

Follow-up on the Committee of the Parties' Supervision of Estonia

Feministeerium's comments

1. Article 31

Estonia has provided the correct information. Judges have a lot of freedom to decide whether violence, if present, is relevant, or not. Because case law is classified, it is very difficult to say anything substantive about how prevalent the secondary victimization of mothers is during custody battles and neither have there been any NGO-s specializing in advocacy of this kind before 2025. That is when at least two new NGO-s have formed to shed light on what they claim is widespread judicial violence towards women in custody hearings.

Feministeerium has also heard a handful of witness accounts where judges ignore domestic violence when assigning custody rights. There is no legal concept of judicial violence. Conversations with children or parents are not recorded as a rule, so even if an investigation were to be launched by an oversight committee, critical information is lost. If conversations between parents and children with specialists giving assessments to the courts were to be recorded as a rule, the system would benefit. It is our belief that custody battles as a way of continuing intimate partner violence have increased in the past decade, but its precise nature and scope remains unknown.

2. Article 50

"Police officers are trained in trauma-informed practices, as well as in interviewing victims of specific types of crimes and understanding their particular needs." This is partially correct. It has not been standard police officer training and there are many who lack such knowledge, but a portion of police officers have taken the training later on voluntarily, or they have educated themselves of their free time. Efforts to teach trauma-informed practices to all who train to become police officers are underway, but efforts like these are extremely dependent on individual actors within the system.