

Kraków, 01.12.2025

Dr hab. Magdalena Grzyb  
Criminology Department  
Faculty of Law and Administration  
Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland  
m.grzyb@uj.edu.pl

**Comment on the Poland's implementation of the recommendations of the Committee of  
the Parties to the Istanbul Convention**

Referring to the response of the Polish government to the GREVIO report and recommendations, I point to the following inaccuracies and circumstances omitted or not taken into account in the response.

**1. The Minister for Equality/Government Plenipotentiary for Equality,  
Katarzyna Kotula, does not work towards eliminating violence against  
women**

According to the [regulation of 18 December 2023](#), the Minister for Equality has no competence in combating discrimination based on sex or in gender equality policies or equality between women and men.

§ 2 of the Regulation states: *The minister's remit includes in particular:*

- 1. implementing the government's policy in the field of equality issues, including preventing discrimination, particularly on the basis of gender identity, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief, worldview, age, disability, and sexual orientation.*

*(...)*

- 7. implementation of tasks related to preventing domestic violence.*

**2. The Minister for Equality/Government Plenipotentiary for Equality,  
Katarzyna Kotula, does not fulfil her obligations in the field of preventing  
domestic violence**

To date, she has not presented a report on the implementation of the national programme on preventing domestic violence for 2023 and 2024<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> RPO pyta o sprawozdanie z realizacji Krajowego Programu Przeciwdziałania Przemocy w Rodzinie za 2023 r.  
<https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-rodzina-przeciwdzialanie-przemocy-sprawozdanie-mr>

The last nationwide study entitled “National Diagnosis of the Phenomenon of Domestic Violence” was conducted in 2019, i.e. 6 years ago.

- 3. Funds allocated for preventing domestic violence are redirected to organisations working for “other marginalised groups” under the pretext of combating gender-based violence.**

It is alarming that Minister Kotula openly declares that budget funds intended to combat domestic violence will be used to support organisations working for LGBTQ+ <sup>2</sup> (under the umbrella of gender-based violence).

- 4. In her public activity, the Minister for Equality/Government Plenipotentiary for Equality Katarzyna Kotula primarily supports men’s rights movements known for misogyny and LGBTQ+ movements. However women’s rights, and so violence against women does not seem a priority for her.**

Minister Kotula officially met with representatives of the so-called men’s rights movement<sup>3</sup> that [promotes notion of “parental alienation”](#) and [included men’s right](#) postulates in the equality agenda for Polish Presidency in UE in 2025.

- 5. The activity of other government bodies, mainly the Ministry of Justice, also raises concerns from the perspective of the goals of the Convention and the protection of women and children from violence.**

The Ministry of Justice is considering—implementing demands of “fathers’ rights” organisations—[criminalising parents who hinder contact with children](#). This is extremely controversial and risky, especially when the abusive parent retains full parental rights and has never been reported (because the abused partner, usually woman chose separation to end violence), which is not uncommon in Poland. Introducing such a measure could lead to punishing mothers who want to protect their children from violence by the former partner.

---

<sup>2</sup> Her statement from a parliamentary committee for LGBTQ+ rights [meeting 8 January 2025](#) (16:40).

Call for proposals: Priority II.

[https://www.gov.pl/web/minister-ds-rownosci/program-oslonowy-2025---oglaszamy-konkurs?fbclid=IwY2xjawOacM9leHRuA2FlbQJxMABicmlkETBVTG4zTlo3dGIwR05SN0xnc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQOMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHtEIMz7un7R-jfj8bi35rxqzeheMkflDTo86UJ7ZVs-svGY2SvxeGzH9SLNp\\_aem\\_aWuGoB1rWIzuRU0zHRDHQ](https://www.gov.pl/web/minister-ds-rownosci/program-oslonowy-2025---oglaszamy-konkurs?fbclid=IwY2xjawOacM9leHRuA2FlbQJxMABicmlkETBVTG4zTlo3dGIwR05SN0xnc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQOMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHtEIMz7un7R-jfj8bi35rxqzeheMkflDTo86UJ7ZVs-svGY2SvxeGzH9SLNp_aem_aWuGoB1rWIzuRU0zHRDHQ)

<sup>3</sup> <https://schm.org.pl/blog/spotkanie-z-ministra-ds-rownosci-katarzyna-kotula/>

Since 2012, civil-law measures have allowed financial penalties for a parent who obstructs the other parent's contact with the child. In practice, this provision is used against mothers and serves as a tool for fathers to intimidate them.

In Poland, men who use violence against their partners retain full parental rights and custody of children after separation.

It is worth recalling the [case from July 2025 in Poznań](#)— a 37-year-old man killed his 26-year-old ex-partner, against whom he had a restraining order, yet they met regarding custody of their small child.

Minister Waldemar Żurek—a former judge—due to his personal experience publicly supports “wronged fathers”.

## **6. Positive legal changes consistent with the spirit of the Convention:**

- introduction of [emergency barring](#) orders in 2020.
- [the 2023 amendment to the Domestic Violence Act](#)—expanding the definition of domestic violence and recognising that children who witness violence are also victims
- criminalisation of forced marriage ([article 191b of penal code](#)) and FGM ([article 156 § 1 3](#)) of penal code) in 2023
- change of the [definition of rape](#) in 2025 and introduction of a clear “lack of consent” criterion.

## **7. Current problems: the domestic violence prevention system is ineffective and underfunded.**

The April 2025 [report of the Supreme Audit Office](#) indicates the following deficiencies and irregularities:

- lack of an integrated register of families covered by the Blue Card procedure
- lack of reliable data on the scale of domestic violence
- lack of tools to identify families at risk
- unreliable fulfilment of the obligation to prepare domestic violence prevention programmes
- unreliable implementation and reporting of tasks under the National Domestic Violence Prevention Programmes
- lack of coordinated cooperation between institutions
- insufficient funding for domestic violence prevention tasks
- not all units prepared to carry out tasks
- specialist support for persons affected by domestic violence available only to a limited extent
- lack of support centres for victims
- low number of corrective-educational and psychological-therapeutic programmes

- insufficient places in care facilities and foster care, hindering immediate protection of children
- excessive workload of social workers and family assistants, and insufficient staffing in other institutions
- lack of or delayed assistance to victims (slow procedures)
- inadequate police response (failure to immediately isolate the perpetrator) when violence occurs under the influence of alcohol
- failure of healthcare workers and teachers to initiate the Blue Card procedure

## 8. Current problems: public discourse and political climate

There is growing concern over very strong narratives of the fathers' rights movement—its activists are often men convicted of violence against partners or sexual abuse of children.

In August 2025, a [scandal arose when a convicted paedophile](#)—sentenced for child sexual abuse and for stalking of his former partner—appeared as a representative of fathers' groups at a parliamentary committee meeting on child protection. He was listed in the public register of sex offenders.

Another worrying phenomenon is the increasing presence in public discourse of the symmetrical framing of domestic violence under the slogan “violence has no gender.” Every public or media report on domestic violence or violence against women is met with comments by many opinion leaders claiming that men also experience violence from women “equally and in the same way.”

### Summary

Despite some positive legal changes, the overall system of combating various forms of violence against women did not enhance. There is still shortage in data collection, coordination and resources allocation. Domestic violence nor violence against women is not a matter of concern for governmental authorities.

Nor the Minister for Equality/Government Plenipotentiary for Equality Katarzyna Kotula is interested in the issue of violence against women; preventing domestic violence is rather secondary issue for her. This is likely because she is a political representative of LGBTQ+ communities and focuses mainly on implementation of their agenda.

For this reason, even in the regulation defining her competences, combating discrimination based on sex, combating violence against women, and equality between women and men are not mentioned at all. Systemic problems related to the effective prevention of domestic violence are not being addressed. There is concern that plans to criminalise hindering contact may weaken the position of the parent who seeks to protect the child from violence by a partner.