

*Building trust
by delivering support,
protection and justice*

France

First thematic
evaluation report

GREVIO

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



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

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ISTANBUL CONVENTION
SAVES LIVES

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**Building trust by delivering
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and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

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Executive summary

This evaluation report addresses progress made in bringing support, protection and justice to victims of violence against women and domestic violence under selected provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). It offers an assessment made by the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), an independent human rights monitoring body mandated to monitor the implementation of the convention. GREVIO's findings identify developments that have taken place since the publication of its baseline evaluation report on France on 19 November 2019 and are based on the information obtained during its first thematic evaluation procedure as set out in Article 68 of the convention. These include written reports (a state report submitted by the French authorities and additional information submitted jointly by a group of specialised women's rights organisations, including the National Federation of CIDFFs, Solidarités Femmes, Feminists against Cyberbullying, Cimade, Family Planning) and a five-day evaluation visit to France. A list of the bodies and entities with which GREVIO had exchanges can be found in Appendix II.

The report assesses the wide variety of measures taken by the French authorities to prevent violence against women and domestic violence and to deliver protection, support and justice for victims – the theme chosen by GREVIO for its first thematic evaluation report. In identifying emerging trends in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, GREVIO shines a light on laudable efforts made for the implementation of this convention. Moreover, it provides in-depth information on the implementation of selected provisions in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution as building blocks for a comprehensive response to the different forms of violence against women that instils trust in victims.

GREVIO welcomes the progress that has been made since the 2019 Grenelle Forum on intimate partner violence. Notably, several laws have been adopted to strengthen the protection of women victims of intimate partner violence and their children, enabling a number of new measures to be introduced, such as electronic tagging and immediate interim protection orders. Several new initiatives have also been implemented to protect and support women victims of violence, including dedicated healthcare facilities, universal emergency financial assistance for women who have left a violent partner and the New Start package, launched in 2023 to support victims on their path away from violence by rallying all the relevant bodies around them. Improvements have been made to the helpline for women victims of violence. Since 2019, increased funding has also been allocated to combating violence against women and promoting gender equality.

Substantial measures have been taken to prevent violence against women in sport, including setting up a national taskforce to handle reports of violence in sport and developing a variety of tools to promote awareness of sexual violence. In schools, a common core syllabus has been drawn up for teaching about sexuality and making respectful choices regarding intimate and emotional relationships and is set to be implemented from September 2025. New measures have also been introduced to train certain professionals on how to deal with violence against women, including at the French Judicial Service Training College (ENM), while the Interministerial Task Force on Combating Violence against Women and Trafficking in Human Beings (MIPROF) has continued to provide various professional groups with educational kits on different forms of violence against women.

Several improvements have been noted in the judicial response to violence against women, including the establishment of judicial units dealing with violence within the family and the creation of liaison judge posts on violence within the family to improve information sharing within the judiciary. Some courts have begun holding hearings on violence within the family which bring together the criminal and civil aspects of the same case. In addition, the number of social workers and psychologists in police and gendarmerie stations has increased significantly and the gendarmerie's family protection centres continue to play a vital role in raising awareness of intimate partner violence thanks to their specialised staff. There has also been increased activity on the digital platform for reporting violence, which facilitates online reporting and communication with police officers and gendarmes. Since 2021,

victims of sexual violence have been able to have forensic evidence collected and preserved without having to press charges beforehand.

Beyond the progress made in France to implement the convention, GREVIO has identified areas which require urgent action by the authorities to comply fully with the convention's provisions. In particular, the French authorities should extend legislation and policies to cover forms of violence against women other than domestic violence, especially sexual violence. Additional measures are required throughout the criminal law process to enhance the judicial response to this form of violence, particularly in terms of improved investigation and evidence-gathering. It is also necessary to analyse the reasons for the attrition of rape cases and to adopt a definition of sexual violence based on the absence of free consent from the victim. Furthermore, GREVIO has expressed concern that police responses to women victims of violence wishing to press charges still vary greatly according to the location and the level of training of the law enforcement officers involved.

GREVIO has noted significant shortcomings in the co-ordination of policies and measures to combat violence against women and in the evaluation of these policies. It also highlights the need for greater recognition of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that some women victims of violence, especially migrant and refugee women, may be exposed to, particularly when seeking protection and support. Furthermore, it is important for the data collected by the judicial services to be disaggregated by the sex of the victim and the perpetrator, as well as by the nature of their relationship.

Lastly, it is important to ensure that organisations providing essential specialist support services to women victims of violence have sufficient and stable financial resources to carry out their work. Although funding for such organisations has increased, the fragmented nature of funding sources, coupled with competition from non-specialised entities, risks making it even harder for specialist support services to provide services tailored to women victims.

GREVIO has identified a number of additional issues that require sustained action in order to effectively build trust by delivering protection, support and justice for acts of violence against women. These relate to the need to:

- continue the efforts to ensure adequate funding, commensurate with increasing needs for policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women; step up efforts in the area of primary prevention of violence against women;
- ensure that all professionals in contact with victims and perpetrators of violence against women receive compulsory and systematic initial and in-service training on all forms of violence against women;
- develop minimum standards for programmes for perpetrators of violence in line with European standards of best practice;
- ensure that bodies to co-ordinate support for women victims of violence are set up throughout the country and that they identify, bring together and involve all relevant bodies;
- ensure that all women victims of violence have access to a forensic examination and the possibility of preserving evidence, even when they have not pressed charges; take further measures to prevent and combat violence against women with disabilities, including those in institutions; make continued efforts to provide victims of sexual violence with medical care, support, forensic examinations and psychological assistance;
- ensure that specialist support is available for women victims of violence and their children residing in shelters; ensure that specialist services are available throughout the country, including overseas, and see to it that all such victims have access to them;
- secure the safety of victims and their children when decisions are made on custody and visiting rights and guarantee the proper implementation of tighter legislation banning the use of mandatory mediation in cases of violence;
- ensure that risk assessments are conducted systematically and in partnership with all the bodies concerned and that they result rapidly in a proper safety plan for victims; continue taking measures designed to foster increased use of protection orders;
- take further measures to limit the secondary victimisation to which women victims of violence may be exposed during judicial proceedings.

GREVIO has also identified further areas in which improvements are required in order to fully comply with the obligations of the convention under this round's theme. These include the need to ensure that all relevant professionals are aware of the assistance available, and that it is implemented in a co-ordinated manner and accessible to all women victims, whatever their status. The authorities should also ensure that dedicated healthcare facilities for women victims of violence have adequate, lasting resources enabling them to perform the many tasks assigned to them, that the efficiency of investigations and prosecutions relating to intimate partner violence is improved and that all the necessary measures are taken to set up a system of emergency barring orders which meet the requirements of Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention so that women victims of violence and their children can remain safely in their homes.

Lastly, GREVIO has pointed to several emerging trends, including an increase in sexual violence against girls and young women.

Introduction

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210) (hereafter “the convention”) is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle violence against women and domestic violence.

It sets up a two-pillar monitoring mechanism to assess the level of implementation by its parties: 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 Parties to the Convention. In line with Article 68 of the convention, GREVIO has been providing country-based monitoring reports under its baseline evaluation procedure since 2017. Its baseline evaluation report on France, offering a comprehensive assessment of the convention’s implementation in its entirety, was published on 19 November 2019, following France’s ratification of the Istanbul Convention on 4 July 2014. France’s original reservation not to apply the provisions under Articles 44 and 58, entered in accordance with Article 78, paragraph 2, of the convention, was renewed by a declaration dated 26 June 2024, giving GREVIO the reasons for maintaining it.

This report on France was drawn up under GREVIO’s first thematic evaluation round launched in 2023 focusing on the theme of building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. To address this overarching theme, it describes emerging trends in the areas of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in the country. Section two aims to identify developments in key areas such as comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, funding, and data collection, which have ensued following the completion of the baseline evaluation procedure. Section three sets to obtain more in-depth information on the implementation of selected provisions in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution, in respect of which baseline evaluation procedures and the Conclusions on the implementation of recommendations of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention have revealed significant challenges and the need for further action.

In respect of France, the first thematic evaluation procedure was initiated in accordance with Article 68 of the convention by letter and transmission of GREVIO’s first thematic questionnaire on 12 January 2024. The French authorities subsequently submitted their state report on 30 June 2024 – the deadline set by GREVIO. Following a preliminary examination of France’s state report, GREVIO carried out an evaluation visit to Paris and Poitiers, which took place from 23 to 27 September 2024. The delegation was composed of:

- Marie-Claude Hofner, Member of GREVIO
- Helmut Tichy, Member of GREVIO
- Françoise Kempf, Administrator at the Secretariat of the monitoring mechanism of the Istanbul Convention

During the evaluation visit, the delegation met with a number of senior public officials, including Salima Saa, Minister of State for Gender Equality, attached to the Ministry for Solidarity, Autonomy and Gender Equality, Jean-Benoît Dujol, Director General for Social Cohesion and Interministerial co-ordinator for Gender Equality, Roxana Maracineanu, Secretary General of the Interministerial task force on combating violence against women and trafficking in human beings, Catherine Petit, Head of the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Department and Jean-Marie Girier, Prefect of Vienne. In addition, the delegation met with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental representatives working in the area of preventing and combating violence against women. A list of the national authorities, non-governmental organisations and others met is set out in Appendix II of this report. GREVIO is grateful for the valuable information provided by all of them. The evaluation visit was prepared in close co-operation with Stéfania Chiru, who was appointed as contact person for the evaluation by GREVIO, and the Women’s Rights Department of the Directorate-General for Social Cohesion. GREVIO would like to express its gratitude for their co-operation and support provided throughout the evaluation process, and for the constructive approach adopted by the

French authorities. The state report and the written contributions submitted by civil society are available on the country monitoring website of the Istanbul Convention.¹

The present assessment was drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of GREVIO and is based on the information collected during the various steps of the evaluation procedure. In keeping with the approach adopted in its baseline evaluation reports, the findings made reflect different levels of urgency, indicated in order of priority by the following verbs: “urges”, “strongly encourages”, “encourages” and “invites”.

Resulting from a process of confidential dialogue with the aim of offering country-specific proposals and suggestions for improvement within the national context of the party under review, this report describes the situation as observed by GREVIO up until 27 March 2025. Where applicable, relevant developments up until 3 July 2025 have also been taken into account.

According to the convention, national parliaments shall receive this report from the national authorities (Article 70, paragraph 2). GREVIO requests the national authorities to translate this report into their official national language(s) and to ensure that it is widely disseminated, not only to the relevant state institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the government, the ministries and the judiciary, but also to NGOs and other civil society organisations which work in the field of violence against women.

1. See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/france>.

I. Emerging trends on violence against women and domestic violence

1. During the period following the adoption of its baseline evaluation report in 2019, GREVIO identified several trends with regard to preventing and combating violence against women in France. These include a number of legislative changes whose aim was to improve protection for women victims of domestic violence, an increase in violence against girls and young women, prevention measures in the sports sector and shortcomings in preventing and combating violence against women in overseas *départements*, regions and communities.

Legislative developments to improve protection for women victims of violence

2. Since GREVIO's baseline evaluation, a number of legislative measures have been taken to protect victims of intimate partner violence and make prosecution of perpetrators more effective.² These laws were adopted in the wake of the Grenelle Forum on intimate partner violence in November 2019 (hereinafter, the Grenelle Forum), which shows that the French authorities have recognised the need to tackle this very widespread form of violence against women. The protection for women victims of intimate partner violence and their children has been strengthened and a number of new measures have been introduced, such as electronic tagging and immediate interim protection orders. In addition, the law of 30 July 2020 on the protection of victims of intimate partner violence made the harassment of intimate partners an aggravating factor if it led the victim to commit or attempt suicide. Although there has been little case law pertaining to this provision to date, it is an important step forward in the consideration of all the elements that make up domestic violence.³ The notion of controlling behaviour by one partner over the other has also been enshrined in legislation through these legislative developments. Furthermore, the case law on intimate partner violence has evolved, particularly with the definition of coercive control as a mechanism “designed to entrap the victim within a relationship where they are compelled to obey and submit to the will of an individual who establishes themselves as the arbiter of the relationship, its dynamics and family life”.⁴

3. These legislative developments reflect the desire of the French authorities to continue their efforts to combat intimate partner violence and to align French legislation with the core principles of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO considers that it is now vital to focus on the full implementation of the existing legal framework, in close co-operation with all relevant stakeholders. In addition, following the example of what has been achieved in the field of intimate partner violence, decisive steps need to be taken to extend legislation and policies on other forms of violence against women, in particular sexual violence. While awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence has grown within French society, primarily due to the #MeToo movement in recent years and the impact of notable cases such as the Mazan mass rape trial,⁵ the political response remains inadequate.

4. Furthermore, the introduction in 2018 of the offence of sexist language or behaviour (*outrage sexiste*), making it possible to punish instances of street harassment, has been reinforced by new legislation stipulating that sexist or sexually offensive language or behaviour is a criminal offence in cases where aggravating circumstances are present.⁶ In 2023, the law enforcement agencies recorded a total of 2 200 cases of sexist or sexually offensive language or behaviour.⁷ This legislative

2. Law No. 2024-233 of 18 March 2024 on better protection and support for child victims and co-victims of violence within the family; Law No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on combating violence within the family; Law No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020 on protecting victims of intimate partner violence and Law No. 2024-536 on improvements to protection orders and the establishment of the immediate interim protection order.

3. In 2023, law enforcement agencies recorded 773 cases of women who had been stalked by a partner or former partner; Letter from the National Observatory on Violence Against Women, Gender-based and sexual violence in France, November 2024.

4. Poitiers Court of Appeal, press release: Criminal Appeals Division, judgments of 31 January 2024.

5. During the trial, which took place in 2024, approximately 50 men appeared before the Vaucluse Criminal Court, accused of raping Ms Gisèle Pélicot while she slept, at the instigation of her husband, who had drugged her.

6. Law of 24 January 2023 on the Ministry of the Interior's policy and programme and Decree No. 2023-227 of 30 March 2023 on the offence of sexist or sexually offensive language or behaviour.

7. Statistics Office of the Ministry of the Interior (SSMSI), *Info rapide* No. 41, « Nouvelle hausse des infractions enregistrées pour outrage sexiste et sexuel en 2023 » [New increase in offences registered for sexist language or behaviour], July 2024, Letter from the National Observatory on Violence Against Women, *ibid.*, 2024.

development can contribute to the prevention of violence against women by sending a clear message that sexist behaviour and harassment in public spaces have no place in French society.

5. Lastly, a 2021 law designed to protect minors from sexual offences and incest establishes the presumption of non-consent for minors under the age of 15, thereby addressing a concern expressed by GREVIO in its 2019 report.⁸

Measures to prevent violence against women: progress in the sports sector

6. Since the #MeToo movement exposed the issue of sexual violence against women and girls in various sports, substantial measures have been taken to prevent and combat such violence. In 2019, a national taskforce was set up to handle reports of violence in sport and more than 1 200 reports have been made since then. Almost half of the reports have led to measures to remove those accused of violence from their positions and to bans on practising their sport. In addition, criminal background checks have been introduced for sports staff and volunteers, including cross-checking their details against the register of perpetrators of sexual violence. The measures also apply to high-level sport. Furthermore, a variety of tools aimed at promoting awareness of sexual violence in sport are available to young people and sports coaches. Although the effective implementation of these measures depends on sports federations, they demonstrate a strong commitment on the part of the French authorities to prevent and combat violence against women in sport. It is vital that these different measures be continued in order to help bring about a genuine change in culture among professionals and amateurs alike.

Increase in sexual violence against girls and young women

7. The 2024 annual report by the High Council for Gender Equality (HCE) on sexism in France highlights the growing prevalence of distinct gender roles among young people, with young men increasingly adopting “masculinist” stereotypes promoted on social media. Furthermore, it emphasises the harmful impact of pornographic content on young people’s sex lives, particularly with respect to the notion of consent and the use of physical violence in sexual relationships.⁹

8. At the same time, data published by the National Observatory on Violence Against Women indicate very high rates of sexual violence against young women and minors: more than half of the victims of sexual violence and rape in 2022 and 2023 were minors, 72% of whom were under the age of 15.¹⁰ Girls and young women are also disproportionately affected by sexual violence in the digital sphere.¹¹ The number of young perpetrators of violence is high: in 2023, 37% of rapists were under the age of 20 and 18% were under the age of 15.¹²

9. The impact of (violent) pornography on young people who commit these offences and on the increase in rates of sexual violence against girls and young women is therefore becoming increasingly evident in France, as in other countries.¹³ Research has confirmed that pornography can have a devastating effect on young minds, highlighting the link to harmful sexual behaviour among children and young adults who view and share pornography without being able to contextualise or understand what they are seeing. The increasing exposure of young men to sexist

8. Law No. 2021-478 of 21 April 2021 on the protection of minors from sexual crimes and incest.

9. High Council for Gender Equality, 2024 Annual Report on sexism in France: tackling the Roots of Sexism, 22 January 2024.

10. National Observatory on Violence Against Women: Gender-based and sexual violence in France in 2023, November 2024 and Sexual violence and intimate partner violence in France in 2022, March 2024.

11. Evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, p. 111.

12. Statistics office of the Ministry of the Interior, 2023, cited in Information report No. 792 on the criminal definition of rape submitted by the National Assembly delegation on women’s rights and equal opportunities for women and men, 21 January 2025.

13. See, for example, GREVIO’s First Thematic Evaluation Report on Austria, adopted on 21 June 2024. See also the report by the UK Children’s Commissioner, “Evidence on pornography’s influence on harmful sexual behaviour among children” (2023), available at: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/pornography-and-harmful-sexual-behaviour/.

rhetoric, frequently glorifying violence against women, on social media platforms is a contributing factor.¹⁴

10. The negative impact of these developments is exacerbated when young people have limited access to contextualised discussions around sexuality, gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity. It is therefore vital to address these issues as part of broader strategies to prevent sexual violence, with a particular focus on young men. The new programme on emotional and relationship education and sexuality in schools should, once implemented, play an important role in this regard.¹⁵

Shortcomings in preventing and combating violence against women in overseas départements, regions and communities

11. Although the available data on violence against women in overseas France are less comprehensive than those on mainland France, they show that rates of violence, including gender-based killings, are among the highest in France as a whole.¹⁶ It would also seem that underreporting of violence is even more widespread than in mainland France and that there are significant shortcomings in support services for women victims of violence, particularly in terms of emergency shelter. Significant inequalities in access to rights and services have also been reported, as well as a lack of standardised criminal justice policies to combat violence against women throughout overseas France. Despite some positive developments, funding for combating gender-based violence appears to be largely inadequate. Lastly, migrant women who are victims of violence in overseas France face additional difficulties related to their highly precarious economic and administrative situation.¹⁷

12. The high prevalence of violence against women in overseas France is the result of complex factors linked to history, the economic context and geography. The difficulty of providing support and protection to female victims is compounded by the insular nature of these regions. However, these factors do not appear to be offset by proactive public policies to prevent and combat such violence. In this context, the creation of the position of interministerial co-ordinator for combating violence against women in overseas France in 2023 is a promising development. More generally, measures should be taken to strengthen the prevention of and fight against violence against women and to ensure the full implementation of the Istanbul Convention throughout the territories under French jurisdiction.

14. Recommendations on how to address these issues were recently provided by the thematic guidance note on “Safeguarding children from the risks of accessing online pornographic content” drawn up by the Council of Europe Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child. It is available at: <https://rm.coe.int/cdenf-2024-20-final-guidance-note-on-safeguarding-children-from-the-ri/1680b4bc32>. See also page 33 of the Feasibility study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for – inter alia – preventing and combating violence, including risky or harmful sexual behaviour by children, by the Committee of Experts on the Prevention of Violence, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/cdenf-2024-08-draft-feasibility-study-on-comprehensive-sexuality-educa/1680b0d4d0>.

15. See Article 14, Education.

16. In 2022, 13 gender-based killings were recorded in overseas France; source: Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) resolution, *7 ans après l’avis du CESE : amplifions la lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes dans les Outre-mer* [Seven years after the ESEC opinion: stepping up the fight against violence against women in the Overseas Territories], November 2024. See also the survey on violence and gender relations (VIRAGE) in overseas France by the National Institute for Demographic Studies and the public thematic report by the Court of Auditors on policies to prevent violence against women in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, April 2024.

17. These include Brazilian women in French Guiana, Haitian, Cuban, Venezuelan, Colombian and Dominican women in Martinique and Comorian women in Mayotte. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit.

II. Changes in definitions, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, funding and data collection in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence

13. Chapter I of the Istanbul Convention sets out general principles which apply to all the substantive articles contained in Chapters II to VII and therefore lay the foundation for a comprehensive and adequate response that ensures the delivery of support, protection and justice for all women and girls at risk of or who have experienced gender-based violence. These include, among others, that it is a fundamental human right for everyone, particularly women, to live a life free from violence in both the public and the private sphere, that the convention must be implemented without discrimination on any ground, and that the potential for, and effects of, multiple forms of discrimination should be borne in mind. They also spell out that a gender perspective must be integrated into the implementation of the convention and the evaluation of its impact. Chapter II of the Istanbul Convention sets out the core requirement for a holistic response to violence against women: the need for state-wide effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, sustained by the necessary institutional, financial and organisational structures.

A. Definitions (Article 3)

14. Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention sets out key definitions of concepts that are fundamental to its implementation. “Violence against women” refers to “all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”, whereas the expression ‘domestic violence’ is to be understood as referring to “all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim”. The definition of “gender-based violence against women” provided in paragraph d of Article 3 seeks to ensure more clarity regarding the nature of the violence covered, by explaining that this is “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”.

15. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that different terms for violence against women coexist in French law and policy, which could hinder a shared understanding of these forms of violence as gender-based violence. It notes that a variety of terminology continued to be used, including violence within the family (*violences intrafamiliales*), intimate partner violence (*violences conjugales*) and gender-based and sexual violence (*violences sexistes et sexuelles*). With regard to intimate partner violence, which is not defined in French law, GREVIO understands that the authorities and professionals who deal with this concept consider it to include violence perpetrated by a current or former spouse, even if the couple does not live in the same household. The term “violence within couples” is also used in the same sense. Accordingly, in this report, GREVIO uses the term “intimate partner violence” to refer to domestic violence, insofar as it refers to situations covered by the Istanbul Convention’s definition of domestic violence. The term violence within the family covers all forms of violence committed within the family. GREVIO notes that since the Grenelle Forum, the term “intimate partner violence” has been used more frequently than “violence within the family” to refer to domestic violence against women and welcomes this, as “violence within the family” does not reflect the gendered nature of domestic violence. However, it notes that “violence within the family” appears to be widely used in the spheres of justice and law enforcement to refer to violence between spouses or ex-spouses, rendering its gendered nature invisible. Lastly, there is also no definition of the term “gender-based and sexual violence”, which is sometimes used to cover all forms of gender-based violence against women and sometimes in reference to sexual violence. GREVIO considers that the continued use of these different terms can lead to confusion about the forms of violence being referred to and make interdisciplinary and interprofessional communication more difficult. While some official documents provide clarification of the terminology,¹⁸ common

18. Such as the letters from the National Observatory on Violence Against Women.

reference definitions should be used, for example in the context of national action plans or other documents which are relevant to all bodies working on such issues.

16. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO encourages the French authorities to develop harmonised definitions of violence against women, in line with those of the Istanbul Convention, which can be used by all stakeholders.

B. Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies (Article 7)

17. Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to take co-ordinated and comprehensive measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. Policies must ensure effective co-operation and place the rights of victims at their centre.¹⁹ This includes taking into account and addressing the specific circumstances and barriers experienced by women exposed to or at risk of multiple forms of discrimination, in line with Article 4, paragraph 3, of the convention. Ensuring service delivery, effective protection and justice with a comprehensive understanding of intersecting forms of discrimination is a fundamental element in building trust among all women and girls.

18. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had highlighted the lack of continuity and coherence of public policies to combat violence against women, the absence of guidelines for multi-annual action plans against violence against women and a lack of co-ordination of government action, both at national level and at the level of decentralised services.

19. GREVIO is notes with satisfaction that, since its baseline evaluation report, the 2019 Grenelle Forum has resulted in the adoption of 54 measures and in the setting up of a government's priority policy on "combating violence against women and femicide". This process also led to the adoption of an Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality 2023-2027, of which combating violence against women is the first priority area of action.²⁰ According to many people GREVIO spoke with, the Grenelle Forum marked a turning point of great political import, reflecting the authorities' increased awareness and determination to take decisive action against domestic violence, which GREVIO commends.

20. While GREVIO welcomes this new momentum, it notes that, although a series of measures have been taken in various areas as part of this process and as part of the government's priority policy and the Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality, there is still no proper roadmap for combating all forms of violence against women, shared by all stakeholders, with short- and long-term objectives and clear indicators for each party involved. Though the existing measures are undoubtedly necessary, in some cases representing a significant step forward, they have simply been juxtaposed rather than designed as a comprehensive and co-ordinated policy framework to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. This has resulted in a lack of clarity in the authorities' approach to violence against women.

21. GREVIO welcomes the fact that measures to combat violence against women have been integrated into France's gender equality policy, in accordance with the requirements of Article 4, paragraph 2, of the Istanbul Convention. However, the measures to combat violence set out in the Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality 2023-2027, necessary though they are, do not address all the areas covered by the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO particularly regrets that the bulk of the measures are aimed at tackling intimate partner violence and that not all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention are given equal attention. GREVIO is particularly concerned about the lack of focus on preventing and combating sexual violence. In the light of the information gathered and the discussions held during its visit, it considers that this form of violence against women has not yet been the subject of thorough reflection by the authorities at all levels as

19. These include, but are not limited to, women from national and/or ethnic minorities, Roma women, migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women with disabilities, women without a residence permit, LGBTI women, women from rural areas, women in prostitution and women with addiction issues.

20. See: www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/presentation-du-plan-interministeriel-pour-legalite-entre-les-femmes-et-les-hommes-2023-2027.

to its causes and the measures necessary to combat it, despite the successive waves of the #MeToo movement that have swept through France since 2019 and the debates that have taken place in French society, particularly on the occasion of high-profile trials.²¹

22. GREVIO also regrets that, as highlighted in its 2019 baseline evaluation report, there are still significant shortcomings in the co-ordination of policies and measures to combat violence against women. For example, the Interministerial Committee for Gender Equality is scheduled to regularly meet to co-ordinate implementation of the government's priority policy measures and the Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality. However, according to the information available to GREVIO, the committee does not meet often in practice and each ministry sets its own priorities for implementing the planned measures.²² Although each ministry has a senior official responsible for gender equality, the presence of someone in this key role does not make up for the lack of interministerial co-ordination. GREVIO considers that the absence of a common roadmap for all stakeholders impedes the development of coherent and co-ordinated policies and measures to combat violence against women.

23. The co-ordinating body under the Istanbul Convention, the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Department (hereinafter the SDFE) at the Ministry for Gender Equality, is responsible for facilitating interministerial action and overseeing the implementation of the Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality. While welcoming the SDFE's important work, GREVIO notes with concern the significant reduction in the department's operating budget and in the budget of its decentralised women's rights network. While this operational budget remained stable between 2019 and 2023, the missions assigned to the SDFE have significantly expanded.²³ GREVIO considers that the limited human and financial resources at the SDFE's disposal hamper its ability to fulfil its mandate and to co-ordinate and set priorities for the work of the various ministries.²⁴

24. At *département* level, the decentralised women's rights network, under the authority of the prefects, is responsible for co-ordinating work to combat violence against women. GREVIO notes with interest that, as of 2021, new arrangements have been made for steering local policies to combat violence against women.²⁵ However, it understands that the necessary human and financial resources are often lacking for effective co-ordination at local level.

25. While it is to be welcomed that the Grenelle Forum brought together a wide range of stakeholders from the field, not all the measures taken since 2019 have been grounded in a thorough situation and needs analysis or in an assessment of the implementation of previous three-year plans to combat violence against women. In addition, GREVIO considers that the limited number of quantified indicators and the fact that they are restricted to certain measures launched after the Grenelle Forum (e.g. number of electronic tags, "high danger telephones", etc.) do not allow for systematic monitoring and overall evaluation of policies and measures to combat violence against women on the basis of common indicators and methodologies.

26. In its baseline evaluation, GREVIO welcomed the fact that the independent policy assessment had been carried out by an independent body, the High Council for Gender Equality (HCE), and the data collection and analysis work carried out by the Interministerial Task Force on Combating Violence against Women and Trafficking in Human Beings (MIPROF). It welcomes the continuation of the important work carried out by these two bodies, and in particular the publication in 2021 by the HCE of a "dashboard of indicators" to evaluate policies to combat intimate partner violence.²⁶ It notes, however, that to date the HCE has not carried out any systematic evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women and their impact. GREVIO reiterates the importance of adopting an evaluation policy to systematically and independently

21. In particular, the Mazan rape trial in 2024.

22. See, for example, Court of Auditors, The French Government's Gender Equality Policy, Public thematic report, September 2023, p. 19.

23. Because of a substantial growth of Programme 137, see Article 8, Financial resources.

24. See Article 8, Financial resources.

25. See Article 18, General obligations.

26. High Council for Gender Equality (2021): *Tableau de bord d'indicateurs, Politique de lutte contre les violences conjugales, année 2019* [A dashboard of indicators, Policy to combat intimate partner violence, 2019].

assess policies and measures on the basis of common indicators, as required by Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. This would help better evaluate the appropriateness of the authorities' response to objectives for preventing and combating violence against women and to the needs of women victims of violence, and to correct any shortcomings in the choice of measures, resources available, messaging, target audiences or, in the case of awareness-raising campaigns, the media used.

27. GREVIO would also like to highlight the important contribution that civil society organisations working to prevent and combat violence against women can make to the evaluation of existing policies and to policy making, given their expertise and experience of working with women victims of gender-based violence. Representatives of women's rights NGOs expressed concern to GREVIO about the limited opportunities to work with the authorities on these issues, pointing to the lack of institutionalised channels for their regular involvement.²⁷

28. GREVIO welcomes the fact that, since the baseline evaluation, certain measures have been taken to better meet the support and protection needs of women facing intersectional discrimination, including women living in rural areas or women with disabilities. Nevertheless, representatives of associations working with women exposed to intersectional discrimination raised concerns with GREVIO about the inadequate implementation of policies to prevent and combat violence against this group, even though it is one of those most at risk of gender-based violence. Women and girls with disabilities, for example, are much more frequently victims of violence, including sexual violence.²⁸ The same is true for migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women,²⁹ who also continue to face significant barriers to protection and support. It should also be noted that, on average, 47% of gender-based killings of women occur in rural areas.³⁰ The situation of women in the overseas *départements*, regions and communities is also in need of more systematic and continuous attention from the authorities.³¹ Lastly, GREVIO did not receive any information concerning specific measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence against LGBTI women or Roma or Traveller women.

29. GREVIO therefore calls for greater recognition of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that some women victims of violence may be exposed to, particularly when seeking protection and support. It also reiterates the importance of integrating the perspectives and needs of such women into policies to combat violence against women while, at the same time, taking measures to combat stereotypes, discrimination and structural inequalities against specific groups of women.³²

27. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

28. Women with disabilities are 1.5 to 10 times more likely to be victims of physical or sexual violence than those without disabilities, Centre Hubertine Auclair, *Décryptage de l'Observatoire n°7 - Les violences faites aux femmes en situation de handicap : connaître les ressources adaptées* [Analysis of survey No. 7 – Violence against women with mental disabilities: identifying suitable resources], 2024.

29. See, in particular, The Lancet Regional Health - Europe, Incidence of sexual violence among recently arrived asylum-seeking women in France: a retrospective cohort study, November 2023.

30. Parliamentary report: *Plan rouge vif, Améliorer le traitement juridique des femmes victimes des violences intrafamiliales* [Emergency plan for the improvement of the treatment of women victims of domestic violence by the justice system], 2023.

31. See section I, Emerging trends in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence.

32. See Lorena Sosa and Ruth M. Mestre i Mestre, Ensuring the non-discriminatory implementation of measures against women and domestic violence: Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention, Council of Europe, 2022.

30. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to develop a long-term overarching strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. Such a strategy should set out a clear set of responsibilities and indicators for each stakeholder and be accompanied by an effective steering mechanism. In doing so, the authorities should:

- a. ensure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated to the body co-ordinating policies to prevent and combat violence against women;
- b. develop an intersectional approach and include in policies specific measures to prevent violence against specific groups of women, such as women with disabilities, migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women living in rural areas and in overseas communities, LGBTI women and Roma and Traveller women;
- c. ensure that women's rights associations are fully involved in the development, design, implementation and evaluation of policies and measures;
- d. evaluate, on a regular basis, policies aiming to achieve the comprehensive and co-ordinated policy approach required by the Istanbul Convention. Such evaluations should be carried out on the basis of pre-defined indicators in order to assess their impact and ensure that policymaking is based on reliable data.

C. Financial resources (Article 8)

31. Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention aims to ensure the allocation of appropriate financial and human resources for activities carried out by public authorities and by relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations.³³

32. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted a lack of financial resources for combating violence against women, hindering the ability of public services and specialised services for women victims of violence to carry out their missions. It had also noted that budgets were spread across different funding sources, making it hard for organisations to obtain grants, and that it was difficult to foresee the amount of public funding that would be available.

33. Since 2019, there has been a significant increase in funding to combat violence against women and promote gender equality. The budget for Programme 137 on gender equality policy managed by the SDFE increased from €29.8 million in 2017 to €65,4 million in 2023.³⁴ The proportion of the budget earmarked for combating violence against women increased from €22 million in 2021 to €38.4 million in 2023.³⁵ Government funding to tackle intimate partner violence also increased from €126.8 million in 2019 to €171.7 million in 2023.³⁶ GREVIO welcomes the significant increase in the financial resources allocated to combating violence against women in the wake of the Grenelle Forum, which was already welcomed in the conclusions of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention on the implementation of its recommendations in respect of France.³⁷

34. However, according to information received by GREVIO, the impact of increased public funding to combat violence against women is being undermined by an exponential rise in reported cases of violence and requests for specialist support. As a result, the resources available have actually decreased in relation to the number of victims, according to the associations with which GREVIO spoke.³⁸ Despite the increase, several of the people GREVIO spoke to believe that the budgets allocated to combating violence against women are still insufficient to meet the needs. For example, while funding for the 3919 helpline has been increased, the associations reported a lack

33. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 66.

34. Information provided by the authorities.

35. State report, p. 17.

36. Fondation des Femmes, *Où est passé l'argent contre les violences faites aux femmes ?* [What happened to the money to fight violence against women?], 2023 edition.

37. Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention: Conclusions on the implementation of recommendations in respect of France, adopted on 1 June 2023.

38. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

of resources for the specialised services to which female victims who contact the helpline can be referred.³⁹ In addition, there is no specific budget line for associations to implement new systems introduced as a result of the Grenelle Forum, such as “high danger telephones”, and the funding granted to associations responsible for managing the system is not linked to the number of devices connected to it. Some associations find themselves having to manage a growing number of telephones with limited resources.⁴⁰ As a result, associations providing specialised services are increasingly forced to rely on private funding. This is particularly true for some new facilities, such as those responsible for providing care for female victims of violence in hospitals.⁴¹ GREVIO stresses that it is essential that the authorities, when introducing new schemes, ensure that they can be funded in the long term and that the burden of implementing them does not fall entirely on specialised associations and services without adequate resources being made available to them.

35. GREVIO also notes that the majority of the increase in funding has been allocated to combating intimate partner violence. According to most of the people GREVIO spoke to, the resources available for combating sexual violence are still very far from adequate.⁴² Furthermore, there seem to be very few resources available for preventing and combating violence against women online.

36. Since the Grenelle Forum, local services such as support and counselling centres (LAEOs), day care centres and mobile services have received more funding. However, information received by GREVIO shows that the resources for combating violence against women at a local level still fall short of what is required, as noted in the baseline evaluation report. Budget constraints faced by local and regional authorities also impact the funding of associations providing specialised services.

37. Despite the efforts made since 2020, it appears that the funding allocated to programmes for perpetrators is insufficient to meet long-term needs, including training for professionals.⁴³ In addition, the women’s rights organisations with which GREVIO spoke regretted that centres for the care of perpetrators of intimate partner violence (CPCA) were funded under Programme 137, which focuses on gender equality policy.

38. With regard to the funding of associations, GREVIO welcomes the existence of multiannual agreements with a number of large networks of associations responsible for specialised services, such as those operating the 3919 helpline or providing accommodation and counselling services for victims. However, it has also been informed that other associations providing essential services to women victims of violence still have to apply for funding on an annual basis or through calls for projects, or rely on private funding. Therefore, although funding for associations has increased,⁴⁴ the fact that funding sources are fragmented, both at national and local level, forces these associations to regularly submit multiple funding applications, which hinders their ability to carry out their core mission of providing specialised services to women victims of violence. This situation makes it difficult for such associations to adopt long-term strategies and undermines the attractiveness of the jobs they offer, which are often precarious, as well as the retention and transfer of expertise within the teams.

39. Furthermore, the worrying trend noted in the GREVIO baseline evaluation report of specialised associations facing competition from non-specialised associations which may be able to provide services at a lower cost has continued, particularly in the case of emergency accommodation. GREVIO notes with concern the fears expressed by specialised associations

39. See also Article 22, Specialist support services.

40. Public subsidies for the “high danger telephone” scheme vary between €15 and €1 300 per telephone. Evaluation report by the group of specialist associations submitted to GREVIO on 24 June 2024, p. 27. The European association against violence towards women in the workplace (*Association européenne contre les Violences faites aux Femmes au Travail*, AFVT) reported an increase of nearly 90% in referrals between 2016 and 2023 and a 258% increase in requests for training between 2020 and 2023, without any increase in its subsidies. See also Article 51, Risk assessment and risk management.

41. See Article 22, Specialist support services.

42. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit. Fondation des Femmes, “*Où est passé l’argent ...*”, *ibid.*, 2023.

43. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit. See also Article 16, Preventive intervention and treatment programmes.

44. Grants for associations increased by €5.8 million between 2019 and 2022, Evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, *ibid.*, p. 26.

regarding an ongoing reform of the pricing system for shelters, aimed at introducing a common basis for the funding of basic social support. They are concerned that this new system will force them to seek additional funding in order to continue to provide specific support to women victims of violence and their children living in shelters. GREVIO notes with concern that this development may make it more difficult for women's rights organisations to provide services tailored to the needs of women victims of violence.⁴⁵

40. Several associations have also informed GREVIO of frequent delays in grant payments, which could potentially jeopardise their work.⁴⁶ It also notes with concern that following the extension of the pay rise granted to healthcare and social workers in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic (the "Segur bonus") to all the associations' staff, the latter were obliged to pay this bonus to their employees from August 2024, despite not having received any state compensation, which put their cash flow at risk.⁴⁷

41. In general, despite greater transparency since 2019 in the budgets for promoting gender equality and combating violence against women, it remains difficult to determine the exact breakdown of funding provided by the various ministries in each specific area of the fight against violence against women. According to the Court of Auditors, the increase in funding noted in the cross-cutting policy document on gender equality, which brings together the contributions of the various ministries to the promotion of gender equality, is largely due to the scope of the appropriations included being extended.⁴⁸ Lastly, while the SDFE is responsible for managing the funds for the implementation of Programme 137, no single body has oversight of all the funds allocated to combating violence against women. GREVIO points out that the continuing lack of transparency in budgetary data is also linked to the absence of a clear roadmap with quantified indicators and a precise timetable for each of the relevant stakeholders.

42. Lastly, GREVIO notes with interest the work being done to introduce the principles of gender budgeting at state level and considers it important that this process be successfully completed as soon as possible. It also notes that several French cities have already implemented this type of gender-responsive budgeting.⁴⁹

43. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to ensure that women's rights organisations responsible for implementing measures resulting from the Grenelle Forum on intimate partner violence and other essential services for women victims of violence have sufficient and stable financial resources to carry out their work, without having to rely on multiple sources of funding.

44. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue their efforts to ensure adequate funding, commensurate with increasing needs, at central and local levels, for policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. The French authorities should also take further steps to improve the clarity and coherence of budgets for combating violence against women, including by creating specific budget lines for the relevant ministries for policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women.

45. Lastly, GREVIO invites the French authorities to take concrete steps to implement the principles of gender-responsive budgeting in the national budget.

45. See also Article 22, Specialist support services.

46. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, p. 28.

47. The authorities informed GREVIO that €7 million were budgeted in 2025 to partly alleviate this burden.

48. Court of Auditors, The French Government's Gender Equality Policy: Limited progress in relation to the set objectives, Public thematic report, September 2023. Information brought by the authorities to GREVIO's attention indicates that, according to the cross-cutting policy document on gender equality, in 2024 a total amount of €526 million was allocated to combating violence against women.

49. This is particularly the case in Lyon and Strasbourg.

D. Data collection (Article 11)

46. Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence requires evidence-based policy making. The collection of systematic and comparable data from all relevant administrative sources is crucial in this regard, as is information on the prevalence of all forms of violence against women.

1. Law enforcement agencies and the justice sector

47. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had commended MIPROF's work in promoting the collection of statistics on violence against women, in its capacity as the National Observatory on Violence against Women. However, it had regretted the lack of harmonisation of the categories of offences used to compile statistics in law enforcement agencies and the judiciary and the fact that the data collected by the judicial services did not systematically include the victim's sex, age and relationship to the perpetrator.

48. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that MIPROF has continued to collect and regularly publish data gathered by the Ministries of the Interior and Justice, as well as by various research institutes, local authorities and NGOs active in this field.⁵⁰ In 2024, MIPROF published for the first time data, disaggregated by sex, on suicides and attempted suicides following harassment by a partner. It labelled these situations as indirect femicides or indirect attempted femicides in order to highlight the structurally gender-based nature of such forms of intimate partner violence. GREVIO welcomes this development. In addition, there are currently 28 regional observatories on violence against women in mainland and overseas France, partly funded by the State and receiving support from MIPROF. However, GREVIO regrets that, as already highlighted in its baseline report, the human resources available to MIPROF remain very limited and that it has no specific and permanent budget line. It emphasises the importance of the data collected by MIPROF for the development and evaluation of public policies to combat violence against women and for raising awareness of professionals and public awareness of the issue.

49. With regard to data collected by the Ministries of the Interior and Justice, GREVIO welcomes the adoption of a common statistical nomenclature of offences in 2021, which should facilitate statistical monitoring of reports of violence against women from the moment a complaint is lodged up to the close of criminal proceedings. Such monitoring is still not possible at present. This means that it remains particularly difficult to assess how the judiciary responds to violence against women, including sexual violence.⁵¹ GREVIO notes that in 2023 the authorities set up a working group specifically to ensure that cases could be followed throughout the criminal justice process. It is important that this work be completed quickly. GREVIO also notes with satisfaction that digital criminal proceedings are gradually being introduced and that in future, this should enable cases to be monitored from the initiation to the conclusion of criminal proceedings by means of a case registration number.⁵²

50. GREVIO notes that data are available on the number of protection orders requested by women victims of violence: 5 917 orders were requested in 2021, compared with 4 141 in 2019.⁵³ Data on prosecutions for breaches of protection orders were also provided to GREVIO.

51. Notwithstanding these significant advances, gaps remain in the collection of administrative data on violence against women. While noting that the Ministry of the Interior collects data disaggregated by the sex of the victim, it is particularly concerned by the continued absence of judicial data disaggregated by the sex of the victim. It takes note of the argument put forward by the authorities that processing data disaggregated by the sex of victims could lead to unequal treatment

50. In particular through the annual letters of the National Observatory on Violence Against Women: <https://arreteonslesviolences.gouv.fr/les-lettres-de-l-observatoire-national-des-violences-faites-aux-femmes>.

51. It was possible to carry out such an analysis of sexual violence in 2024 following the release of recent statistical data from the Ministry of Justice's Cassiopée software. See also Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

52. The system is expected to be operational in all courts by the end of 2025.

53. Parliamentary report: *Plan rouge vif*, *ibid.* 2023, page 48. In 2023, 5 690 protection orders were issued in connection with violence within the family. Source: information provided to GREVIO by the Ministry of Justice.

of victims. Nevertheless, GREVIO would like to emphasise that the collection of data on violence against women, disaggregated by factors such as the sex of the perpetrator and the victim and the relationship between them, is essential to make violence against women visible, obtain an overview of the judicial follow-up of cases of violence against women and, ultimately, assess the effectiveness of the criminal justice response to these forms of violence.⁵⁴

52. Furthermore, GREVIO notes a paucity of data concerning violence against women in the digital sphere and in the world of work. The data on violence against women in overseas departments, regions and communities are also fragmented.⁵⁵ To date, there are only two regional observatories on violence against women in overseas France, located in Réunion and in Martinique.

2. Healthcare sector

53. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that healthcare services did not collect data on the number of women victims of the various forms of violence covered by the Convention who sought their assistance. It notes with concern that this shortcoming still exists. Although new healthcare facilities for victims of violence integrated into hospitals do collect information on the number of victims they receive, such arrangements are not in place throughout the country and insufficient data are collected to establish with any clarity how many women victims of violence consult healthcare services.⁵⁶

54. In addition, violence against women is not among the determinants of health measured by statistical agencies when compiling health statistics. GREVIO stresses that data collected by healthcare services – often the first port of call for women victims of violence – complement police and judicial data, which often fail to reflect the true extent of violence against women due to the limited number of cases reported. Collecting such data is also a means of highlighting the fact that violence against women is a major public health issue.

3. Social services

55. Data are available on the number of women who have used the “new start” package and universal emergency assistance for victims of domestic violence.⁵⁷ Apart from this, however, there are no data on the number of women and girls who contact social services - which operate under the responsibility of local authorities - for help relating to violence against women, including domestic violence.

56. **Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report and bearing in mind the need for data collection to apply to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO urges the French authorities to take measures to ensure that data collected by the judicial services are disaggregated by the sex of the victim and the perpetrator, as well as by the nature of their relationship.**

54. See the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 76.

55. See Court of Auditors, Public thematic report on policies to prevent violence against women in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, April 2024.

56. See Article 22, Specialist support services.

57. See Article 20, General support services.

57. In addition, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:
- a. continue efforts to monitor cases of violence against women along the entire path of the criminal justice chain;
 - b. ensure that MIPROF has sustainable and adequate resources to carry out its work;
 - c. set up data collection – broken down by type of violence, age of the victim and the alleged perpetrator, and their relationship to each other – on the number of women and girls who seek help from or contact public or private healthcare services due to their experiences of violence against women, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation.

III. Analysis on the implementation of selected provisions in priority areas in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution

A. Prevention

58. Chapter III of the Istanbul Convention contains a number of general and more specific obligations in the area of prevention. This section analyses progress made, since the baseline evaluation monitoring procedure, towards the implementation of early preventive measures. It also covers progress made towards the implementation of the more specific preventive measures provided for under this chapter in the areas of education, training of all relevant professionals and perpetrator programmes.⁵⁸ Ensuring the effective prevention of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence is an important step in rendering it unacceptable and reducing levels of perpetration. In turn, effective prevention empowers women and girls to speak out about their experiences and seek support and protection.

1. General obligations (Article 12)

59. Article 12 sets out a number of general preventive measures which represent the overarching principles of the parties' duty to prevent violence against women. These include the requirement to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men, with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men. A positive contribution to achieving such change can be made by men and boys acting as role models and advocates for equality between women and men and mutual respect, including by speaking out against violence, engaging other men in ending violence against women, or actively taking on caring responsibilities. Moreover, flowing from the premise that violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, Article 12 further requires that parties adopt specific measures to empower women in order to enable them to recognise and reject discrimination, unequal power relations and, ultimately, reduce women's vulnerability to violence and achieve greater gender equality.

60. GREVIO also welcomes the fact that interministerial agreements to promote equality between girls and boys and women and men in the education system have been in place for several years, with the aim of instilling a culture of equality in young people and combating gender-based and sexual violence. The Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality 2023-2027 also stresses the importance of promoting equality in schools. Moreover, significant measures have been implemented to raise awareness of gender-based and sexual violence in sport since GREVIO's baseline evaluation.⁵⁹

61. Following the emergence of the #MeToo movement, measures have also been taken in the arts, particularly in the film industry. These include making public funding conditional on the implementation of action plans to prevent and combat gender-based and sexual violence and setting up a helpline for victims and witnesses of sexual harassment and violence.⁶⁰ Several large media companies also signed a charter to combat sexual harassment and sexist behaviour in the media in 2019. GREVIO also notes with interest the 2023 campaign aimed at raising the awareness of public transport users of sexual and gender-based violence.⁶¹

62. Measures adopted in the wake of the Grenelle Forum include certain steps to prevent violence against women, such as the introduction of compulsory awareness-raising on domestic violence as part of France's Universal National Service scheme. However, it remains difficult to

58. The importance of this endeavour has been reiterated and strengthened through the Dublin Declaration on the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, adopted in Dublin, Ireland, on 30 September 2022, by 38 member states of the Council of Europe.

59. See Article 14, Education.

60. In March 2025, a new plan to combat sexist and sexual violence in the area of culture was announced in order to strengthen prevention and training, reporting and the handling of reports and to better support victims.

61. See: www.levonslesyeux.fr/index.html.

assess the extent to which these measures have been implemented in practice.⁶² GREVIO also commends MIPROF's important work in raising awareness through campaigns on certain forms of violence against women and the provision of awareness-raising materials.⁶³ Regional observatories on violence against women and other local stakeholders such as municipalities also run public awareness campaigns and campaigns aimed at professionals. However, information brought to GREVIO's attention points to a lack of regular campaigns to prevent violence against women, particularly those targeting young people and violence committed in the digital sphere.⁶⁴ Measures to prevent sexual violence and rape also appear to be lacking, with the majority being carried out by associations with limited resources. Awareness-raising measures concerning female genital mutilation, forced marriage and violence committed in the name of "honour" are also lacking. Furthermore, GREVIO notes with concern that although overall budgets for promoting a culture of equality have increased, their share of Programme 137 fell from 8% in 2017 to 4% in 2022.⁶⁵

63. In this context, GREVIO expresses its concern at the findings of the High Council for Gender Equality's 2024 annual report on the state of sexism in France, which indicates that gender stereotypes are becoming more prevalent in French society and that men and women have different perceptions of equality.⁶⁶ The 2025 annual report highlights the increased visibility of sexist and masculinist discourse, particularly in the media and in politics.⁶⁷ While welcoming the publication of these annual reports on sexism, GREVIO considers that urgent and determined action is needed to address the challenges posed by the increase in sexism and differing perceptions of gender equality, particularly among young people, and to tackle violence against women in the digital sphere, as this is an extension of the various forms of violence against women that occur elsewhere.⁶⁸

64. In the world of work, since 2018, private employers with more than 250 employees have been required to appoint advisers on combating sexual harassment and sexist behaviour at work, whose responsibilities include raising staff awareness of this issue.⁶⁹ Several guides have been produced to improve the training of these advisers and raise the awareness of victims witnesses and employers.⁷⁰ Since 2019, the civil service has been required to have action plans against gender-based and sexual violence, reporting units for such violence and relevant training tools.⁷¹ In addition, calls for projects to prevent and combat gender-based and sexual violence at work, aimed in particular at funding prevention measures, were launched in 2022. GREVIO also welcomes France's ratification of the International Labour Organisation's Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) in 2023.

65. Despite these measures, information brought to GREVIO's attention points to persistent gaps in awareness of these issues in companies and among trade unions.⁷² According to those who spoke with GREVIO, awareness-raising initiatives are sometimes influenced by gender stereotypes, and those responsible for them have not always had sufficient training on the gendered nature of violence against women. GREVIO also regrets the lack of data and research on the prevalence of violence against women in the workplace, which limits awareness of the extent of this issue despite the

62. Court of Auditors, The French Government's Gender Equality Policy, 2023, *ibid.*

63. See, for example:

https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/je-suis-professionnel/campagnes-et-outils-de-sensibilisation#campagne_contre_les_violences_sexistes_et_sexuelles_dans_les_transports0.

64. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

65. Court of Auditors, The French Government's Gender Equality Policy, 2023, *ibid.*, p. 63.

66. High Council for Gender Equality, 2024 Annual Report on sexism in France, *ibid.*, 2024; see also section I, Emerging trends in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence.

67. High Council for Gender Equality, 2025 Report on sexism in France, 20 January 2025.

68. See GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, adopted on 20 October 2021.

69. Advisers on gender-based and sexual violence are also appointed by the social and economic committees of companies with more than 11 employees.

70. See for instance the guide « *Harcèlement sexuel et agissements sexistes au travail : prévenir, agir, sanctionner* » [Sexual harassment and sexist behaviour in the workplace : prevent, act and punish] as well as the guide for small businesses on equality in the workplace and tools for the staff of public services.

71. See, for example, MIPROF's training kit: *Une femme comme moi* [A woman like me], an educational tool for staff members, particularly managers, HR personnel, etc., in the three branches of the civil service.

72. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See Article 15, Training of professionals.

revelations concerning various professional sectors brought to light by the #MeToo movement in recent years.⁷³

66. With regard to higher education and research, GREVIO welcomes the adoption of the national action plan against gender-based and sexual violence in higher education and research (2021–2025).⁷⁴ It includes training and awareness-raising for professionals regarding such violence, strengthened reporting mechanisms, a national awareness-raising campaign on consent and a platform to identify existing mechanisms. In this context, 4 000 people have received training in how to listen to and provide support for victims and how to conduct administrative investigations.⁷⁵ Lastly, the authorities indicated that a platform for reporting cases was being set up, a development which GREVIO welcomes, as this could enable the monitoring of reports of violence.

67. Furthermore, information submitted to GREVIO points to a lack of awareness-raising measures regarding the increased risk of gender-based violence faced by women and girls experiencing intersectional discrimination, due in particular to persistent stereotypes about them and a lack of awareness of their needs.⁷⁶ For example, migrant women who report violence are often suspected of claiming to be victims in order to obtain the right to stay, a concern which was already highlighted in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report. A lack of awareness of the increased vulnerability of women with disabilities to gender-based violence, particularly for those living in institutions, has also been reported to GREVIO.⁷⁷

68. While welcoming the awareness-raising measures implemented by the French authorities, GREVIO strongly encourages them to step up their efforts in the area of primary prevention of violence against women by regularly running awareness-raising campaigns or programmes aimed at eliminating gender-based stereotypes and prejudices and preventing violence against women in all areas. In doing so, they should:

- a. extend awareness-raising measures to the different manifestations of all forms of violence against women and girls covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, including sexual violence and rape, violence committed in the digital sphere or the workplace, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and violence committed in the name of so-called honour;**
- b. step up prevention work that specifically targets violence against migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women and girls, women with disabilities, Roma and Traveller women and other women at risk of intersectional discrimination;**
- c. ensure that the implemented actions are of high quality, in particular by involving women's rights organisations with the necessary expertise and by regularly evaluating the impact of awareness-raising campaigns and primary prevention measures.**

2. Education (Article 14)

69. The drafters of the convention recognised the important role which formal and informal educational settings play in addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls. Article 14 therefore requires the design of teaching material that promotes equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, the right to personal integrity and informs learners of the different forms of gender-based violence against women, adapted to the age and capacity of learners and where parties deem appropriate. The obligation to promote these principles extends to informal educational

73. For example, in hospitals, the film industry and the armed forces. According to preliminary survey results published in November 2024 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Eurostat, 41.1% of French women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

74. This plan has been extended beyond 2025 with a secured budget of €3,5 million per year. Information provided by the authorities.

75. Information provided by the authorities. The Clashes association, which is dedicated to combating sexual harassment in universities, has also produced various tools, including an information guide for victims: <https://clasches.fr/>.

76. See in particular the evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, *ibid*.

77. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

facilities as well as any sports, cultural and leisure facilities. In this context, GREVIO stresses the importance of informing parents about the content and objectives of these courses, the qualifications of those responsible for teaching these subjects and the authorities to whom they can turn if they have any questions.

70. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that, despite the 2001 law providing for at least three sessions per age group each year, sexuality education was not systematic. It had also expressed regret at the inadequacy of measures to enable professionals working in schools to identify and support child victims of violence. Lastly, GREVIO had welcomed the establishment of “equality missions” in higher education.

71. GREVIO notes with regret that statutory requirements of the 2001 law on sexuality education are still not being properly implemented, despite circulars reminding schools of their obligation to provide such teaching: only 15 to 20% of pupils benefit from the three annual sexuality education sessions required by the 2001 law.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the quality of the training provided is difficult to assess due to the lack of a unified programme or an evaluation process, and because it is delivered by various providers, some of whom are not part of the national education system. Law enforcement authorities, particularly the gendarmerie’s family protection centres, also carry out activities to address violence against women, albeit not systematically.

72. In this context, GREVIO welcomes the development of a core syllabus for teaching about sexuality and making respectful choices regarding intimate and emotional relationships by the Higher Council for National Curricula in 2024. The syllabus covers topics such as consent, deconstructing gender stereotypes and promoting equality between girls and boys, as well as the prevention of minors being exposed to prostitution and pornography through social media.⁷⁹ This curriculum should be implemented gradually, with content adapted for all levels of education from nursery to secondary school. GREVIO also welcomes the fact that the adoption of the core syllabus followed a wide-ranging consultation process with civil society and that an evaluation of its implementation is foreseen once it is in place. In order to fully implement the 2001 law, it is crucial that this programme is introduced in schools quickly. It should be accompanied by relevant teacher training. The provision of relationships, emotional and sexuality education during schooling is recognised as one of the most powerful primary prevention tools for violence against women and girls. GREVIO considers that introducing this core syllabus is a vital way of responding to the challenge posed by the proliferation of discourse that undermines gender equality and denies the existence of violence against women. Pupils can be taught about the notion of freely given consent to sexual relations, the harmful effects of violent pornography and the impact of sharing intimate images of oneself or others. The aim is also to strengthen young people’s commitment to fundamental principles such as gender equality, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution. In this regard, GREVIO emphasises that experience shows that such curricula, which promote respectful and non-violent behaviour, contribute to a better overall atmosphere in schools. Furthermore, GREVIO considers it vital to run information campaigns on the content and objectives of the syllabus in order to inform all relevant parties, especially parents. The aim of these campaigns should be to dispel any misconceptions about the purpose of sexuality education, as these can fuel movements that could jeopardise the implementation of the curriculum. It is also vital to keep parents informed about staff training and the relevant authorities they can approach with any queries.

73. GREVIO notes with concern about the reports it received that children with disabilities who do not attend mainstream schools are not given access to sexuality education, despite being particularly vulnerable to violence, including sexual violence.⁸⁰

78. *Pour une véritable éducation à la sexualité* [The case for genuine sexuality education], Recommendations from civil society to public authorities, November 2023. See also: Economic, Social and Environmental Council: Education on emotional, relational and sexual life, September 2024.

79. State report, p. 29. See also: *Le Monde*, *Éducation à la sexualité à l'école : les derniers arbitrages d'Elisabeth Borne* [Sexuality education in schools: Elisabeth Borne's latest decisions], 23 January 2025.

80. Information provided during GREVIO’s visit. See also: Economic, Social and Environmental Council: *Éduquer à la vie affective, relationnelle et sexuelle* [Education on emotional, relational and sexual life], September 2024.

74. GREVIO welcomes the publication of several guides to help education professionals identify pupils who are victims of gender-based or sexual violence or violence within the family, enabling them to provide better support and take preventive action.⁸¹ However, GREVIO has been informed that training for professionals is not systematic and that it is sometimes difficult to follow up on identification measures and provide adequate protection for affected pupils.⁸²

75. With regard to non-formal education, a charter to combat violence in wraparound childcare was signed in 2023 by all relevant professionals, following a #MeToo movement among staff working in the field. In 2024, a call for projects to promote gender equality in wraparound care and extracurricular activities was also launched as part of the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan 2023–2027.

76. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take steps to ensure that all pupils have effective access to education on the matters outlined in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention, including gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and the right to personal integrity.

3. Training of professionals (Article 15)

77. Building society's trust by delivering support, protection and justice to women and girls with experiences of gender-based violence requires well-trained professionals across a wide spectrum of fields. The standard set by the Istanbul Convention in its Article 15 is that of systematic initial and in-service training of all those who deal with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence. The training that is required must cover the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, and the prevention of secondary victimisation.

78. In its 2019 report, GREVIO had noted shortcomings in the initial and in-service training on violence against women provided to professionals dealing with victims. It had highlighted, in particular, the non-mandatory nature of in-service training on violence against women for judges and police officers, and significant shortcomings in the training of healthcare professionals, including those responsible for providing psychiatric assessments to the courts.

79. GREVIO notes that, since its baseline evaluation, some measures have been taken to improve the training of certain professionals, but shortcomings persist for others. It particularly welcomes the fact that, since 2019, MIPROF has continued to provide various professional groups, especially those working in healthcare, with educational kits on different forms of violence against women and the impact of intimate partner violence on children.⁸³ It also notes with interest that MIPROF is preparing a national training plan to make the training provided more consistent and clearer. In addition, all public servants have the option to take voluntary online training courses.⁸⁴ Last, GREVIO welcomes the fact that MIPROF provides training on intimate partner violence to professionals involved in the “new start” package, together with the family allowance fund.⁸⁵

80. In the healthcare sector, the issues with training that were identified by GREVIO in 2019 persist. This is despite the implementation of measures such as the appointment of advisers on violence within the family by medical associations and training courses run by these associations with the support of MIPROF.⁸⁶ There is still no mandatory training on violence against women for

81. For example, the guide *Comportement sexistes et violences sexuelles : prévenir, repérer, agir* [Sexist behaviour and sexual violence: prevent, identify, act]; the handbook *Violences sexuelles intrafamiliales : comprendre, prévenir, repérer et agir* [Sexual violence within the family: understand, prevent, identify and act]; and the training booklet on sexual violence against children by the CIIVISE (Independent commission on sexual violence against minors).

82. Information provided during GREVIO's visit.

83. A training kit on violence against women in overseas France has also been produced. See: <https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/je-suis-professionnel/outils-de-formation>.

84. In person training is also available.

85. See also Article 18, General obligations.

86. These training courses focus in particular on the new provisions (2021) concerning the reporting of violence by doctors.

doctors, pharmacists and nurses.⁸⁷ The information received by GREVIO shows that the training of occupational health doctors, in particular, is often inadequate, especially with regard to psychological trauma and victimology. This limits their ability to identify and care for women who are victims of violence in the workplace.⁸⁸ Professional training on identifying and providing care for women who have undergone female genital mutilation is also limited.⁸⁹ Lastly, staff in forensic medical units (UMJs) do not always receive training in how to write medical certificates for cases of violence against women, how to recognise forms of violence such as psychological violence⁹⁰ or how to refer victims to support services.

81. A lack of training in dealing with violence against women has also been reported among staff working in meeting places for visitation rights,⁹¹ which may impact the safety of children and their mothers. Furthermore, according to information provided to GREVIO, the training of social workers employed by gendarmeries and police stations varies depending on the organisation that employs them.⁹² GREVIO notes with interest that the reference frameworks for various social care professions are currently under review.⁹³ It is crucial that this review guarantees adequate training on all forms of violence against women for such professionals.

82. With regard to the justice system, GREVIO welcomes the fact that the French Judicial Service Training College (ENM) has developed new training tools since the baseline evaluation, including a multidisciplinary training kit on violence within the family. Initial training for judges covers issues related to violence within the family and traineeships can be completed in specialist departments dealing with violence against women.⁹⁴ The issue is also addressed in a cross-disciplinary manner during the initial training programme. A further development since 2019 is that when appointed to other positions, judges are now required to complete a module on violence within the family as part of their mandatory training. GREVIO welcomes this important development. It also notes that judges and other judicial staff working in the recently established judicial units dealing with violence within the family (VIF units) are encouraged to undergo specific training. In 2024, a new two-year optional in-service training course was launched, together with a new one-day training module on issues and concepts related to violence against women. It covers important concepts for understanding the specific dynamics of intimate-partner and sexual violence, such as coercive control, the impact on children who are exposed to violence and psychological trauma. It also includes a compulsory practical placement at a Women's and Family Rights Information Centre (CIDFF). In addition, several in-service training courses, which are open to various legal and law enforcement professionals on an opt-in basis, are held each year.

83. While welcoming efforts to expand training for judges, GREVIO notes with concern that judges who have not been assigned to a VIF unit are not systematically being trained on issues related to violence against women. Information brought to its attention indicates that many judges still lack a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach, as well as awareness of the issues faced by women exposed to intersectional discrimination, such as migrant and refugee women, women with addiction issues, women in prostitution or women with disabilities.⁹⁵ GREVIO was also informed that, despite the availability of training on sexual violence, there is an overall lack of specialised training on this form of violence.⁹⁶

84. While GREVIO reaffirms its full respect for the essential principle of independence of the judiciary and judicial autonomy in the organisation of training, it notes, at the same time, the unique and essential role the judiciary plays in applying the Istanbul Convention and its principles

87. Optional in-service training modules have been introduced, in particular for nurses and doctors working in emergency services, in co-operation with MIPROF. In addition, midwives, nursing assistants and childcare workers receive compulsory initial training on risk situations, including violence within the family.

88. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

89. See Article 20, General support services.

90. See Article 20, General support services and Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

91. See Article 31, Custody, visitation rights and safety.

92. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

93. Information provided by the authorities.

94. 2.5 days of training on this subject are provided during initial training.

95. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

96. See also Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

incorporated into national legislation. By virtue of this essential role, their decisions may directly engage states' responsibility.⁹⁷ When it comes to the training of judges, the growing corpus of GREVIO's baseline and thematic evaluation reports have consistently pointed to shortcomings at the level of the courts, including in France, notably due to insufficient knowledge about the nature and dynamics of violence against women among many judges, and, as a result, low conviction rates for all forms of violence against women. It is therefore of paramount importance that, when adjudicating cases in criminal and civil law pertaining to violence against women, such decisions are informed and based on appropriate, specialist knowledge, addressing, inter alia, gender stereotyping. Indeed, this requires expertise on very complex phenomena – such as trauma-induced victim behaviour; the freeze, flop and befriend reactions of victims of rape; and the long-term harm and consequences of witnessing domestic violence on children – and in-depth knowledge of the standards of the Istanbul Convention. Such training needs cannot be sufficiently addressed by ad hoc, optional courses, but require mandatory and in-depth training of judges on relevant issues. It is encouraging that this is increasingly being recognised and that judicial service colleges are moving towards mandatory training on violence against women to address the complex nature of these offences. This is supported by the information collected by the Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) in 2020 showing that 24 member states of the Council of Europe require some form of compulsory in-service training for judges, and the complex nature of violence against women would merit inclusion of these topics.⁹⁸ Ways must be found, therefore, to ensure that members of the judiciary are equipped with the necessary knowledge to respond to women victims of violence and their children in a manner that instils their trust in the judiciary and provides an adequate sense of justice. This is of acute relevance not only in the context of criminal proceedings but also in relation to family law cases, where judicial decisions on custody and visitation often do not give sufficient consideration to the safety concerns and needs of women and children leaving abusive relationships, frequently ignoring allegations of domestic violence and/or accepting agreements despite a history of domestic violence.⁹⁹

85. Regarding an issue already identified in its baseline report, GREVIO has been informed that there is still a lack of training on violence against women for professionals who provide psychological opinions during judicial proceedings.¹⁰⁰ Expert reports of this sort often provide key evidence in criminal proceedings. In civil proceedings, some experts continue to use concepts such as so-called parental alienation syndrome.¹⁰¹ It is therefore crucial that expert opinions are drawn up by professionals who have been properly trained on the issue of violence against women. They should receive initial and in-service training on the different forms of violence against women, the gendered nature of such violence, the impact of domestic violence on children and non-violent partners and the corresponding need for responses that take due account of the trauma suffered while excluding the use of what is termed "parental alienation syndrome".

86. Lawyers also play a vital role in helping women victims of violence to access justice. It is essential that they receive sufficient training on violence against women, the risks of secondary victimisation during proceedings and the legal mechanisms at their disposal to provide guidance and support to women. GREVIO therefore regrets that no steps have been taken to make training on violence against women compulsory for lawyers.

87. Since 2021, prison rehabilitation and probation officers have been required to undergo initial training on various aspects of violence within the family. They can also choose to take various in-service training courses. GREVIO emphasises the importance of providing systematic, compulsory training on gender-based violence for all professionals dealing with perpetrators of

97. The following are examples among the many cases in the area of violence against women in which decisions by judge(s) have engaged states' responsibility under the European Convention on Human Rights and led to a finding of violation of the Convention: *Vuckovic v. Croatia* (Application No. 15798/20, 12 December 2023), *J.L. v. Italy* (Application No. 5671/16, 27 May 2021), and *Carvalho Pinto de Sousa Morais v. Portugal* (Application No. 17484/15, 25 July 2017).

98. Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), Qualitative Data on European Judicial Systems, 2020, available at: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/cepej/viz/QualitativeDataEN/QualitativeData>.

99. See Article 31, Custody, visitation rights and safety.

100. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

101. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

violence against women, including those working for programmes run by associations, in order to better ensure the safety of women victims of violence and their children.¹⁰²

88. As part of their initial training, members of law enforcement agencies (the national police and gendarmerie) complete compulsory training modules on violence against women. GREVIO welcomes the fact that, since 2019, 90 000 national police officers and gendarmes have been trained to deal with violence against women. Information provided to GREVIO shows that police training covers handling people in stressful or traumatic situations, addressing stereotypes and interviewing children.¹⁰³ However, GREVIO does not have sufficient information to assess in any detail how this training addresses violence against women. Since 2019, initial training for members of the national gendarmerie has included a specific module on violence within the family. There is also voluntary in-service training available on intimate partner and sexual violence. Gendarmes assigned to family protection centres undergo mandatory ongoing training on intimate partner violence. Despite these measures to strengthen the training of law enforcement agencies, GREVIO has received reports of persistent shortcomings in the way authorities deal with and care for women victims of violence, particularly those exposed to intersectional discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities.¹⁰⁴ GREVIO is also concerned about reports of persistent shortcomings in training on sexual violence and violence against women in the digital sphere.¹⁰⁵

89. In general, GREVIO notes with concern the lack of training for professionals in meeting the specific protection and support needs of women affected by intersectional discrimination, including migrant women, asylum seekers and refugees, LGBTI women, women with disabilities, women in prostitution or with addiction issues and Roma and Traveller women. With regard to the training of protection officers at the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), who are responsible for examining asylum applications, GREVIO welcomes the efforts made to improve training on violence against women in co-operation with specialist associations. However, according to information provided to GREVIO, their ability to detect and report violence against women could still be improved.¹⁰⁶

90. Lastly, GREVIO emphasises the importance of taking advantage of the expertise of women's rights organisations in devising and implementing training for professionals.

91. **Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to pursue and expand measures aimed at ensuring that all professionals in contact with victims and perpetrators of violence against women, including judges, receive compulsory and systematic initial and in-service training on all forms of violence against women, including those in the digital sphere. In doing so, they should:**

- a. ensure such training covers the prevention and detection of all acts of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, gender equality, stereotypes and perceptions of violence against women, the needs and rights of victims, trauma-induced victim behaviour and prevention of secondary victimisation;
- b. ensure that such training also addresses the specific needs of women exposed to intersectional discrimination;
- c. ensure that training is supported by standardised protocols for identifying victims, providing victim support and referring them to specialist services;
- d. ensure that the expertise of specialist associations is drawn on when devising and implementing training;
- e. carry out assessments of such training courses.

102. See Article 16, Preventive intervention and treatment programmes.

103. Information provided by the authorities.

104. See Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

105. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

106. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

4. Preventive intervention and treatment programmes (Article 16)

92. Perpetrator programmes are important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating violence against women. Under Article 16 of the convention, parties are required to set up or support programmes that prevent perpetrators of domestic violence and of sexual violence from re-offending and support them in adopting non-violent behavioural strategies. Making the safety of, the support for, and the human rights of, victims a primary concern, these programmes are key elements in ensuring women's safety from known perpetrators. The convention requires their close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims.

a. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence

93. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that accountability programmes for perpetrators of intimate partner violence varied in terms of duration and content, and that there was a lack of collaboration with specialist associations providing support to victims of intimate partner violence. Since 2019 and the Grenelle Forum, a new mechanism has been set up under the guidance of the SDFE, namely the Network of Centres for the Care of Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence (CPCA), which currently operates 30 centres providing voluntary or court-ordered care for perpetrators of intimate partner violence. It includes measures to encourage perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions, as well as psychotherapeutic, medical, social and socio-professional care. GREVIO welcomes this development which aims to strengthen and standardise care for perpetrators of intimate partner violence and to promote local partnerships involving stakeholders from the health, social and judicial sectors. In 2023, 19 720 persons were taken care of by the CPCA, 87% of whom were referred from the courts¹⁰⁷.

94. Another positive development since 2020 is the free, anonymous and confidential helpline which has been set up for perpetrators of intimate partner violence and their relatives.¹⁰⁸ In 2024, helpline staff handled 2 623 calls, including 601 with perpetrators of intimate partner violence (354 of whom agreed to be referred for follow-up care).

95. The Ministry of Justice runs various pre- and post-sentencing programmes, including accountability courses as an alternative to prosecution, and, since 2020, judicial supervision with pre-trial placement in accommodation. The latter is an experimental programme run in co-operation with associations in order to provide better individual and collective care for perpetrators of intimate partner violence. It involves compulsory accommodation, either as an alternative to imprisonment or following eviction from the marital home. The programme is currently being implemented at 10 sites.¹⁰⁹

96. Despite the introduction of stronger measures to treat perpetrators, GREVIO notes that a number of issues remain, primarily the continued absence of guidelines and a uniform training programme for all organisations working with perpetrators of violence. As a result, perpetrator programmes continue to vary greatly in terms of content and duration. Furthermore, information provided to GREVIO shows that programmes designed to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions do not consistently incorporate efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and prejudices concerning the roles of men and women in society, which play a significant role in the perpetration of violence against women.¹¹⁰ Some programmes are limited to a more medico-centric approach, while others may even provide a space for male socialisation that reinforces gender stereotypes.¹¹¹ The short duration of some programmes, sometimes limited to a few hours or days, also reduces their effectiveness. GREVIO therefore stresses how important it is to set minimum standards for all organisations working with perpetrators of violence, as well as adequate training for professionals

107. Information provided by the authorities.

108. *Ne frappez pas!* [Don't hit!]: www.fnacav.fr/une-permanence-telephonique-pour-les-auteurs-de-violences-conjugales-n-08-019-019-11/.

109. Regarding alternatives to prosecution, see also Article 50, Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures.

110. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

111. See Oddone C., "Before and after #MeToo: How French perpetrators of domestic violence perceive themselves as 'victims of feminism'", in *Patriarchy in practice, Ethnographies of Everyday Masculinities*, Bloomsbury, 2023.

dealing with perpetrators, including in-depth knowledge of the underlying mechanisms of different forms of violence against women and the gendered nature of such violence. In this regard, GREVIO draws the attention of the authorities to the recently published European standards for perpetrator programmes, which fully align with the Istanbul Convention's requirements and could serve as a reference when establishing national minimum standards for such programmes.¹¹²

97. GREVIO is also concerned about the frequent lack of co-operation between perpetrator support services and organisations working with women victims of violence. This shortcoming can seriously compromise the safety of victims.¹¹³ Lastly, it regrets that there is no evaluation of the success of such perpetrator programmes, which makes it impossible to assess their impact on reoffending rates or how effective they are at ensuring that perpetrators stop using violence and adopt non-violent behaviour.

98. Against this backdrop, GREVIO views the establishment of the CPCA network as a positive development, as it aims to pool best practices and enhance professional training. However, GREVIO's discussions with civil society representatives have brought to light a number of inadequacies that still limit the effectiveness of this new mechanism. In addition to the shortcomings outlined above, the network established in 2021 has been hindered by a lack of clarity in terms of how the perpetrator programmes put in place prior to the creation of CPCAs, the centres themselves and the programmes implemented under the remit of the Ministry of Justice tie in with each other. This can lead to confusion regarding the various stakeholders' roles and responsibilities and make it more difficult to refer perpetrators to different types of programmes. GREVIO considers that, in close collaboration with services for victims of violence, measures should be taken at national and local levels to better co-ordinate, clarify and harmonise the provision of care for perpetrators of violence.

99. **While welcoming the measures taken to strengthen care for perpetrators of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:**

- a. **develop minimum standards for programmes for perpetrators of violence in line with European standards of best practice, ensuring that work on gender stereotypes is an integral part of these programmes and that such standards are implemented in a consistent manner throughout the country;**
- b. **ensure that programmes take an approach centred on victim safety and support and are implemented in close co-operation with victim support services;**
- c. **ensure that there are clear programme referral routes for perpetrators of violence, whether their participation is mandatory or voluntary;**
- d. **regularly assess the implementation and impact of the programmes.**

b. Programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence

100. In its 2019 evaluation, GREVIO had noted shortcomings in the implementation of programmes for perpetrators of sexual offences, in particular a medicalised approach to violence that did not sufficiently take into account the gendered aspect of violence against women. Since then, GREVIO has not been made aware of any new assessments of existing therapeutic care schemes for perpetrators of sexual violence who have been ordered to undergo treatment. It notes that a Senate fact-finding mission on recidivism in sexual violence was launched in 2024 following a high-profile rape case.¹¹⁴ In addition, the French authorities are currently reviewing the tools used in perpetrator programmes, as well as revising the co-operation protocol which governs how the healthcare services and the law work together in these programmes. GREVIO has also been informed that courses to raise awareness and a risk assessment tool are being developed for prison staff, as well as a reference framework for the care of such perpetrators. It is essential to implement these new tools in order to improve care for perpetrators of sexual violence and better prevent

112. See: www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/european-standards-for-perpetrator-programmes.

113. See "Guidance for safe and effective perpetrator programmes: Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention", a comparative study and recommendations on programmes for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence, Council of Europe, 2024.

114. The rape and murder of Philippine Le Noir by a repeat offender in September 2024.

reoffending. GREVIO also emphasises how important it is to ensure that perpetrator treatment programmes follow an approach that recognises sexual violence against women as a phenomenon rooted in gender inequality, rather than solely or systematically viewing it as a mental health issue.

101. In addition, GREVIO notes the work carried out by resource centres for professionals dealing with the perpetrators of sexual violence (CRIAVS), which provide those working in the field with resources and opportunities to share best practices.¹¹⁵ Since 2021, the centres have also been running a “referral and prevention hotline” for paedophiles.¹¹⁶ GREVIO has also been informed of promising initiatives, such as courses introduced by the Grenoble public prosecutor’s office to raise awareness of sexual violence among minors aged 13 to 18 who have been involved in incidents relating to sexuality.¹¹⁷

102. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take measures to assess the tools and programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence, and to use the results of the assessment to improve the care provided.

B. Protection and support

103. Chapter IV of the Istanbul Convention requires a multifaceted, professional and victim-oriented support structure for any woman or girl who has experienced any of the forms of violence covered by the convention. General and specialist support services that are victim oriented, accessible to all and adequate in numbers greatly facilitate recovery by offering support, protection and assistance to overcome the multiple consequences of such violence. As such, they play a key role in offering a comprehensive and adequate response to the different forms of violence covered by the convention.

1. General obligations (Article 18)

104. Article 18 of the Istanbul Convention sets out a number of general principles to be respected in the provision of both general and specialist protective and supportive services for women victims of violence. One of these principles is the need for services to act in a concerted and co-ordinated manner, with the involvement of all the agencies concerned. More specifically, Article 18, paragraph 2, of the convention requires parties to put in place appropriate co-ordination mechanisms that can ensure effective co-operation among, inter alia, the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities, NGOs and other relevant entities and organisations. In this regard, women’s rights NGOs and specialist women’s support services play an important role in guaranteeing that the rights of victims are safeguarded in multi-agency co-operation. Other general principles established under this article include the need for measures of protection and support to be based on a gendered understanding of violence against women, and to focus on women’s safety and human rights, taking into account the relationship between victims, perpetrators, children and their wider environment, and addressing their needs holistically. Specialist support services must aim at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence and avoid their secondary victimisation. This provision equally stresses the importance of ensuring that access to services is not subject to the victim’s willingness to press charges or testify against the perpetrator.

105. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had highlighted the lack of institutionalisation of the various co-operation activities between relevant bodies catering for the needs of women victims of violence and the inadequate co-ordination of these activities by the SDFE’s decentralised network. Since then, measures have been taken to structure this co-operation more efficiently. In 2021, it was decided to strengthen co-ordination between local partners through specific steering bodies on

115. See for example: <https://violences-sexuelles.info/>.

116. See: www.fccriavs.org/nos-actions/numero-unique/.

117. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit.

intimate partner violence in order to promote comprehensive victim support strategies.¹¹⁸ The latter were selected from among existing bodies, particularly local victim support committees (CLAVs) and *département* crime prevention committees (CDPDs). 70 specific steering mechanisms have now been set up across the country. They bring together various partners involved in the work to protect women victims of violence (including police, courts, healthcare services, local and regional authorities and perpetrator programmes) under the authority of the prefect and the Principal State Prosecutor. Associations providing specialist services may take part in the activities of CLAVs and CDPDs but, according to the information provided to GREVIO, they are not systematically involved.¹¹⁹ In addition, co-ordination measures are not applied uniformly throughout the country, their functioning differs from *département* to *département* and the involvement of several overlapping bodies sometimes makes the mechanism somewhat indecipherable.¹²⁰ Furthermore, to GREVIO's knowledge, the measures concerned are not based on formalised protocols, which does not help to make them sustainable and creates uncertainties as to the roles and responsibilities of each party involved. GREVIO also reiterates how important it is to regularly assess the functioning of these co-operation bodies to gain a better understanding of the difficulties encountered and be able to remedy them. Lastly, GREVIO regrets that the measures that have been set up address only intimate partner violence and none of the other forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. In this connection, it stresses the importance of establishing mechanisms designed to empower women victims of all forms of violence including sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage or violence committed in the digital sphere.

106. GREVIO welcomes the establishment since 2021 of steering committees on violence within the family (COPIL VIFs) attached to courts; these are intended to improve information sharing, monitor individual situations posing a risk of intimate partner violence and carry out joint risk assessments.¹²¹ They include representatives of civil and criminal courts, law enforcement agencies and specialist associations.¹²² It notes with interest that some courts have specialised COPIL VIFs, focusing for instance on the protection of children exposed to domestic violence.

107. GREVIO also notes that the various services for women victims of violence had never previously been delivered on a one-stop-shop basis. In this context, it welcomes the launch in 2023 of the “new start” package, whose aim is to manage victims' path away from violence and make it safer. The goal is to rally all the relevant bodies around victims and designate a co-ordinating body (the family allowance fund or the *département* council) to assess victims' needs and set the co-ordination procedure in motion, based on prior reporting and identification. On this basis, the services concerned (social security office, employment office, prefecture, associations, etc.) undertake to provide victims with the assistance they need as quickly as possible.¹²³ The family allowance fund or the *département* council is tasked with ensuring that all the bodies concerned provide a rapid response for victims. This system, which is currently in its pilot phase, is open unconditionally to all victims of intimate partner violence.¹²⁴ GREVIO welcomes this development and considers that it should be rolled out across the whole country as quickly as possible so as to counter the dispersal of services and support for victims.¹²⁵

108. Following the Grenelle Forum, dedicated facilities for the healthcare of women victims of violence (DDFVVs) were set up in 86 *départements* and the authorities aim to cover the entire territory. These facilities, some of which are also known as “women's centres/health”, are generally attached to a hospital department and provide victim with onsite multidisciplinary assistance and/or refer them to other specialised local services. Their aims are to provide special healthcare for women victims of all forms of violence, help to co-ordinate the work of various professionals at local level

118. Circular of 7 September 2021 from the Minister of Justice presenting the Prime Minister's circular on local and regional governance relating to action against intimate partner violence.

119. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

120. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

121. On the terminology used (“violence within the family”), see Article 3, Definitions.

122. See also Article 50, Investigations, prosecutions and convictions.

123. Assistance such as accelerated access to social rights, access to housing, universal emergency financial assistance, psychological support, childcare and social and vocational integration.

124. The programme has been introduced in four territories for an initial six-month period and will shortly be rolled out on two more territories.

125. See also Article 20, General support services.

and help victims lodge complaints.¹²⁶ They are open to all victims of violence unconditionally, meaning in particular that there is no requirement to have lodged a prior complaint, which GREVIO welcomes. GREVIO welcomes the establishment of these new facilities, which should help to address the failure to properly incorporate the health dimension into policies to combat violence against women which it identified in its baseline report. On its visit, however, it was informed by various civil society representatives that some of these facilities were devised without any attempt to take stock beforehand of existing specialised services, resulting in a proliferation of new facilities and hence a dispersal of resources rather than the stepping up of activities.¹²⁷ GREVIO points out that it is important to ensure that specialist support for women victims of violence covers all general and specialised services which are able to make a co-ordinated contribution to the empowerment of victims.

109. While welcoming the measures taken to improve the co-ordination of services for the support and protection of women victims of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. ensure that co-ordination bodies are set up throughout the country and that they identify, bring together and involve all relevant bodies, including associations specialising in the protection of women victims of violence;**
- b. adopt standardised protocols for multi-agency co-operation to secure support and protection for all women victims of violence and their children;**
- c. address all the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention including rape and sexual violence, digital manifestations of violence against women, forced marriage and female genital mutilation;**
- d. conduct regular reviews of the activities of co-ordinating bodies;**
- e. ensure that the new one-stop-shop facilities set up to provide support for women victims of violence identify and involve all the bodies concerned.**

2. General support services (Article 20)

110. General support services, such as social services, health services as well as housing or employment services must be equipped to offer support and protection to women victims of gender-based violence of all ages and backgrounds. Article 20 of the Istanbul Convention requires state parties to ensure that these services are adequately resourced and that the staff is adequately trained on the different forms of violence against women, and able to respond to victims in a supportive manner, in particular those that women and girls turn to first (i.e. health and social services).¹²⁸ Their interventions are often decisive for victims' onward journey towards a life free from violence and thus a core element of a trust-based system of protection and support.

a. Social services

111. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that while several measures had been taken to facilitate access to social housing for women victims of violence, there were still obstacles which rendered such access difficult, particularly the requirement for a protection order or a family court decision to have been issued. GREVIO therefore welcomes the simplification, since 2023, of the conditions women must meet to be able to apply for social housing. Certification of a situation of violence by a social worker or an association is now sufficient to warrant an application for housing and only the woman's income is taken into account now when assessing the application.¹²⁹ Furthermore, campaigns to raise awareness about detecting violence against women have been run in the social housing sector since 2020.¹³⁰ Other measures to help victims find a long-term housing solution include the possibility of accessing a rental guarantee.¹³¹ GREVIO welcomes these developments, which have resulted in an increase in the number of social housing units assigned to

126. See Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

127. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

128. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 127.

129. Order of 20 April 2023 amending the Order of 22 December 2020 on the new social housing application form and the supporting documents to be provided for the examination of such applications.

130. 1 300 employees of social landlords have been given training on this issue since 2023, with the support of MIPROF.

131. The Visale Guarantee, available to persons under 30.

victims over recent years.¹³² The information provided shows, however, that it is still very difficult for victims to find permanent accommodation owing, in particular, to an overall lack of social housing.

112. GREVIO welcomes the adoption in December 2023, of a system of universal emergency financial assistance, designed to provide financial support for women who have left a violent partner.¹³³ This assistance takes the form of either an interest-free loan or a non-reimbursable sum depending on the person's situation. It can be paid quickly (within three to five days) and has already been granted to more than 45 000 victims.¹³⁴ When applying for it, victims must be able to present a protection order or proof that they have pressed charges or reported the offence to a prosecutor. Perpetrators may be ordered to reimburse loans made to their victims if they are convicted. It is regrettable, however, that such assistance is not available to migrant women without a residence permit as this may force them to stay with a violent partner for financial reasons. A review of the system has been scheduled to find out how funds are being used and to provide better guidance for victims. GREVIO welcomes this major development in measures to help women victims to gain economic independence, which is also connected to the establishment of the "new start" package. It is important for financing of this system to continue and for it to be accessible to all women who are victims of intimate partner violence.¹³⁵

113. Since 2023, a financial intermediation system, whose aim is to prevent and combat unpaid child maintenance, has been systematically applied to all separations and may not be refused by either party where there has been intimate partner violence. Furthermore, since this time, partner's incomes have no longer been included in the calculation of the allowance for adults with disabilities with a view, in particular, to increasing the economic independence of women with disabilities and enabling them to leave violent partners more easily. Indemnities for loss of job may also be awarded in the event of resignations connected with intimate partner violence, for example where the victim has been forced to change residence. Lastly, women who are victims of violence in the workplace and have been forced to resign may be entitled to unemployment benefit, albeit only if they have pressed charges.¹³⁶

114. GREVIO welcomes the fact that the authorities have taken further measures to limit the impact of economic violence against women victims of violence and enable them to move towards more independence. It is concerned, however, about reports that it is often still difficult for women, particularly migrant women, to assert their status as victims of violence and gain access to existing assistance owing in particular to the dispersal of measures, a problem which is compounded by a lack of co-ordination between the professionals concerned.¹³⁷

115. While welcoming the measures taken to facilitate victims' access to housing and economic independence, GREVIO encourages the French authorities to ensure that all the professionals concerned are aware of existing assistance, and that it is implemented in a co-ordinated manner and accessible to all women victims, whatever their status, so that they can escape situations of violence and achieve autonomy.

b. Health services

116. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that the health component was not sufficiently integrated into the national and local management of policies on violence against women and that there was a lack of human and financial resources in care units for victims of female genital mutilation. With regard to the gathering of forensic evidence, GREVIO had regretted that charges had to be pressed before this process was triggered.

117. GREVIO welcomes the fact that, since its evaluation of 2019, substantial measures have been taken to improve the care provided by health services for women victims of violence, including

132. From 7 700 in 2017 to 11 500 in 2021, state report, p. 59.

133. System set up by Law No. 2023-140 of 28 February 2023.

134. Between December 2023 and March 2025. The amounts awarded vary between €240 and €1 330 depending on the circumstances and average about €800. Information provided by the authorities.

135. See Article 8, Financial resources.

136. Persons who resign are not entitled to unemployment benefit, save in exceptional circumstances.

137. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See Article 18, General obligations. See also Anna Matteoli, *Les aides à dimension économique dans le cadre des violences au sein des couples* [Financial assistance in the context of violence between partners], Dalloz AJ Familles, December 2023.

sexual violence, such as the establishment of DDFVVs.¹³⁸ Firstly, it is now possible to draw up a medical report and gather evidence of violence without the victim having to press charges first.¹³⁹ According to information brought to GREVIO's attention, 61 protocols have been signed by health establishments to provide for this possibility.¹⁴⁰ However, not all UMJs, which are the main bodies tasked with forensic examinations, offer this option. Furthermore, in the opinion of several of the people GREVIO talked to, it is still difficult to get psychological violence attested to in UMJs, and access to such facilities is limited for women living in rural areas and overseas territories and those with disabilities.¹⁴¹ The same applies to minor girls applying for asylum on grounds of the fear of female genital mutilation, who must regularly provide UMJs with non-excision certificates, while their mothers must produce excision certificates proving the risk to which their daughters are exposed. Since 2024, DDFVVs have also been authorised to issue such certificates.¹⁴²

118. GREVIO also regrets that requests by women victims of violence for medical certificates are frequently still refused, in breach of the law in force.¹⁴³ It reiterates how important it is for victims to be able to present an official medical report ascertaining the violence suffered and assessing the harm sustained. It was also reported that major disparities persist in the quality of medical certificates, which can give rise to considerable problems in judicial proceedings.¹⁴⁴ In this context, GREVIO notes with interest the procedures for reporting violence set up by MIPROF for doctors and several other medical and paramedical professions and of the support provided to healthcare professionals in the drafting of professional writings.¹⁴⁵

119. GREVIO also welcomes the publication by the National Health Authority (HAS) of a good practice recommendation for healthcare staff, accompanied by factsheets. The aim is to encourage health professionals to systematically identify victims of the various forms of violence and help them to provide better care and guidance for victims.¹⁴⁶ It also notes with satisfaction that imminent danger and coercive control assessment guides have been drawn up for doctors and other healthcare professionals to help them implement the Law of 30 July 2020, making provision for carers to report intimate partner violence where there is an imminent danger for victims or coercive control is being exercised.

120. Since 2018, it has been possible for regional psychological trauma centres to provide care for all persons confronted with a psychological trauma. A large majority of persons using these centres are women victims of violence.¹⁴⁷ It seems, however, that these centres lack resources and specific care provision for women victims of violence.¹⁴⁸

121. As to the detection and care of women with disabilities who are victims of violence, GREVIO regrets the persistent lack of awareness raising about violence against women living in institutions, particularly sexual violence. The information available to GREVIO shows that many women are not aware that they have been victims of sexual violence because they do not have enough information about their rights. It is also very difficult for women in institutions to report any violence to which they may have been subjected. The establishment in 2023 of Intimagir Centres, whose aim is to raise awareness among professionals about violence against women with disabilities, including in institutions, is therefore a positive development. However, there are not enough of these centres to meet the many needs in this sphere.¹⁴⁹ GREVIO also notes that it is planned to extend a scheme to facilitate access for women with disabilities to healthcare, especially gynaecological care, to the

138. See Article 22, Specialist support services.

139. Circular from the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice and the Minister for Solidarity and Health of 25 November 2021. This circular contains a specific protocol providing guidance for doctors when taking samples (information and consent of victims, sampling procedures and traceability).

140. See Article 22, Specialist support services.

141. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

142. See Article 22, Specialist support services.

143. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

144. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

145. In co-operation with the Ministry of Health and the national healthcare professionals' orders.

146. See: www.has-sante.fr/jcms/p_3104867/fr/reperage-des-femmes-victimes-de-violences-au-sein-du-couple#toc_1_1_2. Also available are good practice recommendations to improve the reception and care of children, young people and women who have suffered or are at risk of suffering genital mutilation.

147. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

148. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also 25, Support for victims of sexual violence.

149. In 2023, there were 13 of these centres in metropolitan France and one in Réunion.

entire country by 2026, and to set up workshops on sexual and reproductive health for these women.¹⁵⁰

122. Lastly, GREVIO notes with concern that it is still possible for the contraceptive sterilisation of women with disabilities and no legal capacity to be carried out at the request of a third party.¹⁵¹ Even though this possibility is subject to precautionary measures, it is difficult to know if the information transmitted to women undergoing such operations is sufficiently clear and accessible to enable them to take a decision. In the absence of data concerning forced sterilisations, GREVIO is not in a position to assess the application of precautionary measures. However, it is concerned about allegations that have been made of sterilisations without informed consent performed on persons with psychosocial disabilities considered incapable of judgment, affecting people living in institutions in particular.¹⁵² It emphasises the importance of guaranteeing respect for the sexual and reproductive rights of women with disabilities, including those under guardianship, by offering them less invasive and permanent birth control options than sterilisation. Women with intellectual disabilities who undergo consensual sterilisation should be able to make their decision on the basis of sufficient information presented to them in an accessible manner by professionals with training in gender and disability issues. Against this background, GREVIO notes with interest that one of the objectives of the Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality 2023-2027 is to increase awareness of healthcare professionals of the need to obtain consent of women with disabilities to contraceptive measures.

123. With regard to female genital mutilation, the 2019 national action plan has been extended by the interministerial equality plan and by a plan for the region Île-de-France, where a substantial share of the population originating from countries with a heightened risks of female genital mutilations resides. Its main aims are to increase awareness among health professionals and implement awareness-raising campaigns. It has been brought to GREVIO's attention however that in practice, there is very little reporting of female genital mutilation, and medical staff are still not systematically trained to detect this form of violence, even though some DDFVVs offer specialised medical and surgical treatment for women and girls who have suffered this form of violence.¹⁵³ In addition, GREVIO questions the French authorities' practice of regularly asking girls seeking asylum to produce non-excision certificates, as this entails repeated medical examinations, can cause trauma and may not be in the child's best interests. GREVIO also stresses that having been subject to genital mutilation once does not prevent this type of violence from happening again.¹⁵⁴

124. GREVIO welcomes the measures taken by the French authorities to improve the health system's response to women victims of violence and encourages them strongly to:

- a. ensure that all women victims of violence have access to a forensic examination and the possibility of preserving evidence, even when they have not pressed charges; improve the quality of medical certificates and ensure that women have access to them;**
- b. review the requirement to produce a non-excision certificate having regard to women's and girls' experiences of female genital mutilation, in consultation with specialised associations working in the field;**
- c. take further measures to prevent and combat violence against women with disabilities, including those in institutions;**
- d. take steps to ensure that the safeguarding measures provided for by the law in the event of contraceptive sterilisation are properly implemented in order to protect women with disabilities against forced sterilisation, in accordance with Article 39 of the Istanbul Convention.**

150. The *Handigynéco* scheme.

151. Article L2123-2 of the Public Health Code. Sterilisation committees appointed by regional health agencies give opinions on applications for contraceptive sterilisation. See also UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding Observations on France's initial report, 4 October 2021; see also European Disability Forum, Forced sterilisation of persons with disabilities in the European Union, September 2022.

152. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. It is also foreseen to provide women with disabilities living in institutions with gynaecological and reproductive healthcare.

153. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Article 15, Training of professionals.

154. See, in particular, Guidance Note on Refugee Claims relating to Female Genital Mutilation, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section, Division of International Protection Services, Geneva, May 2009, paragraph 6.

3. Specialist support services (Article 22)

125. Specialist support services ensure the complex task of empowering victims through optimal support and assistance geared to their specific needs. They are therefore an equally important cornerstone of a trust-based system of protection and support. Much of this is best ensured by women's organisations and by support services provided, for example, by local authorities with specialist and experienced staff with in-depth knowledge of gender-based violence against women. They need to be able to address the different types of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and to provide support to all groups of victims, including hard-to-reach groups.

126. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had pointed to the need to provide more daycare facilities and support and counselling centres (LEAOs) along with places in specialised women-only accommodation for women victims of violence, of which there is an alarming shortage. It had also recommended that the 3919 women's helpline should be available 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Lastly, it had regretted how little funding was allocated to specialist support provided by specialist associations for children exposed to domestic violence.

127. GREVIO welcomes the fact that since its baseline evaluation, the helpline has been improved as it has now been made accessible 24 hours a day for seven days a week and adapted to deaf and hard-of-hearing persons. There are problems of access, however, for women living in overseas territories, particularly because of the lack of interpretation in some of the languages spoken on these territories. Other telephone lines run by associations are available such as the *Viols-Femmes* information line.¹⁵⁵

128. Following the Grenelle Forum, measures were also taken to make more specialist accommodation available to women victims of violence, with the number of places rising from 5 000 in 2017 to nearly 11 000 in mid-2024. While welcoming this increase, GREVIO regrets that it does not always result in a satisfactory response to all specialist accommodation needs and that access for specialist associations to funding for specialised and safe women-only accommodation is still a complex process.¹⁵⁶ In this context, GREVIO notes with concern reports that the lack of specialist support, particularly for children housed in shelters with their mothers, can prompt some victims to return to their homes.¹⁵⁷ Nor, in the overseas *départements*, regions and communities, are the 445 existing accommodation places enough to meet needs, and the remote island location can make it difficult to properly shelter victims who have left their homes.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, GREVIO notes with concern how few specific places there are for women migrants, asylum seekers or refugees who are victims of violence, despite the fact that between 2019 and 2021 300 specialist accommodation places were opened for women in these categories who are victims of human trafficking or violence. Consequently, most of these women are housed in unsafe, general emergency facilities or, where there is no emergency solution, they can end up on the street, where they often fall victim to gender-based violence.¹⁵⁹ A lack of co-ordination between the asylum system and the services combating violence against women has also been reported to GREVIO. As a result, women asylum seekers and refugees who are victims of violence are not systematically referred to existing specialist services and have to navigate between several systems.¹⁶⁰

129. In 2022, a "femicide" protocol was introduced to provide for care for children witnessing a gender-related murder in an intimate partner relationship, a measure which GREVIO welcomes. The protocol provides for hospitalisation and care of child witnesses, often in the context of newly established paediatric wards for the care of children in danger (UAPEDs). 75 femicide protocols have been signed or are being signed by hospitals and UAPEDs contain separate hearing rooms for children. On the subject of psychological support for children exposed to violence, GREVIO is

155. Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

156. See also Article 8, Financial resources.

157. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

158. See Resolution of the ESEC, *ibid.*, November 2024.

159. See, in particular, the joint civil society evaluation report, *ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

160. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

informed, however, that the resources allocated to associations assisting victims in this sphere are still largely inadequate.¹⁶¹

130. The network of LEAOs and daycare centres managed by state-approved associations,¹⁶² continues to offer women victims of violence legal advice, psychological support and specialised social assistance. Although the number of consultations with these centres never stops growing, their funding fluctuates and has not covered the exponential increase in needs in recent years.¹⁶³ Furthermore, its geographical coverage is still patchy and some areas, particularly rural ones, do not have such facilities. In this respect, GREVIO notes with interest that various associations have set up schemes to bring advice and guidance services in rural areas and in some overseas territories closer to victims, such as mobile vans providing advice and support. It would be good for this type of scheme to be supported and rolled out more extensively in various parts France, particularly in its overseas territories.

131. Information provided to GREVIO has also indicated a general lack of specialised support services for victims of violence against women carried out in the digital sphere, despite the fact that this has been increasing exponentially. As to victims of female genital mutilation and forced marriage, they may turn to LEAOs, specialist associations or DDFVVs. It is important to ensure that all women victims of these forms of violence have access to a specialist support service, including those overseas.

132. GREVIO notes that the tasks assigned to DDFVVs have increased considerably because they are now expected to train local stakeholders on the various forms of violence against women, strengthen support for women with disabilities, develop mobile facilities and teleconsultation and meet the needs of women and girl victims of female genital mutilation, including preparing non-excision certificates for women and girl asylum seekers.¹⁶⁴ GREVIO has doubts about the capacity of DDFVVs to perform the many tasks assigned to them in the long term considering that the financial resources allocated to them are limited, largely depend on private sector funding and are, therefore, uncertain.¹⁶⁵ It is concerned that concentrating so many key tasks in the hands of a single facility may mean that essential specialist services for women victims of violence will not be available where the organisations or bodies which are supposed to implement them lack resources.

133. While welcoming measures taken to increase the availability of specialist support and guidance services for women victims of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. ensure that specialist support is available for women victims of violence and their children residing in shelters;
- b. ensure that specialist services are available throughout the country, including overseas, and see to it that all victims, including those exposed or subject to intersectional discrimination, have access to them;
- c. ensure that specialist support services are able to respond to the digital dimension of violence against women.

134. GREVIO also encourages the French authorities to take measures to ensure that dedicated facilities for the healthcare of women victims of violence (DDFVVs) have adequate, lasting resources enabling them to perform the many tasks assigned to them, in close co-operation with all the bodies providing specialist services for women victims of violence.

4. Support for victims of sexual violence (Article 25)

135. Under Article 25 of the convention, parties are required to provide a set of holistic services to victims of sexual violence, including immediate medical care and trauma support, combined with forensic examinations, as well as short- and long-term psychological counselling and therapy to

161. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

162. In particular, Women's and Family Rights Information Centres (CIDFFs) and the Solidarité Femmes network (FNSF).

163. See Article 8, Financial resources.

164. See Article 25, Support for victims of sexual violence. 163 LEAOs and 128 daycare centres are currently funded under Programme 137.

165. See Article 8, Financial resources.

ensure the victim's recovery. Such services should be provided by trained and specialised staff in an appropriate manner to respond to the victims' needs, preferably within rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres established in sufficient number through the country to ensure their easy access. The recommendation is to set up one of the above-mentioned centres per every 200 000 inhabitants.¹⁶⁶

136. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had regretted the lack of specialist support facilities for women victims of sexual violence apart from a few pilot projects. It therefore welcomes the establishment in recent years of regional psychological trauma centres and the DDFVVs referred to above. It notes with satisfaction that these bodies are intended to serve as sexual violence victim support centres. Since 2021, victims can have forensic evidence collected and stored by DDFVVs, some UMJs and other healthcare institutions without pressing charges beforehand.¹⁶⁷ Some DDFVVs are available 24 hours a day and they receive all victims, including those reporting historical abuse, which GREVIO welcomes. There are currently 15 regional psychological trauma centres and 84 DDFVVs.¹⁶⁸ GREVIO takes note of the French authorities' intention to extend the geographical scope of DDFVVs and points out how important it is to meet the needs of women living in areas where such facilities do not exist, including overseas.

137. GREVIO has been informed that the treatment of victims of sexual violence in regional psychological trauma centres does not always meet their specific needs, and that this is the result in particular of a lack of specific training among professionals working in these centres and a lack of resources, which can lead to delays in the treatment of victims.¹⁶⁹ It would seem, in fact, that victims of past sexual violence or complex trauma sometimes have to wait several months to access psychological care in such centres.¹⁷⁰ Another problem is that victims are not always aware of these centres, which do not systematically work with specialist associations able to refer victims to them.¹⁷¹ As was pointed out above, GREVIO stresses that it is essential to ensure that these bodies have the necessary resources to perform their duties lastingly and be able to meet the short-, medium- and long-term needs of women victims of sexual violence. It is also important to establish a specific care path so that victims of sexual violence can be systematically catered for and referred to the relevant specialist services.

138. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to make continued efforts to provide victims of sexual violence with medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and immediate psychological assistance by qualified professionals providing victim-sensitive examinations and referring victims to specialist services providing short and long-term psychological counselling and support.

C. Substantive law

139. Chapter V of the Istanbul Convention covers a range of provisions related to substantive law, in the area of both civil and criminal law, which aim to create the necessary legislative framework to prevent women and girls' further victimisation and to ensure robust intervention and prosecution by law-enforcement agencies. This section focuses on progress made with respect to selected provisions of the convention in the area of substantive law, notably, Article 31 on custody, visitation rights and safety and Article 48 on the prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing in cases of violence against women.

166. Explanatory Report, paragraph 142.

167. See Implementation report submitted by France on the conclusions of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention on 2 June 2025.

168. Including one regional psychological trauma in Martinique and another in Réunion. It is planned to set up 23 additional DDFVV. Information provided by the authorities.

169. See, in particular, High Council for Gender Equality, *Evaluation of Regional Psychological Trauma Centres: an alarming situation for the treatment of women victims of violence*, 2023.

170. See Article 20, General services.

171. Report by the High Council for Gender Equality on Regional Psychological Trauma Centres, *ibid*, 2023.

1. Custody, visitation rights and safety (Article 31)

140. Custody and visitation decisions in relation to families with a history of abuse require a careful balancing of the different interests at stake. Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention seeks to ensure that incidents of violence covered by the convention, in particular domestic violence, are taken into account in decisions on custody and visitation rights, to ensure that the exercise of these rights does not harm the rights and safety of the victim or children. This provision contributes directly towards their trust in the authorities because it offers essential protection from post-separation abuse.¹⁷²

141. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had regretted that legislation enabling the interests and safety of the child to be given priority in decisions on parental authority was rarely applied, for reasons including a lack of co-ordination between civil and criminal courts. Since 2019, successive amendments have been made to the Civil Code and Criminal Code regarding parental authority. Under a law of 2019 it is now possible for criminal courts to rule on the withdrawal of parental authority.¹⁷³ In 2024, the adoption of a law to provide better protection and support for child victims and co-victims of violence within the family made it possible to suspend the exercise of parental authority and visitation and custody rights of a parent prosecuted or indicted for a crime committed on the other parent, incestuous sexual assault or a crime committed on their child until the court makes its ruling.¹⁷⁴ This temporary suspension becomes final in the event of a conviction for sexual assault, incestuous rape or any other crime committed on the child or the other parent. For a crime other than incestuous sexual assault on a child, it is mandatory for criminal courts to rule on whether parental authority should be partly or fully withdrawn. They may also make such a ruling for an offence on the other parent.¹⁷⁵ GREVIO welcomes the legislative changes that have been made, which should help to improve child protection in proceedings concerning situations of domestic violence. It notes with interest that the changes made since 2019 have resulted in an increase in the number of criminal convictions giving rise to measures to restrict parental authority.¹⁷⁶ It regrets, however, that these new rules on the automatic suspension of parental authority only apply where the offences committed on the other parent are classified as crimes, whereas many acts of intimate partner violence fall into the category of lesser indictable offences. In such cases, the Criminal Code only foresees the possibility for the judge to rule on the withdrawal of the exercise of parental authority.

142. GREVIO is also pleased that the Law of 2024 establishes the principle that a child exposed to intimate partner violence is a co-victim. This step forward had already been introduced in a decree of 2021 specifying that children exposed to intimate partner violence were regarded as victims and could therefore participate in proceedings as a civil party.¹⁷⁷

143. Despite these legislative advances, whose practical effects cannot yet be fully gauged, GREVIO regrets that some of the concerns it expressed in its baseline report of 2019 persist, especially with regard to family court decisions on visitation and custody rights in separation cases. It is left for the courts to decide if the child's place of residence should be changed on grounds of his or her best interests.¹⁷⁸ The exchanges which GREVIO has held with civil society representatives and lawyers reveal that while judges are required to take account of "physical or psychological

172. It is noteworthy that in the case of *Bîzdîga v. the Republic of Moldova* (no. 15646/18, 17 October 2023), the European Court of Human Rights held that in proceedings concerning the custody and visitation rights regarding children in a domestic violence context, the primary focus must be on the best interests of the child, and an assessment of any risks of violence or other forms of ill-treatment therefore has to form an integral part of such proceedings. For this reason, it found that an alleged history of domestic violence was a relevant and even mandatory factor to be weighed in the assessment of domestic authorities when deciding on contact rights (§ 62). In the recent case of *Luca v. the Republic of Moldova* (no. 55351/17, 17 October 2023), the Court found a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) on account of the failure of the Moldovan authorities to take into account incidents of domestic violence in the determination of child contact rights.

173. Law No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on combating violence within the family.

174. Law No.2024-233 of 18 March 2024 on better protection and support for child victims and co-victims of violence within the family. Suspension was possible prior to this but only for six months.

175. Article 228-1 of the Criminal Code.

176. In 2022, 1 011 criminal convictions gave rise to restrictions on parental authority compared to 134 in 2017. Information communicated to GREVIO by the French authorities.

177. Decree No. 2021-1516 of 23 November 2021 on the increased effectiveness of the rights of victims of offences committed within couples or families.

178. Article 373-2-1 of the Civil Code.

pressure or violence exerted by one of the parents on the other” in these circumstances,¹⁷⁹ many decisions in cases of intimate partner violence still result in the maintenance of shared custody.¹⁸⁰ Judges are not always aware that the exercise of joint parenting may be a means for a perpetrator of domestic violence to continue to maintain control and domination over the mother and her children. According to the information provided to GREVIO, this situation also results in persistent use of the alleged syndrome of parental alienation and similar notions, such as “manipulative” or “overly devoted” mothers or “pathological relationships” (“*conjugopathie*”).¹⁸¹ These types of notion are found in particular in psychological reports used by judges to justify their decisions.¹⁸² As it has already argued in its baseline report and its evaluation reports on many other Parties to the Convention, GREVIO points out that the use of the concept of “parental alienation”, which has no ground in science, contributes to the tendency for violence against women and their children to be rendered invisible and to go undetected and for children’s accounts to be called into question.¹⁸³ It is essential therefore to make continued efforts to ensure that all the professionals involved, including judges, prosecutors, social and child protection services, and court experts, are given proper training on the frequent use by perpetrators of joint parenting to maintain their control and domination over mothers and children, and on the unchecked use of concepts such as so-called parental alienation syndrome.¹⁸⁴

144. Another factor which may limit the extent to which intimate partner violence is taken into account in decisions regarding custody and visitation rights is the persistent lack of co-ordination between civil justice and criminal justice. Family courts do not necessarily look for histories of violence which are not referred to directly before them. Given this, GREVIO welcomes the measures taken by the French authorities to remedy this shortcoming. A decree of 2021 requires the Principal State Prosecutor to ensure that courts required to rule on custody and visitation rights have all the relevant items of evidence at their disposal.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the progressive establishment since 2023 of a computerised system for the review of priority criminal policies (SISPoPP) should make it possible to carry out an ongoing, contextualised review of all civil and criminal proceedings relating to violence within the family for consultation by all the professionals at any given court. The establishment in 2023 of specialised legal hubs on violence within the family should also help to reduce the lack of co-ordination between civil and criminal justice.¹⁸⁶ GREVIO also notes with great interest that some courts have begun holding hearings on violence within the family which bring together the criminal and civil aspects of the same case so that the judges responsible for decisions on custody and visitation rights have all the information they need concerning the criminal proceedings.¹⁸⁷ Lastly, the creation of posts of liaison judges and assistant legal liaison officers on violence within the family and court steering committees on the same subject (COPIL VIFs) is also intended to improve information sharing within the judiciary.¹⁸⁸

145. GREVIO is also greatly concerned by the fact, which it already noted in its baseline report, that many court decisions on situations of intimate partner violence result in children being placed with social services rather than the non-violent parent. These decisions to place children are reported to affect foreign women victims of violence in irregular situations in particular.¹⁸⁹ According to information provided to GREVIO, some of these decisions stem from a lack of co-ordination between juvenile courts and family courts. It is also concerned to note that prosecutions and convictions of women for withholding children continue to occur despite a requirement since 2021 for prosecuting authorities to check allegations of violence against minors made by persons indicted

179. Article 373-2-11 of the Civil Code.

180. In 2022, 10% of persons calling 3919 stated that custody was shared between separated parents; overall analysis of data from calls to the 3919 helpline, p. 21.

181. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit.

182. Information provided during GREVIO’s evaluation visit.

183. As acknowledged in the 5th interministerial action plan to combat all forms of violence against women (2017-2019).

184. See Article 15, Training of professionals.

185. Decree No. 2021-1516 of 23 November 2021 on the increased effectiveness of the rights of victims of offences committed within couples or families.

186. See Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

187. Hearings of this type are held at the Poitiers Appeal Court.

188. See also Article 18, General obligations.

189. See the evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, *ibid.*, pp. 77 and 78.

for withholding children.¹⁹⁰ It reiterates its major concerns about these practices which expose victims of violence to secondary victimisation through restrictions on the exercise of their parental rights.

146. Courts may also provide for visitation rights to be exercised in a designated meeting space if a handover represents a danger for the child or the parent who is a victim or if this is in the child's interest. Since 2019, where a protection order providing for a contact ban has been issued, courts must give special reasons not to order the exercise of visiting rights in a meeting space.¹⁹¹ GREVIO welcomes this development. It is concerned however by the persistent lack of training on the specific dynamics of intimate partner violence for staff tasked with managing supervised meeting spaces. It is extremely worried about reports that violence is committed by fathers on their children within these spaces and that staff fail to report these acts to the courts, which moreover are said to tend to favour the re-establishment of ties with a violent father and taken no account of the techniques sometimes used by perpetrators to maintain control over the mother and her children. Furthermore, there are currently not enough meeting spaces to meet growing needs, particularly in rural areas. Measures of accompaniment under protection,¹⁹² which were welcomed by GREVIO in its report of 2019, also continue to be very inadequate in number despite the fact that this measure makes it much safer to exercise visitation and custody rights.¹⁹³

147. **GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to pursue their efforts to secure the safety of victims and their children when decisions are made on custody and visitation rights and, in particular, to:**

- a. review judicial practice regarding the legal provisions requiring judges to take histories of violence into account in cases of parental separation in order to determine whether current practice complies with Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention;
- b. support and broaden the application of measures to strengthen inter-agency co-operation and information exchange between civil and criminal courts;
- c. step up efforts to make the professionals concerned aware that there is no scientific basis for so-called parental alienation syndrome;
- d. ensure that children are not removed from the custody of non-violent parents, unless this is necessary for other reasons;
- e. take decisive measures to ensure that there are enough facilities for supervised visits, including measures of accompaniment under protection, with adequate resources and an emphasis on the safety of children and their mothers.

2. Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing (Article 48)

148. Article 48, paragraph 1, of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to prohibit the mandatory participation in any alternative dispute resolution processes, including mediation and conciliation, in relation to cases of all forms of violence against women covered by the convention. This provision stems from the principle that violence against women is a manifestation of unequal power relations and that victims of such violence can never enter the alternative dispute resolution processes on an equal footing with the perpetrator. To avoid the re-privatisation of such violence and to enable the victim to seek justice, it is the responsibility of the state to provide access to adversarial court proceedings on the basis of robust criminal and civil law provisions.

149. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that while criminal mediation could be organised in cases of intimate partner violence only if the victim expressly requests it, the victim could be strongly encouraged to accept a proposal by judges in these circumstances. With regard to civil proceedings, GREVIO had noted the legal uncertainty arising from various provisions concerning family mediation. Consequently, it welcomes the introduction in 2020 of an incontrovertible ban on the use of criminal mediation in the event of intimate partner violence.¹⁹⁴

190. Decree No. 2021-1516 of 23 November 2021.

191. Law No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on combating violence within the family.

192. Under this measure, children are accompanied by a qualified person during the exercise of visitation rights.

193. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also *Plan rouge vif*, *ibid.*, 2023, pp. 69 and 70.

194. Law No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020 on protecting victims of intimate partner violence; Article 41-1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Similarly, the Civil Code has been amended to prohibit mediation during procedures under family law in the event of alleged intimate partner violence or clear coercive control by one of the partners over the other,¹⁹⁵ even where the parents are seeking a consensus on the exercise of parental authority.¹⁹⁶ Mandatory prior mediation in family disputes, which has been tested since 2016 in several courts, is also ruled out in the event of allegations of intimate partner violence or clear coercive control by one partner over the other. Lastly, GREVIO welcomes the fact that the new national reference framework for partnership funding of family mediation services, which came into force in January 2025, expressly rules out the use of conventional family mediation in the same circumstances.¹⁹⁷

150. Last, the information provided to GREVIO shows that despite the guarantees offered by the legislation, some prosecutors implement measures which resemble conciliation between perpetrators and victims of violence when validating decisions to set up alternative measures to prosecution, particularly settlement procedures, which involve establishing what compensation perpetrators will be ordered to pay.¹⁹⁸ GREVIO also notes with grave concern reports that mediation is frequently proposed by labour courts in cases of sexual violence at work and that courses to promote responsible behaviour are often proposed to perpetrators as alternatives to disciplinary sanctions.¹⁹⁹ Women victims of violence also continue to be encouraged to resort to mediation in cases where family courts are not aware that intimate partner violence has occurred. Refusal to agree to mediation can be held against them during legal proceedings. Furthermore, according to information brought to GREVIO's attention, some associations tasked with providing assistance during family mediation continue to promote mediation in cases of intimate partner violence, making use in particular of the concept of "highly conflictual" circumstances when describing intimate partner violence.²⁰⁰ It is essential to ensure that persons tasked with conducting mediation have sufficient training in issues such as the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, the unequal power relations between the parties which is something more than a mere conflictual relationship between spouses, and the negative effects that witnessing violence against women has on children. The aim of such training should be to increase participants' capacity to detect situations of abuse.²⁰¹

151. GREVIO is also concerned about the fact that the procedure for divorce by mutual consent without the involvement of a court, introduced in 2017, does not rule out situations of intimate partner violence. Consequently, women victims of violence may be forced to sign divorce agreements despite not being on an equal footing with a perpetrator of violence. GREVIO has been alerted to the fact that this situation particularly affects foreign women, who may be forced to sign a divorce agreement without having been able to report intimate partner violence to their lawyer because no interpretation was provided.²⁰²

152. **While welcoming the legislative amendments made to strengthen the ban on using mediation in cases of intimate partner violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take all the necessary measures to ensure that this tighter legislation is properly implemented and see to it that mediation procedures carried out in family law proceedings do not constitute quasi-mandatory mediation in cases where there is a history of violence. To do so, the authorities should *inter alia*:**

- a. **set up screening mechanisms to ensure the systematic detection of histories of domestic violence by judges and mediators in family law proceedings;**
- b. **put in place adequate safeguards to ensure that free and informed consent is given by women victims of violence throughout voluntary family mediation processes and that such processes fully respect the rights, needs and safety of victims.**

195. Law No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020; Article 255 of the Civil Code.

196. Law No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020; Article 373-2-10 of the Civil Code.

197. Mediation prior to referral to the courts at the initiative of the parties.

198. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. A settlement procedure may be ordered if the perpetrator acknowledges the facts for offences punishable by a prison sentence of fewer than five years (Article 41-2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). When validating the proposal to set up a settlement procedure, the court may hold a hearing of the perpetrator and the victim.

199. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

200. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

201. See Article 15, Training of professionals.

202. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

D. Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures

153. Full accountability for all acts of violence against women requires an adequate response from law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice sector. Chapter VI of the Istanbul Convention establishes a set of measures to ensure criminal investigations, prosecutions and convictions in a manner that validates women's and girls' experiences of violence, that avoids their secondary victimisation and that offers protection throughout the different stages of proceedings. The provisions covered in this section are fundamental to the delivery of protection and justice for all women and girls at risk of or who have experienced gender-based violence.

1. General obligations (Article 49) and immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50)

154. A key principle of an adequate response to violence against women is that of swift and effective investigations and judicial proceedings that are based on a gendered understanding of these types of offences and that take into consideration the rights of the victim during all stages. Law enforcement or judicial actors often do not prioritise incidents of violence against women and domestic violence, thereby contributing to the impunity of perpetrators and reinforcing the misconception that this type of violence is "acceptable" in society.²⁰³ A consequence of assigning low priority to incidents of violence against women and domestic violence are delays in initiating investigations and judicial processes, which in turn may lead to the loss of vital evidence and to an increased risk for the victim of repeated violence. For these reasons, Article 49 of the convention requires parties to ensure that investigations and judicial proceedings are conducted without undue delay, while at the same time respecting the rights of victims during each stage of these processes. Article 50 further reinforces these obligations by requiring that law enforcement agencies react promptly and appropriately in cases of violence against women, including by offering victims immediate protection, and by engaging in the prevention of violence. GREVIO reports focus on the application of Article 50 at key stages of the criminal justice process, notably, reporting, investigation, prosecution and conviction, all of which are key contributors to victims' sense of support, protection and justice.

a. Reporting to, immediate response and investigations by law-enforcement agencies

155. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had regretted that reporting rates for violence against women were still very low, because not enough resources were allocated to law enforcement services and associations tasked with assisting victims and there was a general lack of training. It had also regretted the frequency of refusals to take complaints from victims.

156. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that since its baseline evaluation, the upward trend in reporting of violence against women reported from 2019 on has continued.²⁰⁴ While a willingness to speak out following the #MeToo movement has clearly played a role in this development, measures have also been taken by the French authorities to improve the treatment of victims and encourage reporting. Firstly, the number of social workers and psychologists in police and gendarmerie stations rose from 200 in 2021 to 480 in 2024. GREVIO welcomes the fact that their action to support women victims of violence is broadly considered to be positive by professionals working with these victims, in particular where it comes to referring victims to other services.²⁰⁵ However, according to the representatives of associations and lawyers consulted by GREVIO, staffing levels are still well below what would be required to meet victims' needs throughout the country and staff's employment conditions are often precarious because of a lack of long-term funding despite the availability of earmarked public funding.²⁰⁶

203 Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 255

204. In 2023, 271 000 victims of intimate partner violence were recorded, which is a 10% increase compared to 2022 and a 50% increase compared to 2016; Statistics Office of the Ministry of the Interior, *Intestats Info Rapide No. 44*, 6 November 2024.

205. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

206. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also the evaluation report on the system for the deployment of social workers in police and gendarmerie stations, General Inspectorate of the Administrative Services, 2021, p. 7; www.interieur.gouv.fr/Publications/Rapports-de-l-IGA/Rapports-recents/Evaluation-du-dispositif-des-intervenants-sociaux-en-commissariats-et-unites-de-gendarmerie.

157. Measures have also been taken to facilitate reporting. The digital platform for the reporting of physical assault and for victim support, which was set up in 2018, has seen increased activity. It enables victims to report offences and talk to police officers and gendarmes online, with regard either to recent violence or to historic abuse, and operates 24 hours a day and seven days a week. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that this mechanism enables victims to be guided by staff trained in issues of violence against women and facilitates subsequent reporting by them.²⁰⁷ The national gendarmerie has also set up several measures to improve the reception of women victims of violence, such as the possibility to indicate that they are victims of violence on a tablet at the reception desk of the gendarmerie station and hence to be taken to a place in which confidentiality is guaranteed.

158. In addition, since GREVIO's baseline evaluation, the law enforcement agencies have allowed victims of violence to file a complaint in a place other than the gendarmerie or police station with an investigator equipped with a laptop. Since 2021, it has also been possible to file a complaint at a hospital or at one of the dedicated healthcare facilities that have been set up for women victims of violence, based on signed agreements between hospitals, law enforcement agencies and the courts.²⁰⁸ GREVIO welcomes this development, which makes it possible either for victims to talk to a police investigator on the spot, particularly in urgent cases, or for the hospital to arrange an appointment for them with a law enforcement officer. It has been informed that in practice, a lack of human resources within law enforcement agencies means that opportunities to hear a victim at the hospital are limited.²⁰⁹ Moreover, other reports indicate that it is still difficult for women victims of violence wishing to use these new mechanisms in order to press charges to access information on all the options available to them.²¹⁰

159. GREVIO also welcomes the work done by the gendarmerie's family protection centres, which are found in all *départements* and have specialised staff who help to prevent intimate partner violence through awareness-raising work on the issue with law enforcement officers, fire and rescue officers, local councillors, municipal police, etc. It is also their role to support investigations in sensitive or complex cases. Professionals from specialist services and associations welcome the work of these centres but regret the fact that they cannot receive victims or complaints directly.²¹¹ Similar facilities, called family protection groups, were set up by the national police force in 2022. GREVIO also welcomes the fact that liaison officers for "violence within the family" have been appointed in police and gendarmerie stations.

160. Other measures taken in recent years include the dissemination of several internal memorandums calling on the law enforcement agencies to refer complaints of intimate partner violence immediately to the prosecuting authorities and the introduction of a new outline plan for hearings of women victims of violence designed to help law enforcement officers better identify all the forms of violence they can face.²¹² GREVIO welcomes these measures but points out however that, according to the information provided, these new hearing outlines are not yet systematically used by law enforcement officers, who are not always trained in their use.²¹³ GREVIO also considers that hearing outlines could have parts added relating to the issue of violence against women in the digital sphere, so that such incidents can be better detected. It also regrets that this document only covers intimate partner violence and that no tools of this nature are available to law enforcement agencies for hearings of women victims of other forms of violence covered by

207. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

208. In 2021, France was awarded the Crystal Scales of Justice Prize for this practice by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ); see: [French initiative rewarded with the CEPEJ Crystal Scales Prize, 2021 edition - CEPEJ](#).

209. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

210. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

211. Except for minor victims, who may be heard in special premises called "Mélanie rooms".

212. Including circular of 9 May 2019 on improving the handling of intimate partner violence cases and the protection of victims ; circular of 28 January 2020 introducing directly applicable civil and criminal law provisions from law No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on acting against violence in the family ; circular of 5 May 2020 on the conditions and modalities of the gradual resumption of court jurisdictions' work; dispatch of 19 May 2021 calling for increased vigilance in the handling of intimate partner violence; dispatch of 24 September 2021 gathering instructions and good practices in the field of combating intimate partner violence.

213. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Centre Hubertine Auclert, *Protéger les victimes de violences conjugales et prévenir les féminicides : retour d'expérience d'effectifs de la police nationale sur les outils et dispositifs visant à améliorer le recueil de la plainte et l'évaluation du danger* [Protecting victims of intimate partner violence and preventing femicide: feedback from national police officers on tools and measures intended to improve the reception of complaints and assessment of the danger], 2024.

the Istanbul Convention, such as sexual violence or forced marriage.²¹⁴ It has also been informed that there is still a shortage of investigators specialising in violence against women although their numbers have increased since the baseline evaluation.²¹⁵

161. GREVIO notes with grave concern that despite these developments, women victims of various forms of violence are still frequently met with refusals to register their complaint. The reasons given for this include failure to produce a medical certificate, minimisation of the violence suffered or a failure to take account of psychological violence or violence committed in the digital sphere.²¹⁶ GREVIO is also concerned about reports that law enforcement officers still sometimes record reports only as logs although victims wish to file a complaint despite the fact that this practice is prohibited in cases of intimate partner violence.²¹⁷

162. GREVIO is also greatly concerned to hear that some migrant women in an irregular situation were placed in administrative detention centres after reporting violence, in breach of the legislation in force which prohibits this practice.²¹⁸ Women with disabilities report that certain police and gendarmerie stations are still difficult to access, that there is a lack of accessible information relating to them and that prejudices against persons with disabilities endure, particularly in relation to sexual violence, where the credibility of disabled victims often seems to be questioned. Cases have been reported to GREVIO in which the requirement for women with mental disabilities to be accompanied by their legal guardian is applied even where the latter is the alleged perpetrator of the violence together with instances in which deaf and hard-of-hearing women were considered to have a mental disability.²¹⁹ Roma women may also be prevented from filing complaints.²²⁰ Women in prostitution and LBTI women may also face difficulties in having it acknowledged that they have been victims of sexual violence because of a lack of staff training and the persistence of prejudices against them.²²¹

163. Despite the progress made since 2019, GREVIO notes with grave concern the fact that the police response to women victims of violence wishing to press charges still varies greatly according to the location and the level of training of the law enforcement officer concerned. The unpredictability of how women victims of violence will be received does not encourage them to file complaints or instil trust in the judicial system. The information brought to GREVIO's attention shows that while, in some places, well-trained officers provide full support and care, in others, they prevent women from filing complaints, pose inappropriate questions, behave in a disparaging, guilt-inducing manner, particularly towards women reporting sexual violence, and fail to provide victims with information about their rights.²²² It notes in this respect that despite the increase in the number of women pressing charges, a large number of victims still do not do so, particularly victims of sexual violence, as it is estimated that only about 20% of them actually do file complaints.²²³

164. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to strengthen the measures taken to encourage women victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention to report the violence to which they have been subject and to provide appropriate reception and support services which take account of the trauma they have suffered. They should, in particular:

214. Except for certain pilot projects, see footnote 168.

215. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

216. National survey on "Cyberviolence and cyberharassment: survey of a widespread phenomenon", conducted by IPSOS for the association *Féministes contre le cyberharcèlement* [Feminists against cyberharassment], 15 December 2022.

217. Logs are means for law enforcement officers to record facts without being obliged to open an investigation. See, in particular, Amnesty International: Filing complaints of sexual violence, *ibid.*, 2024.

218. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

219. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

220 See Defender of Rights, *Solliciter les forces de l'ordre : évolutions et inégalités relatives à l'accès au service public policier* [Turning to the police: developments and inequalities concerning access to public policing services], March 2025.

221. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Amnesty International, *"Rentrez chez vous, ça va passer...": porter plainte pour violences sexuelles : l'épreuve des femmes migrantes, transgenres et travailleuses du sexe en France* ["Go home, it won't last ...", filing complaints of sexual violence: the ordeal of migrant, transgender and sex worker women in France], 2024.

222. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Defender of Rights, *Solliciter les forces de l'ordre*, *ibid.*, 2025.

223. Statistics Office of the Ministry of the Interior, Survey on experience and feelings concerning safety (VRS), 2022.

- a. **identify and address any factors preventing women and girls from reporting their experiences of violence against women to law-enforcement agencies, focusing particularly on the experiences of migrant women, women with disabilities, women in prostitution and LGBTI women;**
- b. **continue to deploy social workers and psychologists on law enforcement premises and ensure that qualified, sworn interpreters are available.**

b. Effective investigation and prosecution

165. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had noted that the main burden of providing evidence of the violence suffered tended to be placed on the victim and highlighted the need for a proactive approach of law enforcement to collect evidence in preliminary investigations. Moreover, it had underlined the fact that a large number of intimate partner violence were dropped for lack of evidence. Following the Grenelle Forum, new instructions were issued to prosecutors emphasising that priority should be given to action against intimate partner violence and seeking to improve victim protection through measures to evict violent partners from the family home or keep them away from the victim.²²⁴ They also recommend the use of summary trials for perpetrators of violence, which are actually deployed very often in cases of intimate partner violence. In this context, a number of courts have set up systems for the priority processing of such violence and monitoring units. The instructions also emphasise that cases should not be dropped because of shortcomings in the investigation.²²⁵ As a result, some courts have devised tools to improve the quality of investigations and evidence-gathering.²²⁶ GREVIO notes with satisfaction that these efforts have resulted in an increased number of indictments for intimate partner violence and sexual harassment.²²⁷

166. The instructions referred to above recommend that judges should favour prosecution over alternative measures. GREVIO welcomes the fact that, as a result, the prosecution rate for intimate partner violence has increased considerably since its baseline report.²²⁸ Alternatives to prosecution do continue to be used though, particularly for first offences and where there is no evidence of coercive control. GREVIO points out that where intimate partner violence is concerned, it is essential to bear in mind that victims often only first report offences after they have been subjected to violence repeatedly over a long period. It is important therefore to be on the lookout for any signs of violence, particularly psychological violence and harassment, and violence committed in the digital sphere, in order to detect any evidence of intimate partner violence requiring prosecution, including after a separation. Alternatives to prosecution may consist in a temporary ban from appearing at the victim's home, eviction from the family home or an order to attend accountability courses as part of a settlement procedure.²²⁹ Application of alternatives other than settlement such as accountability programmes fell from 42% of criminal law responses in 2017 to 9% in 2023.²³⁰ However, GREVIO notes with concern that according to the information it has been provided, alternatives to prosecution are often used in cases of sexual violence at work.

167. GREVIO regrets that so many sexual violence cases, including cases of intimate-partner rape, are still dropped. It is particularly concerned that 83% of sexual violence proceedings are discontinued, and 94% of rape cases, and that the prosecution rate for sexual violence has declined in recent years.²³¹ Various factors may explain this, including the increase in recent years of reporting of sexual violence, including historical violence, and the lack of resources allocated to the courts to deal with the huge number of complaints. However, when cases of sexual violence are dropped, this

224. See, in particular, the Circular from the Minister of Justice of 9 May 2019 on improved handling of intimate partner violence and the protection of victims.

225. *Ibid.*

226. For example, Poitiers Court, where response guidance cards have been drawn up.

227. 67 555 people were prosecuted for violence against women or domestic violence in 2022, compared to 48 167 in 2019 – data provided by the Ministry of Justice, see state report, appendix 2.

228. In 2022, 57% of persons convicted of intimate partner violence were prosecuted by referral (presentation of the accused to the prosecutor following police custody) compared to 38% in 2017. The prosecution rate for domestic violence was 43% in 2023 – information provided by the authorities during the evaluation visit. See also state report, pp. 80 and 81.

229. See also Article 48, Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing.

230. Information provided by the authorities during the evaluation visit. See also Article 16, Preventive intervention and treatment programmes.

231. Maëlle Stricot, *Le traitement judiciaire des violences sexuelles et conjugales en France* [How the courts handle sexual and intimate partner violence in France], Institut des Politiques Publiques, April 2024, updated on 27 November 2024.

is still mostly the result of a lack of evidence, which may arise from defective investigation. Information brought to GREVIO's attention shows in particular the under-investigation of allegations of intimate-partner rape and rape involving women with disabilities. Another problem is the variable quality of medical certificates and expert reports.²³² These investigative shortcomings mean that victims' statements become the centre of the proceedings and the responsibility to provide evidence lies with victims. At the same time, it has been reported that in cases of rape without the use of force, victims alleging that they did not consent to the sexual act are often still not thought to be credible, and this often leads to cases being dropped for lack of evidence.²³³ Against this background, GREVIO draws attention to the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *L. versus France*, in which the Court underlined that «, when assessing the capacity and consent of the applicants, domestic courts have not thoroughly analysed their situation of special vulnerability (...) and that the modalities for assessing whether consent was genuine did not provide the applicant with adequate protection".²³⁴ Moreover complaints concerning sexual violence against women committed in the digital sphere, such as threats, stolen identity, sexual abuse using images or sending unsolicited sexual images, also mostly result in dropped cases.²³⁵

168. Furthermore, GREVIO notes that restorative justice measures, involving the interaction at all stages of criminal proceedings between victims and perpetrators of offences, are increasingly applied in cases of sexual violence. While in principle such measures cannot be an alternative to criminal proceedings and must be implemented with the victims' express consent, GREVIO notes that according to existing research, victims of sexual violence often decide by default to resort to restorative justice because there is no criminal justice remedy to the violence they have suffered.²³⁶ It points out that restorative justice practices may help victims to surmount the trauma they have experienced and to be recognised as victims. However, they should not be a substitute for a proper criminal response to violence against women and for a strong message sent to perpetrators of violence against women. Indeed, restorative justice does not take account of the systemic dimension of violence against women, which is linked to gender inequality.

169. GREVIO notes with grave concern the low level of prosecution in cases of sexual violence. While noting the existence of promising practices in some courts,²³⁷ it considers that decisive steps should be taken to implement a proactive prosecution policy, meeting the need to combat impunity for sexual violence, as has done with regard to the prosecution of domestic violence, and in line with the due diligence obligation included in Article 5 of the convention.

170. GREVIO urges the French authorities to take decisive measures to ensure that more sexual violence cases reach the prosecution stage, particularly through improved investigation and evidence-gathering.

171. GREVIO also encourages the French authorities to continue and step up their work to improve the efficiency of investigations and prosecutions relating to intimate partner violence.

232. See Article 20, General support services and Article 15, Training of professionals.

233. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

234. *L. and Others v. France*, Application no. 46949/21 and 2 others, judgment of 24 April 2025, paragraphs 247 and 249. This judgment will become final in the circumstances set out in Article 44 § 2 of the Convention.

235. A study in 2022 shows that only 3% of cases of cyberviolence give rise to complaints followed by judicial proceedings. National survey on cyberviolence and cyberharassment, *ibid.*, 2022.

236. See for example Delphine Griveaud and Sandrine Lefranc, *Pratiques et effets de la justice restaurative en France* [The impact of restorative justice practices in France], *Institut des Études et de la Recherche sur le Droit et la Justice*, May 2024.

237. Particularly in Grenoble, where a reference guide to improve the judicial processing of sexual violence cases has been produced. See *Le Monde*, leader comment by Magali Lafourcade: *Violences sexistes et sexuelles : Le faible nombre de condamnations incite à trouver de nouvelles façons de travailler* [Gender-based and sexual violence: The low number of convictions calls for new ways of working], 5 October 2022.

c. Conviction rates

172. In its report of 2019, GREVIO had noted the low rates of conviction of perpetrators of violence against women, particularly with regard to sexual violence, and pointed out that this situation was liable to create a climate of impunity for perpetrators and insecurity for victims. It had expressed particular concern about the judicial practice of reclassifying rapes as lesser offences.

173. GREVIO welcomes the establishment in 2023 of specialised legal taskforces on violence within the family, which should help to improve the criminal response to intimate partner violence through measures such as increased specialisation of members of the judiciary. These taskforces have been instructed to organise training activities on violence within the family, sharing information and setting up pathways for the proper handling of this type of violence. They will serve therefore as reference points for the entire judicial system. It is important for these taskforces to be set up throughout the territory, including overseas, and for them to be afforded enough means to carry out their tasks.

174. The measures taken since 2019 to strengthen the criminal response to intimate partner violence has resulted in an increase in the number of convictions and the severity of the sentences handed down. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of convictions in cases of intimate partner violence grew by 123%.²³⁸ GREVIO welcomes this development but points out that when the number of convictions is compared with the number of reports of intimate partner violence, it is clear that progress can still be made to punish this form of violence appropriately.²³⁹ It also notes that it is still difficult to convict perpetrators for the new offence of harassment leading the victim's suicide or attempted suicide because of the problem of gathering evidence for this.²⁴⁰

175. GREVIO notes with concern that while clear progress has been made with convictions for intimate partner violence, this is not the case with sexual violence. With regard to rape in particular, GREVIO reiterates the concerns it expressed in its baseline evaluation report and considers that the criminal law response to this form of violence is still largely inadequate and tends to contribute to a climate of impunity for this type of violence. Although it does not have recent data on convictions for sexual violence, all the information brought to its attention would indicate that the conviction rate for rape is still extremely low, owing, in particular, to the very low rate of prosecution.²⁴¹ A large number of dismissal orders are also issued by judges, often because of shortcomings in the investigation but also because of problems finding evidence of the components of the offence, particularly coercion.²⁴² Apart from the obstacles encountered by victims when filing complaints and the difficulties in finding evidence, which result in a large number of cases being closed, the policy of reclassifying rapes as sexual assault offences has continued since 2019, although the number of such reclassifications has diminished.²⁴³ GREVIO considers that the persistence of this practice tends to play down the seriousness of rape and render this form of violence invisible.

176. The *département*-level criminal courts, which were set up in 2021, are a response by the authorities to the practice of reclassifying offences, because most of the cases tried by these courts are rape cases,²⁴⁴ which are not now reclassified as more minor offences. In addition, the proceedings before *département* criminal courts are supposed to be quicker than those before an assize court and the fact that they are made up solely of professional judges may reassure some victims fearing the public exposure during proceedings.²⁴⁵ However, GREVIO's attention was brought to the fact that, despite the advantages which these courts may offer, they cannot rule on

238. State report, p. 90.

239. In 2022, 52 000 convictions for intimate partner violence were handed down whereas the law enforcement agencies registered 271 000 victims. Source: information provided by the French authorities and the Statistics Office of the Ministry of the Interior, *Info rapide* No. 44, November 2024.

240. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

241. Only 0.6% of cases of rape or attempted rape are estimated to have resulted in a conviction in 2020 and only 10% of complaints of rape lead to convictions; source: evaluation report of the group of specialist associations, *ibid.*, 2024.

242. Information report submitted by the National Assembly delegation on women's rights and equal opportunities for women and men on the definition of rape, *ibid.*, 2025.

243. Reclassification is still applied, particularly in cases of oral or digital penetration, according to the information provided to GREVIO during its evaluation visit.

244. See Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention: France's response to the form in the report on the implementation of recommendations of the Committee of the Parties adopted on 30 January 2020, 27 January 2023.

245. Assize Courts, which try crimes punishable by more than 20 years' imprisonment, are made up of professional judges and a jury.

crimes punishable by more than 20 years' imprisonment, meaning that aggravating circumstances attaching to certain rape cases which may prompt the prosecutor to call for a sentence exceeding 20 years may not be taken into account.²⁴⁶ GREVIO considers it important to regularly review the impact of the establishment of these courts, both on the victims of violence and on the effectiveness of the criminal law response to rape.

177. GREVIO also reiterates the concern expressed in its baseline report concerning the criminal definition of sexual assault and rape, which is not explicitly based on the infringement of the victim's free and unequivocal consent, as required by Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO considers that the need to assess the absence of consent by the victim in the light of the deployment by the perpetrator of violence, coercion, threat or surprise still prevents a number of circumstances from being considered rape because of the lack of free, and freely given, consent by the victim. It takes note of the case law which resulted in acknowledgment of the fact that when a victim of sexual violence freezes, this could not be taken as a sign of consent.²⁴⁷ However, it also considers that a definition of rape that was entirely in accordance with Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention would make it possible to extend the criminal law response to encompass a whole range of situations in which, although the victim remained passive, this does not mean that she consented to the sexual act, particularly in cases of the use of drugs or other chemical substances. A law requiring explicit consent would allow the judiciary to focus, in the context of the surrounding circumstances of the case, on the matter of the woman's free will and the ability of the perpetrator to take notice of the woman's will, instead of evidence of other constituent elements of the offence such as threat or coercion. During investigations and prosecutions, this would translate into more focus on finding evidence such as calls to emergency services or statements to a person in whom the plaintiff has confided rather than evidence such as injuries, which are often invisible, and on examining the perpetrator's strategy. GREVIO would also like to point out what an educational role in terms of challenging gender stereotypes and myths regarding rape a law based on a standard of affirmative consent could have on society as a whole, as well as the judicial system and other legislation.²⁴⁸ In this respect, it draws attention to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in January 2025 relating to "marital duty" in the context of marriage as defined in French civil law, which, in the Court's view, "takes no account of consent to sexual relations, whereas this constitutes a fundamental restriction on the exercise of others' sexual freedom".²⁴⁹

178. GREVIO therefore welcomes the fact that since its baseline report, a debate has been set in motion in France on the advisability of amending the criminal definition of rape, involving the justice sector, elected representatives and associations. It takes particular note of the conclusions, made public in January 2025, of a parliamentary fact-finding commission, which addressed the issue of the criminal definition of rape. It also notes with interest that an associated bill, with a view to establishing a new definition of rape based on the criterion of free and informed consent, was adopted by the National Assembly in April 2025 and by the Senate in June 2025.²⁵⁰ It is essential that these debates result in measures which substantially improve the judicial response to sexual violence and meet society's expectations in this respect.

179. Recalling the findings in its baseline evaluation report and the conclusions of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO urges the French authorities to take additional measures throughout the criminal law process to enhance the judicial response to sexual violence. They should, in particular, analyse the reasons for the attrition of rape cases, with a view to higher prosecution and conviction rates for these crimes. For this purpose, they should also ensure that the definition of sexual violence which is adopted is based on the absence of free consent from the victim.

180. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue in their efforts to provide a proper judicial response to all forms of violence against women.

246. Crimes punishable by more than 20 years' imprisonment are tried in the Assize Courts.

247. See, in particular, Court of Cassation, Criminal Division, 11 September 2024, judgment no. 23-86.657.

248. See the 4th general GREVIO activity report, focus section on approaches taken in states parties to the Istanbul Convention on the criminalisation and prosecution of sexual violence, including rape, September 2023.

249. *H.W. v. France*, Application No. 13805/21, judgment of 23 January 2025.

250. Information report submitted by the delegation of the National Assembly on women's rights and equal opportunities, on the criminal definition of rape, *ibid.*, January 2025 and bill No. 842 of 21 January 2025.

2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51)

181. Many perpetrators of domestic violence, rape, stalking, sexual harassment, forced marriage and other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention threaten their victims with serious violence, including death, and have subjected their victims to serious violence in the past, including non-fatal strangulation. The growing digital dimension to such violence further exacerbates women's and girls' sense of fear. Article 51 thus places concern for their safety at the heart of any intervention in such cases by requiring the establishment of a multi-agency network of professionals to protect high risk victims without aggravating the harm experienced. It sets out the obligation to ensure that all relevant authorities, not just law-enforcement authorities, effectively assess and devise a plan to manage the safety risks a victim faces, on a case-by-case basis, according to standardised procedures and in co-operation with each other.

182. In 2019, GREVIO had regretted that the personalised risk assessment process was not systematically applied as part of a standardised interinstitutional co-ordination procedure. Therefore, it notes with satisfaction that a joint law enforcement agencies' risk assessment table was drawn up after the Grenelle Forum. The related questionnaire, on which 3 000 police officers have received training, does not cover non-fatal strangulation however.²⁵¹ Therefore, GREVIO notes with interest information according to which a working group is currently updating this questionnaire to include additional questions, such as for example suicidal thoughts, strangulation attempts, violence on children or coercive control, with the aim of better assessing immediate risks that a woman victim of violence can face.²⁵² GREVIO was also informed that the table is not used systematically, particularly for operations at people's homes, and that victims are often asked to fill in the questionnaire themselves.²⁵³ Furthermore, the national protocol for the care of victims at risk, which complements the risk assessment table, does not always seem to be available to law enforcement officers and this can give rise to risk assessments which do not include any proposals for victim safety plans or referrals to support services. Nor does this protocol include any indications on the support to be provided for victims who do not wish to file a complaint. Lastly, it would seem that the risk to which victims are exposed is not reviewed after their first hearing.²⁵⁴

183. Since 2019, prosecutors have been asked to organise a systematic in-depth risk assessment during judicial proceedings. This is generally entrusted to victim support associations or specialist services such as CIDFFs, but it is not based on a standardised tool. Since 2021 risk assessment has extended beyond the sentencing stage to include the period after the perpetrator's release.²⁵⁵ Lastly, GREVIO notes with interest that the probation and integration service also uses domestic violence risk assessment software.

184. GREVIO welcomes the establishment in 2023 of a database on the prevention of violence within the family, which enables the various stakeholders concerned to access information on the perpetrators of domestic violence gathered from various files kept by the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas France and the Ministry of Justice. The purpose of this tool is to improve information sharing on perpetrators and hence better assess the risks run by victims. It should facilitate the work of monitoring individual risks carried out by the COPIL VIFs. In this respect, GREVIO stresses how important it is to involve the specialist services concerned in this information sharing so as to be able to make the best assessment of the protection needs of victims and their children. It is also essential for family courts to have access to these files.

185. While welcoming the measures taken to improve risk assessment, GREVIO regrets the continuing lack of co-ordination between risk assessment and the setting up of individual safety measures. It is particularly concerned that women with disabilities are often forced to return to live with their aggressors, either at home or in institutions, because they are not properly catered for by

251. A particularly dangerous form of physical violence, which is known to greatly increase the risk of physical escalation and lethal violence.

252 The working group includes, under the auspices of Miprof, representatives of the national police and gendarmerie and of the Ministry of Justice. Information provided by the authorities.

253. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also Centre Hubertine Auclert, *Protéger les victimes de violences conjugales et prévenir les féminicides* [Protecting victims of intimate partner violence and preventing femicide] *ibid.*, 2024.

254. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

255. See also Article 56, Measures of protection.

the judicial system.²⁵⁶ It also notes that risk assessment relates only to intimate partner violence and that there are no standardised guidelines for risk assessment concerning other forms of violence against women such as forced marriage or violence committed in the digital sphere. Lastly, representatives of specialist associations working with victims reported that the systematic seizure of weapons belonging to perpetrators of violence, provided for in particular in protection orders, is not always applied, thus exposing victims to a major additional risk.

186. Since 2019, new protection measures have been introduced or existing ones have been strengthened, particularly through the high danger telephones and electronic tags which may be issued after a risk assessment. Although the deployment of these tools amounts to a major step forward for victim protection, according to the information provided to GREVIO, there are still simply not enough of them, with a particular shortage of high danger telephones, law enforcement officers still do not always know much about them and there are still major technical difficulties connected with the use of electronic tagging. Another major problem is the limited finances of the associations tasked with managing the implementation of these measures.²⁵⁷

187. GREVIO welcomes the annual publication, since 2022, of a national survey on violent deaths within couples.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, since 2020,²⁵⁹ the practice of gathering feedback with a view to analysing cases of gender-based femicide has been stepped up under the supervision of the Principal State Prosecutor. The results of these retrospective surveys may be shared with CLAVs and COPIL VIFs.²⁶⁰ GREVIO emphasises how important it is to share the lessons of retrospective surveys widely, bearing in mind that precisely one of the findings of these surveys is that a failure to share information between the authorities concerned is frequently one of the causes of gender-based murders. It notes with concern that 118 women were killed by their partner or former partner in 2022 and 96 in 2023.²⁶¹ GREVIO also points to the importance of drawing on these lessons when devising new measures and policies.

188. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take further measures to ensure that risk assessments are conducted systematically and in partnership with all the bodies concerned, in all the cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, and that they result rapidly in a proper safety plan for victims.

3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52)

189. Under Article 52 of the convention, in situations of immediate danger, the authorities are granted the power to issue an emergency barring order, ordering the perpetrator to leave the residence of the victim or person at risk for a specific period of time, and to prohibit the perpetrator from entering the residence or contacting the victim or person at risk. Emergency barring orders are tools intended to prevent a crime and to put safety first.²⁶² They should therefore be time bound and incident based, with the possibility of renewal in the case of continued danger. Longer term protection should, however, be granted by a court by means of a protection order, upon application by the victim. An emergency barring order should in principle extend to children in need of protection and should have immediate effect.

190. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had regretted the lack of emergency barring orders meeting the requirements of Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention. This shortcoming persists in that a minimum of six days is still required for the adoption of protection orders, including those ordering the eviction of a violent partner from the family home. It therefore welcomes the adoption in June 2024 of a legislative provision enabling the family court to issue an immediate interim protection order. Such orders may be called for by prosecutors in the event of a serious and immediate danger for the victim and her children, with the victim's agreement, in the context of an application for a protection order, and the family court must rule within 24 hours. At the same time, it may issue orders

256. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

257. See also Article 8, Financial resources.

258. Ministry of the Interior and Overseas France, National surveys on violent deaths within couples, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

259. Circular of the Ministry of Justice of 23 September 2020 on criminal policy on combating intimate partner violence.

260. Circular of 7 September 2021, *ibid*.

261. National Observatory on Violence against Women: Gender-based and sexual violence in France in 2023, November 2024, and Sexual Violence and violence within couples in France in 2022, March 2024.

262. See GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports on Denmark, paragraph 207, and Malta, paragraph 218.

prohibiting perpetrators from making contact, appearing in certain places or carrying weapons. It may also suspend the exercise of parental authority and allow victims to conceal their address. A high danger telephone may also be issued to the victim in such circumstances. Any interim measures taken come to an end once the court makes its ruling on the application for a protection order. Immediate interim protection orders are also applicable in cases of forced marriage. GREVIO welcomes the adoption of this new provision, which came into force in January 2025 and may help to improve the protection of victims pending protection orders. It stresses how important it is however to make provision for emergency barring orders which fully meet the requirements of Article 52 of the convention, namely ones which can be implemented by the relevant authority straight away in the event of an immediate danger, even where the victim has not applied for them. In the event of immediate danger, victims of violence and their children should be able to stay safely in their homes and should not have to go through long procedures or take refuge in an emergency shelter or another place. GREVIO also points out that emergency barring orders are short-term measures which are considerably less restrictive than others taken with a view to separating the victim from the perpetrator (such as arrest and custody).

191. GREVIO encourages the French authorities to take all the necessary measures to set up a system of emergency barring orders which meet the requirements of Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention so that women victims of violence and their children can remain safely in their homes.

4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53)

192. Restraining and protection orders are conceived to prolong the protection afforded to the victim and her children by emergency barring orders and may be considered complementary to the protection offered by emergency barring orders. Under Article 53 of the Istanbul Convention, victims of all forms of violence against women should be able to obtain a protection order available for immediate protection - without undue financial or administrative burden placed on the victim and irrespective of whether or not they choose to set in motion any other legal proceedings.

193. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had pointed out that the conditions for the application of protection orders made it difficult for victims to access protection, owing in particular to the requirement laid down by many courts for evidence of violence to be provided in the form of a formal complaint or a medical certificate. It had also regretted the excessive length of time it took to issue orders and the fact that they did not apply to all forms of violence against women.

194. GREVIO welcomes the fact that since the Grenelle Forum, the use of protection orders has been increasing steadily.²⁶³ The rate of acceptance of applications for protection orders by family courts has remained stable, increasing slightly from 64% in 2019 to 68% in 2021, and it is higher when the application also relates to the victim's children.²⁶⁴ Protection orders may be requested by victims or by prosecutors with the victim's consent. Measures which may be ordered under protection orders include prohibitions of contact, perpetrators being prohibited from appearing at the victim's home or in other places such as the children's school, assigning the victim sole use of the family home or exclusive exercise of parental authority or requiring perpetrators to exercise their children's visitation rights at a designated meeting space.²⁶⁵ During criminal proceedings, judges and prosecutors may issue prohibitions on contact and appearing in certain places, either pending judgment or as part of an alternative to prosecution.

195. Despite the increasing use of protection orders, GREVIO considers that this measure is still under-used, as it already noted in its report of 2019, in view of the total number of reports of intimate partner violence. The information brought to its attention shows that the limited use of protection orders is linked to several factors including a fear among victims and their lawyers that rejection of their application may harm their case in subsequent judicial proceedings. In addition, there are still major disparities between courts in this area: some courts issue very few protection orders and this may reflect a reluctance on the part of family court judges to make use of this measure, which is

263. See Article 11, Data collection.

264. Statistics Office of the Ministry of Justice: Infostat Justice No. 192, June 2023.

265. See Article 31, Custody, visitation rights and safety.

seen by some as being alien to their civil law functions.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, the level of evidence required by family courts to demonstrate the probability that violence has occurred is often still very high and may include the requirement to provide a medical certificate or a complaint whereas these criteria do not figure in the law. Similarly, a restrictive interpretation of the danger criterion in the legislation often causes applications to be rejected as many judges insist on ascertaining whether the danger is imminent.²⁶⁷ It would also seem that victims applying for a protection order are not systematically referred to specialist support services.²⁶⁸

196. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that since 2019, a number of legislative amendments have made it possible to strengthen protection order measures. The Law of 2019 on action against violence within the family gives courts up to six days to rule on an application for a protection order.²⁶⁹ This amendment to the Civil Code made it possible to substantially reduce the time taken to issue orders, which had previously been reaching up to two months. The Law of 2020 on the protection of the victims of intimate partner violence allows courts to automatically assign sole use of the family home to the non-violent partner under protection orders and requires them to give reasons if they decide otherwise.²⁷⁰ It also requires family courts to inform prosecutors immediately when a protection order is issued. Courts may also order perpetrators to wear an electronic tag. Lastly, the Law of 2024 on improvements to protection orders lengthens the validity of orders from six months to one year and reiterates that orders may be issued even where partners are not currently cohabiting or have not done so in the past. It also enables custody of pets to be assigned to the non-violent partner because pets may be used to influence children.²⁷¹ Victims' addresses may also be concealed, including on electoral registers. However, GREVIO was informed that perpetrators could often still find out a victim's address through their children's school because of a frequent lack of co-ordination between the bodies concerned when protection orders are set up, which is a concern which was already raised in the baseline evaluation report.²⁷²

197. The Law of 2024 also increases the penalties for non-compliance with a protection order or an immediate interim protection order.²⁷³ GREVIO welcomes the desire to punish non-compliance more severely enshrined in the Law of 2024. However, according to the information brought to its attention, infringements do not seem to be systematically prosecuted, and it is often left to victims to report breaches.²⁷⁴ Only 175 convictions were handed down in this connection in 2022.²⁷⁵

198. GREVIO welcomes the French authorities' efforts since 2019 to encourage more use of protection orders and make them more effective as this measure plays a key role in keeping women victims of violence and their children safe. Furthermore, a protection order is often still required as evidence of violence, opening up access to certain rights and certain forms of support. It is a prerequisite in particular for access to a separate temporary residence permit for foreign women who are victims of violence.²⁷⁶ This makes it especially important where it comes to increasing victims' trust in the ability of the judicial system to keep them safe when on their path away from violence. In this light, GREVIO regrets that these measures apply only to intimate partner violence and forced marriage and that they are rarely applied in the latter case. According to the authorities, fewer than five protection orders were issued in the context of forced marriage in 2023. GREVIO also points out how important it is to identify and remove all the obstacles limiting the use of protection orders and to alert legal professionals, particularly family court judges and lawyers, as to how useful this tool is where it comes to protecting victims and their children.

266. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

267. Under Article 515-11 of the Civil Code, a protection order may be issued "if there are serious reasons to consider it likely ... that the alleged violent acts were committed and that the victim and one or more children are exposed to further danger".

268. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit. See also the evaluation report by the group of specialist associations, *ibid.*, p.104.

269. Law No. 2019-1480 of 28 December 2019 on combating violence within the family.

270. Law No. 2020-936 of 30 July 2020 on protecting victims of intimate partner violence.

271. Law No. 2024-536 on improvements to protection orders and the establishment of the immediate interim protection order.

272. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

273. Sentences were increased from two to three years' imprisonment and fines from €15 000 to €45 000.

274. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

275. Source: Ministry of Justice, see state report, Appendix 2.

276. See Article 20, General support services.

199. Recalling the findings in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue taking measures designed to foster increased use of protection orders. In particular, they should:

- a. ensure that protection orders are available to victims of all the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;
- b. pursue efforts to foster increased use of protection orders regardless of the victim's desire to file a complaint;
- c. ensure that protection measures are properly followed up on and that all breaches are suitably punished.

5. Measures of protection (article 56)

200. Article 56 of the convention is a key provision in building trust at the level of judicial proceedings for women and girls who have experienced or who are witness to any of the forms of violence covered by the convention. It sets forth a non-exhaustive list of procedures designed to protect victims of violence from intimidation, retaliation and secondary victimisation at all stages of proceedings, during investigations and at trial. The drafters intended this list to be indicative, and parties may adopt additional protection measures that are more favourable than those provided in the convention. Moreover, intimidation and secondary victimisation can occur not only at the hands of perpetrators but also when investigations and judicial proceedings are not based on a gendered understanding of violence against women, which is why the practical application of measures of protection should be firmly anchored in such understanding.

201. Having noted in its baseline evaluation report that victims were frequently not informed when perpetrators were released or had escaped, GREVIO welcomes the amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2021 which reminded the judicial authorities of the need to inform victims before taking any decision to release a prosecuted or convicted perpetrator of violence, even temporarily.²⁷⁷ Likewise, provision is made for courts to be able to decide to order electronic tagging, issue a high danger telephone or prohibit contact in this context. Specialist victim support associations are often tasked with notifying victims of release decisions. They are also responsible for risk assessments enabling the courts to decide whether extra safety measures are required. However, as mentioned above, they are still not allocated enough resources to implement these new measures.²⁷⁸

202. It has been brought to GREVIO's attention that women are often not notified that their case has been dropped. GREVIO would point out that a failure to inform victims about follow-up to their complaint is a source of secondary victimisation and a factor which may give rise to mistrust in the judicial system. The frequent shortcomings reported to GREVIO in the availability of interpreters at all stages of proceedings, including in overseas territories, where interpretation is not provided into all the languages spoken locally,²⁷⁹ is another factor of secondary victimisation and substantially limits the possibility for victims to express their views and put forward the evidence of violence. GREVIO notes with concern that interpretation can sometimes be entrusted to non-certified family or friends or associations.²⁸⁰ It is also concerned about reports that foreign women victims of violence were required to bring their violent partner when filing their application for a separate residence permit, thus exposing them to a risk of reprisals.²⁸¹ Concerns were also reported to GREVIO about data protection flaws in the system for the digital administration of foreign nationals (ANEF), which could cause confidential information on victims of violence to be revealed to their violent partners, thus threatening their safety.²⁸² Women with disabilities may also face difficult situations during

277. Decree No. 2021-1820 of 24 December 2021 on the supervisory measures to be applied to perpetrators of offences within couples on their release.

278. See Article 8, Financial resources, and Article 51, Risk assessment and risk management.

279. Particularly in French Guiana, Martinique, Réunion and Saint-Martin. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

280. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

281. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

282. Evaluation report of the group of specialist associations, *ibid.*, pp. 93 and 94.

proceedings, stemming in particular from poor accessibility and unsuitable facilities at police stations and court buildings.²⁸³

203. GREVIO is also concerned to note that according to the information brought to its attention by specialist associations and lawyers, the possibility of recording hearings of victims is still highly under-exploited. This means that these victims are forced to repeat their statements, which is a major source of secondary victimisation. Furthermore, victims are frequently not informed that they are entitled to give statements in the perpetrator's absence.²⁸⁴ Frequent encounters between perpetrators of violence and their victims can result in secondary victimisation. In addition, infringements of victims' privacy, particularly moral judgments about their sex life, their clothes or their conduct, continue to be reported at all stages of proceedings, including during hearings, where such comments are sometimes even made by defence lawyers.²⁸⁵

204. GREVIO also notes that it is still particularly difficult for women victims of violence committed in the digital sphere to demand that content published in the digital sphere which infringes their rights to their image or their privacy is removed.²⁸⁶ GREVIO points out that content such as rapes filmed and disseminated online perpetuate the violence to which the victims were subject.

205. **While welcoming the measures taken by the French authorities to provide better protection for the rights and interests of women victims of violence during judicial proceedings, GREVIO strongly encourages them to take further measures to limit the secondary victimisation to which they may be exposed during proceedings. In particular, they should:**

- a. ensure that the measures provided for by Article 56 of the Istanbul Convention are systematically applied for victims of all forms of violence against women;
- b. ensure that women victims of violence are informed within a reasonable time of the action that will be taken in response to their complaint;
- c. inform women victims of violence that they are entitled to give statements in the perpetrator's absence;
- d. take measures to limit infringements of the victim's privacy during judicial proceedings;
- e. ensure that qualified sworn interpreters are available throughout the proceedings.

283. GREVIO was informed during its visit for example that in some courts, there were no toilets for persons with reduced mobility, which made it difficult for them to attend hearings.

284. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

285. See, in particular, the comments made by some of the defence lawyers during the Mazan mass rape trial in 2024 and the Emily Spanton trial in 2019; see *Le Monde*, *Au procès du « viol du 36 », la crédibilité de l'accusatrice au cœur des débats*, [At the "No. 36" rape trial, the debate hinges on the accuser's credibility], 21 January 2019.

286. Information provided during GREVIO's evaluation visit.

Appendix I

List of proposals and suggestions by GREVIO

II. Changes in definitions, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, funding and data collection in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence

A. Definitions (Article 3)

1. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO encourages the French authorities to develop harmonised definitions of violence against women, in line with those of the Istanbul Convention, which can be used by all stakeholders. (paragraph 16)

B. Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies (Article 7)

2. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to develop a long-term overarching strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. Such a strategy should set out a clear set of responsibilities and indicators for each stakeholder and be accompanied by an effective steering mechanism. In doing so, the authorities should:

- a. ensure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated to the body co-ordinating policies to prevent and combat violence against women;
- b. develop an intersectional approach and include in policies specific measures to prevent violence against specific groups of women, such as women with disabilities, migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women living in rural areas and in overseas communities, LBTI women and Roma and Traveller women;
- c. ensure that women's rights associations are fully involved in the development, design, implementation and evaluation of policies and measures;
- d. evaluate, on a regular basis, policies aiming to achieve the comprehensive and co-ordinated policy approach required by the Istanbul Convention. Such evaluations should be carried out on the basis of pre-defined indicators in order to assess their impact and ensure that policymaking is based on reliable data. (paragraph 30)

C. Financial resources (Article 8)

3. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to ensure that women's rights organisations responsible for implementing measures resulting from the Grenelle Forum on intimate partner violence and other essential services for women victims of violence have sufficient and stable financial resources to carry out their work, without having to rely on multiple sources of funding. (paragraph 43)

4. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue their efforts to ensure adequate funding, commensurate with increasing needs, at central and local levels, for policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. The French authorities should also take further steps to improve the clarity and coherence of budgets for combating violence against women, including by creating specific budget lines for the relevant ministries for policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women. (paragraph 44)

5. Lastly, GREVIO invites the French authorities to take concrete steps to implement the principles of gender-responsive budgeting in the national budget. (paragraph 45)

D. Data collection (Article 11)

3. Social services

6. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report and bearing in mind the need for data collection to apply to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO urges the French authorities to take measures to ensure that data collected by the judicial services are disaggregated by the sex of the victim and the perpetrator, as well as by the nature of their relationship. (paragraph 56)

7. In addition, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. continue efforts to monitor cases of violence against women along the entire path of the criminal justice chain;
- b. ensure that MIPROF has sustainable and adequate resources to carry out its work;
- c. set up data collection – broken down by type of violence, age of the victim and the alleged perpetrator, and their relationship to each other – on the number of women and girls who seek help from or contact public or private healthcare services due to their experiences of violence against women, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. (paragraph 57)

III. Analysis on the implementation of selected provisions in priority areas in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution

A. Prevention

1. General obligations (Article 12)

8. While welcoming the awareness-raising measures implemented by the French authorities, GREVIO strongly encourages them to step up their efforts in the area of primary prevention of violence against women by regularly running awareness-raising campaigns or programmes aimed at eliminating gender-based stereotypes and prejudices and preventing violence against women in all areas. In doing so, they should:

- a. extend awareness-raising measures to the different manifestations of all forms of violence against women and girls covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, including sexual violence and rape, violence committed in the digital sphere or the workplace, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and violence committed in the name of so-called honour;
- b. step up prevention work that specifically targets violence against migrant, asylum seeking and refugee women and girls, women with disabilities, Roma and Traveller women and other women at risk of intersectional discrimination;
- c. ensure that the implemented actions are of high quality, in particular by involving women's rights organisations with the necessary expertise and by regularly evaluating the impact of awareness-raising campaigns and primary prevention measures. (paragraph 68)

2. Education (Article 14)

9. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take steps to ensure that all pupils have effective access to education on the matters outlined in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention, including gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and the right to personal integrity. (paragraph 76)

3. Training of professionals (Article 15)

10. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to pursue and expand measures aimed at ensuring that all professionals in

contact with victims and perpetrators of violence against women, including judges, receive compulsory and systematic initial and in-service training on all forms of violence against women, including those in the digital sphere. In doing so, they should:

- a. ensure such training covers the prevention and detection of all acts of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, gender equality, stereotypes and perceptions of violence against women, the needs and rights of victims, trauma-induced victim behaviour and prevention of secondary victimisation;
- b. ensure that such training also addresses the specific needs of women exposed to intersectional discrimination;
- c. ensure that training is supported by standardised protocols for identifying victims, providing victim support and referring them to specialist services;
- d. ensure that the expertise of specialist associations is drawn on when devising and implementing training;
- e. carry out assessments of such training courses. (paragraph 91)

4. Preventive intervention and treatment programmes (Article 16)

a. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence

11. While welcoming the measures taken to strengthen care for perpetrators of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. develop minimum standards for programmes for perpetrators of violence in line with European standards of best practice, ensuring that work on gender stereotypes is an integral part of these programmes and that such standards are implemented in a consistent manner throughout the country;
- b. ensure that programmes take an approach centred on victim safety and support and are implemented in close co-operation with victim support services;
- c. ensure that there are clear programme referral routes for perpetrators of violence, whether their participation is mandatory or voluntary;
- d. regularly assess the implementation and impact of the programmes. (paragraph 99)

b. Programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence

12. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take measures to assess the tools and programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence, and to use the results of the assessment to improve the care provided. (paragraph 102)

B. Protection and support

1. General obligations (Article 18)

13. While welcoming the measures taken to improve the co-ordination of services for the support and protection of women victims of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. ensure that co-ordination bodies are set up throughout the country and that they identify, bring together and involve all relevant bodies, including associations specialising in the protection of women victims of violence;
- b. adopt standardised protocols for multi-agency co-operation to secure support and protection for all women victims of violence and their children;
- c. address all the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention including rape and sexual violence, digital manifestations of violence against women, forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- d. conduct regular reviews of the activities of co-ordinating bodies;
- e. ensure that the new one-stop-shop facilities set up to provide support for women victims of violence identify and involve all the bodies concerned. (paragraph 109)

2. General support services (Article 20)

a. Social services

14. While welcoming the measures taken to facilitate victims' access to housing and economic independence, GREVIO encourages the French authorities to ensure that all the professionals concerned are aware of existing assistance, and that it is implemented in a co-ordinated manner and accessible to all women victims, whatever their status, so that they can escape situations of violence and achieve autonomy. (paragraph 115)

b. Health services

15. GREVIO welcomes the measures taken by the French authorities to improve the health system's response to women victims of violence and encourages them strongly to:

- a. ensure that all women victims of violence have access to a forensic examination and the possibility of preserving evidence, even when they have not pressed charges; improve the quality of medical certificates and ensure that women have access to them;
- b. review the requirement to produce a non-excision certificate having regard to women's and girls' experiences of female genital mutilation, in consultation with specialised associations working in the field;
- c. take further measures to prevent and combat violence against women with disabilities, including those in institutions;
- d. take steps to ensure that the safeguarding measures provided for by the law in the event of contraceptive sterilisation are properly implemented in order to protect women with disabilities against forced sterilisation, in accordance with Article 39 of the Istanbul Convention. (paragraph 124)

3. Specialist support services (Article 22)

16. While welcoming measures taken to increase the availability of specialist support and guidance services for women victims of violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to:

- a. ensure that specialist support is available for women victims of violence and their children residing in shelters;
- b. ensure that specialist services are available throughout the country, including overseas, and see to it that all victims, including those exposed or subject to intersectional discrimination, have access to them;
- c. ensure that specialist support services are able to respond to the digital dimension of violence against women. (paragraph 133)

17. GREVIO also encourages the French authorities to take measures to ensure that dedicated facilities for the healthcare of women victims of violence (DDFVVs) have adequate, lasting resources enabling them to perform the many tasks assigned to them, in close co operation with all the bodies providing specialist services for women victims of violence. (paragraph 134)

4. Support for victims of sexual violence (Article 25)

18. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to make continued efforts to provide victims of sexual violence with medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and immediate psychological assistance by qualified professionals providing victim sensitive examinations and referring victims to specialist services providing short and long-term psychological counselling and support. (paragraph 138)

C. Substantive law**1. Custody, visitation rights and safety (Article 31)**

19. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to pursue their efforts to secure the safety of victims and their children when decisions are made on custody and visitation rights and, in particular, to:

- a. review judicial practice regarding the legal provisions requiring judges to take histories of violence into account in cases of parental separation in order to determine whether current practice complies with Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention;
- b. support and broaden the application of measures to strengthen inter-agency co operation and information exchange between civil and criminal courts;
- c. step up efforts to make the professionals concerned aware that there is no scientific basis for so-called parental alienation syndrome;
- d. ensure that children are not removed from the custody of non-violent parents, unless this is necessary for other reasons;
- e. take decisive measures to ensure that there are enough facilities for supervised visits, including measures of accompaniment under protection, with adequate resources and an emphasis on the safety of children and their mothers. (paragraph 147)

2. Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing (Article 48)

20. While welcoming the legislative amendments made to strengthen the ban on using mediation in cases of intimate partner violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take all the necessary measures to ensure that this tighter legislation is properly implemented and see to it that mediation procedures carried out in family law proceedings do not constitute quasi-mandatory mediation in cases where there is a history of violence. To do so, the authorities should inter alia:

- a. set up screening mechanisms to ensure the systematic detection of histories of domestic violence by judges and mediators in family law proceedings;
- b. put in place adequate safeguards to ensure that free and informed consent is given by women victims of violence throughout voluntary family mediation processes and that such processes fully respect the rights, needs and safety of victims. (paragraph 152)

D. Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures**1. General obligations (Article 49) and immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50)****a. Reporting to, immediate response and investigations by law-enforcement agencies**

21. Recalling the findings of its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the French authorities to strengthen the measures taken to encourage women victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention to report the violence to which they have been subject and to provide appropriate reception and support services which take account of the trauma they have suffered. They should, in particular:

- a. identify and address any factors preventing women and girls from reporting their experiences of violence against women to law-enforcement agencies, focusing particularly on the experiences of migrant women, women with disabilities, women in prostitution and LBTI women;
- b. continue to deploy social workers and psychologists on law enforcement premises and ensure that qualified, sworn interpreters are available. (paragraph 164)

b. Effective investigation and prosecution

22. GREVIO urges the French authorities to take decisive measures to ensure that more sexual violence cases reach the prosecution stage, particularly through improved investigation and evidence-gathering. (paragraph 170)

23. GREVIO also encourages the French authorities to continue and step up their work to improve the efficiency of investigations and prosecutions relating to intimate partner violence. (paragraph 171)

c. Conviction rates

24. Recalling the findings in its baseline evaluation report and the conclusions of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO urges the French authorities to take additional measures throughout the criminal law process to enhance the judicial response to sexual violence. They should, in particular, analyse the reasons for the attrition of rape cases, with a view to higher prosecution and conviction rates for these crimes. For this purpose, they should also ensure that the definition of sexual violence which is adopted is based on the absence of free consent from the victim. (paragraph 179)

25. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue in their efforts to provide a proper judicial response to all forms of violence against women. (paragraph 180)

2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51)

26. GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to take further measures to ensure that risk assessments are conducted systematically and in partnership with all the bodies concerned, in all the cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, and that they result rapidly in a proper safety plan for victims. (paragraph 188)

3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52)

27. GREVIO encourages the French authorities to take all the necessary measures to set up a system of emergency barring orders which meet the requirements of Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention so that women victims of violence and their children can remain safely in their homes. (paragraph 191)

4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53)

28. Recalling the findings in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the French authorities to continue taking measures designed to foster increased use of protection orders. In particular, they should:

- a. ensure that protection orders are available to victims of all the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;
- b. pursue efforts to foster increased use of protection orders regardless of the victim's desire to file a complaint;
- c. ensure that protection measures are properly followed up on and that all breaches are suitably punished. (paragraph 199)

5. Measures of protection (article 56)

29. While welcoming the measures taken by the French authorities to provide better protection for the rights and interests of women victims of violence during judicial proceedings, GREVIO

strongly encourages them to take further measures to limit the secondary victimisation to which they may be exposed during proceedings. In particular, they should:

- a. ensure that the measures provided for by Article 56 of the Istanbul Convention are systematically applied for victims of all forms of violence against women;
- b. ensure that women victims of violence are informed within a reasonable time of the action that will be taken in response to their complaint;
- c. inform women victims of violence that they are entitled to give statements in the perpetrator's absence;
- d. take measures to limit infringements of the victim's privacy during judicial proceedings;
- e. ensure that qualified sworn interpreters are available throughout the proceedings.
(paragraph 205)

Appendix II

List of the national authorities, other public bodies, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with which GREVIO held consultations

National authorities

Ministry of Culture
Ministry of Equality between Women and men
Ministry of Environmental Transition and Territorial Cohesion
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Higher Education and Research
Ministry of Interior and Overseas
Ministry of Justice
Ministry of National Education
Ministry of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games
Ministry of Transformation and Public Services
Interministerial task force on combating violence against women and trafficking in human beings (Miprof)

Territorial authorities: Poitiers

Court of Poitiers
Département delegation for women's rights and equality between women and men
Département gendarmerie group of the Vienne
National gendarmerie's family protection centre
Prefect of the Vienne region
Regional Directorate for Women's Rights and Gender Equality
Regional health agency of the Vienne region
University hospital of Poitiers, "*Maison de Freyja*", paediatric wards for the care of children in danger (UAPED), psychological trauma centre

Public institutions:

Delegation for Women's Rights and Equality between Women and Men of the National Assembly
High Council for Equality
National Consultative Commission on Human Rights
National Institute of Demographic Studies
National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies

Non-governmental organisations :

Afrogameuses
Caméléon
CIMADE
European Association against Violence against Women at Work (AVFT)
Family planning
Feminist Collective Against Rape (CFCV)
Femmes pour le Dire, Femmes pour Agir
Feminists against cyber-harassment

Foundation for children

France terre d'asile

France Victimes

French Council of Associations for the Rights of the Child (COFRADE)

Information Centre on Women's and Family Rights (CIDFF)

Information and support group for migrants (GISTI)

Les dévalideuses

La Vague

LOBA

National collective for the rights of women

National federation solidarity women (FNSF)

#StopFisha

Women's Foundation

Lawyers:

Anne-Laure Casado, lawyer

Carine Durrieu Diebolt, lawyer

Miléna Dostanic, lawyer

Emmanuelle Goby, lawyer

Anne-Sophie Laguens, lawyer

Catherine Le Magueresse (LL.D., researcher, university of La Sorbonne)

Carole Pascarel, lawyer

Frédérique Pollet-Rouyer, lawyer

Lorraine Questiaux, lawyer

Élodie Tuaillon Hibon, lawyer

Marjolaine Vignola, lawyer

Marion Vivien, lawyer

Trade unions:

French democratic labour confederation (CFDT)

Workers general confederation (CGT)

GREVIO, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, is an independent human rights monitoring body mandated to monitor the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) by the parties.

Following the comprehensive stocktaking exercise set out in its baseline evaluation reports, GREVIO's first thematic evaluation round identifies progress made in building trust among women and girls by delivering support, protection and justice for any of the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. This report contains an analysis of developments in law and policy in respect of provisions of the convention relating to victim support and protection, criminal investigation and prosecution of acts of violence. It also covers developments in the determination of child custody and visitation rights in cases with a history of violence and wider preventive measures.

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