

Committee of the Parties

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



Conclusions on the implementation of recommendations in respect of Belgium adopted by the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention

IC-CP(2024)3

Adopted on 31 May 2024

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The Committee of the Parties to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), acting under the terms of Article 68(12) of the Convention and Rule 1(2b) of the Committee of the Parties’ Rules of Procedure;

Bearing in mind the provisions of Article 66(1) of the Convention concerning the monitoring role of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as “GREVIO”);

Having regard to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties;

Having regard to the instrument of ratification deposited by Belgium on 14 March 2016;

Having regard to the Baseline Evaluation Report concerning the implementation of the Convention by Belgium adopted by GREVIO at its 21st meeting (25-26 June 2020) as well as the comments of the Government received on 21 September 2020;

Having regard to the recommendations on the implementation of the Convention addressed to Belgium by the Committee of the Parties, published on 18 December 2020;

Bearing in mind the adoption, at its 9th meeting on 15 December 2020, of a reporting form which focuses on a maximum of ten areas of the Convention and which states are required to use to report back to the Committee of the Parties on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to their authorities;

Having examined the information provided by Belgium on the implementation of the recommendations addressed to its authorities, through the reporting form provided for that purpose, as well as the information submitted by non-governmental organisations and civil society;

A. Welcomes the measures taken and progress achieved by Belgium in the implementation of recommendations for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, noting in particular:

- the adoption of a new national action plan on gender-based violence (2021-2025) which takes into consideration the particular needs of victims faced with intersectional discrimination, such as women with disabilities, women with irregular migrant status, LGBTI women, women and girls victim of or at risk of FGM and women in prostitution;
- the efforts made to identify the budget lines allocated to preventing and combatting violence against women, and the overall increase in funds earmarked, among other things, to improve and strengthen the role of the Institute for Equality of Women and Men;
- the increased level of co-operation with civil society, particularly visible through the creation of an independent national platform for civil society, whose members meet on a monthly basis, which is tasked with the monitoring of the implementation of the new action plan on gender-based violence;
- the creation of a new inter-departmental co-ordination group on violence against women consisting of federal, regional and local authorities and service providers introduced by the new national action plan;
- a new nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about FGM, underpinned by a national prevalence study on this form of violence, completed in June 2022;
- the introduction of an amendment to the Criminal Code in March 2022, whereby rape is now based on the lack of freely given consent and has been accompanied, in parallel, by a campaign to raise awareness of the new consent-based legislation;
- the adoption of a new law aiming to Prevent and Combat Femicide in June 2023 which, among other things, aims to harmonise terminology in the field of violence against women, introduces significant novelties to risk assessment procedures, makes trainings for magistrates on sexual violence mandatory and puts in place new safeguards when victims of violence against women interviewed by the police.

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- B. Encourages the Government of Belgium to take further measures to implement the recommendations addressed to its authorities, in particular by:
1. continuing the on-going efforts in administrative data collection on violence against women by expanding the data categories in use at all levels, including in particular by law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, social services and the public health sector, which would allow for policy-making to be informed and guided by robust data;
 2. ensuring that specialist support service providers, in particular NGOs working to end violence against women across the country, benefit from the increase in budget allocated to this goal, including in a manner that ensures their continued service provision across funding periods;
 3. taking additional measures, beyond explicit references to the non-scientific nature of notions such as “parental alienation syndrome” in the national action plan, to ensure that the competent authorities deciding on custody and visitation rights are required to consider all issues pertaining to violence against women, and the harmful effect that it has on children, by making use of the existing legal provisions which provide for a possibility to limit custody and visitation rights of perpetrators.
- C. Invites the Government of Belgium to report back on these measures by 30 May 2026.
- D. Invites the Government of Belgium to continue taking measures to implement the Istanbul Convention, particularly on the basis of the conclusions of GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report.