Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice

Slovenia

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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on Action against Violence against Women
and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

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Contents

Executive summary 4

Introduction 7

I. Emerging trends in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence 9

II. Changes in definitions, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, funding and data collection in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence 11
A. Definitions (Article 3) 11
B. Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies (Article 7) 12
C. Financial resources (Article 8) 14
D. Data collection (Article 11) 16

III. Analysis of the implementation of selected provisions in priority areas in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution 19
A. Prevention 19
1. General obligations (Article 12) 19
2. Education (Article 14) 21
3. Training of professionals (Article 15) 22
4. Preventive intervention and treatment programmes (Article 16) 25
B. Protection and support 27
1. General obligations (Article 18) 27
2. General support services (Article 20) 29
3. Specialist support services (Article 22) 32
4. Support for victims of sexual violence (Article 25) 34
C. Substantive law 35
1. Custody, visitation rights and safety (Article 31) 35
2. Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing (Article 48) 38
D. Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures 40
1. General obligations (Article 49) and Immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50) 40
2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51) 45
3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52) 47
4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53) 48
5. Measures of protection (Article 56) 49

Appendix I List of proposals and suggestions by GREVIO 51

Appendix II List of the national authorities, other public bodies, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with which GREVIO held consultations . 58

Executive summary

This evaluation report addresses the progress made in providing 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 Slovenia on 12 October 2021 and are based on the information obtained during its first thematic evaluation procedure as set out in Article 68 of the Istanbul Convention, including from written reports (a state report submitted by the Slovenian authorities and additional information submitted by the Human Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Slovenia and the Association SOS Helpline for women and children victims of violence together with the Association for Non-violent Communication) and from a five-day evaluation visit to Slovenia. 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 Slovenian 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 round. By identifying emerging trends in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, GREVIO shines a light on the laudable efforts made to implement 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.

In this regard, GREVIO welcomes Slovenia's continued expansion and development of its legislative and policy framework on violence against women, which demonstrates the authorities' commitment to implementing the Istanbul Convention. Among the positive legislative developments, GREVIO notes in particular the introduction of a consent-based definition of rape, the recognition of gender as a motive for a criminal offence warranting enhanced sentencing, and the reform of the compensation scheme for victims of violence. GREVIO further welcomes the broadening of the relevant national strategy on violence against women to encompass forms of violence beyond domestic violence. This development reflects an increasing recognition, at the level of policymaking, of forms of violence against women that had previously not been addressed through comprehensive measures.

GREVIO also welcomes the increased allocation of state funding for the prevention of and protection from violence against women, as well as the strengthened involvement of women's rights organisations in the development of relevant policies. The introduction of victim support offices in two major district courts is likewise a welcome development. In practice, these offices work predominantly with women victims of violence with the explicit aim of reducing secondary victimisation and facilitating victims' access to justice. GREVIO welcomes the plans to further expand this service, which has the potential of strengthening women victims' confidence in the criminal justice system.

While acknowledging the progress made by Slovenia in implementing the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO has identified a number of areas requiring urgent action by the authorities to ensure full compliance with the convention's provisions. One such area is education, where reforms are needed to explicitly incorporate, in school curricula, the topics and issues covered by Article 14 of the Convention. Such measures are particularly important in order to address the root causes of violence against women and girls through effective primary prevention. Moreover, GREVIO underlines the need to establish systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training for professionals within the judiciary on all forms of violence covered by the convention. This is particularly important for the effective implementation of Slovenia's recently adopted consent-based definition of rape. GREVIO further draws attention to the absence of dedicated services for women victims of sexual violence. In particular, Slovenia currently lacks comprehensive sexual violence referral and rape crisis centres

providing specialised, integrated support to victims. The establishment of such services is essential to ensure that victims of sexual violence have access to appropriate medical, psychological, legal and other forms of support in accordance with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

In the area of substantive law, GREVIO has identified a number of shortcomings concerning custody and visitation rights. These include the need to ensure the systematic screening of family law proceedings for a history of domestic violence; to ensure that domestic violence is expressly and systematically taken into account as a mandatory legal consideration when determining custody and visitation arrangements; and to strengthen awareness among relevant professionals of the harmful effects of relying on notions and concepts such as the so-called parental alienation syndrome that dismiss children's reluctance to have contact with their fathers by suggesting they have been alienated from them, including where this reluctance stems from exposure to abuse and the resulting fear and distrust.

With regard to criminal justice proceedings, GREVIO points to several areas requiring further attention, notably the need to strengthen the investigation and case-building efforts of prosecutorial authorities, particularly in cases of domestic violence, sexual violence and violence perpetrated in the digital sphere. Moreover, victims' confidence in the criminal justice response would be strengthened by ensuring that, in practice, the requirements relating to the victim's subordination and the repetition of violent conduct do not constitute barriers to prosecuting conduct as domestic violence, rather than as a less serious criminal offence or a misdemeanour.

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:

- fully institutionalising the interministerial working group responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, including a gender-sensitive approach in all policies and measures implementing the convention and ensuring that such policies are regularly evaluated;
- extending data collection by the judiciary, ensuring that relevant, disaggregated data are systematically collected by all healthcare facilities and extending data collection by social services to all forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence;
- enhancing the primary prevention of violence against women by making it a priority in future action plans and measures, conducting regular awareness-raising campaigns, and regularly assessing the impact of the primary prevention measures undertaken;
- stepping up the training of all professionals dealing with victims of violence against women on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular those working in the law-enforcement, social welfare and healthcare sectors;
- ensuring that sexual violence perpetrator programmes are available in sufficient numbers and attended, and that minimum standards for such programmes are developed;
- setting up further institutionalised structures for co-ordination and co-operation among all relevant stakeholders and service providers to ensure multi-agency co-operation tailored to the specific needs of victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the convention, including one-stop shops, where appropriate;
- ensuring that multi-agency co-operation mechanisms on domestic violence and other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention take a distinctly gendered approach, and that multidisciplinary teams in Social Work Centres are operational in practice, and guided by appropriate protocols;
- continuing the existing efforts to support the recovery and economic independence of women victims of violence, in particular through measures involving financial assistance, education and training support, and assistance in finding employment and affordable housing;
- ensuring that healthcare services are fully integrated into all co-ordination mechanisms on violence against women and ensuring that all women and girls who are victims of violence have access to comprehensive healthcare services for their experiences of violence, with a particular focus on the needs of victims with mental health issues;

- increasing the number and capacity of shelters and ensure that all women victims of gender-based violence, including in particular Roma and migrant women and their children, irrespective of their age, have access to long-term domestic violence shelters, and ensuring the continued work of the national helpline through sustainable resources;
- ensuring that mediation procedures carried out in custody proceedings do not amount to quasi-mandatory mediation in cases with a history of domestic violence;
- ensuring that sanctions are commensurate with the gravity of the offence and dissuasive in all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;
- ensuring that gender-sensitive risk-assessment and risk-management procedures are conducted in close co-ordination with all relevant agencies and entities, including women's rights organisations;
- implementing all existing victim-oriented protection measures in criminal proceedings, in particular the use of videoconferences and the obligation to conceal the victim's address.

Last, GREVIO highlights several emerging trends, including the continued legislative changes to further implement the convention, such as the introduction of a consent-based definition of rape. Other trends point to the need to diversify policies beyond domestic violence and to strengthen the efforts made in tackling the digital dimension of violence against women.

Introduction

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, the Istanbul 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 Slovenia, offering a comprehensive assessment of the convention's implementation in its entirety, was published on 12 October 2021, following Slovenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention on 5 February 2015. Slovenia's original reservation not to apply the provisions under Article 30, paragraph 2; Article 44, paragraphs 1*e*, 3 and 4; Article 55, paragraph 1, in respect of Article 35 regarding minor offences; Article 58 in respect of Articles 37, 38 and 39, and Article 59, entered in accordance with Article 78, paragraph 2, of the convention, was renewed by declaration dated 1 June 2025.

This report 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 that have ensued following the completion of the baseline evaluation procedure. Section three presents 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 Slovenia, the first thematic evaluation procedure was initiated in accordance with Article 68 of the Istanbul Convention by letter and transmission of GREVIO's first thematic questionnaire on 16 December 2024. The Slovenian authorities subsequently submitted their state report on 18 August 2025. Following a preliminary examination of Slovenia's state report, GREVIO carried out an evaluation visit to Slovenia, which took place from 20 to 24 October 2025. The delegation was composed of:

- Marie-Claude Hofner, Member of GREVIO
- Olena Kharytonova, Member of GREVIO
- Mihail Stojanoski, Legal adviser at the Secretariat of the monitoring mechanism of the Istanbul Convention.

During the evaluation visit, the delegation met with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental representatives working in the area of preventing and combating violence against women. GREVIO wishes to highlight its constructive exchanges with the Slovenian authorities, in particular Mr Dan Juvan, State Secretary for social affairs, employment relations and labour rights at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and other high-level representatives. A list of the national authorities, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders with whom GREVIO met is set out in Appendix II of this report. GREVIO is grateful for the valuable information provided by all of them. For the co-operation and support provided throughout the entire evaluation procedure, it wishes to extend its gratitude to Ms Sara Slana, who was appointed as contact person. The state report and the written contributions submitted by civil society are available on the country monitoring website of the Istanbul Convention.

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 26 March 2026. Where applicable, relevant developments up until 15 October 2026 have also been taken into account.

According to the Istanbul 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 that work in the field of violence against women.

I. Emerging trends in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence

Legislative reforms driving change, but greater implementation efforts needed

1. In June 2021 Slovenia reformed the Criminal Code, introducing an affirmative consent approach to rape. Currently the use of force remains an aggravating element, but is no longer necessary to prosecute rape, which continues to be prosecuted *ex officio* in most cases.[1] Moreover, amendments to the Criminal Code in 2023 made crimes motivated by the victim's sex, including violence, an aggravating circumstance that should be taken into account in sentencing.[2] The act on victim compensation was also reformed in 2023 to expand the group of potential beneficiaries, which now includes non-European Union nationals. Further reforms that will, among other things, remove the requirement for a complaint to be made in cases of marital rape, are currently being discussed.[3]

2. For these reforms to be fully and effectively implemented, further efforts are still needed. This is first and foremost the case in terms of training of and raising awareness among relevant professionals in the judiciary and other professional groups. Awareness-raising measures aimed at the general public also remain necessary in order for society to fully understand the impact and importance of the policy shift to a consent-based definition of rape. Moreover, it is important to ensure that consent and consensual sexual relations and how to resolve conflict in relationships in a non-violent way are included in the education curricula, adapted to the age of all learners and in a way that participants can effectively integrate these values and adopt these behaviours. Greater awareness about these issues could contribute to the prevention of sexual violence, in particular among young people, and might lead to an increase in reporting rates of sexual violence, which would set the judicial response mechanism in motion and provide for more accountability for perpetrators of this form of violence.

Domestic violence remains the main focus of laws and policies

3. On 7 March 2024 the Slovenian Government adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, a major programmatic undertaking to introduce an important number of reforms in the field of violence against women. Although this is a positive shift compared to previous similar documents whose focus was exclusively on domestic violence, the measures contained in the resolution nonetheless remain heavily focused on domestic violence, at the expense of other types of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. This lack of focus of policies on other forms of violence against women is also related to the fact that legislation has until now mostly focused on the prevention of domestic violence, as demonstrated by the 2008 Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA), which is entirely focused on domestic violence and has not been complemented by legislative efforts to prevent other forms of violence against women since.

4. Despite the formal widening of the scope of programmatic documents to include prevention and protection, policies still lack sufficient measures targeting women victims of other forms of violence beyond domestic violence. This is particularly alarming with regard to sexual violence. As further discussed in this report, there is a lack of adequate awareness-raising measures, specialist support services and short- and long-term counselling services for victims of this form of violence. Victims of other forms of violence against women such as stalking, forced marriage, violence based on so-called honour or sexual harassment also lack access to services built specifically with their needs in mind, or to any multi-agency co-operation schemes that provide an integrated response to them. Therefore, victims of these forms of violence still make use of the existing specialised structures for domestic violence or of the general healthcare and social services available to the public, which results in a piecemeal response to their needs, lacking specialised knowledge about their specific needs. Providing adequate specialist services to victims of all forms of violence against

1. Cases of marital rape, and rape against a live-in partner are still not prosecuted *ex officio* and require a complaint to be lodged by the victim. See Article 171, paragraph 4, of the Slovenian Criminal Code.
2. The new paragraph 3 of Article 49 of the Criminal Code on sentencing rules.
3. www.gov.si/novice/2025-03-21-ministrica-katic-napovedala-spremembe-novele-kazenskega-zakonika-ki-je-ze-vlozena-v-drzavni-zbor/.

women covered by the Istanbul Convention requires stronger, more co-ordinated action, as well as adequate resources.

Stronger focus required to increase the effects of the existing efforts to tackle the digital dimension of violence against women

5. Violence against women in the digital sphere is a growing phenomenon in Slovenia as in many European countries. It is positive that the Slovenian authorities are increasingly aware of the scale of this challenge and the need to undertake systemic measures.[4] In addition to the various projects already in place, at the policy level, the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2030 envisages training for professionals on the digital dimension of violence against women, in particular on online sexual abuse, and public awareness-raising, especially among young people, of the dangers and consequences of such violence.[5] These goals are planned to be achieved over the entire duration of the programme. Considering the growing prevalence of this phenomenon, concrete measures that would rapidly address the acute awareness-raising needs and the needs of victims of such forms of violence need to be prioritised and reinforced.

6. The number of cases of online stalking, non-consensual dissemination of images of a sexual character, often among children, and online sexual harassment is increasing. Although the non-consensual dissemination of sexual images is criminalised, the requirements of public dissemination and serious infringement of privacy raise questions as to whether all forms of such conduct are adequately covered. These requirements, as well as the lack of specialised units within the prosecution services, appear to affect the number and effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions. Addressing these issues is important to ensure effective criminal law protection for all women victims of violence in the digital sphere.[6]

7. Last, outside of limited programmes provided by women's rights organisations, specialised services for women victims of violence occurring in the digital sphere, including counselling, are lacking. Limited information is disseminated among young people about the harm of online violence and of violent pornography. Legislative changes, supported by comprehensive professional training initiatives and a holistic approach to prevention and protection are still needed. To this end, guidance can be found in GREVIO's General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women.

4. See details on the conference "Tackling digital violence against women and girls in Slovenia", held on 17 March 2025: www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/-/tackling-digital-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-slovenia; also see the Odklikni project: www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/nov-projekt-51/.
5. See the resources made available to pupils and teachers discussed in Article 14, Education.
6. Abuse of Personal Data, Article 143, paragraph 6 of the Criminal Code.

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

8. Chapter I of the Istanbul Convention sets out general principles that 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 other things, 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)

9. 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”.

10. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had found that the definitions in use were aligned with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. It notes that the definitions applicable at the time of its baseline evaluation have not been changed since.

11. On 7 March 2024 the Slovenian Government adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (2024-2029, “the national strategy”).[7] A two-year action plan (2024-2025, “NAP”) was also adopted to implement the strategy. The national strategy and the NAP both use the terms “family violence” to designate domestic violence, a term defined in Articles 2 and 3 of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.[8] GREVIO notes that the terms “family violence” and “domestic violence” are used synonymously in both civil and criminal law, policy and practice, and they appear to meet the requirements prescribed in Article 3, paragraph 1*b*, of the Istanbul Convention. However, at the same time, it notes that neither the national strategy nor the existing legislation include a definition of violence against women, a gap that constitutes an obstacle to a shared understanding of violence against women among all the relevant professionals.

12. **GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to introduce a definition of violence against women in line with Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention, with a view to ensuring a harmonised use of this concept across all areas of law and policy.**

7. www.gov.si/en/news/2024-03-07-94th-regular-session-of-the-government-of-the-republic-of-slovenia/.
8. Article 3 provides the following definition: “Domestic violence is any use of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence by one member of the family against another, including neglect or stalking, regardless of the age, sex or any other personal circumstances of the victim or the perpetrator, including corporal punishment of children”. Article 2 provides an extensive list of relations, in line with Article 3, paragraph 1*b*, of the Istanbul Convention, who are to be considered as “family members” within the meaning of Article 3. The list includes current and former partners, non-married partners, common law partners, individuals in a romantic relationship regardless of whether they share the same household, relatives and similar.

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

13. 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. 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,[9] 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 of building trust among all women and girls.

14. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had noted the absence of a comprehensive national strategy concerning all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention and it had strongly encouraged the Slovenian authorities to adopt such a comprehensive strategy and to develop a long-term co-ordinated approach. It had further strongly encouraged them to enhance the application of a gendered perspective in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including in relation to policies concerning domestic violence. Last, it had highlighted the need to better include the interests of women victims of violence exposed to intersectional discrimination in relevant policies.

15. Since the adoption of Slovenia's first National Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in 2009 (for the period 2009-2014), which focused exclusively on domestic violence, the authorities' response to violence against women has become broader, which GREVIO welcomes. The current national strategy sets out objectives to address the needs of victims of other forms of violence against women beyond domestic violence, such as sexual violence, stalking and forced marriage, demonstrating the authorities' engagement with GREVIO's findings.[10] The national strategy was adopted following an inclusive process of consultation in which many government departments and NGOs were involved.[11] It is based on scientific research identifying a strong prevalence of domestic violence and violence against women committed in the digital sphere (including online harassment), and it treats violence against women as a form of discrimination.

16. The national strategy's implementation is ensured through three two-year NAPs that operationalise the strategy's goals. The first NAP (2024-2025) provides for gender-sensitive measures to be implemented in a short time span, which translate the long-term goals of the strategy into concrete actions. It is accompanied by a dedicated budget from each of the line ministries and agencies tasked with implementing the NAP.

17. GREVIO notes, however, that the measures in the national strategy addressing the needs of women victims of forms of violence other than domestic violence remain very limited in number and in scope. The NAP does not contain specific measures to address forms of violence beyond domestic violence either. Instead, it remains largely limited to setting broad objectives that target violence against women as a general phenomenon.[12]

18. In addition to the national strategy, violence against women is also addressed in the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2030, adopted in 2023.[13] This gender equality strategy prioritises the prevention of all forms of violence

9. 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, LBTI women, women from rural areas, women in prostitution and women with addiction issues.
10. See measure no. 3 of objective no. 2 of the national strategy, which envisages the improvement of comprehensive treatment for victims of sexual violence, sexual abuse and forced marriage for adult victims; and measure no. 10 of objective no. 3, which concerns the introduction of new training, including on stalking.
11. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 18.
12. See, for example, measures such as holding workshops to raise awareness and train media representatives on reporting on domestic violence and violence against women (Objective no. 4, measure no. 3, of the NAP), or providing timely, diverse and free psychosocial assistance and therapeutic assistance to all victims of domestic violence and violence against women and children (objective no. 2, measure no. 2, of the NAP).
13. Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2030: www.pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO132.

against women and girls and includes measures to combat domestic and sexual violence.[14] In 2024, the government also adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention and Suppression of Crime 2024-2028, which treats domestic violence as a serious societal issue within the broader context of crime prevention.[15]

19. GREVIO welcomes the fact that the national strategy places a special focus on groups of women exposed to intersectional discrimination, listing measures to address the needs of elderly women, Roma women and girls, migrant women and women with disabilities, and that it targets the digital dimension of violence against women.[16] However, it notes with regret that there are no specific policy measures addressing the needs of LBTI women victims, neither as part of the national strategy or in any other strategic document.

20. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that the national strategy and the NAP are based on a gendered understanding of violence against women. While this is a positive development, the gendered approach that the Istanbul Convention requires has not yet fully permeated all policy areas. This is most visible in the policy guidance documents for frontline responders and structures within the framework of services for women victims of violence. Additional efforts in this respect remain needed, especially in the work of law-enforcement officials and the judiciary.[17] An example illustrating this would be the manual "Together against violence", issued by the Ministry of the Interior to inform law-enforcement officials and the general public about domestic violence, which lists "the personality traits of individuals" as the key reason behind domestic violence. The manual also fails to recognise that women are significantly more likely to be victims of such violence, which is a key starting point for the implementation of a gendered understanding of such violence.[18] This omission is particularly concerning, as patriarchal stereotypes and prejudices significantly hinder the detection of violence and the provision of appropriate protection to victims.

21. The interministerial working group (the IWG), which serves as the co-ordinating body within the meaning of Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, is responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. The IWG is also tasked with the evaluation of the first NAP (2024-2025) adopted under the national strategy, planned for 2026. GREVIO welcomes the inclusion of members of women's rights NGOs in the composition of the IWG. It notes, however, that the IWG meets only two to three times per year. Although established as a permanent body, it remains dependent on political mandates, and its membership is subject to frequent changes. Moreover, its members are employees of the participating ministries and bodies, for whom these tasks constitute an addition to their core responsibilities. In the absence of dedicated staff to ensure continuity of policies beyond government mandates, and without an independent and sustainable budget, the impact of this body on the implementation of measures contained in the national strategy and the NAP remains limited. GREVIO considers that institutionalising a co-ordination body that fully meets the requirements of Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention would

14. See, in particular, point 2.4 of the strategy, which presents the following goals: 1. Strengthening interdepartmental integration and co-operation for more effective treatment of all forms of violence against women and better informing professionals and the general public about the causes and consequences of domestic violence and violence against women; 2. Providing comprehensive and appropriate support to victims of domestic violence and violence against women, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups; 3. Improving professional training and awareness of online violence, including from a gender perspective; 4. Ensuring a safe learning and working environment free from violence, sexual harassment and gender-based harassment; and 5. Legislative changes to address all forms of violence against women (limited to the criminalisation of femicide as a separate crime).
15. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 10.
16. Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, pages 3 and 4.
17. See Veselič S. (2022), "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Slovenia", *Genero*, Issue 26, page 7. www.researchgate.net/publication/368013945_Council_of_Europe_Convention_on_Preventing_and_Combating_Violence_Against_Women_and_Domestic_Violence_in_Slovenia.
18. "Together against violence [Skupaj proti nasilju] – a guide to recognising and dealing with domestic violence", issued by the Slovenian Police in 2024, page 17, available at www.policija.si/medijsko-sredisce/sporocila-za-javnost/sporocila-za-javnost-gpue/123547-strokovni-posvet-ob-izidu-novega-prirocnika-skupaj-proti-nasilju-obravnava-nasilja-v-druzini-presega-meje-in-pristojnosti-ene-organizacije.

address these shortcomings. Such a body would significantly enhance and streamline the implementation of policies in the field of violence against women, while preserving the expertise developed by its members. It would also enable independent monitoring and evaluation of the national strategy and the NAP, which are currently lacking.

22. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. fully institutionalise the interministerial working group responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and that serves as the national co-ordinating body, and allocate the necessary human and financial resources to its functioning;**
- **b. ensure that all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention are adequately addressed in strategic and policy documents to prevent and combat violence against women;**
- **c. ensure that a gender-sensitive approach is included in all policies and measures implementing the Istanbul Convention;**
- **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 predefined indicators in order to assess their impact.**

C. Financial resources (Article 8)

23. 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.[19]

24. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had strongly encouraged the Slovenian authorities to secure appropriate human and financial resources for the policies in force and those under preparation at the time, as well as for specialist support services for victims. It had further called on the authorities to ensure sustainable funding for women's rights NGOs providing those services.

25. GREVIO welcomes the fact that funding for policies for the prevention of and protection from violence against women has increased and become more sustainable since the adoption of its baseline evaluation report.[20] This is particularly true in the case of structural funding provided for specialist support services, many of which continue to be delivered by NGOs. The same applies to calls for funding of civil society organisations, a notable example being the 2023 call for funding for NGO projects aimed at preventing violence against women and girls, including online violence.[21]

26. In recent years, the funding infrastructure of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZ) – which is the main source of funding for programmes for gender equality and services for victims of gender-based violence – has evolved, and it now allows for seven-year funding cycles when it comes to specialist support services for victims.[22] For example, in 2023 the MDDSZ allocated a total of €4 802 839 for programmes for the prevention of gender-based violence and victim support. In 2024 the funding was increased to €5 444 941, which represents a substantial increase compared to the €3 467 649 available in 2021. These funds cover the work of NGOs as well as that of social work centres (SWCs). While the latter have a broad

19. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 66.
20. See the state report, page 12, and the submission by the NGO Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 17.
21. Funding for providers of specialised victim services is typically provided through seven-year long contracts. See submission by the NGO Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 17.
22. In 2021 and 2022, 34 programmes for the provision of services for women victims of violence were included in the seven-year funding scheme of the MDDSZ, and in 2024 one more programme was added to this funding scheme; see the state report, page 12. Also see the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 18.

mandate covering topics such as general social benefits, the protection of children, people with disabilities and elderly people, women's rights organisations have benefited from an increase in sustainable funding as well. GREVIO welcomes this development, which allows for better planning of services, the retention of trained personnel and for continuous support to women victims of violence.[23]

27. Additionally, in 2023 the MDDSZ launched its first call for NGO projects aimed at preventing violence against women and girls, including violence occurring in the digital sphere. The call was for funding worth a total of €50 000, with awards of €10 000 for each organisation selected. The call for projects has been repeated yearly and the total funds allocated to NGOs have amounted to €70 000.[24]

28. Despite the increased availability and sustainability of the funding available to providers of support services to women victims of violence, women's rights organisations drew GREVIO's attention to the fact that co-funding is required to access the funding scheme of the MDDSZ, for up to 20% of the project costs. In practice, service providers turn to municipalities to close the gap. However, not all municipalities have the means to provide multi-annual, sustainable funds to co-fund such services, which forces service providers to seek alternatives, such as private and international donors.[25] GREVIO notes that other funding possibilities are available in practice, for example funds from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Administration, which also help close gaps in financing through short-term grants.[26]

29. GREVIO notes that the Counselling Office for Migrant Women Victims of Violence, which was financed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through the MDDSZ, had ceased to operate after one year. However, according to the Slovenian authorities, the programme has since resumed.[27] GREVIO further notes that NGOs working with migrant and asylum-seeking women are currently not included in any sustainable funding scheme. NGOs specialising in the provision of support for specific groups of victims, such as women with disabilities and Roma women, as well as NGOs that have been established more recently, face particular difficulties in accessing funding due to their limited capacity and their limited number of years of experience, which are often prerequisites for securing public funding. This situation also impacts NGOs working with LBTI victims.[28]

30. Last, GREVIO notes that Slovenia does not presently implement gender-responsive budgeting, at either national or local levels.

31. **Acknowledging the steps taken to enhance the availability of sustainable funding for women's rights NGOs providing specialist support services to women victims of violence, GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. take further steps to ensure sustainable levels of funding for women's rights NGOs that work with and provide specialist support services to migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women victims of violence, and to women victims who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination, such as Roma women and women with disabilities, through funding mechanisms that allow for continuous service provision, such as long-term grants;**
- **b. take steps to implement gender-responsive budgeting.**

23. For more details on the scope of work done by the centres for social work, see www.csd-slovenije.si/delovna-podrocja/.
24. Information obtained from the MDDSZ during the evaluation visit.
25. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
26. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 18.
27. The programme was implemented by a local NGO, the Association SOS Helpline for women and children, and serviced 254 users during the initial year. See the state report, page 12. According to the Slovenian authorities, the office has resumed operations under the management of a different local women's rights NGO (The Emma Institute).
28. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

D. Data collection (Article 11)

32. 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

33. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had underlined that a data-collection system allowing for the tracking of a case related to a form of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention from reporting to its final outcome had not been in place. Furthermore, the collection of disaggregated data in relation to all forms of violence covered by the convention by the judiciary and law enforcement was insufficient.

34. GREVIO welcomes the recent introduction of a possibility for victims to have access to parts of the police database, allowing them to track the status of their report.[29] As was the case at the time of the baseline evaluation, the law-enforcement agencies continue to hold the most complete database of cases of violence against women in Slovenia. The police continue to record data on the victim and the perpetrator, including their age and sex, and information on their relationship, the location and the type of violence, disaggregated according to criminal law offences established in Slovenian law, as well as other relevant data. The presence of children is recorded, either as direct or indirect victims, depending on whether the child suffered violence or was a witness of it. These data continue to be published in annual reports from the police, available online.

35. As to the judiciary, GREVIO notes with interest that since the baseline evaluation report, work has begun on the creation of a single database including data collected by the State Prosecutor's Office and the Supreme Court, co-ordinated by the State Statistical Office (SURS). Data are collected on the location, the type of violence and the age and sex of the victim and perpetrator, but not on their relationship, which GREVIO regrets. Moreover, judicial cases are now assigned a single tracking number that allows them to be followed throughout the different judicial stages, from prosecution to sentencing, including remittals by higher courts.[30] While welcoming this development, GREVIO notes that the databases of the police and the judiciary are still not harmonised and that consequently tracking a case from the stage of reporting to the police to prosecution and sentencing remains very difficult in practice. Against this background, it notes with interest the plans to further expand the existing co-operation in data collection with the aim of creating a unified database on violence against women (and other crimes), shared among all relevant stakeholders beyond the judiciary, based on formal protocols. It notes, however, that this plan does not appear to be in line with the objectives set out in the NAP, and that there may be legislative impediments to its implementation, as outlined by the Ministry of Justice, which expressed concerns relating to the protection of privacy.[31] While taking note of these concerns, GREVIO draws attention to the fact that, in order to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of victims, perpetrators and other persons involved, data on violence against women shall be collected in line with the applicable rules for data protection, including in particular the Council of Europe Convention No. 108 on data protection.[32]

36. Data concerning emergency barring and active protection orders are collected by the police and the Supreme Court. Data on the violation of such orders and the sanctions issued for such violations are collected by the police, in line with the Police Tasks and Powers Act and internal regulations.

29. State report, page 15.
30. See Conviction rates under General obligations (Article 49) and Immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50).
31. Objective no. 6 of the NAP, which aims "to ensure high-quality data on domestic violence and violence against women", contains only one measure – to strengthen the collection of data on sexual harassment and sexual crimes at the prosecution level, which was scheduled for implementation in 2024. For the concerns of the Ministry of Justice, see the state report, pages 13 and 14.
32. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 80.

2. Healthcare sector

37. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had noted that no data on violence against women had been collected by the healthcare sector. It regrets that no progress has been made in this regard, and that other than a voluntary questionnaire disseminated to pregnant women and those in the immediate postpartum period, no steps have been taken to ensure data collection on instances of contact made by women and girls with the healthcare sector for reasons related to experiences of any of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. What is more, even if a victim volunteers information about her experience of violence, the current record-keeping system in the healthcare system only allows for a manuscript note to be made in the patient file, which cannot be further transformed into useful disaggregated data. It also appears that any data currently collected by healthcare institutions in Slovenia cannot be exported outside the healthcare framework, used or integrated into any database that collects data from other stakeholders.

3. Social services

38. Social work centres record data on the sex and age of the victim and the perpetrator, their relationship, the form of violence and the location. Measures have been taken to increase data collection by SWCs since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report to include the reason why the victim contacted the SWC and their referral pathway.[33] GREVIO notes, however, that the collection of data continues to be limited to domestic violence, as the mandate of SWCs is tied to the scope of the 2008 DVPA.

39. On a more general note, GREVIO notes with regret that there is limited interconnectedness between stakeholders when it comes to the exchange of data, and outside of the annual reports published by the Ministry of the Interior, no data on violence against women are published, online or otherwise. Furthermore, there is no indication as to whether existing data-collection efforts extend to municipal services offered to victims of violence against women and to what extent information on such services is used in policy making. This includes aspects of policy such as the access to housing and other social welfare benefits for victims of violence against women.

40. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, and bearing in mind the need for data collection to extend to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. extend data collection by the judiciary to include the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, while fully abiding by existing international standards on data protection, as contained in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108), in order to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of victims, perpetrators and other persons involved;**
- **b. systematically collect data, disaggregated by the type of violence, the age of the victim and the alleged perpetrator and the nature of their relationship, on the number of women and girls who seek assistance from, or come into contact with, public or private healthcare services as a result of experiences of violence against women. This includes, in particular, cases of domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation;**
- **c. extend data collection by social services to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, beyond domestic violence.**

33. State report, page 14. See also the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 21.

41. **In addition, GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

a. **continue their efforts to harmonise data collection between law-enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other stakeholders with the aim of allowing for the tracking of a case across the different stages of the criminal justice system and enabling an assessment of, *inter alia*, conviction, attrition and recidivism rates;**
b. **ensure that all relevant data are made available to the public, in line with Article 11, paragraph 4, of the Istanbul Convention.**

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

A. Prevention

42. Chapter III of the Istanbul Convention contains a number of general and more specific obligations in the area of prevention. This section analyses the progress made since the baseline evaluation monitoring procedure on the implementation of early preventive measures. It also covers progress made on the implementation of the more specific preventive measures provided under this chapter in the areas of education, training of all relevant professionals and perpetrator programmes. 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.[34] In turn, effective prevention empowers women and girls to speak out about their experiences and seek support and protection.

1. General obligations (Article 12)

43. Article 12 sets out a number of general preventive measures that 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 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 a cause as much as 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.

44. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had encouraged the Slovenian authorities to sustain and further develop their awareness-raising efforts by expanding their scope to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, by ensuring their reach across the country and by continuing to rely on the expertise of women's rights NGOs.

45. GREVIO regrets that sexist and gender stereotypes seem to still be largely tolerated in public life in Slovenia, including in the media.[35] Objective no. 4 of the national strategy lists a number of measures aimed at raising awareness of violence against women among young people, with a particular focus on violence occurring in the digital sphere, which GREVIO welcomes. On the other hand, although the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2023-2030) sets out strategic objectives for the prevention of violence against women through primary prevention (namely challenging social norms and stereotypes that reinforce the idea of women's subordination),[36] the NAP does not contain any measures to operationalise these goals in practice.[37] GREVIO welcomes the organisation of several workshops in Slovenian schools by the Ministry of Interior Affairs focusing on human trafficking and forced marriage but nonetheless notes that more efforts concentrated on changing societal values regarding the roles of women and men, tackling prejudices and broader primary prevention remain necessary.

46. Furthermore, while the NAP includes several awareness-raising measures to be implemented in 2024-2025, none of these appear to specifically target women facing intersectional

34. 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.
35. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 29 and 30.
36. See objective no. 3 under point 2.2.3 of the resolution and point 2.4.
37. See objective no. 4 of the NAP: "Zero tolerance for domestic violence and violence against women, high public awareness in this area and preventive action".

discrimination. GREVIO notes with concern information indicating that awareness about early and forced marriages is insufficient at all levels, including in schools, SWCs and in the judiciary and that little is done to prevent violence against Roma women and girls.[38] Similarly, there seems to be a lack of focus on raising awareness about the specific needs of LBTI women and women with disabilities who are victims of violence, and about the role of men and boys in prevention efforts.

47. Most awareness-raising measures are carried out by the MDDSZ, with some campaigns also led by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Digital Transformation and other state agencies. As mentioned under Article 8 above, the MDDSZ has an annual recurring budget to finance awareness-raising projects by women's rights NGOs that has increased year on year. GREVIO welcomes the fact that some of these projects address violence in the context of dating life, in the digital sphere among high-school students, violence occurring in nightlife settings and similar, and often include performative art to better reach out to youth and other social groups.

48. An online platform rolled out as a national awareness-raising focal point for the safe use of the internet, intended for children, parents and teachers, has been operating for over 15 years in Slovenia[39]. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that the platform includes educational materials and simplified guides on how to report to the relevant social media platform and to law enforcement several forms of violence occurring online, including the non-consensual publication of (intimate) images. In addition to reporting possibilities, GREVIO notes with satisfaction that the platform also contains educational material for children and teachers, including on the safe use of the internet and safe interactions in online games and social media.

49. GREVIO welcomes the fact that protocols to detect and report violence developed by the Ministry of Education and the National Education Institute are in place in schools, and teachers are trained to detect signs of violence. These protocols are accompanied by (non-mandatory) training materials for teachers, posters and infographics. Although it would appear that in practice incidents of violence may not always be appropriately detected or reported by schools, a study is underway to assess the implementation of these protocols and re-evaluate them, if necessary.[40]

50. GREVIO notes with concern that, despite the recent shift towards a consent-based definition of rape and sexual violence, few measures are in place to enhance the population's understanding of the notion of freely given consent in sexual relations, inform victims of their rights and the available services and send a clear message of zero tolerance to potential perpetrators of sexual violence. Prevention efforts addressing other forms of violence – some less visible, such as FGM, forced sterilisation and forced abortion, and others that are increasingly prevalent, such as stalking and the digital dimension of violence against women – would not only raise awareness of these forms of violence in society but would also enable more victims to report.

51. Last, it does not appear that any regular, formal or systematic evaluation is done in respect of the existing awareness-raising measures to allow for their adjustment and the identification of any undesirable or adverse effects.

52. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

a. step up primary prevention efforts to eradicate sexist prejudices and stereotypes in Slovenian society; for this purpose, the Slovenian authorities should make primary prevention of violence against women a priority in future action plans and measures; guidance on specific measures and tools for preventing and combating sexism, including in the media, can be drawn from Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating sexism;

38. Submission by the Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsperson, page 3.
39. www.safe.si.
40. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

b. conduct regular awareness-raising campaigns or programmes addressing different manifestations of violence against women and girls as covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in their digital dimension, as well as the heightened risk of gender-based violence of women and girls exposed to intersectional discrimination, for example women with disabilities, LBTI women and women from national and/or ethnic minorities, and address the importance of the notion of freely given consent in sexual relationships;
c. regularly carry out impact assessments of any primary prevention measures and awareness-raising campaigns;
d. identify, through such impact assessments, any undesirable or adverse effects of the awareness-raising campaigns and adjust them accordingly.

2. Education (Article 14)

53. The drafters of the Istanbul Convention recognised the important role that 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 and 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 facilities as well as any sports, cultural and leisure facilities. In this context, GREVIO underlines the importance of informing parents about the content of related courses, the qualifications of the persons providing the courses and to whom any questions can be directed.

54. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had found that topics such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent interpersonal conflict resolution and the right to personal integrity were not sufficiently covered in educational curricula. In addition, it had found that a further need to invest in early intervention by educators existed where girls were at risk of any of the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention.

55. In 2020, the Active Citizenship programme was introduced at the level of high-school education in Slovenia. Depending on the type and specialisation of the individual school, this programme is included in the mandatory curriculum for 30 to 40 hours per year. The goals of the teaching programme are set by the National Education Institute and are publicly available.[41] The topics covered by the Active Citizenship programme refer to critical thinking, democratic participation and human rights, which are treated in broad terms. GREVIO notes with concern that equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, non-violent interpersonal conflict resolution, the right to personal integrity or the notion of consent in sexual relations are not covered by this programme. Although the integration of these topics into school curricula was set as the first measure to be implemented under the fourth objective of the national strategy, it does not appear that they are currently integrated into the curricula for Active Citizenship, or any other teaching programme for primary or high-school education in Slovenia.[42] While a reform of the school curricula was recently undertaken in Slovenia it does not appear that any elements of Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention were introduced. GREVIO notes the view expressed in 2023 by the Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsperson and Slovenian NGOs that further reforms in this regard were needed.[43]

56. GREVIO regrets the lack of progress since the baseline evaluation report and reiterates the importance of ensuring the inclusion of all elements set out in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention, adapted to the capacity of learners, in mandatory school curricula as a way of contributing to the primary prevention of violence against women by promoting equality between women and men,

41. www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/2019-12-04_aktivno_drzavljanstvo_gim_predlog_ucnega_nacrta_november_2019.pdf
42. Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (2024-2029), objective no. 4, measure no. 1.
43. See the submission from the Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsperson, page 6, and Article 12, General obligations, above.

non-violent conflict resolution, mutual respect and eradicating prejudices, among other important values.[44] It also considers that the introduction of the elements set out in Article 14 of the convention is an essential tool to meet the challenge posed by the proliferation of discourses that deny the existence of violence against women and provides an opportunity to teach about the notion of freely given consent in sexual and interpersonal relations, the harmful effects of violent pornography and the impact that sharing intimate images of oneself or others can have.

57. NGOs working in the field have also drawn GREVIO's attention to the fact that skills and knowledge related to the topics listed in Article 14 of the convention are often lacking among primary education teachers.[45] GREVIO underlines that this challenge requires further close attention by the Slovenian authorities.

58. Currently there are no unified rules for detecting and acting on sexual harassment cases and other forms of violence against women in sports, and the regulation is left to individual sports federations. However, the Slovenian Olympic Committee has set up an anonymous platform for reporting harassment and other types of misconduct, which GREVIO welcomes.[46] The Slovenian Ombudsperson for Athletes' Rights is also involved in creating a safe sporting environment for all participants in sport, focusing specifically on measures to eradicate sexual and verbal violence in sports by instructing the relevant sports organisations to introduce policies and awareness-raising programmes concerning these two problems.

59. **Recalling the findings from the baseline evaluation, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure that all the topics covered in Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Istanbul Convention – gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution, gender-based violence and the right to personal integrity – as well as the importance of freely given consent, including in sexual relations, and the harmful effects of violent pornography are effectively taught in practice;**
- **b. ensure that all programmes are supported with adequate teaching materials and delivered by teachers with appropriate training, adapted to the age and evolving capacity of learners;**
- **c. monitor to what extent these subjects are taught in schools in practice and conduct regular evaluation of these programmes.**

3. Training of professionals (Article 15)

60. 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.

61. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had urged the Slovenian authorities to ensure systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training on the prevention and detection of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, on equality between women and men, on the needs and rights of victims and on the prevention of secondary victimisation for all professional groups, in particular in the healthcare sector, social work and the judiciary.

62. As underlined in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, an obligation to undergo regular in-service training is set in law for professionals from the judiciary and other sectors that come into

44. See Article 12, General obligations, above.
45. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 31.
46. "Žvižgavka", available at www.oks.zvizgavka.si/.

contact with victims of violence against women.[47] However, GREVIO regrets that no progress has been made in implementing this obligation in practice as regards members of the judiciary. There is currently no mandatory in-service training on domestic violence or other types of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention for this category of professionals. In-service training offered by the Judicial Training Centre is sparse and organised on an ad hoc basis, often taking the form of workshops and conferences. Attendance remains voluntary for both judges and prosecutors.[48] Training courses discussing forms of violence other than domestic violence, or the application of a trauma-informed approach when dealing with victims of violence are not provided systematically. GREVIO notes with concern that no training was organised on the application of the consent-based definition of rape, which was recently introduced into Slovenian legislation, including on building cases of sexual violence or on dealing with victims of rape. Moreover, it appears that there is no system of accreditation or verification for individual professionals from the judiciary who have attended any specific training course over their years of service.[49]

63. While GREVIO underscores its full respect for the independence and autonomy of members of the judiciary as well as for 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 incorporating its principles into national legislation. By virtue of this essential role, their decisions may directly engage states' responsibility.[50] 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, as well as 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 training academies are moving towards mandatory training on violence against women to address the complex nature of these offences. This is supported by 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 that the complex nature of violence against women would merit inclusion of these topics.[51] 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 offer sufficient consideration of 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.[52]

64. Linked to the above, GREVIO notes with concern that the training of prosecutors on issues of violence against women remains similarly limited.[53] In particular, no training was organised for prosecutors on the application of the new consent-based definition of rape.

47. Domestic Violence Prevention Act, Article 10, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6.
48. For details on attendance, see the state report, pages 20-23. These numbers should be interpreted against the fact that there are currently around 900 judges and 300 prosecutors currently holding office at all levels across the country. See European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), Study on the judicial systems in the EU member states, Country fiche Slovenia (2022), page 1291, available at www.rm.coe.int/slovenia-eu-scoreboard-country-fiches-2022-data/1680b06603.
49. State report, pages 65-74. Also see the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 33.
50. The following are examples among many cases in the area of violence against women where the decisions of judge(s) engaged states' responsibility under the European Convention on Human Rights and led to a violation thereof: *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).
51. Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), Qualitative Data on European Judicial Systems, 2020, available at: www.public.tableau.com/app/profile/cepej/viz/QualitativeDataEN/QualitativeData.
52. See also Article 31, Custody, visitation rights and safety, Article 49, General obligations, and Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.
53. See Article 50, Immediate response, prevention and protection.

65. Although training for court experts is organised through their respective professional institutions, GREVIO regrets that very limited steps have been taken to introduce issues falling under the purview of the Istanbul Convention in the respective training programmes. GREVIO notes that the same applies to training provided to practising lawyers.

66. The topic of gender equality and the application of the protocol for responding to reports of domestic violence form part of the initial training for police cadets. Responding to domestic violence is also part of the mandatory programme for in-service training of serving law-enforcement officers, which GREVIO welcomes.[54] GREVIO notes the progress achieved through the effective application of a "trickle-down" training system for law-enforcement officers, which envisages the training of "multiplier" officers at a central level, who should then disseminate the knowledge further, in line with the dynamic prescribed in the Action Plan on Domestic Violence of the Ministry of the Interior (2025-2026).[55] However, little training is available on forms of violence other than domestic violence. Topics such as interviewing victims of sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking or other forms of violence against women, and the application of a trauma-informed approach when dealing with women victims, should be part of training programmes in order to prevent secondary victimisation of the women victims of violence and to enhance their trust in law enforcement.

67. GREVIO regrets that progress regarding the inclusion of topics falling under the purview of the Istanbul Convention in the training for healthcare professionals has been limited. Although initial, basic training on working with victims of violence against women appears to be included in the training for various categories of healthcare professionals, it is mandatory for paediatricians and family medicine specialists only.[56] When it comes to in-service training on violence against women, GREVIO notes that it is limited to nurses, midwives and healthcare technicians.[57] In-service training for medical doctors appears to be limited. Healthcare professionals working in gynaecology and neonatal services receive in-service training, including through the Professional Chamber of Midwives, which is particularly active in the field of domestic violence detection and prevention. A number of other training courses for these categories of professionals are available, albeit on a voluntary basis. However, indications from practising medical professionals suggest that they have not received any initial or in-service training on detection or screening for signs of violence, referrals or treatment of such victims.[58] GREVIO underlines the need for further efforts to better include medical professionals, in particular frontline medical staff, in initial and in-service training programmes concerning violence against women. This is particularly important given their unique role in the detection of cases of violence and the trust that victims often place in such professionals.

68. Initial training for social workers on violence against women continues to be limited and is not mandatory, which GREVIO regrets.[59] The MDDSZ designs and funds activities in terms of ongoing training for staff working at SWCs, which are delivered by the Social Chamber of Slovenia. Additional training is provided by the ministry directly and by the association of SWCs. However, as was similarly observed by GREVIO during its baseline evaluation, the in-service training provided to staff at SWCs is still almost entirely focused on domestic violence and remains optional. GREVIO notes with concern information submitted by women's rights organisations that some of the staff working at SWCs do not have an adequate understanding of the cycle of domestic violence or the unequal distribution of power between men and women underpinning such violence. As a consequence, violence is often treated as a behavioural issue and as a "relationship conflict or disagreement between partners".[60] Given the central role of the SWCs in protecting women victims

54. State report, pages 63 and 74, and information obtained during the evaluation visit.
55. Action Plan on Domestic Violence of the Ministry of Interior (2025-2026), page 4.
56. State report, pages 61-62. According to the most recent research into this issue in Slovenia (2015), medical professionals identified a lack of systematic training in the area of violence against women, with over 80% not having attended such a training. See www.prepoznajnasilje.si/en/project-details/research-results.
57. The training also covers topics such as violence against the elderly, issues of addiction and mental health. See the state report, page 75.
58. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
59. State report, page 61.
60. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 33

of domestic violence in Slovenia, GREVIO underlines the need for in-depth training on domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

69. Last, GREVIO notes more generally that specialised NGOs do not appear to be sufficiently involved in the training of professionals in the field of violence against women in Slovenia. Regular evaluation of the training efforts concerning all the categories of professionals is similarly lacking.

70. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, and in view of the persistent gaps in ensuring mandatory training of professionals, whose contribution to a trust-based system of support, protection and justice is vital, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure the provision of systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training to professionals in the judiciary on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
- **b. ensure that such training addresses the implementation of the new legislation on rape and aims to identify women victims of violence and refer them to specialist support services.**

71. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. step up the training of all professionals dealing with victims of violence against women on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular of those working in the law-enforcement, social welfare and healthcare sectors; such training should focus on the victims' human rights, safety, individual needs and empowerment and the prevention of secondary victimisation through a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach, including in particular on identifying women victims of violence and referring them to specialist support services;**
- **b. conduct regular evaluations of the impact of training and maximise the impact by drawing on the expertise of women's rights organisations and providers of specialist support services.**

4. Preventive intervention and treatment programmes (Article 16)

72. Perpetrator programmes are important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating violence against women. Under Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention, parties are required to set up or support programmes that prevent perpetrators of domestic violence and of sexual violence from reoffending and support them to adopt 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

73. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had encouraged the Slovenian authorities to increase the number of available programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and to ensure that minimum quality standards and a multi-agency approach are applied and that the programmes are evaluated according to international best practices.

74. All certified programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence in Slovenia continue to be provided by the Association for Non-violent Communication, which is present in nine regions of the country, thereby covering almost the entire territory of Slovenia.[61] All programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence are currently supervised by the MDDSZ and evaluated internally by the

61. Other programmes that lack certification also operate, albeit in a very limited way.

Slovenian Social Protection Institute.[62] Despite the certification process in place, which conditions funding, national standards for programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence have not been introduced since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report. GREVIO points to the newly developed European standards for perpetrator programmes, which fully align with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention and should serve as a basis for any efforts to expand and develop further such programmes in Slovenia.[63]

75. The programmes in place are funded by the MDDSZ, complemented by municipal funding. They begin with an individual assessment of needs, followed by 24 group sessions per year. Risk assessment is conducted for each participant every three months, which GREVIO welcomes. The programme focuses on behavioural change, accepting responsibility and teaching non-violent ways of communication, and is rooted in a gendered understanding of domestic violence, which GREVIO similarly welcomes.

76. Perpetrators attend these programmes either by court order or voluntarily. GREVIO notes with concern that the increased demand for these programmes in the past few years has led to a delay of up to several months to enrol in a programme. A public call issued by the MDDSZ in 2025 for the creation of two new programmes is expected to alleviate some of the pressure.

77. As to perpetrators of domestic violence serving prison sentences, GREVIO notes with regret that some of the programmes provided by the social and counselling services in prisons, which existed at the time of its baseline evaluation, have since been discontinued. Prisoners therefore have even fewer options for participation in specialised programmes. Moreover, while the staff running these programmes in prisons are receiving training from the Association for Non-Violent Communication to increase the impact and adapt the methodology of the programmes, additional specialisation is needed. Last, information brought to GREVIO's attention indicates that these programmes are in need of standardisation, as already highlighted in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, and that they require additional resources.[64]

78. **GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. develop common minimum standards for perpetrator programmes in prison as well as in non-custodial settings, in line with Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention and the European standards for perpetrator programmes, to be applied across the country;**
- **b. ensure an external evaluation of the programmes, in line with recognised best practices and principles, in order to assess their effectiveness and lack of adverse effects.**

b. Programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence

79. GREVIO had found in its baseline evaluation report that voluntary programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence were available in several prisons across Slovenia and were operated by prison psychologists.

80. Since the baseline evaluation, these programmes continue to be available. However, indications received by GREVIO from professionals working in the field suggest that these voluntary programmes are not sufficient in number and not effectively operating in many prisons. Furthermore, reluctance to participate among convicted perpetrators remains high, limiting the overall impact of the programme.[65] No information is available about the adoption of national standards regarding these programmes or an evaluation thereof.

62. Inštitut Republike Slovenije za socialno varstvo. The last evaluation made in 2024 can be found on the website of the institute: www.irssv.si/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Drustvo-za-nenasilno-komunikacijo_Poti-iz-nasilja_TSV.pdf.
63. See www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/european-standards-for-perpetrator-programmes.
64. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
65. Ibid.

81. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

a. take steps to improve the levels of attendance on sexual violence perpetrator programmes;
b. ensure that programmes for this category of perpetrators are available in sufficient numbers;
c. ensure that common minimum standards for such programmes are developed and that external evaluations of the programmes are carried out on a regular basis.

B. Protection and support

82. 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)

83. 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.

84. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had urged the Slovenian authorities to set up institutionalised structures for co-ordination and co-operation among all the different governmental agencies and service providers, including women's rights organisations, and to ensure multi-agency co-operation tailored to the specific needs of victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. Where such responses were in place – notably with respect to victims of domestic violence through the multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) created in SWCs – the need to implement a gendered perspective had been identified as a priority.

85. GREVIO notes with concern that outside of the work done by MDTs on domestic violence, institutionalised structures for co-ordination and co-operation on cases of violence against women continue to be lacking in Slovenia. As already noted in GREVIO's baseline evaluation, there are no one-stop-shop services for victims of other forms of gender-based violence against women. As a consequence, victims of sexual violence, forced marriage or other types of violence continue to have to seek support from multiple agencies, requiring separate appointments, travel and having to give testimony repeatedly. GREVIO cannot but note that the response to their needs is not provided in a co-ordinated manner.[66]

66. Since 2022, child victims of sexual violence have been able to make use of the first children's house (Barnahus) in Ljubljana.

86. As for domestic violence, co-ordination and co-operation continue to be mostly provided through the social work centres, which are the first point of reference for all other authorities dealing with such cases. The SWCs decide on the measures to be taken in all individual cases and are in charge of further referral of victims. The SWC case officer may set up an MDT for a specific case. The MDT is then required to follow the case and meet regularly to discuss progress or the need for adjustment in individual cases.[67] GREVIO notes, however, that the practice of forming an MDT is not sufficiently used and appears to be restricted to a few, very complex cases of violence, and cases involving children. GREVIO welcomes the fact that a wide spectrum of interlocutors is invited to participate in these teams, including the police, judiciary, healthcare structures and providers of specialist support services, which in practice are predominantly women's rights NGOs. However, these bodies are not involved in the day-to-day work of SWCs and their participation in MDTs is not systematic. In the case of healthcare structures in particular, participation in MDTs remains very limited. Moreover, GREVIO notes that the co-operation between relevant bodies in the work of MDTs, despite being based on a protocol, often depends in practice on the will, personal expertise and dedication of the individuals who are called to participate. GREVIO therefore welcomes the planned revision of the existing guidelines and protocols in the field of domestic violence and violence against women, which is envisaged in the NAP for 2025.[68]

87. As regards the implementation of a gendered perspective at the level of SWCs, GREVIO notes with concern that it greatly depends on individual social workers and centres. While individual social workers at SWCs demonstrate a high level of awareness of the uneven power dynamics that are present in cases of domestic violence and implement practices such as scheduling separate meetings with the victim and the perpetrator, this is not always the case. Traditional gender roles are still frequently reinforced by certain SWCs.[69] This is particularly evident from reports of the downplaying of violence made to GREVIO by lawyers working in the field, and the application of questionable methods and unsafe practices when supervised visits of children by (violent) parents are organised at the centres.[70] Such discrepancies in the practice of SWCs and social workers can be accounted for by frequent staff turnover, as the information available to GREVIO suggests.

88. Against this background, GREVIO considers it important to provide further training to SWC staff and to undertake the revision of the existing guidelines on how to deal with cases of domestic violence, and adopt new ones, where relevant. This should contribute to streamlining the response of SWCs to cases of violence and increasing trust among victims.

89. Moreover, women's rights organisations alerted GREVIO to the systemic practice of SWCs reporting cases of domestic violence to the police.[71] GREVIO notes with concern that this practice can lead to victims hesitating to reach out to SWCs, preferring to stay outside of the existing framework for support and to seek help through informal means, or within the community.[72]

90. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to set up further institutionalised structures for co-ordination and co-operation among all the relevant stakeholders and service providers to ensure multi-agency co-operation tailored to the specific needs of victims of all forms of**

67. Article 6(2) of the Rules on co-operation between authorities and on the operation of social work centres, multidisciplinary teams and regional services in dealing with domestic violence (Pravilnik o sodelovanju organov ter o delovanju centrov za socialno delo, multidisciplinarnih timov in regijskih služb pri obravnavi nasilja v družini, updated in 2017), available at the following link: www.pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV9598.
68. Second objective, measure no. 1 of the NAP (2024-2025).
69. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 38.
70. These practices are outlined in Article 31, Custody, visitation rights and safety. Women's rights organisations pointed to the fact that different departments at SWCs work on violence against women and supervised custody, and they do not always co-operate effectively.
71. GREVIO noted that the individual practice in terms of the possibility to accompany the victim to make a report or make a report to the police directly may vary between SWCs, but in any event, the police will be notified of an incident of domestic violence in practice.
72. Information obtained during the evaluation visit. A low level of trust in the authorities is especially present among Roma women victims, who often resort to solutions inside the community or simply do not report the violence at all.

violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention across the country. Where appropriate, one-stop shops should be set up to provide such services to victims of violence against women.

91. **Moreover, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure that multidisciplinary teams set up by social work centres are effectively convened when needed and are operational in practice, and ensure the involvement of all the relevant professionals in their work, in particular of healthcare professionals;**
- **b. take steps to review existing guidelines and protocols to ensure effective co-operation, and adopt new ones concerning the different forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, where appropriate;**
- **c. ensure that multi-agency co-operation mechanisms on domestic violence and other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention take a distinctly gendered approach, operate on the basis of the principle of safety of victims and respect for their human rights, as required by Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention.**

2. General support services (Article 20)

92. General support services, such as social services, health services and 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 states parties to ensure that these services are adequately resourced and that the staff are 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 (health and social services).[73] 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

93. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had stressed the need to set up dedicated programmes aimed at empowering victims, including gaining economic independence to ensure their recovery, including through long-term housing solutions.

94. The majority of essential services for victims of violence against women, such as financial, social support and counselling, continue to be provided by the SWCs. Individual victim plans, prepared by the SWCs, outline the needs of individual victims. The SWC will either address such needs directly or they will make a referral to the appropriate support service. However, as outlined above, some SWCs demonstrate an insufficient understanding of the gendered nature of violence against women and do not systematically co-operate with all providers offering specialist support services to women victims of violence.[74]

95. The most important reform to address the shortcomings identified in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report undertaken by the Slovenian authorities consists of the amendments brought to the Employment Relationships Act in November of 2023. This reform was guided by a recognition of the impact of domestic violence and the specific needs of victims, who now enjoy special protection against dismissal, the right to a temporary adjustment of working hours (granting a part-time contract or an adjustment in the victim's work schedule), an additional five days of paid leave and a restriction on overtime and night work or reassignment, which GREVIO welcomes.[75]

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73. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 127.
74. See Article 18, General obligations.
75. Act on Amendments and Additions to the Labour Relations Act (ZDR-1D): www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/2023-01-3325; see also the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 13.

96. Although women victims of violence continue to be considered a priority category in the allocation of social housing, the overall shortage of housing (including social housing) in Slovenia negatively impacts their access to it. Moreover, not all municipalities in Slovenia have social housing programmes available. As a consequence, the waiting time for social housing, where it is available, has increased for all categories of applicants, including women victims of violence.[76] Challenges in securing housing appear to be even more pronounced for elderly women, Roma women and women who are foreign nationals.[77]

97. GREVIO notes that no specific scheme for short- or long-term financial support is available to women victims of violence in Slovenia. Similarly, it also does not appear that women victims of violence are considered as a priority category with regard to seeking employment, through the provision of training, education or other measures.

98. Representatives of women's rights organisations have indicated to GREVIO that access to social services for women exposed to intersectional discrimination is often hampered by a lack of understanding among professionals of how to apply an intersectional perspective. Roma women, in particular, appear to be impacted by this shortcoming. They consequently have limited access to the services available. The needs of women victims of violence who are asylum seekers and refugees are similarly not adequately addressed, in the absence of a mechanism to systematically screen, identify and refer them to appropriate specialist support services.

99. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to continue their efforts to support the recovery and economic independence of women victims of violence, in particular through measures involving financial assistance, education and training support, and assistance in finding employment and affordable housing. In doing so, additional measures must also be taken to provide more effective responses to the needs of women and girls who are victims of violence and who are exposed to intersectional discrimination, including Roma women, elderly women and asylum-seeking and refugee women.**

b. Healthcare services

100. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had observed that the applicable protocols in the domain of healthcare services for the identification of women victims of violence and their referral to specialist support services had been insufficiently implemented. This had been particularly pressing concerning women victims of forms of violence other than domestic violence.

101. GREVIO notes that the applicable protocol for the treatment of domestic violence cases within the framework of the healthcare system dates back to 2011.[78] In 2015, more extensive professional guidelines for dealing with domestic violence cases in the context of healthcare activities were adopted.[79] These guidelines identify a high prevalence of domestic violence among women, elderly people and persons with disabilities, put forward good practices for screening for violence and prescribe appropriate procedures to follow once signs of domestic violence have been identified.[80] However, GREVIO notes with concern that not all healthcare professionals are familiar with these guidelines and that they are not consistently applied. For example, professionals working in gynaecology and neonatology appear to be well acquainted with screening procedures, applying

76. For example, depending on the size of the family, waiting times for social housing in Ljubljana currently vary between six months and four years. See www.jssmol.si/najem/dodeljevanje-bivalnih-enot.
77. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 50 and 56, and information obtained during the evaluation visit. Addressing the problem of access to social housing for residents in Slovenia who are not nationals is envisaged in the national strategy, objective no. 2, measure no. 18.
78. Rules and procedures for working with domestic violence in healthcare activities (Pravilnik o pravilih in postopkih pri obravnavanju nasilja v družini pri izvajanju zdravstvene dejavnosti), available at: www.pisrs.si/pregledNpb?idPredpisa=PRAV10303&idPredpisaChng=PRAV10303.
79. Available here: www.prepoznajnasilje.si/docs/default-source/zakonodaja/strokovne-smernice-za-obravnavo-nasilja-v-dru%C5%BEini-pri-izvajanju-zdravstvene-dejavnosti.pdf.
80. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 34-39.

a gender-sensitive approach and the protocols for interagency co-operation and referral of victims, but this does not seem to be the case for most other medical professionals. As a result, the experiences of women victims of violence in the healthcare sector continue to vary significantly.[81]

102. Moreover, GREVIO welcomes the publication in 2022 of a handbook on dealing with domestic violence in health and social care institutions by the Professional Chamber of Midwives, noting that it provides useful tools to detect and take care of women victims of violence, both committed against the staff of these institutions and among the general public. However, it notes that the recommendations contained in this handbook are limited to domestic violence and are not formally implemented by these institutions.[82] As such, although a positive development, the handbook cannot be seen as replacing or updating the formal protocol and guidelines discussed above. GREVIO notes with concern that all of these documents only refer to domestic violence and that no protocols are in place regarding sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, violence in the name of so-called honour or other forms of violence against women.

103. GREVIO notes that outside of the Women Abuse Screening Tool (WAST), a questionnaire used to screen for signs of violence among pregnant women and women going through postnatal examinations, there is currently no mandatory screening for signs of domestic or other types of violence by healthcare professionals.[83]

104. Regarding the reporting of cases of violence by professionals, the 2011 protocol on domestic violence mentioned above requires healthcare professionals to report to the police when they detect signs of such violence, in contradiction with Article 28 of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO notes that this obligation appears to be widely followed in practice.[84] GREVIO received information indicating that some victims misrepresent the origin of their injuries to healthcare providers in order to receive treatment while avoiding mandatory reporting.[85] This, together with the shortcomings noted above regarding screening, may help explain the apparent low number of domestic violence victims turning to healthcare professionals.[86]

105. GREVIO notes that the gaps in the response given by healthcare professionals to women victims of violence may be attributed to the lack of initial and in-service training for all categories of healthcare professionals.[87] However, it also notes that the healthcare system on the whole appears to be insufficiently integrated within the framework for the protection of victims of violence against women in place in Slovenia, including in the multidisciplinary teams working at SWCs and in any prevention programmes. GREVIO underlines the importance of taking measures to improve the response of the healthcare system to the needs of victims and to increase the co-operation and co-ordination of the healthcare sector with other parties within the victim support framework. This is particularly important given that medical professionals are often the first point of contact for women victims of violence seeking support and protection.

106. Regarding access to healthcare, GREVIO welcomes the fact that all women victims of violence, regardless of whether they have medical insurance, may obtain a medical certificate identifying the injuries suffered, free of charge.

107. Finally, GREVIO notes that there is no co-ordination between the healthcare infrastructure for people with mental health issues and the services available to women victims of violence. As a result, women victims of violence with mental health issues cannot benefit from both types of support simultaneously.

81. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
82. Ibid.
83. For the use of the WAST questionnaire, see the state report, page 14.
84. Article 5(1) of the protocol.
85. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
86. Information obtained during the evaluation visit. Official, disaggregated data on reports of violence from healthcare institutions in Slovenia are currently not systematically collected; see Article 11, Data collection.
87. See Article 15, Training of professionals.

108. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

a. **take measures to ensure that healthcare services are fully integrated into all co-ordination mechanisms on violence against women; this would include ensuring that existing standardised care pathways in the healthcare sector are fully implemented and that new ones are introduced where necessary in order to ensure a holistic, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach to identifying, treating and referring victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
b. **take measures to ensure that all women and girls who are victims of violence have access to comprehensive healthcare services for their experiences of violence, with a particular focus on the needs of victims with mental health issues.**

3. Specialist support services (Article 22)

109. Specialist support services ensure the complex task of empowering victims through optimal support and assistance catered to their specific needs and are 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.

110. Although GREVIO had identified in its baseline evaluation report a need to introduce specialist support services regarding forms of violence other than domestic violence, no such steps have been taken since.

111. GREVIO had also raised concerns in its baseline evaluation report about access to women's shelters and other programmes that provide safe accommodation for women victims of violence. In this respect, women's rights organisations have shared with GREVIO concerns regarding difficulties for Roma and migrant women victims of violence to access such structures across the country. Certain shelters refuse access to Roma women, justifying their refusal by fears of compromising the location's anonymity, while migrant women lack information about the services available.[88] Additionally, women in a situation of irregular migration appear reluctant to use such services out of fear of deportation.[89] GREVIO notes with regret that the counselling office for migrant women that had been operating in the country since 2023 was closed down in 2024.[90]

112. GREVIO welcomes the fact that specialist support services tailored to the needs of certain groups of women victims of violence exposed to intersectional discrimination continue to operate. For example, there is a safe house for women with disabilities and an adapted accommodation programme for such women provided by NGOs and co-funded by the state. Additionally, the shelter for women with addiction issues who are victims of domestic violence, co-financed by the MDDSZ and the municipality of Ljubljana, continues to operate. GREVIO further notes with interest the fact that the creation of transitional houses between accommodation in shelters for victims of domestic violence and independent housing is envisaged in the national strategy.[91]

113. As discussed in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, maternity homes, whose role is to provide temporary housing to pregnant women and women with small children that experience economic and social hardship, are sometimes used to provide temporary accommodation to women victims of violence who face difficulties finding housing. GREVIO notes, however, that that they have no security arrangements in place and do not offer the necessary support or empowerment to women

88. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
89. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 59 and 60, and information obtained during the evaluation visit.
90. See also Article 8, Financial resources.
91. Objective no. 2, measure no. 13 of the national strategy.

victims of violence.[92] They therefore do not meet the requirements of a shelter under Article 23 of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO underlines that in order to be able to fulfil their task of ensuring the safety of women and children, it is crucial that shelters assess the security situation of each victim and draw up an individual security plan. The technical security of the building is another key issue for shelters as violent attacks by perpetrators are a threat not only to the women and their children but also to the staff and other people in the surrounding area. Women victims of violence usually face multiple, interlocking problems related to their health, safety, financial situation and the well-being of their children, and specialist women's shelters are best equipped to address these problems and respond to the multiple needs of these women.[93]

114. In 2023 the MDDSZ provided financing for 22 residential programmes for women victims of violence and their children, including 11 shelters where victims can stay for up to one year, and three emergency crisis centres where victims can stay for up to three weeks. Concerning the capacity of shelters, in 2022 there were 254 individual places available in Slovenian shelters.[94] The information available suggests that the number of places has increased to around 270 since then, which GREVIO welcomes. It notes, however, that only a fraction of these places are family places.[95]

115. Although certain specialist women's rights organisations have made parts of their shelters accessible to women with physical disabilities, the majority of shelters and all of the crisis centres in Slovenia continue to be inaccessible for these women. Furthermore, not all shelters currently offering services to women victims of violence have made adequate security arrangements. Victims residing in shelters without specific security arrangements may therefore be exposed to risks of renewed violence.[96] Women with teenage boys face particular challenges to secure accommodation given that most shelters do not accept boys above the age of 15. NGO-run shelters address this issue by seeking alternative accommodation for such families in apartments outside the regular service framework, often covering the full cost themselves.[97]

116. Although access to and services provided at crisis centres are free of charge, monthly fees amounting to 30% of the minimal social income prescribed by law continue to be charged to victims for the use of residential shelters. Additional charges apply for each child accompanying the victim. Although these fees are only applied if the victim has a continuous source of income, GREVIO emphasises that fees may sometimes act as barriers to accessing shelters.[98]

117. With regard to the existence of a national telephone helpline, in its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had urged the Slovenian authorities to ensure the sustainable operation of a national helpline that would be accessible 24/7 and be supported by long-term funding to guarantee its continuous functioning. Therefore, it notes with satisfaction that the continuous operation of the national helpline for women victims of violence, run by the Association SOS Helpline since 1989, has been secured through new funding from the MDDSZ on the basis of a seven-year grant.[99] The helpline has expanded its capacity and currently operates in Slovenian, English, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. It receives around 250 calls per month.[100] Although GREVIO welcomes this increase in funding, additional funding is still needed to reduce the helpline's dependence on volunteers, especially during the night hours and weekends.[101]

92. See Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 133.
93. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraphs 133 and 134.
94. National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2030, page 60.
95. Information obtained during the evaluation visit. The standard applied by the Istanbul Convention is one family place per 10 000 population. See the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 135.
96. GREVIO received reports of incidents happening at shelters in Slovenia in the past, when their location became known to the perpetrator.
97. Information obtained during the valuation visit.
98. See GREVIO's first thematic evaluation report on Belgium, paragraph 125.
99. See Article 8, Financial resources.
100. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 15, and information obtained during the evaluation visit.
101. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

118. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. increase the number and capacity of shelters providing safe accommodation to victims of all forms of violence against women, with an adequate geographical distribution, with the aim of achieving the standard set in the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention of one family place per 10 000 inhabitants;**
- **b. ensure that all women victims of gender-based violence, including in particular Roma and migrant women and their children, irrespective of their age, have access to long-term domestic violence shelters;**
- **c. provide adequate specialist support services throughout the country for women victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
- **d. ensure that the national helpline is supported through sufficient and sustainable resources to secure its continuous operation.**

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

119. Under Article 25 of the Istanbul 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 ensure the victim's recovery. Such services should be provided by trained and specialist 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.[102]

120. GREVIO, in its baseline evaluation report, had noted with concern the absence of rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres in Slovenia. It had similarly noted the absence of any protocol addressing the protection needs of victims of sexual violence. Last, it had underlined the need to ensure that forensic examinations are conducted in a timely and gender-sensitive manner, with full respect for victims' dignity and integrity.

121. GREVIO notes with regret that no rape crisis or sexual violence centres for adult victims have been established in Slovenia since the adoption of its baseline evaluation report.[103] As a consequence, victims of sexual violence continue to be received at general hospitals, at either trauma-related or gynaecological departments, where they are provided with basic medical care. They are then referred to other services such as SWCs where they are offered the same services as those available to victims of domestic violence.

122. In Slovenia, forensic evidence is collected at 14 general hospitals across the country, where gynaecologists are called upon to carry out the evidence gathering in case of rape. The National Forensic Institute may also collect evidence directly, although in practice its role is largely limited to examining forensic material and issuing reports.[104] A request for a forensic examination can only be made by a public institution such as law-enforcement agencies, the courts or other healthcare bodies. GREVIO notes with concern that victims cannot undergo such a forensic examination at their own request and for their own use, without the information being forwarded to the relevant prosecuting authorities. Forensic evidence can be stored only as part of an open criminal investigation.

123. Some women's rights organisations offer specialised counselling programmes based on a trauma-informed approach, but these are not integrated into a standardised referral pathway and operate only with a limited capacity.[105] Outside of these, psychological support for victims of sexual

102. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 142.
103. The first Barnahus in Slovenia, based in Ljubljana, opened its doors in May 2022. See www.coe.int/en/web/children/-/first-barnahus-for-child-victims-of-sexual-abuse-launched-in-slovenia.
104. See www.ism-mf.si/strokovna-dejavnost/klinicna-forenzicna-ambulanta/.
105. See GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Slovenia, paragraph 194.

violence in Slovenia is provided by mental healthcare centres that are part of the general public healthcare system. GREVIO notes that these services do not specialise in support for victims of sexual violence, who must secure an appointment with these services on their own initiative. Moreover, as waiting times for such services are very long because of excessive demand, victims often have to obtain such services from individual private therapists, which can be costly.[106]

124. GREVIO notes with grave concern the insufficient focus on victims of sexual violence in Slovenia. This is manifested at the policy level through the lack of specialist protocols and specialist support services (holistic or otherwise) to address the needs of such victims. In terms of healthcare, victims of sexual violence are offered basic medical treatment for any physical trauma, without any specialist short- or long-term psychological counselling and support, outside of the limited support provided by the specialist NGOs mentioned above. The impossibility of obtaining a forensic examination without reporting the crime further reinforces the perception that victims of sexual violence have limited agency or possibilities under the applicable legislation in Slovenia and deprives them of the possibility to obtain a crucial piece of evidence that would support their criminal complaint lodged at a later date, or in other proceedings. Urgent, systemic measures are necessary to address the needs of women victims of sexual violence.

125. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. establish rape crisis centres and/or sexual violence referral centres across the country, ensuring a sufficiently widespread geographical distribution to make them accessible to victims in both rural and urban areas. These centres must provide comprehensive support, including medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and immediate and long-term psychological counselling and support by qualified professionals trained in providing a victim-sensitive approach;**
- **b. develop a specific protocol for healthcare professionals to provide adequate support to victims of sexual violence and refer them to specialist support services;**
- **c. ensure that the collection and storage of forensic evidence is not contingent upon the victim's willingness to report the violence.**

C. Substantive law

126. 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.

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

127. 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

106. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

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.[107]

128. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had identified several shortcomings in the Slovenian authorities' implementation of Article 31 of the convention. It had urged the authorities to remedy the absence of an explicit obligation for courts to consider the existence of violence when determining custody, to require all stakeholders involved in decisions on custody and visitation rights to screen for violence and perform risk assessments; to introduce follow-up measures regarding institutional and court practices and strengthen interinstitutional co-operation and information exchange between civil and criminal courts and other relevant bodies; and to ensure that professionals monitor visitation arrangements and guarantee that they take place in a safe environment.

129. GREVIO notes with regret that no progress has been made regarding the explicit legal obligation for courts to take into account the existence of violence when deciding on issues of custody and visitation rights. It further notes with regret that civil courts are still not under an obligation to screen custody cases for indications or evidence of domestic violence or to conduct regular risk assessments as part of proceedings.[108] In line with the findings made during its baseline evaluation cycle, GREVIO underlines that it is essential, in order to ensure an effective implementation of Article 31 of the convention, to explicitly include in legislation, as criteria to be taken into account when determining custody and visitation rights, incidents of violence against women, including those witnessed by children.[109] Legislative reforms to address these shortcomings are therefore still needed.

130. Legal professionals and women's rights organisations working in the field have confirmed that civil courts rarely take into account indications or evidence of domestic violence in their decisions on custody. Civil courts are often unaware about the existence of such circumstances, as evidence of violence is rarely brought to their attention. In practice, Slovenian courts rely heavily on the reports of SWCs, which are requested in custody proceedings to assess whether the family situation, including any potential occurrence of violence, warrants a restriction or withdrawal of parental rights. As a consequence, it is mainly through an SWC's report that a history of abuse in the relationship is brought to a court's attention, and in the absence of such a report, it falls on the parties to produce evidence to the court. Unfortunately, GREVIO notes that the SWCs do not always mention domestic violence in their reports to courts, which, in turn, negatively impacts the rights and safety of women victims of violence and their children in custody proceedings.[110] Moreover, it appears that women victims of violence may not inform courts about the existence of domestic violence due to the lack of legal representation and/or the fear of retaliation by the abuser.[111]

131. With regard to the courts' own investigations into the existence of violence, GREVIO notes that in the absence of a well-functioning system to flag the existence of a criminal case or an emergency barring or protection order issued against one of the parties in a custody dispute, civil courts must request a search of the criminal courts' database through the relevant court registry in

107. It is noteworthy that in the case of *Bîzdîga v. the Republic of Moldova* (Application 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* (Application No. 55351/17, 17 October 2023), the Court found a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights on account of the failure of the Moldovan authorities to take into account incidents of domestic violence in the determination of child contact rights.
108. This was also highlighted by the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention. See the conclusions on the implementation of recommendations in respect of Slovenia adopted by the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention on 6 June 2025, IC-CP(2025)11, page 3, available here: www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/slovenia.
109. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 144.
110. See, for example, the case study presented in the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 64. According to the available information, this is partly because different teams within the SWCs deal with domestic violence and custody issues, and co-operation between them is not always systematic.
111. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

each individual case. Because these searches are carried out manually and only upon the judge's request, civil courts do not always receive this information.[112]

132. More importantly, when civil courts learn about indications or evidence of domestic violence, they often fail to recognise its gravity and impact on the children exposed to it. According to legal professionals working in the field, many civil court judges hold the belief that a child would suffer harm if they did not maintain regular contact with both parents, regardless of the family circumstances. Legal professionals have brought to GREVIO's attention the fact that courts frequently describe cases containing a history of domestic violence as merely "high-conflict (divorce) cases" in order to avoid having to act on such indications.[113] Moreover, custody proceedings often last for extended periods, partly due to a shortage of trained clinical psychologists who are often relied on to provide expert opinions. As a result of the practices laid out above, shared custody seems to be the preferred interim and long-term solution, including in cases where evidence of violence has been presented.[114] GREVIO notes with grave concern that such a practice places children exposed to domestic violence and their mothers at serious risk, with detrimental consequences for children's safety, health and development.

133. In a more positive development, GREVIO welcomes the growing recognition among the Slovenian authorities of the lack of a scientific basis of the so-called parental alienation syndrome, manifested through a circular distributed by the MDDSZ to all SWCs in 2023. The circular warns against the use of the so-called parental alienation syndrome, describing the concept as lacking scientific basis, and underlines that only solid, scientifically based approaches should be used in the SWCs' approach to handling cases of domestic violence. However, GREVIO notes that the so-called parental alienation syndrome (and related concepts) continue to be used in court opinions provided by SWCs in custody cases, by court experts, attorneys and the civil courts themselves.[115] Legal professionals have alerted GREVIO to the fact that the so-called parental alienation syndrome is used to justify continued contact with a violent parent, even when there is clear evidence of violence, such as a criminal conviction, police reports or the fact that a protection order was already in place against the violent parent.[116] The "syndrome" is employed to dismiss the reluctance demonstrated by children to spend time with their fathers by suggesting they have been alienated from them, including where this reluctance stems from exposure to abuse and the resulting fear and distrust. GREVIO reiterates that a child's exposure to physical, sexual or psychological violence and abuse between parents breeds fear, causes trauma and adversely affects children's health, well-being and development.[117] GREVIO also draws attention to the fact that joint parenting in these circumstances allows perpetrators to maintain their control and dominance over the mother and children.[118]

134. GREVIO welcomes the fact that most SWC staff members appear to be knowledgeable of the dynamics of domestic violence, the imbalance of power underpinning it and the risks for the safety of the child in supervised visits involving violent parents. However, the frequent turnover among SWC staff (including staff in charge of implementing supervised visits) results in not all staff being aware of and trained about the risks involved in such circumstances. This situation can put the safety of women victims of violence and their children at risk. Questionable practices continue to be reported in some SWCs, such as the use of inappropriate language by SWC staff to describe parents and incentivise children to take a position in a conflict between parents, the practice of leaving the room during a supervised visit or of organising a supervised visit in an unsafe location outside the SWC.[119] Last, GREVIO notes with concern information brought to its attention about instances where a court had mandated the custodial parent to undertake the supervision of the meetings between

112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 65.
115. See, for example, Judgment no. 400/2023 of 30 January 2024, Celje Court of Appeal, and Decision no. 858/2022, of 5 July 2022, Ljubljana Court of Appeal.
116. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
117. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 143.
118. See GREVIO's first thematic evaluation report on the Netherlands, paragraph 142.
119. Information obtained during the evaluation visit. See also the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 69 and 70.

the other violent parent and their child, which raises serious concerns about the safety of the non-violent parent and the children involved in such arrangements.[120]

135. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to take the following priority actions in the area of custody and visitation rights to ensure the safety of women victims of violence and their children:**

- **a. take measures to ensure that the negative impact that domestic violence has on children is reflected in legislation and that incidents of violence against women are a mandatory legal criterion to be taken into account when deciding on custody and visitation rights;**
- **b. in the determination of custody and visitation rights, introduce systematic screening and risk-assessment procedures, including through the use of standardised questionnaires, in order to establish whether there is a history of violence by one parent against the other;**
- **c. ensure a swift and effective exchange of information between civil and criminal courts and with other relevant stakeholders in order to identify indications or evidence of domestic violence and take all necessary measures to protect the victims;**
- **d. in the interim, carry out a thorough review of the judicial practice concerning custody and visitation rights in cases of parental separation with a history of violence in order to determine whether the current practice complies with the provisions of Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention;**
- **e. take further measures to inform the professionals concerned, particularly in the judiciary and social services, of the absence of any scientific grounds for the so-called parental alienation syndrome, as well as to raise public awareness concerning this subject;**
- **f. ensure that supervised visitation is ordered and carried out with due regard for the safety of children and their mothers.**

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

136. 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.

137. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had strongly encouraged the Slovenian authorities to take measures to prevent mediation from being treated as obligatory in practice in family disputes and divorce proceedings with a history of domestic violence. It had further underlined the need for guidelines to be developed in this respect. It had also expressed concern about settlement procedures being used without sufficient safeguards to protect the victim from secondary victimisation, intimidation and retaliation.

138. Article 22*e* of the DVPA explicitly excludes the use of alternative dispute resolution in civil law proceedings concerning any form of violence against women. Furthermore, Article 210 of the Family Code provides that in cases where domestic violence is suspected mediation between the parties shall not take place. In this regard GREVIO was alerted by women's rights organisations that parties undergoing divorce must participate in a preliminary procedure before a SWC, during which efforts are frequently made to reach an agreement concerning child custody, if relevant. An additional concern is the provision contained in Article 28 of the Act on Free Legal Aid, according to

120. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

which parties receiving free legal aid from the state are obliged to undergo mediation if the other party also agrees to it. In light of its findings under Article 31 highlighting that SWCs do not always detect or adequately record evidence of domestic violence in their reports to courts, GREVIO notes that, in the absence of adequate safeguards, women victims of violence, especially those receiving free legal aid, may find themselves exposed to pressure to reach a settlement regarding custody during preliminary proceedings before SWCs.[121] GREVIO notes with concern that these practices may amount to quasi-mandatory mediation. Such shortcomings should be remedied by the introduction of mandatory screening for domestic violence by civil courts, as outlined under Article 31 above.

139. GREVIO notes that under Slovenian criminal legislation, settlements and the conditional suspension of prosecution are only allowed for lesser crimes punishable by imprisonment of up to three years. This means that most forms of violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, are excluded from any such proceedings.[122] Nonetheless, GREVIO received information indicating that due to the frequent practice of downgrading cases of domestic violence to lesser crimes (in the absence of, for example, repetitive acts of violence), such cases end up being prosecuted as a "violation of public order", which makes it possible to circumvent the application of the above prohibition of settlement or conditional suspension of prosecution.[123] Despite the fact that any settlement requires the express consent of the victim, GREVIO notes with concern indications brought to its attention by legal practitioners that in such scenarios victims may feel pressured to reach a settlement. GREVIO considers that such situations cannot but have a negative impact on the victims' trust in the judiciary. It is therefore essential to introduce and apply safeguards to ensure that in such processes free and informed consent to an alternative dispute resolution is obtained from the victim.

140. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure that mediation procedures carried out in custody proceedings by the social work centres and civil courts do not amount to quasi-mandatory mediation in cases with a history of domestic violence; to do so, introduce screening procedures and mandatory guidelines to systematically detect cases of violence in family law proceedings;**
- **b. establish and implement adequate safeguards in criminal law cases to ensure that no direct or indirect pressure is placed on a woman victim of domestic violence to agree to an out-of-court settlement or the suspension of criminal proceedings against her perpetrator.**

121. See Article 31, Custody, visitation right and safety.
122. Outside of cases of stalking, slight physical harm and similar, which are punishable with sentences below this threshold.
123. See, for example, the case of a football player who had severely beaten his wife and threatened her life. The prosecution proposed and the court accepted a monetary fine of €2 790, which he paid to a local charity: www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/nekdanji-slovenski-nogometni-reprezentant-obsojen-zaradi-druzinskega-nasilja.html.
Also see General obligations (Article 49) and Immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50).

D. Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures

141. 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)

142. 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 and those in the judicial system 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.[124] 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 Istanbul 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

143. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had urged the Slovenian authorities to take measures to ensure a prompt and appropriate response from law-enforcement agencies in relation to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular by developing binding guidelines and applying a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach. It had further stated that measures to encourage reporting of all forms of violence against women, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence and rape, stalking and online and technology-facilitated violence against women, were necessary.

144. GREVIO notes with satisfaction that measures have been taken to improve the police response to reports of violence against women since the adoption of its baseline evaluation report. The adoption by the Ministry of the Interior of a dedicated Action Plan for Domestic Violence (2025-2026) sets out priorities for further development of the police response to such reports and sends a strong signal that domestic violence is being afforded due prominence in law-enforcement policy. In addition, the publication of a manual on domestic violence by the Ministry of the Interior in 2024 represents another positive step towards raising awareness of the dynamics of such violence and the role of law enforcement in its prevention and in the protection of victims.[125] Intended for use by law-enforcement officials as well as the general public, the manual covers important topics such as the cycle of domestic violence and its various manifestations in practice. Nonetheless, it falls short

124. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, paragraph 255.
125. "Together against violence [Skupaj proti nasilju] – a guide to recognising and dealing with domestic violence", issued by the Slovenian Police in 2024.

of adopting a fully gendered approach when defining the root causes of such violence.[126] Similar policy and guidance documents on sexual violence, female genital mutilation, violence committed in the name of "honour" and other forms of violence against women, including those occurring in the digital sphere, are still needed.[127]

145. GREVIO notes that although there are no formally established specialised units on violence against women in the Slovenian police, a number of "multiplier" officers receive additional training and apply a train-the-trainer system to disseminate the knowledge acquired to police officers working in local stations. This system of training seems to have had a positive impact on the capacity of police officers to adequately respond to violence against women and case building. However, GREVIO notes that this knowledge is yet to be fully rolled out to first responders.[128]

146. GREVIO notes with concern that for cases of domestic violence to be treated as such by law-enforcement officials, three elements must be present: a "domestic" element – the crime must occur within the context of a family or intimate relationship (either past or present); the victim must be in a subordinate position to the perpetrator; and the existence of recurring violence. As a consequence, when an act of violence is considered to be a one-off incident, or when the victim does not appear to be in a subordinate position, law-enforcement officials will, as a rule, not treat the incident as domestic violence.[129] This practice is not in line with the definition of domestic violence contained in the Istanbul Convention. In the absence of information on the number of reports received by law enforcement, attrition rates after reporting to law-enforcement officials are difficult to establish. However, indications from legal professionals suggest that attrition and the requalification by police officers of incidents of domestic violence into lesser crimes and misdemeanours remain high in Slovenia.[130] Furthermore, GREVIO notes with concern that this situation leads to inconsistent practices by police officers in individual cases of reports of domestic violence, as indicated to GREVIO by women's rights organisations.[131]

147. As regards the police's capacity to respond to the digital dimension of violence against women, GREVIO notes that the police officials' knowledge and training on how to investigate these types of crimes remain in need of improvement.[132] As a result, the digital dimension of violence against women is often investigated as part of a broader pattern of violence, but only very rarely as a stand-alone crime. This is of particular concern in light of the recent increase in cases of non-consensual sharing of images of an intimate character, which receives insufficient follow-up from law-enforcement authorities.[133]

148. Although female officers are in principle available in each police station to take statements from victims, this option is not always presented to women victims of violence. GREVIO further notes that there are currently no specialised premises in police stations in Slovenia for interviewing victims of violence against women that are designed to establish a relationship of trust between victims and law-enforcement agents. Moreover, stereotypes about women victims of violence, ignorance of their needs and the lack of a trauma-informed approach also persist among law-enforcement officials, in

126. "The causes of domestic violence are often complex, depending on social, cultural, economic, personality and psychological factors. The causes can be found in traditional social patterns of male domination, in the historical economic dependence of women on men, in the stressful circumstances of the family (unemployment, alcoholism, addictions, mental and psychological problems, poverty, educational powerlessness, disagreements, divorce, etc.), but above all they must be sought in the personality traits of each individual perpetrator." See Skupaj Proti Nasilju, cited above, page 17. See also Article 7, Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies.
127. Regarding the digital dimension of violence against women, see Završnik A. and Hooper L., "The digital dimension of violence against women and girls in Slovenia", available at: www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/-/tackling-digital-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-slovenia.
128. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
129. In such cases the incident may still be prosecuted as a violation of public order or another lesser crime. See the Action Plan for Domestic Violence of the Ministry of the Interior (2025-2026), page 2, and the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 89. For a further discussion on this issue, see the sub-section concerning effective investigation and prosecution below.
130. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.

particular first responders.[134] However, the introduction of an online platform for the reporting of crimes has facilitated the access to law enforcement for women victims of violence, which GREVIO welcomes.[135]

149. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to develop guidelines in order to equip law-enforcement agencies with the necessary skills to deal with all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in particular sexual violence and violence occurring in the digital sphere, while applying a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach.**

150. **GREVIO further strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. take legislative and/or other measures to ensure that law-enforcement officials classify reports of violence as domestic violence even without an apparent subordinate position of the victim and regardless of whether the violence is recurring or a one-off incident;**
- **b. identify and address the factors that contribute to attrition among law enforcement of cases related to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
- **c. take further measures to ensure that women victims of violence can be heard in premises that are designed to establish a relationship of trust between victims and law-enforcement agents.**

b. Effective investigation and prosecution

151. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had highlighted a need for prosecution services to diligently assess the additional evidence collected beyond the victim's statement, to re-examine the practice of withdrawing charges in cases when women victims of violence change or withdraw their statements and to address attrition of cases of violence against women, specifically when it comes to domestic and sexual violence.

152. GREVIO welcomes the recent establishment of specialist units for the prosecution of domestic violence, sexual offences and offences against minors in five of the 11 prosecutorial districts of Slovenia. It further welcomes the introduction of victim support offices within the district courts in Ljubljana and Maribor, which are expected to better guide victims through the justice system and prevent secondary victimisation. Although these offices are not specialised in violence against women, their creation – and the plans to expand them further to all district courts in the country– constitutes a positive step that may help build the trust in the judicial system of women victims of violence. Despite the absence of official data on the functioning of these new entities, information submitted by the Slovenian authorities indicates that the majority of cases dealt with by them relate to violence against women.

153. The testimony of the victim continues to play a central role in many proceedings for domestic violence. Although domestic violence cases are prosecuted *ex officio*, the withdrawal of the victim's statement often leads to the discontinuation of proceedings, citing lack of evidence.[136] In addition, the prosecution of domestic violence remains challenging because victims are often required to produce medical evidence for the case to be accepted for prosecution, given that testimony supporting the existence of economic or psychological violence alone is usually not sufficient for the prosecution to move forward.

154. GREVIO notes with concern that the requirement to establish both the subordinate position of the victim and the fact that violence was repeated as a prerequisite for the prosecution of domestic

134. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, pages 75-78.
135. State report, page 42.
136. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

violence constitutes a significant barrier to the prosecution of a substantial number of cases. It underlines that not all victims of domestic violence are necessarily in a subordinate position to the perpetrator, as domestic violence also covers, for example, former partners regarding whom any prior subordination has ceased. Furthermore, GREVIO notes with concern that the current prosecutorial practice of requiring repeated incidents risks excluding victims of single acts of violence from prosecution.[137] It recalls that acts of violence do not need to be repeated in order to constitute domestic violence, in accordance with Article 3, paragraph *b*, of the Istanbul Convention. Additionally, requiring repeated acts of violence as a condition for prosecution exposes women victims of violence and their children to additional and increasingly serious risks. GREVIO also stresses that treating a first report of violence merely as a violation of public order, as is frequently the case in practice, can discourage women from further reporting incidents of violence, undermine their trust in the criminal justice system and deprive them of the protections afforded under the framework for domestic violence that is in place. GREVIO therefore considers that a change in policy and practice for both prosecution services and the judiciary is necessary to move beyond these requirements.

155. The above limitations on the prosecution of domestic violence contribute to a high level of attrition of cases at the prosecution stage, as evidenced by statistical data. Although the number of domestic violence incidents recorded by law enforcement has remained stable – between 1 300 and 1 500 reports received annually over the past several years – in 2023 and 2024, only 503 and 616 investigations were opened by prosecution services, and only 385 and 359 indictments for domestic violence were lodged.[138] GREVIO therefore notes that approximately four out of five domestic violence cases received by the Slovenian prosecution services do not progress to the stage of court proceedings. In the absence of data concerning the number of reports received by the police, a more comprehensive analysis of overall attrition in cases of violence against women is not possible.

156. As regards rape and sexual violence, Slovenia transitioned to an affirmative consent approach to rape in 2021, which GREVIO had welcomed in its baseline evaluation report. The available data indicate that the number of victims of rape and sexual violence that reported the crime to the police has increased significantly during the reporting period, from 41 cases in 2020 to 74 in 2024 concerning rape, and from 37 to 84 cases concerning sexual violence during the same period.[139] Although this increase in reporting may indicate a growing awareness about these forms of violence, GREVIO notes that only a very small number of cases actually move forward through the judicial chain.[140]

157. Information brought to GREVIO's attention indicates low levels of awareness in the judiciary, including among the prosecution services and judges, when it comes to the effective application of the new consent-based approach to rape.[141] According to legal professionals, very little training on how to apply the new provision, and in particular on how to assess consent in the light of the surrounding circumstances, has been organised prior to or since the change in legislation. As a consequence, prosecution services still require victims to undergo a forensic examination in a high number of sexual violence cases, which may indicate that the new provision on affirmative consent is underused in practice and that physical evidence of violence is still often required.[142] GREVIO also notes with grave concern that although rape is prosecuted *ex officio*, rape between married spouses

137. For a complete analysis of the issue, see Veselič S. (2022), "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Slovenia", *Genero*, Issue 26, pages 18-19, available at www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1098602. Also see and compare GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Ukraine, paragraph 164.
138. According to data from the Ministry of the Interior, there were 1 335 reports of domestic violence received in 2019, 1 477 in 2020, 1 285 in 2021, 1 137 in 2022, 1 311 in 2023 and 1 476 in 2024. See the Action Plan for Domestic Violence of the Ministry of the Interior (2025-2026), page 1. For the data concerning the prosecution, see the state report, pages 56-57.
139. State report, page 54.
140. The data indicate that only 44 and 51 indictments were lodged by prosecutors in 2024 for rape and sexual violence respectively. State report, page 57. For the rate of conviction and incarceration, see the section on conviction rates, below.
141. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
142. Ibid.

is only prosecuted following a complaint, and in the case of a withdrawal of the complaint the case will be discontinued.

158. Moreover, investigations into stalking cases appear to frequently lead to attrition. Official data for 2024 indicate that out of 1 197 cases received by the prosecution services, only 491 ended up in an indictment.[143] Additionally, despite the absence of official data, reports from women's rights organisations indicate that forced marriages continue to be overlooked at all levels of the judicial system, including by law-enforcement officials, not regarded as a problem of violence against women and largely left to be addressed by the communities concerned.[144]

159. There are no units in the prosecution services specialising in the digital dimension of violence against women, and such forms of violence remain poorly prosecuted in practice.[145] GREVIO notes in particular that investigative action to collect digital evidence remains exceptional for cases of violence against women and, in practice, unless a victim brings the evidence herself, such as printouts of digital messages, such evidence is not likely to be collected *ex officio*.[146] Additionally, women victims of such forms of violence are often verbally discouraged from formally reporting incidents.[147]

160. **GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to take decisive measures to:**

- **a. ensure that prosecution services enhance their case-building and investigation efforts for all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular domestic violence, sexual violence and violence committed in the digital sphere;**
- **b. review the practice requiring that the crime of domestic violence be characterised by the elements of victim subordination and repetition of the acts of violence in order for prosecution to take place;**
- **c. identify and address any factors that contribute to attrition concerning all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention at the stage of investigation and prosecution.**

c. Conviction rates

161. In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had urged the Slovenian authorities to address any factors that led to attrition of cases of violence against women in the judiciary, with particular focus on cases of domestic and sexual violence.

162. GREVIO notes with concern that procedures in cases of domestic violence continue to be excessively long, due to the shortage of trained clinical psychologists highlighted under Article 31 and the lack of prioritisation of domestic violence cases.[148]

163. Sentences issued for domestic violence in Slovenia are predominantly of a suspended nature. According to the available data, out of 283 sentences issued in 2023, 230 were suspended (37 of those with supervision), while only 52 perpetrators were sentenced to prison. In 2024, 172 sentences were suspended (37 of which with supervision) out of the 253 sentences issued, with 55 cases of imprisonment.[149] While GREVIO notes that the prevalent use of suspended sentences forms part of a broader policy within the Slovenian judiciary, reports made by women's rights organisations indicate that this situation generates an overwhelming feeling among victims

143. State report, pages 56-57.
144. According to the NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, such practices are reported mostly among the Roma community. See page 57 of the submission.
145. Ibid., page 83.
146. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
147. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 57.
148. Ibid., page 92.
149. The number for suspended sentences also includes the suspended sentences with custodial supervision. In addition, a smaller number of cases are also resolved with a fine, compulsory psychiatric treatment and similar. See the state report, pages 59 and 60.

that reporting of violence does not lead to proportionate and dissuasive sanctions and that the system was not designed with the interests and protection of victims in mind.[150] This situation has a negative impact on the trust of women victims of violence in the system and it can perpetuate a feeling of impunity among perpetrators of domestic violence.

164. As regards convictions for sexual violence, the data available indicate that once the case passes the attrition filters at the levels of law enforcement and the prosecution, a conviction will be reached in over two thirds of cases.[151] On sentencing, GREVIO notes with concern that out of 23 sanctions for rape issued in 2023, four were suspended and 18 involved prison sentences. In 2024 only 11 sentences for rape were handed down, one of which was suspended and eight involved imprisonment.[152] Sentences issued for sexual violence other than rape are overwhelmingly suspended, with eight suspended sentences and only two involving imprisonment in 2023, and 19 suspended and 10 sentences involving imprisonment in 2024.[153] GREVIO notes that the recent consent-based definition of rape remains underused in practice, and that the use of force is still largely seen as a requirement to reach a conviction for sexual violence, including rape.[154] For this reform to translate into an effective shift in the way sexual violence is dealt with and into a meaningful shift of paradigm for victims of sexual violence, GREVIO underlines the importance of carrying out substantial awareness-raising work among judges and other legal professionals on the new approach required by the amended legislation on rape and, in particular, the need to assess evidence in the light of the surrounding circumstances in order to establish whether full and informed consent to sexual acts was given freely.

165. No official information is available on convictions and sentences for violence against women committed online and through technology or for other forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. The information that is available suggests that convictions for crimes in the digital sphere are rare and that such cases tend to reach the sentencing stage only when elements of other criminal offences are present.[155]

166. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure that sanctions are commensurate with the gravity of the offence and dissuasive in all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
- **b. take swift measures to fully implement the new consent-based definition of rape in order to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are held fully accountable for their acts.**

2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51)

167. 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.

150. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
151. In 2023 there were 34 cases of rape closed by the courts in Slovenia, in 23 of which some type of sentence was issued. For 2024 these numbers were 13 and 11 accordingly. See the state report, pages 57 and 58.
152. State report, page 59.
153. Ibid.
154. Also see Article 15, Training of professionals, above.
155. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.

168. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had highlighted the need to ensure that systematic risk-assessment and risk-management procedures are in place in all cases of violence against women.

169. In Slovenia, risk assessments are performed both by the law-enforcement authorities and the SWCs. Law-enforcement officers use a standardised form that relies on 31 questions to identify a wide variety of "red flags". It assesses the risk as "low", "medium", "high" or "very high" and assists the police officers in deciding whether to issue barring orders or other protective measures. As a rule, the risk-assessment form should be included in the case file and communicated to the prosecution services for further action. However, concerns have been raised with GREVIO that this assessment is not designed specifically for cases of violence against women, is not systematically performed and is sometimes performed without the victim having been thoroughly interviewed based on a comprehensive list of questions. Moreover, it is not done in co-operation with other relevant bodies, including women's rights organisations.[156]

170. SWCs, for their part, perform a risk assessment following a different methodology, which includes three levels of risk.[157] GREVIO notes the concerns raised by women's rights organisations that this methodology is outdated and does not adequately reflect all the risk factors and red flags required. However, this insufficient assessment is used as the basis for the preparation of an individual safety plan.[158]

171. GREVIO notes with concern that the two risk-assessment procedures performed by the SWCs and law-enforcement officials function independently of each other and lack integration and common standards. This situation can result in inadequate and discrepant risk assessment in practice. GREVIO points to the importance of ensuring the availability of a standardised and unified comprehensive risk-assessment procedure, as a basis for an effective risk-management plan. Although a separate risk assessment should be carried out by the prosecution services as well, it appears that this is rarely, if ever, done in practice.[159]

172. In this context, GREVIO notes that a process to reform risk assessment in cases of domestic violence is ongoing and several individual risk-assessment methodologies have been prepared by legal experts and women's rights organisations. However, no single, unified gender-sensitive procedure for risk assessment in cases of domestic violence is yet in place. GREVIO further notes that there are no specific risk-assessment tools for forms of violence other than domestic violence. This is linked to the fact that SWCs, whose work is primarily focused on domestic violence, remain the central body in the management of risks for women victims of violence and their children. Moreover, there is little evidence of a multi-agency approach being applied in the process of risk assessment and risk management outside of the work of the SWCs' multidisciplinary teams.[160]

173. GREVIO notes that there is currently no system in place in Slovenia for the retrospective analysis of gender-related killings and gender-based violence-related suicides. GREVIO underlines the importance of such a retrospective analysis to assess whether gaps in the institutional and/or judicial response contributed to the fatal outcome, with the aim of preventing them in the future and holding to account both the perpetrators and any institutions that may have failed in their duties to prevent such fatalities. Retrospective analyses are also essential in order to identify the most appropriate practices and to gather and preserve accumulated expertise. Current retrospective analysis into the causes of gender-related killings of women are done, to a limited extent, by women's rights organisations.[161]

156. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
157. The elements are laid out in the state report, pages 45 and 46.
158. Information obtained during the evaluation visit. See Article 18, General obligations.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid.
161. Gender-based killings remain the leading cause of death of women in Slovenia. See Podreka J. and Antić Gaber M. (2019), "Femicide: the meaning of naming in the study of the violent deaths of women", *Annales*, *Series Historia et Sociologia*, Volume 29, available at: www.zdjp.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ASHS_29-2019-1_PODREKA1.pdf. See also www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/stevilka-deset-kot-rakava-rana-zraste-na-vec-sto.

174. **GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. take measures to ensure that a unified, comprehensive, gender-sensitive risk-assessment and safety-management procedure is developed and used systematically by all authorities that deal with victims of violence against women;**
- **b. ensure that gender-sensitive risk-assessment and risk-management procedures are conducted in cases concerning all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention in close co-ordination with all the relevant agencies and entities, including women's rights NGOs, that provide services to women victims of violence and their children;**
- **c. introduce a system of systematic retrospective review of cases of gender-related killings and gender-based violence-related suicides of women.**

3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52)

175. Under Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention, in situations of immediate danger, the authorities are granted the power to issue an emergency barring order (EBO), 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. EBOs are tools intended to prevent a crime and to put safety first.[162] 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.

176. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had highlighted the need to review the reasons behind the frequent refusal by Slovenian courts to extend emergency barring orders at the request of victims, to better monitor compliance with EBOs and to identify the causes for the high number of violations of such orders.

177. EBOs in Slovenia are regulated under Article 60 of the Act on Police Tasks and Powers and can be issued by law-enforcement officers if the assessment of risks points to such a need without delay. The orders are valid for 48 hours and are sent for judicial review *ex officio* within 24 hours. The order is always communicated to the relevant SWC and to the school attended by the victim's child, if relevant. The judge can extend the EBO for a total duration of 15 days. The victim can subsequently request a further extension for another 60 days. GREVIO notes that law-enforcement officials prioritise the use of EBOs where detention would not be warranted. Although challenges concerning individual law-enforcement officers continue to be reported, EBOs appear to be issued promptly and systematically, which GREVIO welcomes.[163]

178. GREVIO also welcomes the fact that in February 2025 the grounds for imposing an EBO were extended to situations posing a serious risk to the health of the victim, in addition to the already existing grounds of risk to life, personal safety and freedom of the victim.[164] However, GREVIO was alerted to the fact that extensions of EBOs requested by victims are not often granted. No analysis of the reasons behind this low rate of approval of extensions seems to be available. GREVIO notes that this could be linked to a problematic interpretation of what constitutes a sufficient basis to extend such an order. Some courts consider that unless further violence was committed in the 15 days leading up to the request, approving an extension would not be justified.[165] GREVIO draws attention to the fact that in order for EBOs to constitute an effective safety measure, it is essential to ensure an appropriate assessment of the immediate danger for the victim, as prescribed by Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention.

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162. See GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports on Denmark, paragraph 207; and Malta, paragraph 218.
163. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
164. Act to amend and supplement the Act on the Duties and Powers of the Police: www.pisrs.si/pregledNpb?idPredpisa=ZAKO9030&idPredpisaChng=ZAKO9030.
165. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 100.

179. The issues highlighted in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report regarding the compliance with EBOs by perpetrators, the monitoring of their implementation and sanctions for breaches remain of concern. In cases where there is an escalation of violence, law-enforcement officials can replace the measure with detention, but this is rarely used in practice.[166] Aside from this, a monetary fine is the only sanction that can be applied for the violation of an EBO, which does not appear to be sufficiently dissuasive.

180. **GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to build on existing research to assess the practical functioning of the system for emergency barring orders, particularly of the practice of courts with regard to extending such orders, in order to identify and address any shortcomings in their practical use.**

4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53)

181. Restraining and protection orders (POs) 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.

182. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had encouraged the Slovenian authorities to ensure that POs be effectively enforced, and that effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions be applied in cases of breaches. It had also encouraged the authorities to consider implementing a system of electronic monitoring to track compliance with such orders.

183. GREVIO notes that no legislative changes have been made to the regulations concerning POs. They remain applicable for cases of domestic violence outside of an ongoing criminal procedure, since their introduction in the DVPA in 2008. Other measures prohibiting perpetrators from approaching or communicating with the victim in ongoing criminal proceedings are also available under the Criminal Proceedings Act, but as these are not specifically designed for cases of violence against women and are not available outside of criminal proceedings, GREVIO will limit its analysis to the first group of measures prescribed in the DVPA.

184. As was the case at the time of the baseline evaluation, POs are available on an *ex parte* basis to women victims of violence for a duration of up to 12 months, with a possibility of extension. A PO can also be requested *ex officio* by an SWC, with the consent of the victim.[167] The system was designed to be made use of once an EBO lapses, in order to provide continuous protection to the victim.[168]

185. GREVIO notes that POs under the DVPA are restricted to cases of domestic violence and that their use for other types of violence remains exceptional.[169] Furthermore, GREVIO notes with regret that no progress was made to better include children of women victims of violence in the scope of application of POs.[170]

186. Regarding the implementation of POs, GREVIO notes with satisfaction the fact that the Slovenian authorities have formed a working group within the MDDSZ to address the findings in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report pointing to the need to improve the system of monitoring of POs. This is a welcome development, given that out of around 1 000 protection orders issued per year in Slovenia, violations occur in around 20% of them, mostly in the form of unwarranted

166. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
167. Article 22(1) of the DVPA.
168. See Article 52, Emergency barring orders.
169. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 104.
170. Ibid., page 112.

communication with the victim.[171] As for EBOs, sanctions for breaches of POs continue to be limited to fines and as a consequence have a limited dissuasive impact on perpetrators.[172] GREVIO stresses the importance of ensuring that a system of proportionate and dissuasive sanctions is applied in order to prevent breaches of POs.

187. With regard to monitoring of the implementation of POs, the working group at the MDDSZ took the decision not to put in place a system of electronic monitoring of POs. GREVIO notes with interest that discussions regarding the possibility to use other means for monitoring are ongoing.[173] For the time being, the default method of implementation remains compliance checks by law-enforcement officials, who keep a record of the orders issued locally. However, the lack of an electronic system of monitoring leaves gaps, forcing police officers to sometimes contact victims over the phone. In-person checks are performed, if possible, but largely depend on the workload of the law-enforcement officers on duty.

188. **GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:**

- **a. ensure that protection and restraining orders are available and made use of in cases of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention and are tailored to the needs of such victims;**
- **b. ensure that the victims' children are systematically included in such orders;**
- **c. ensure the effective monitoring and enforcement of protection orders, at the victim's home and all other relevant locations, including through electronic means;**
- **d. ensure the availability of dissuasive and proportionate sanctions for violations of protection and restraining orders.**

5. Measures of protection (Article 56)

189. Article 56 of the Istanbul Convention is a key provision for building trust in 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.

190. In its baseline evaluation report GREVIO had strongly encouraged the Slovenian authorities to use all protective measures present in the domestic legislation. These included, in particular, the possibility to hold hearings by videoconference and to inform victims about the release of perpetrators.

191. Although a majority of courts in Slovenia are equipped with videoconferencing equipment, these are not often used in cases of violence against women. Most court buildings do not allow for the organisation of separate hearing rooms, and protective screens are not used.[174] To remedy this shortcoming, GREVIO notes that some law-enforcement officials and investigative judges apply the practice of scheduling interviews with the perpetrator and the victim on different days. However, it appears that these measures are limited to the field of criminal justice, while civil courts would not

171. Filipčič K. and Bertok E. (2024), "Prepoved približevanja in intimnopartnersko nasilje", *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo*, Volume 75, Issue 1, page 52, available at: www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-GSUFP5D9. It should be noted that the research covers all types of protection orders available under Slovenian law, including both EBOs and POs, but only analyses reported violations. The number of orders issued per year is presented in the state report, page 54.
172. Article 22*c* of the DVPA.
173. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
174. Ibid.

act unless the victim explicitly asks the court to take measures, in which case a security officer may be posted in the courtroom.[175]

192. Currently, victims of violence are required to testify multiple times due to legal limitations on the use of statements given to the police at subsequent stages of criminal proceedings. Victims, even minors, are still expected to renew their testimony at the main hearing.[176] This can happen several times in cases where a higher court remits the case, requesting that the victim testifies again. Furthermore, courts do not appear to often prohibit inappropriate questions being asked to victims by defence lawyers.[177] GREVIO underlines the severe impact that these practices have on victims, who risk secondary victimisation, including harmful effects on their health, and the negative consequences they have on the trust of victims in the judiciary.

193. Victims can choose how they want to be informed about the release or escape of a perpetrator. It can be done by submitting a request to that end to the relevant court. If no such request is submitted, the court that issued the sanction against the perpetrator shall contact the victim informing her about the right to be informed. The notification to the victim is made by the penal facility, at the latest within 24 hours of the event.[178]

194. The Criminal Procedure Act reform of December 2020 requires the competent authorities to inform victims of the possibility to conceal their address throughout the proceedings. GREVIO notes that this procedural safeguard is particularly important in cases of violence against women, especially as the residence is also concealed in the parts of the court file accessible to the defendant and the public. However, it appears that the obligation to conceal victims' personal data is not systematically implemented by courts and other stakeholders involved in the victim's protection. In practice, any concealment appears to be limited to the address of the victim and only in case she resides in a shelter.[179] Moreover, the concealment of the victim's residence applies only in criminal proceedings while this is not the case in proceedings before civil courts.[180]

195. **Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to ensure the full and effective implementation of all existing victim-oriented protection measures, in particular by developing the use of videoconferences and fully implementing the obligation to conceal the victim's address, including in proceedings before civil courts.**

175. NGO submission by the Association for Non-violent Communication and the Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, page 39, and information obtained during the evaluation visit.
176. Ibid., page 57.
177. The web page of the Slovenian judiciary dedicated to victims of crime states the following: "As a victim, you will be questioned as a witness in the presence of the perpetrator … The questioning can be lengthy, the participants may ask you uncomfortable questions and the presence of the perpetrator represents additional stress for most victims. It is recommended that you, as a victim, prepare for this". See www.nasodiscu.si/oskodovanec.
178. Article 30*b* of the Act on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions (Zakon o izvrševanju kazenskih sankcij).
179. Information obtained during the evaluation visit.
180. Introduced by the Law on Amendments and Additions to the Law on Criminal Procedure, adopted in 2020. Measures to rectify this are already envisaged in the national strategy, measure no. 7 of objective no. 2.

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. GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to introduce a definition of violence against women in line with Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention, with a view to ensuring a harmonised use of this concept across all areas of law and policy. (paragraph 12)

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

2. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

   a. fully institutionalise the interministerial working group responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and that serves as the national co-ordinating body, and allocate the necessary human and financial resources to its functioning;
   b. ensure that all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention are adequately addressed in strategic and policy documents to prevent and combat violence against women;
   c. ensure that a gender-sensitive approach is included in all policies and measures implementing the Istanbul Convention;
   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 predefined indicators in order to assess their impact. (paragraph 22)

C. Financial resources (Article 8)

3. Acknowledging the steps taken to enhance the availability of sustainable funding for women's rights NGOs providing specialist support services to women victims of violence, GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

   a. take further steps to ensure sustainable levels of funding for women's rights NGOs that work with and provide specialist support services to migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women victims of violence, and to women victims who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination, such as Roma women and women with disabilities, through funding mechanisms that allow for continuous service provision, such as long-term grants;
   b. take steps to implement gender-responsive budgeting. (paragraph 31)

D. Data collection (Article 11)

3. Social services

4. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, and bearing in mind the need for data collection to extend to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. extend data collection by the judiciary to include the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, while fully abiding by existing international standards on data protection, as contained in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108), in order to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of victims, perpetrators and other persons involved;
b. systematically collect data, disaggregated by the type of violence, the age of the victim and the alleged perpetrator and the nature of their relationship, on the number of women and girls who seek assistance from, or come into contact with, public or private healthcare services as a result of experiences of violence against women. This includes, in particular, cases of domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation;
c. extend data collection by social services to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, beyond domestic violence. (paragraph 40)

5. In addition, GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. continue their efforts to harmonise data collection between law-enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other stakeholders with the aim of allowing for the tracking of a case across the different stages of the criminal justice system and enabling an assessment of, inter alia, conviction, attrition and recidivism rates;
b. ensure that all relevant data are made available to the public, in line with Article 11, paragraph 4, of the Istanbul Convention. (paragraph 41)

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

A. Prevention

1. General obligations (Article 12)

6. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. step up primary prevention efforts to eradicate sexist prejudices and stereotypes in Slovenian society; for this purpose, the Slovenian authorities should make primary prevention of violence against women a priority in future action plans and measures; guidance on specific measures and tools for preventing and combating sexism, including in the media, can be drawn from Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating sexism;
b. conduct regular awareness-raising campaigns or programmes addressing different manifestations of violence against women and girls as covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in their digital dimension, as well as the heightened risk of gender-based violence of women and girls exposed to intersectional discrimination, for example women with disabilities, LBTI women and women from national and/or ethnic minorities, and address the importance of the notion of freely given consent in sexual relationships;
c. regularly carry out impact assessments of any primary prevention measures and awareness-raising campaigns;
d. identify, through such impact assessments, any undesirable or adverse effects of the awareness-raising campaigns and adjust them accordingly. (paragraph 52)

2. Education (Article 14)

7. Recalling the findings from the baseline evaluation, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure that all the topics covered in Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Istanbul Convention – gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution, gender-based violence and the right to personal integrity – as well as the importance of freely given consent, including in sexual relations, and the harmful effects of violent pornography are effectively taught in practice;
b. ensure that all programmes are supported with adequate teaching materials and delivered by teachers with appropriate training, adapted to the age and evolving capacity of learners;
c. monitor to what extent these subjects are taught in schools in practice and conduct regular evaluation of these programmes. (paragraph 59)

3. Training of professionals (Article 15)

8. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, and in view of the persistent gaps in ensuring mandatory training of professionals, whose contribution to a trust-based system of support, protection and justice is vital, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure the provision of systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training to professionals in the judiciary on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;
b. ensure that such training addresses the implementation of the new legislation on rape and aims to identify women victims of violence and refer them to specialist support services. (paragraph 70)

9. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. step up the training of all professionals dealing with victims of violence against women on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular of those working in the law-enforcement, social welfare and healthcare sectors; such training should focus on the victims' human rights, safety, individual needs and empowerment and the prevention of secondary victimisation through a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach, including in particular on identifying women victims of violence and referring them to specialist support services;
b. conduct regular evaluations of the impact of training and maximise the impact by drawing on the expertise of women's rights organisations and providers of specialist support services. (paragraph 71)

4. Preventive intervention and treatment programmes (Article 16)

a. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence

10. GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. develop common minimum standards for perpetrator programmes in prison as well as in non-custodial settings, in line with Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention and the European standards for perpetrator programmes, to be applied across the country;
b. ensure an external evaluation of the programmes, in line with recognised best practices and principles, in order to assess their effectiveness and lack of adverse effects. (paragraph 78)

b. Programmes for perpetrators of sexual violence

11. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. take steps to improve the levels of attendance on sexual violence perpetrator programmes;
b. ensure that programmes for this category of perpetrators are available in sufficient numbers;
c. ensure that common minimum standards for such programmes are developed and that external evaluations of the programmes are carried out on a regular basis. (paragraph 81)

B. Protection and support

1. General obligations (Article 18)

12. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to set up further institutionalised structures for co-ordination and co-operation among all the relevant stakeholders and service providers to ensure multi-agency co-operation tailored to the specific needs of victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention across the country. Where appropriate, one-stop shops should be set up to provide such services to victims of violence against women. (paragraph 90)

13. Moreover, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure that multidisciplinary teams set up by social work centres are effectively convened when needed and are operational in practice, and ensure the involvement of all the relevant professionals in their work, in particular of healthcare professionals;
b. take steps to review existing guidelines and protocols to ensure effective co-operation, and adopt new ones concerning the different forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, where appropriate;
c. ensure that multi-agency co-operation mechanisms on domestic violence and other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention take a distinctly gendered approach, operate on the basis of the principle of safety of victims and respect for their human rights, as required by Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention. (paragraph 91)

2. General support services (Article 20)

a. Social services

14. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to continue their efforts to support the recovery and economic independence of women victims of violence, in particular through measures involving financial assistance, education and training support, and assistance in finding employment and affordable housing. In doing so, additional measures must also be taken to provide more effective responses to the needs of women and girls who are victims of violence and who are exposed to intersectional discrimination, including Roma women, elderly women and asylum-seeking and refugee women. (paragraph 99)

b. Healthcare services

15. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. take measures to ensure that healthcare services are fully integrated into all co-ordination mechanisms on violence against women; this would include ensuring that existing standardised care pathways in the healthcare sector are fully implemented and

that new ones are introduced where necessary in order to ensure a holistic, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach to identifying, treating and referring victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;
b. take measures to ensure that all women and girls who are victims of violence have access to comprehensive healthcare services for their experiences of violence, with a particular focus on the needs of victims with mental health issues. (paragraph 108)

3. Specialist support services (Article 22)

16. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. increase the number and capacity of shelters providing safe accommodation to victims of all forms of violence against women, with an adequate geographical distribution, with the aim of achieving the standard set in the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention of one family place per 10 000 inhabitants;
b. ensure that all women victims of gender-based violence, including in particular Roma and migrant women and their children, irrespective of their age, have access to long-term domestic violence shelters;
c. provide adequate specialist support services throughout the country for women victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;
d. ensure that the national helpline is supported through sufficient and sustainable resources to secure its continuous operation. (paragraph 118)

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

17. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to:

a. establish rape crisis centres and/or sexual violence referral centres across the country, ensuring a sufficiently widespread geographical distribution to make them accessible to victims in both rural and urban areas. These centres must provide comprehensive support, including medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and immediate and long-term psychological counselling and support by qualified professionals trained in providing a victim-sensitive approach;
b. develop a specific protocol for healthcare professionals to provide adequate support to victims of sexual violence and refer them to specialist support services;
c. ensure that the collection and storage of forensic evidence is not contingent upon the victim’s willingness to report the violence. (paragraph 125)

C. Substantive law

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

18. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to take the following priority actions in the area of custody and visitation rights to ensure the safety of women victims of violence and their children:

a. take measures to ensure that the negative impact that domestic violence has on children is reflected in legislation and that incidents of violence against women are a mandatory legal criterion to be taken into account when deciding on custody and visitation rights;
b. in the determination of custody and visitation rights, introduce systematic screening and risk-assessment procedures, including through the use of standardised questionnaires, in order to establish whether there is a history of violence by one parent against the other;
c. ensure a swift and effective exchange of information between civil and criminal courts and with other relevant stakeholders in order to identify indications or evidence of domestic violence and take all necessary measures to protect the victims;

d. in the interim, carry out a thorough review of the judicial practice concerning custody and visitation rights in cases of parental separation with a history of violence in order to determine whether the current practice complies with the provisions of Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention;
e. take further measures to inform the professionals concerned, particularly in the judiciary and social services, of the absence of any scientific grounds for the so-called parental alienation syndrome, as well as to raise public awareness concerning this subject;
f. ensure that supervised visitation is ordered and carried out with due regard for the safety of children and their mothers. (paragraph 135)

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

19. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure that mediation procedures carried out in custody proceedings by the social work centres and civil courts do not amount to quasi-mandatory mediation in cases with a history of domestic violence; to do so, introduce screening procedures and mandatory guidelines to systematically detect cases of violence in family law proceedings;
b. establish and implement adequate safeguards in criminal law cases to ensure that no direct or indirect pressure is placed on a woman victim of domestic violence to agree to an out-of-court settlement or the suspension of criminal proceedings against her perpetrator. (paragraph 140)

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

20. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to develop guidelines in order to equip law-enforcement agencies with the necessary skills to deal with all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in particular sexual violence and violence occurring in the digital sphere, while applying a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach. (paragraph 149)

21. GREVIO further strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. take legislative and/or other measures to ensure that law-enforcement officials classify reports of violence as domestic violence even without an apparent subordinate position of the victim and regardless of whether the violence is recurring or a one-off incident;
b. identify and address the factors that contribute to attrition among law enforcement of cases related to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;
c. take further measures to ensure that women victims of violence can be heard in premises that are designed to establish a relationship of trust between victims and law-enforcement agents. (paragraph 150)

b. Effective investigation and prosecution

22. GREVIO urges the Slovenian authorities to take decisive measures to:

a. ensure that prosecution services enhance their case-building and investigation efforts for all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular domestic violence, sexual violence and violence committed in the digital sphere;
b. review the practice requiring that the crime of domestic violence be characterised by the elements of victim subordination and repetition of the acts of violence in order for prosecution to take place;

c. identify and address any factors that contribute to attrition concerning all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention at the stage of investigation and prosecution. (paragraph 160)

c. Conviction rates

23. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure that sanctions are commensurate with the gravity of the offence and dissuasive in all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention;
b. take swift measures to fully implement the new consent-based definition of rape in order to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are held fully accountable for their acts. (paragraph 166)

2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51)

24. GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. take measures to ensure that a unified, comprehensive, gender-sensitive risk-assessment and safety-management procedure is developed and used systematically by all authorities that deal with victims of violence against women;
b. ensure that gender-sensitive risk-assessment and risk-management procedures are conducted in cases concerning all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention in close co-ordination with all the relevant agencies and entities, including women's rights NGOs, that provide services to women victims of violence and their children;
c. introduce a system of systematic retrospective review of cases of gender-related killings and gender-based violence-related suicides of women. (paragraph 174)

3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52)

25. GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to build on existing research to assess the practical functioning of the system for emergency barring orders, particularly of the practice of courts with regard to extending such orders, in order to identify and address any shortcomings in their practical use. (paragraph 180)

4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53)

26. GREVIO encourages the Slovenian authorities to:

a. ensure that protection and restraining orders are available and made use of in cases of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention and are tailored to the needs of such victims;
b. ensure that the victims' children are systematically included in such orders;
c. ensure the effective monitoring and enforcement of protection orders, at the victim's home and all other relevant locations, including through electronic means;
d. ensure the availability of dissuasive and proportionate sanctions for violations of protection and restraining orders. (paragraph 188)

5. Measures of protection (Article 56)

27. Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Slovenian authorities to ensure the full and effective implementation of all existing victim-oriented protection measures, in particular by developing the use of videoconferences and fully implementing the obligation to conceal the victim's address, including in proceedings before civil courts. (paragraph 195)

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

National authorities and public bodies

Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- Family Affairs Directorate
- Directorate on Social Affairs
- Equal Opportunities Division

Ministry of Justice
- Criminal Law and Human Rights Directorate: Support for Victims of Crime Section
- Prison and Probation Service

Ministry of Health
- National Institute for Public Health

Ministry of Interior
- Criminal Police Directorate: Homicide and Sexual Offences Section
- General Crime Division: Juvenile Crime Section
- Slovenian Police Academy
- Celje Police Station

Ministry of Education
- National Education Institute of Slovenia
- Inspectorate of Education

Ministry of Higher Education
Ministry of Digital Transformation
Ministry of Public Administration
Supreme Court of Slovenia
Higher Court Ljubljana
District Court Celje
State Prosecutor's Office
- District State Prosecutor's Office Ljubljana
- District State Prosecutor's Office Maribor
- District State Prosecutor's Office Celje

Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants
University Clinical Centre Ljubljana
Office for the National Minorities
Association of Social Work Centres
Social Work Centre Ljubljana
Social Work Centre Celje
National judicial academy
Social Chamber of Slovenia
Nurses and midwives' chamber of Slovenia
National statistical office
Safer Internet Centre Slovenia
Slovenian Ombudsperson's Office (Varuh človekovih pravic)

Non-governmental organisations and Civil Society

Centre for victim support EMMA (Zavod EMMA)
Association SOS Helpline
Association for Non-violent communication
Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (PIC)

Association for the rights of the disabled and victims of violence VIZIJA (Društvo gibalno oviranih in žrtev nasilja VIZIJA)
PEND Slovenia (Društvo za preprečevanje nasilja v športu in nasilja v družini)

Legal professionals
Jasna Podreka, University of Ljubljana and Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence
Zoran Stankić Rupnik, Attorney

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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