that address the different forms of violence against women and/or the situation of particular groups of women victims (such as migrant women, women with disabilities, national minority women, etc.). In relation to the situation of asylum-seeking and refugee women, GREVIO actively enters into an exchange with NGOs that work for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees and that often have programmes or outreach activities for women fleeing for reasons of gender-based persecution.

99. Women’s rights organisations across the continent have readily embraced the Istanbul Convention as an advocacy tool in their bid to improve the situation of women victims of violence and their children at national level. They fully recognise the monitoring process of the convention as a way of amplifying their messages, which has prompted a total of 47 written submissions to GREVIO in relation to the nine evaluation procedures carried out during the reporting period. These submissions range from individual submissions on specific aspects of the convention to consolidated reports submitted on behalf of a large range of national NGOs, spanning the whole spectrum of the Istanbul Convention. While some submissions comment on the information provided by the authorities in the state report and thus qualify as “shadow reports”, others are drawn up in parallel with the state report and may be considered “alternative reports”.

100. In either case, they provide important information on the practical implementation of laws and policies and help GREVIO set thematic priorities for the evaluation visit. During such visits, GREVIO attempts to meet with the largest possible number of NGOs and civil society organisations, usually in the form of round-table meetings structured by thematic area. GREVIO will also schedule individual meetings with NGOs, where appropriate.<sup>99</sup> In total, in the framework of its evaluation visits, it has met with more than 200 NGOs active in preventing and combating violence against women, including several umbrella NGOs.

101. The GREVIO evaluation process has allowed new strategic alliances and co-operations to emerge among NGOs – at national level and beyond. The preparation of consolidated NGO submissions requires in-depth consultations among NGOs, in some instances leading to the aligning of positions regarding the level of implementation of the Istanbul Convention at national level. Support for this exercise has been provided by European NGO networks, which have offered training and support to NGOs wishing to draft a full shadow report, in addition to providing in some cases their own reports.

102. Beyond the above, GREVIO has fostered co-operation and exchange with civil society and NGOs wherever possible. Since 2015, GREVIO members or its Secretariat have participated in several NGO-led awareness-raising and training events to strengthen exchanges between GREVIO and NGOs – before and after the evaluation procedure. For instance, GREVIO, on the occasion of its 14th meeting, held in Brussels, had an exchange of views with five European network NGOs (Amnesty International, the European Women’s Lobby, the End FGM Network, the EuroMed Rights Network and ILGA Europe). Another notable example is the round table organised on 30 November 2018 in Strasbourg with NGOs from various Council of Europe member states, which the Secretary General, the President of GREVIO at the time, Feride Acar, the Commissioner for Human Rights and other representatives of the Council of Europe attended.<sup>100</sup> The discussion showed the need for joint efforts and strategies to address the anti-gender narrative around the convention and to reinforce efforts to counter misconceptions about the Istanbul Convention.

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99. For instance, during the visits to France and Italy the GREVIO delegation met respectively 39 and 31 NGOs.

100. [Round table with NGO representatives](#), Council of Europe, 30 November 2018.

103. Progressively, national human rights institutions have taken on a similarly informative role in relation to the GREVIO evaluation procedure. Alternative reports have been submitted in relation to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention concerning Albania, Denmark, Serbia, Finland and, more recently, the Netherlands. During its visits, GREVIO has met with national institutions for the protection of human rights in six states parties to the convention, allowing it to gather in-depth information on specific aspects of its implementation. Moreover, the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), composed of public institutions addressing discrimination at the national level, launched a programme to identify opportunities to address gender-based violence from the perspective of discrimination against women. Where possible, these efforts have been supported by GREVIO and its Secretariat, by offering important insights into GREVIO’s monitoring work and its complementarity with any efforts at national level that seek to lay bare questions of structural discrimination towards women victims of gender-based violence.<sup>101</sup>

104. Beyond the evaluation procedure, many NGOs and civil society organisations have made the standards of the Istanbul Convention central to their lobbying efforts for improvements in law and policy. During the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence and around International Women’s Day, various NGOs active in preventing and combating violence against women promoted communication about the convention and the need to follow through with its implementation. Awareness raising about the convention and GREVIO’s monitoring thereof is greatly supported through such action, and NGOs and civil society organisations have proven extremely effective in disseminating GREVIO’s reports and findings.

**Table 2: The number of NGO submissions to GREVIO**

States parties	NGO submissions to GREVIO between June 2015 and May 2019	Number of submissions published on the Istanbul Convention website
Austria	Contribution from NGO Coalition led and co-ordinated by the Austrian Association of Autonomous Women’s Shelters and the Domestic Abuse Intervention Center Vienna, submitted in September 2016.	1
Albania	Contribution from the Women’s Association Refleksione, submitted in February 2017. Contribution from the Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), submitted in December 2016.	2

101. On 22 March 2017, a member of GREVIO’s Secretariat attended a meeting on the project to combat violence against women followed by the meeting of the Equinet working group on gender equality. On 28 September 2017, the Executive Secretary and the President of GREVIO at the time, Feride Acar, joined a networking meeting organised by Equinet in collaboration with the Belgian Institute for Equality between Women and Men.

<b>Belgium</b>	<p><a href="#">Report</a> from an NGO Coalition “Together against Violence” – in French only.</p> <p><a href="#">Report</a> from CAW Brussels (Centrum voor Algemeen Welzijnswerk Brussels).</p> <p><a href="#">Shadow report</a> - GAMS_INTACT_End FGM EU</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from Medecins du monde – in French only.</p>	<b>4</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from the Danish Women’s Council received in January 2017.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from the Network for Psychopathy and stalking-affected in February 2017.</p>	<b>2</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from the Finnish League for Human Rights and the End FGM European Network.</p> <p><a href="#">NGO Parallel Report</a> on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Finland submitted in May 2018.</p> <p><a href="#">Report</a> submitted by Amnesty International in April 2018.</p>	<b>3</b>
<b>France</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from COGRADE submitted in 2018.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from CLEF – Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from Equipop.org, Excision parlons-en ! and End FGM European Network.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from LdH – Ligue des droits de l’Homme, submitted in March 2018.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from 11 joint NGOs submitted in 2018.</p>	<b>5</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from Women’s NGO, submitted in 2018.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from AIDOS and End FGM.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from BeFree.</p> <p><a href="#">Report</a> from the Italian Forum for Disability.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from Relive.</p> <p><a href="#">Report</a> on procedures of civil courts and juvenile courts concerning the custody of children in cases of domestic violence, submitted by a group of specialist professionals and associations.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from UNIRE.</p>	<b>7</b>
<b>Monaco</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Montenegro</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> on the Implementation of Montenegro’s Domestic Violence Legislation by Women’s Rights Center; the Advocates for Human Rights and SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Nikšić.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from the Women’s Rights Centre, Women’s Safe House, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Nikšić and SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Podgorica.</p>	<b>2</b>

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<p><a href="#">Joint Shadow Report</a> produced by Pharos, FSAN and the End FGM European Network Shadow.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> by the Dutch CEDAW Network.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from NNID, Transgender Network Nederland (TNN) and COC Nederland.</p> <p><a href="#">Shadow report by ATRIA for GREVIO.</a></p>	<b>4</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> by the Association of Women's against Violence (Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência – AMCV), the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres – PpDM) and the national branch of the European Women's Lobby. Observatory on Violence against Women.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> The Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> End FGM and Associacao para o Planeamento da Familia</p>	<b>3</b>
<b>Serbia</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution from the</a> Autonomous Women's Centre.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> ATINA</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> Association of Roma Novi Bečej.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> SOS Vojvodina.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> Femplatz and MDRI-S.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> Fenomena Women Against Violence Network.</p>	<b>6</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from the Spanish Istanbul Shadow Platform.</p> <p><a href="#">Joint Shadow Report</a> on FGM by End FGM European Network, Medicos del Mundo, Save a girl – Save a generation and UNAF.</p>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution</a> from International Organization for Self-Determination and Equality (IOSDE) submitted in March 2018.</p>	<b>1</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	<p><a href="#">Contribution from Bianet</a> (Independent Communication Network).</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from Kasav</a> (The Foundation for Support and Training for Women in Healthcare).</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> Rainbow Istanbul Women's Associations Platform (GIKAP)</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform.</p> <p><a href="#">Contribution from</a> KADEM (Women and Democracy Association).</p>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>47</b>

**Table 3: The number of NGOs met by GREVIO during evaluation visits**

<b>States parties and dates of GREVIO's visit</b>	<b>Number of NGOs met by GREVIO as listed in its baseline evaluation reports</b>
Austria (November-December 2016)	12
Albania (April 2017)	17
Denmark (May 2017)	14
Finland (October 2018)	15
France (October 2018)	39
Italy (March 2019)	31
Monaco (5-7 December 2016)	5
Montenegro (November 2017)	4
The Netherlands (March 2019)	22
Portugal (March 2018)	14
Serbia (February-March 2019)	11
Sweden (March 2018)	11
Turkey (October-November 2017)	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>



## Establishment of working relations with other international organisations

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105. Co-operation and partnerships are indispensable prerequisites for successful international action against violence against women and domestic violence. GREVIO is mindful of the need to exchange information and good practices among international organisations concerning their activities, work plans and priorities in the field of combating violence against women and protecting victims. At the same time, GREVIO is ready to explore areas where joint activities can be carried out and which can benefit from the input, institutional support and resources of several organisations.

106. GREVIO rapidly established working relations with international organisations active in the area of combating violence against women and domestic violence. In preparation of its first baseline evaluation reports, GREVIO regularly exchanges with representatives of various international organisations (such as UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNDP and UNFPA) and meets with them during evaluation visits. As appropriate, GREVIO reports take into account and refer to the conclusions reached by UN treaty bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

107. The most important developments in this area are listed below.

## United Nations

108. Co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in the field of violence against women and domestic violence has regularly been one of the topics highlighted in the Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on co-operation between the two organisations, from as early as the drafting of the convention in 2010.<sup>102</sup> GREVIO has engaged in activities with UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), the United Nations Commissions on the Status of Women, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and is part of what is now the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women (Platform on EDVAW).

109. The Council of Europe and UN WOMEN developed a regular and tangible co-operation partnership, also through the involvement of GREVIO in various initiatives. This includes, for instance, participation of the President of GREVIO at the time in the global conference in Istanbul on 9-10 December 2015 entitled “Ending violence against women: Building on Progress to Accelerate Change”, co-organised by UN WOMEN, and in the UN WOMEN Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women in Politics (New York, 8-9 March 2018), which resulted in the publication of a report containing recommendations on this subject. The President of GREVIO also intervened at the regional forum “Promoting Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey – Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships” (Skopje, 27-28 November 2018), which is part of the UN WOMEN Programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds – Ending violence against women in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey”.

110. GREVIO actively contributed, by submitting written comments, to the process that led to the adoption by the CEDAW Committee of Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women (updating General Recommendation No.19).<sup>103</sup> The General Recommendation was inspired by the Istanbul Convention, as it elaborates on the gender-based nature of this form of violence and strengthens the guidance provided to states in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies, in line with the state-of-the art standards enshrined in the convention. The President of GREVIO also chaired the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women working group that adopted the recommendation, and the GREVIO Bureau took part in the high-level panel discussion on the launching of the General Recommendation during the 68th session of the CEDAW Committee, on 14 November 2017, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

111. The GREVIO President and other members, as well as the GREVIO Secretariat, have regularly attended the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in

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102. See Resolution 65/130 adopted at the 65th session of the UN General Assembly: [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/130](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/130); the last resolution, 73/15, was adopted on 26 November 2018 at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly ([www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/15](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/15)).

103. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/35&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/35&Lang=en).

New York, taking part in various official and side events organised by the Council of Europe or by other partners.

112. Since its creation, GREVIO established strong contacts with the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and its consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, who was invited for an exchange of views with GREVIO at its second meeting, in November 2015, to discuss avenues for future synergies and co-operation. One of the main outcomes of such co-operation is the involvement of GREVIO in a network of international and regional mechanisms on violence against women, developed on the initiative of the Special Rapporteur, which includes also the United Nations Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, the CEDAW Committee, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa established by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention.

113. GREVIO has undersigned the following joint statements and calls initiated by the Special Rapporteur and other global and regional mechanisms on women's rights:

- ▶ Joint call to end femicide and gender-based violence, on 25 November 2016.<sup>104</sup>
- ▶ Joint statement "End the global epidemic of femicide (#NiUnaMenos) and support women speaking up against violence against women (#MeToo)", on 25 November 2018.<sup>105</sup>
- ▶ Joint statement at the closing of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on 20 March 2019, joining the UN Secretary-General in the call for strengthened efforts to fight against pushbacks on women's rights in all regions of the world.<sup>106</sup>
- ▶ Joint statement "Intimate partner violence against women is an essential factor in the determination of child custody", on 31 May 2019.<sup>107</sup>
- ▶ Joint statement "Violence and harassment against women and girls in the world of work is a human rights violation", on 31 May 2019.<sup>108</sup>

114. The informal network evolved into a platform<sup>109</sup> in March 2018, with a consultation among seven international and regional mechanisms on the occasion of the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on 12 March 2018, followed by a High-Level Panel on 13 March 2018, in which the President of GREVIO participated. Since then, the platform meets regularly on the fringes of main UN events and/or of events hosted by the members of the platform to discuss progress with the implementation of regional and international standards and co-ordinate action to overcome barriers and difficulties the mechanisms face in their work. The President

104. [www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20911&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20911&LangID=E).

105. [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23921&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23921&LangID=E).

106. [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24380&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24380&LangID=E).

107. <https://rm.coe.int/final-statement-vaw-and-custody/168094d880>.

108. [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/StatementILO\\_31May2019.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/StatementILO_31May2019.pdf).

109. [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx).

of GREVIO attended these fringe meetings at the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 12-23 March 2018), at the 169th session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, (Boulder, Colorado, 2 October 2018) and at the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 11-22 March 2019). The Council of Europe hosted the last of such meetings, on 23 May 2019, as a side event to the conference “Women’s rights at the crossroads” on the improvement of international co-operation to end violence against women organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against its causes and consequences, and with the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. The President of GREVIO took part in the opening and closing panels, and one of the sessions of the conference was dedicated to the presentation of the platform.

115. Finally, the President of GREVIO and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, attended together a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Paris, on 1 March 2019.

## Organization of American States

116. Since GREVIO’s inception in 2015, the desire to build bridges between the monitoring mechanism of the convention and the Follow-up Mechanism (MESECVI) to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (namely the Belém do Pará Convention) has emerged. Adopted in 1994, the Belém do Pará Convention represents a pioneering regional legal instrument on violence against women in the Americas, which paved the way for the Istanbul Convention.

117. To promote an exchange of experience between MESECVI and GREVIO, on 15 and 16 October 2015, the Executive Secretary of GREVIO at the time, Bridget O’Loughlin, took part in the sixth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention of Belém do Pará, in Lima in Peru.<sup>110</sup>

118. Between 2015 and 2018, in the framework of co-operation between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, members of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, GREVIO and its Secretariat participated in three conferences on femicide organised by the Group of the Greens/ European Free Alliance in the European Parliament and the Heinrich Böll Foundation.<sup>111</sup> In Brussels and San Salvador, the experts from the two monitoring bodies, along with representatives from the European Union, the United Nations and civil society organisations, reflected on the situation of femicide in Europe and Latin America. They also discussed the state of implementation of legislation on femicide in the regions and other proposals to tackle this scourge.

110. See information on the sixth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention of Belém do Pará Convention, available at [www.oas.org/en/mese cvi/conferenceofstatesparty.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/mese cvi/conferenceofstatesparty.asp).

111. See information on the 9th, 10th and 11th Conferences on Femicide organised by the Group of the Greens/ European Free Alliance in the European Parliament and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, available at <https://eu.boell.org/en/tags/femicide>.

119. On 7 November 2017, the OAS organised a special meeting in Washington DC, which was entitled “Regional and International Mechanisms for a comprehensive approach to addressing Violence against Women and Girls”<sup>112</sup> with the participation of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, the Vice-President of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, Sylvia Mesa and the President of GREVIO, Feride Acar. This initiative was conducted prior to the formal establishment of the platform (see above) in March 2018.

## World Bank

120. Within the framework of the Law, Justice and Development Week, collaboration has been established between the monitoring mechanism of the convention and the World Bank. The Law, Justice and Development Week is an annual event organised by the World Bank’s Legal Vice Presidency Unit, which gathers together a significant number of development practitioners in Washington DC.<sup>113</sup> It aims to promote legal instruments as key tools for contributing to development.

121. On 6 November 2017, the President of GREVIO attended the Law, Justice and Development Week, which was devoted to “Gender, Law and Development”.<sup>114</sup> She took part in the panel entitled “International and Regional Mechanisms on Violence against Women”, along with Sylvia Mesa, the President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará convention, and Dubravka Šimonović, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. The participants took the floor to recall the importance of connecting and co-ordinating international and regional instruments and mechanisms on violence against women, in order to foster effective efforts and generate positive outcomes.

122. A year later, during the Justice Development Week dedicated to “Rights, Protection and Development”, the incumbent Executive Secretary of GREVIO participated as speaker in a panel entitled “Human rights of migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking women and girls” on 5 November 2018.<sup>115</sup> The event was organised by the Council of Europe in partnership with the Women’s Refugee Commission. The discussion emphasised the difficulties faced by women refugees and asylum seekers, as well as the legal standards established by the convention to protect them in the context of violence against women.

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112. OAS, Regional and International Mechanisms for a comprehensive approach to addressing Violence against Women and Girls, 7 November 2017, available at [www.oas.org/en/mese cvi/docs/MESECVI-VAWRRegionalMecs-EN.pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/mese cvi/docs/MESECVI-VAWRRegionalMecs-EN.pdf).

113. See Law, Justice and Development Weeks, available at [www.worldbank.org/en/about/legal/brief/law-justice-and-development-weeks](http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/legal/brief/law-justice-and-development-weeks).

114. World Bank: Law, Justice and Development Week 2017 – Gender, Law and Development, available at [www.worldbank.org/en/events/2017/03/28/law-justice-and-development-week-2017](http://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2017/03/28/law-justice-and-development-week-2017).

115. World Bank: Law, Justice and Development Week 2018 – Rights, Protection and Development, available at [www.worldbank.org/en/events/2018/05/25/law-justice-and-development-week-2018-rights-protection-and-development](http://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2018/05/25/law-justice-and-development-week-2018-rights-protection-and-development).

## Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

123. In 2014, the OSCE's Ministerial Council demonstrated its support for the convention by adopting a decision on preventing and combating violence against women that explicitly calls on OSCE member states to sign and ratify it.<sup>116</sup> Since then, co-operation between the OSCE and GREVIO has been ensured through fruitful exchanges of views in the framework of high-level political meetings organised by the OSCE Gender Section and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), such as the OSCE Gender Equality Review Conferences and the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings.

124. In Vienna, members of GREVIO's bureau participated as speakers at the Gender Conference "Combating violence against women in the OSCE region" on 22 July 2016 and the second OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference on 12-13 June 2017.<sup>117</sup> These two events brought together key stakeholders from national governments, international organisations, OSCE field operations and civil society, who reflected on a multisectoral response to foster gender equality and combat violence against women, including in conflicts. These discussions focused on the need to create synergies between international high-level standards such as the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the convention, in order to champion the building and implementation of effective national legal and policy frameworks to combat violence against women. It included supporting capacity-building programmes for the judiciary and law enforcement. The need to challenge gender stereotypes was also central to the debate, including through engagements with men and boys to promote positive gender roles and prevent violence against women.

125. Additionally, the Secretariat of GREVIO regularly submitted written contributions to the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, which are organised annually to take stock of the implementation of the OSCE Human Dimension commitments. On 2 and 3 July 2018, Simona Lanzoni, Second Vice-President of GREVIO at the time, took part in the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting entitled "Countering violence against women – Everyone's Responsibility".<sup>118</sup> This side event aimed to provide opportunity for dialogue between states, international organisations and civil society on existing good practices and challenges to combating violence against women, including measures to empower women.

126. Considering the need to collect systematic and comparable data at the European level, the OSCE published in 2019 a report relaying the results of a survey on violence against women, well-being and safety of women<sup>119</sup> conducted in 2018 in in Albania,

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116. OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision n°7/14 on Preventing and Combating violence against women, 5 December 2014, available at [www.osce.org/mc/130721?download=true](http://www.osce.org/mc/130721?download=true).

117. See OSCE, Gender Conference: Combating violence against women in the OSCE region, 22 July 2016, available at [www.osce.org/secretariat/249011](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/249011); second OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, 12-13 June 2017, available at: [www.osce.org/event/2nd-osce-gender-equality-review-conference](http://www.osce.org/event/2nd-osce-gender-equality-review-conference).

118. See OSCE, Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM): Countering Violence against Women – Everyone's Responsibility, 2-3 July 2018, available at [www.osce.org/shdm\\_2\\_2018](http://www.osce.org/shdm_2_2018).

119. See report OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, 6 March 2019, available at [www.osce.org/secretariat/415760](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/415760).

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine and Kosovo. The survey was based on the definitions of the different forms of violence against women, as they are formulated in the convention. To improve the monitoring of laws and practices to combat violence against women, the survey provides data on the prevalence of violence against women, gender norms and attitudes, as well as victims' reporting and help-seeking behaviour. GREVIO members participated as speakers in the launch of the report providing the findings of the survey on 8 March 2019<sup>120</sup> and in the high-level conference on 6 and 7 May 2019, which aimed to disseminate the main results of the survey and discuss room for improvement with relevant stakeholders.<sup>121</sup>

## European Union

127. The Istanbul Convention is open for the signature and ratification of the EU. In October 2015, the European Commission issued a road map on EU ratification of the convention with the aim of creating a coherent legal framework at the EU level for preventing and combating violence against women and strengthening EU member states' ability to develop effective policies to this end. The EU signed the convention on 13 June 2017. During the reporting period and under several subsequent EU Presidencies, the Secretariat of GREVIO has maintained regular contact with the EU Council and has attended several meetings of the Council's working party on Fundamental Rights, Citizen's Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP) to present the standards of the convention, illustrate the work of its monitoring bodies and discuss the ratification process. Throughout the reporting period, the European Parliament has repeatedly voiced its support for the convention and has issued a number of resolutions calling on the EU Commission and Council to ensure progress in the negotiations and urging EU member states that had not already done so to sign and ratify the convention. On 4 April 2019, the European Parliament adopted resolution 2019/2678(RSP) "seeking an opinion from the Court of Justice on the compatibility with the Treaties of the proposals for the accession by the European Union to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and on the procedure for that accession".

128. In the period under review, various exchanges occurred with the European Parliament. On 21 November 2017, the Second Vice-President of GREVIO at the time, Simona Lanzoni, attended a meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Committee organised by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality to discuss the state of ratification and implementation of the convention at EU and national levels and GREVIO monitoring. On 27 November 2018, the Executive Secretary of GREVIO at the time, Bridget T. O'Loughlin, attended a meeting of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the invitation of the European Parliament co-rapporteurs on the EU ratification, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt and Christine Revault d'Allonnes Bonnefoy. The Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General, Gabriella

120. See presentation of the OSCE-led survey reveals violence against women in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, 8 March 2019, available at [www.osce.org/secretariat/413894](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/413894).

121. See conference on combating violence against women and girls 6-7 May 2019, available at [www.osce.org/secretariat/415760](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/415760).

Battaini-Dragoni, held a meeting in Strasbourg with Anna Maria Corazza Bildt on 13 March 2019 to discuss ways to ensure progress in the ratification process and to promote the convention.

129. Close ties were also developed with a number of EU agencies or affiliated bodies. At its fourth Meeting (18-20 January 2016), GREVIO held an exchange of views with the European Institute for Gender Equality, represented by its Director at the time, Virginija Langbakk, and Gender-Based Violence Officer Jurgita Pečiūrienė. The meeting offered the opportunity to highlight the synergies and complementarities that can be developed between the European Institute for Gender Equality and GREVIO. Data collected by the European Institute for Gender Equality on gender-based violence are regularly quoted in GREVIO's evaluation reports. At its eighth meeting (7-10 November 2016), GREVIO members held an exchange of views with the Head of Freedoms and Justice Department at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Joanna Goodey. The exchange of views focused on the outcome data of the 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey on violence against women and more generally on the role of gender-disaggregated data for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of human rights standards, in particular as regards gender-based violence. Representatives of Eurostat and DG Just attended GREVIO's 14th meeting (25-27 June 2018), and informed GREVIO members regarding the state of play of the gender-based violence survey under preparation by the European Statistical System, namely by Eurostat in partnership with the national authorities of EU member states, as well as the European Economic Area and European Free Trade Association countries.

130. During its exchange of views with Eurostat, GREVIO members stressed the importance of following a gender-sensitive approach and of basing the survey on the acknowledgement of the prevalence of gender-based violence that affects women disproportionately. They underlined furthermore the need for the survey to be based on the specific indicators that have been developed to measure violence against women, rather than on the generic indicators applied in general population surveys and in crime-based victimisation surveys.

# 8 Questions on 8 March

A

B



Slide the bar to rank your responses

**START**

## Communication

### Publications

131. The publication and effective dissemination of GREVIO's first baseline evaluation reports is an important step for increasing the impact of GREVIO's work among different stakeholders. In accordance with Article 68, paragraph 11, of the convention, GREVIO reports and conclusions are made public as from their adoption, together with any comments by the party concerned. A total of eight GREVIO baseline evaluation reports were published during the reporting period and are available on the Istanbul Convention's website, together with the comments of the respective national authorities. A press release is issued whenever a report is published. On this occasion, interviews may be given by GREVIO members and the Secretariat in order to provide information on the report and evaluation process.

132. In addition, a rich array of publications about the convention has been made available on the Istanbul Convention's website, providing background information on specific areas of the convention and offering practical advice to policy makers and practitioners as to what needs to be done to implement the convention.<sup>122</sup> A leaflet about the convention's monitoring mechanism was published, as well as a "Questions and answers on the convention" leaflet available in 24 languages, which addresses misrepresentations and false narratives about the convention, clearly stating its aims and scope. In addition, the layout of different thematic fact sheets was updated. The fact sheets relate to the topics of (a) children's rights, (b) stalking,

<sup>122</sup> The complete list of publications can be consulted on the convention's website, at the following page: [www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/publications](http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/publications).

(c) the protection of migrant women, refugee women and women asylum seekers from gender-based violence, (d) crimes committed in the name of so-called honour and (e) female genital mutilation.

### Other communication

133. During the reporting period, GREVIO and its Secretariat participated in several initiatives aimed at informing and deepening knowledge of the convention. To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, on 25 November 2017, all members of GREVIO and the Executive Secretary at the time took part in creating a video<sup>123</sup> illustrating how the standards of the convention aim to support all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved in combating violence against women. On the occasion of International Women's Day, on 8 March 2019, the interactive questionnaire "8 Questions on 8 March" was released in English, French, Italian, German and Russian, to raise awareness of the convention, receive participants' views about what they think are priorities in the quest to end violence against women and girls, and dispel any misinterpretations about the convention.

134. The Secretariat of GREVIO also took part in the creation of a free online course on violence against women and domestic violence, together with the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme. This HELP course covers in an interactive way the key concepts, the international and European legal framework and the European case law governing the prevention and protection of women and girls from violence, focusing in particular on the convention. Composed of six different modules, it offers a comprehensive curriculum to improve the quality of the judicial response in cases of violence against women and support victims' access to justice while prosecuting perpetrators.

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123. See <https://vimeo.com/256080203>.



## Concluding remarks

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135. The Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention and its monitoring mechanism provide a considerable contribution to global efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. Through its baseline evaluation reports, GREVIO contributes to the strengthening of national efforts to combat violence against women by giving advice to the authorities on legislative and policy developments. The reports provide an authoritative source of information on different aspects, identifying gaps, needs and good practices in the parties to the convention. Their relevance goes beyond the parties directly concerned and can serve as guidance to all other countries and actors involved, including those who are not yet parties to the Istanbul Convention.

136. GREVIO is pleased that 34 of the 47 Council of Europe member states have already ratified the convention, and another 11, as well as the European Union, have signed it. It also welcomes the interest expressed by some non-member states to adhere to the standards of the convention in the future. GREVIO very much hopes that those states that have not yet done so will soon set in motion the signature and ratification procedures. It also hopes that its evaluation reports and this first general report on its activities will serve to unequivocally demonstrate just how unfounded the concerns are that have slowed down, in some countries, the ratification processes.

137. This first report on GREVIO's activities sheds light on common trends, improvements and challenges emerging from the country monitoring process. It also emphasises the crucial importance of co-ordination between international organisations in the different types of activities carried out at regional and international level. GREVIO's action is mindful of the need to ensure consistency in the messages and to avoid any duplication of monitoring operations. The partnership developed in the context of what is now what is now the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women, of which GREVIO is a member, is a tangible demonstration of the international commitment in this respect, with a view to achieving greater complementarity and synergies. GREVIO hopes that this platform will find ways to evolve into a sustainable institutionalised space for all independent monitoring mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights.

# Appendix 1 – List of GREVIO’s activities between June 2015 and May 2019

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## **Election of GREVIO members by the Committee of the Parties (CoP):**

- ▶ Election of the first 10 GREVIO members: 1st meeting of the CoP, Strasbourg, 4 May 2015
- ▶ Election of five additional GREVIO members: 5th meeting of the CoP, Strasbourg, 24 May 2018
- ▶ Election of 10 GREVIO members: 7th meeting of the CoP, Strasbourg, 3 May 2019

## **GREVIO meetings**

- ▶ 1st GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 21-23 September 2015
- ▶ 2nd GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 18-20 November 2015
- ▶ 3rd GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 21-22 December 2015
- ▶ 4th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 18-20 January 2016
- ▶ 5th GREVIO meeting, Paris: 9-11 March 2016
- ▶ 6th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 23-25 May 2016
- ▶ 7th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 19-22 September 2016
- ▶ 8th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 7-10 November 2016
- ▶ 9th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 14-17 February 2017
- ▶ 10th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 3-5 April 2017
- ▶ 11th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 26-29 June 2017
- ▶ 12th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 9-13 October 2017
- ▶ 13th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 20-23 February 2018
- ▶ 14th GREVIO meeting, Brussels: 25-27 June 2018
- ▶ 15th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 10-11 September 2018
- ▶ 16th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 4-6 February 2019
- ▶ 17th GREVIO meeting, Strasbourg: 22-23 May 2019

## Exchange of views between the President of GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties (CoP)

- ▶ 2nd CoP meeting, Strasbourg: 14 December 2015
- ▶ 3rd CoP meeting, Strasbourg: 26 April 2016
- ▶ 4th CoP meeting, Strasbourg: 30 January 2018
- ▶ 5th CoP meeting, Strasbourg: 24 May 2018
- ▶ 6th CoP meeting, Strasbourg: 25 January 2019

## Exchange of views between the President of GREVIO and the Committee of Ministers

- ▶ 1295th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, Strasbourg, 27 September 2017
- ▶ 1328th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, Strasbourg, 24 October 2018
- ▶ 1347th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, Strasbourg, 29 May 2019

## Exchange of views between GREVIO members and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- ▶ Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Paris, 1 March 2019
- ▶ Joint meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and the Network Women Free from Violence, Strasbourg, 24 January 2019
- ▶ Meeting of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, Strasbourg, 11 October 2017
- ▶ Joint meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and the Network Women Free from Violence, Berlin, 12-13 May 2016
- ▶ Meeting of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, Paris, 11 March 2016

## State dialogue with GREVIO<sup>124</sup>

- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Monaco, Strasbourg, 8 November 2016
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Austria, Strasbourg, 9 November 2016
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Denmark, Strasbourg, 4 April 2017
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Albania, Strasbourg, 5 April 2017
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Montenegro, Strasbourg, 10 October 2017
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Turkey, Strasbourg, 11 October 2017
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Sweden, Strasbourg, 21 February 2018
- ▶ State dialogue with representatives of Portugal, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018

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124. Since the amendment of GREVIO's Rules of Procedure at its 13th meeting held from 20 to 23 February 2018, the state dialogue has been suspended. The consideration of state reports with state representatives is now carried out within the framework of the evaluation visit.

### **GREVIO's first baseline evaluation reports (in order of publication):**

- ▶ Austria (adopted during GREVIO's 11th meeting): 27 September 2017
- ▶ Monaco (adopted during GREVIO's 11th meeting): 27 September 2017
- ▶ Albania (adopted during GREVIO's 12th meeting): 24 November 2017
- ▶ Denmark (adopted during GREVIO's 12th meeting): 24 November 2017
- ▶ Turkey (adopted during GREVIO's 14th meeting): 15 October 2018
- ▶ Montenegro (adopted during GREVIO's 14th meeting): 15 October 2018
- ▶ Sweden (adopted by written procedure): 21 January 2019
- ▶ Portugal (adopted by written procedure): 21 January 2019

## Appendix 2 – Timeline of GREVIO’s evaluation procedure (November 2016 - May 2019)

Parties to the Convention	Questionnaire sent	Deadline for reports	Evaluation visits	Publication of GREVIO Reports
<b>Austria Monaco</b>	March 2016	September 2016	November / December 2016	September 2017
<b>Albania Denmark</b>	September 2016	January 2017	April + May 2017	November 2017
<b>Montenegro Turkey</b>	January 2017	May 2017	October + November 2017	September 2018
<b>Portugal Sweden</b>	May 2017	September 2017	February + March 2018	January 2019
<b>Finland France</b>	November 2017	March 2018	October 2018	Sept 2019 Finland Dec 2019 France
<b>Italy Netherlands Serbia</b>	February 2018	June 2018	March 2019	January 2020
<b>Spain Belgium</b>	September 2018	February 2019	October 2019	June 2020
<b>Andorra Slovenia Malta</b>	February 2019	September/ October 2019	February/ March 2020	January 2021

## Appendix 3 - Signatures and Ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Member state of the Council of Europe	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force
<b>Albania</b>	19/12/2011	04/02/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Andorra</b>	22/02/2013	22/04/2014	01/08/2014
<b>Armenia</b>	18/01/2018		
<b>Austria</b>	11/05/2011	14/11/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Azerbaijan</b>			
<b>Belgium</b>	11/09/2012	14/03/2016	01/07/2016
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	08/03/2013	07/11/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Bulgaria</b>	21/04/2016		
<b>Croatia</b>	22/01/2013	12/06/2018	01/10/2018
<b>Cyprus</b>	16/06/2015	10/11/2017	01/03/2018
<b>Czech Republic</b>	02/05/2016		
<b>Denmark</b>	11/10/2013	23/04/2014	01/08/2014
<b>Estonia</b>	02/12/2014	26/10/2017	01/02/2018
<b>Finland</b>	11/05/2011	17/04/2015	01/08/2015
<b>France</b>	11/05/2011	04/07/2014	01/11/2014
<b>Georgia</b>	19/06/2014	19/05/2017	01/09/2017
<b>Germany</b>	11/05/2011	12/10/2017	01/02/2018
<b>Greece</b>	11/05/2011	18/06/2018	01/10/2018

<b>Hungary</b>	14/03/2014		
<b>Iceland</b>	11/05/2011	26/04/2018	01/08/2018
<b>Ireland</b>	05/11/2015	08/03/2019	01/07/2019
<b>Italy</b>	27/09/2012	10/09/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Latvia</b>	18/05/2016		
<b>Liechtenstein</b>	10/11/2016		
<b>Lithuania</b>	07/06/2013		
<b>Luxembourg</b>	11/05/2011	07/08/2018	01/12/2018
<b>Malta</b>	21/05/2012	29/07/2014	01/11/2014
<b>Monaco</b>	20/09/2012	07/10/2014	01/02/2015
<b>Montenegro</b>	11/05/2011	22/04/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Netherlands</b>	14/11/2012	18/11/2015	01/03/2016
<b>North Macedonia</b>	08/07/2011	23/03/2018	01/07/2018
<b>Norway</b>	07/07/2011	05/07/2017	01/11/2017
<b>Poland</b>	18/12/2012	27/04/2015	01/08/2015
<b>Portugal</b>	11/05/2011	05/02/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Republic of Moldova</b>	06/02/2017		
<b>Romania</b>	27/06/2014	23/05/2016	01/09/2016
<b>Russian Federation</b>			
<b>San Marino</b>	30/04/2014	28/01/2016	01/05/2016
<b>Serbia</b>	04/04/2012	21/11/2013	01/08/2014
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	11/05/2011		
<b>Slovenia</b>	08/09/2011	05/02/2015	01/06/2015
<b>Spain</b>	11/05/2011	10/04/2014	01/08/2014
<b>Sweden</b>	11/05/2011	01/07/2014	01/11/2014
<b>Switzerland</b>	11/09/2013	14/12/2017	01/04/2018
<b>Turkey</b>	11/05/2011	14/03/2012	01/08/2014
<b>Ukraine</b>	07/11/2011		
<b>United Kingdom</b>	08/06/2012		



## Appendix 4 – List of GREVIO members (from June 2015 to May 2019)

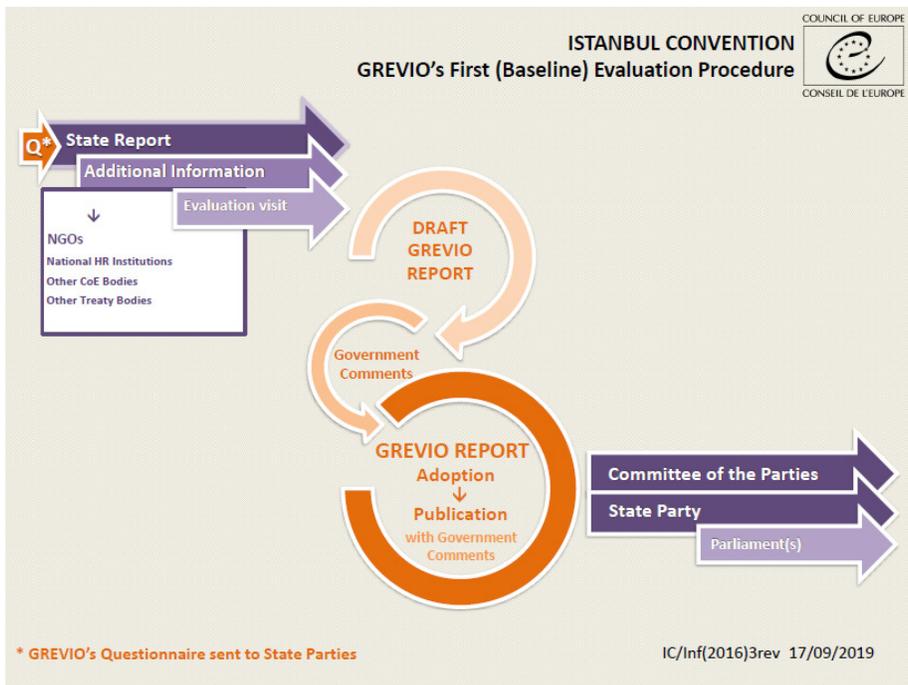
Name	Nominated by	Title	From	To
<b>Feride Acar</b>	Turkey	President	01/06/2015	31/05/2019
<b>Rosa Logar</b>	Austria	Vice-President	01/06/2015	31/05/2019
<b>Marceline Naudi</b>	Malta	Second Vice-President	01/06/2015	12/10/2017
		First Vice-President	12/10/2017	31/05/2019
<b>Simona Lanzoni</b>	Italy	Second Vice-President	12/10/2017	31/05/2019
<b>Biljana Branković</b>	Serbia	Member	01/06/2019	31/05/2023
<b>Françoise Brié</b>	France	Member	01/06/2019	31/05/2023
<b>Rachel Eapen Paul</b>	Norway	Member	01/09/2018	31/08/2022
<b>Gemma Gallego</b>	Spain	Member	12/10/2017	31/05/2019
<b>Per Arne Håkansson</b>	Sweden	Member	01/06/2019	31/05/2023
<b>Sabine Kräuter-Stockton</b>	German	Member	01/09/2018	31/08/2022
<b>Helena Leitão</b>	Portugal	Member	01/06/2019	31/05/2023
<b>Iris Luarasi</b>	Albanie	Member	01/06/2019	31/05/2023
<b>Vladimer Mkervalishvili</b>	Georgia	Member	01/09/2018	31/08/2022
<b>Vesna Ratković</b>	Montenegro	Member	12/10/2017	31/05/2019
<b>Aleid Van den Brink</b>	Netherlands	Member	01/09/2018	31/08/2022



## Appendix 5: GREVIO's Secretariat (from June 2015 to May 2019)

- Bridget O'Loughlin, Executive Secretary (from June 2015 to September 2018)
- Liri Kopaçi-Di Michele, Executive Secretary (from September 2018 to May 2019)
- Carmela Apostol, Administrator
- Johan Friestedt, Administrator (from June 2015 to January 2017)
- Çiğdem Kaya, Administrator (from August 2017 to May 2019)
- Johanna Nelles, Administrator
- Christina Olsen, Administrator
- Nadia Bollender, Assistant
- Irida Varfi-Boehrer, Administrative Assistant

# Appendix 6 – GREVIO’s first (baseline) evaluation procedure



[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 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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