



Committee of the Parties

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

Recommendation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence by Iceland

IC-CP/Inf(2022)12

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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;

Having regard to the purposes of the Convention to protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence; to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women; to design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence; to promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence; and to provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

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 Iceland on 26 April 2018;

Having examined the Baseline Evaluation Report concerning the implementation of the Convention by Iceland adopted by GREVIO at its 28th meeting (10 – 13 October 2022), as well as the comments of the Government received on 7 November 2022;

Considering the overarching priorities set out in Chapter I of the Convention (purposes and scope of the Convention, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, due diligence and gender-sensitive policies);

Bearing in mind the primordial importance of the provisions set out in Chapter II of the Convention, in particular the obligations to (1) ensure a holistic response to violence against women by devising a set of comprehensive and co-ordinated policies implemented by way of effective multi-agency cooperation; (2) institutionalise and fully mandate one or more co-ordinating bodies as required by Article 10 of the Convention; (3) adequately resource policies, measures and mandates introduced to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, including government and nongovernmental specialist support services; and (4) to collect relevant statistical data disaggregated, at a minimum, by sex, age, type of violence, relationship of the perpetrator to the victim and geographic location;

Welcoming the measures taken and progress achieved by the Icelandic authorities in implementing the Convention and noting in particular:

- Iceland’s long-standing history in striving for gender equality and combating violence against women, through laws, (policies and action plans and the specific focus placed on women and girls in the relevant government action plans, demonstrating a clear understanding of the disproportionate exposure of women and girls to domestic and sexual violence;
- the amendment of the Icelandic Criminal Code to include a definition of rape and sexual violence that is based on the absence of consent, and a separate criminal offence of domestic violence;
- the adoption of the Act on the Protection of Sexual Privacy and the Act on Stalking, which increased the protection against digital sexual violence and the protection of persons subjected to stalking, including in the digital sphere;
- the yearly status report on gender budgeting that maps out the gender situation in every public policy area;
- several awareness-raising campaigns on the subjects of violence against women and tackling gender stereotypes, focusing also on including men and boys by promoting positive images of masculinity;
- the fact that police officers are well trained on the handling of cases of sexual violence and domestic violence;

- their leading role in setting up one-stop-shop models in the form of Barnahus (for children) and the family justice centres Bjarkarhlíð and Bjarmahlíð (for adults), which offer holistic services for victims of sexual and domestic violence under one roof; and
- the designation of Sports and Youth Activities Communication Counsellors to assist and guide those who are victims of violence and harassment in sports and youth activity settings.

A. Recommends in light of the considerations indicated in the preamble above, that the Government of Iceland take the following measures identified in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report¹ for immediate action to:

1. adopt definitions of the terms set out in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention and, where such definitions already exist, further align them with the convention (paragraph 13) and enhance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in relation to all forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment, which are currently less addressed by policies, programmes and support services, with due regard to their gendered nature (paragraph 14),
2. ensure that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention are implemented without discrimination on any of the grounds listed in Article 4, paragraph 3, especially in relation to migrant women and women with disabilities, and by placing the rights of victims at the centre of all measures (paragraph 21);
3. address all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention in government strategies and action plans, which shall include measures targeting women subjected to or at risk of intersectional discrimination, such as migrant women, women with addiction issues, women in prostitution and women with disabilities (paragraph 34), and ensure that all forms of violence are included in future population-based surveys (paragraph 63);
4. increase multi-agency co-operation on a local level and in an institutionalised manner, and to systematically include the healthcare sector and NGOs working in the field of violence against women (paragraph 35);
5. ensure appropriate long-term and sustainable funding for NGOs providing specialist support services for women victims of any form of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and their children (paragraph 40), and ensure that appropriate funding for state-wide effective policies and measures for women victims of violence, such as the relevant action plans, are available (paragraph 41), which would include the setting up of dedicated programmes that cater to the specific needs of women victims of violence in the areas of employment and training, thus ensuring their economic independence and empowerment (paragraph 125);
6. designate or establish one or more national co-ordinating body that are fully institutionalised and mandated to fulfil all of the functions as set out in Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, that are vested with the necessary financial and human resources (paragraph 49), and ensure that the co-ordinating body exercises its functions in close consultation with relevant NGOs and civil society and that its work is supported by relevant data (paragraph 50);
7. harmonise the data-collection systems between law enforcement and the judiciary based on a common set of data categories that includes all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention to allow cases to be tracked through all stages of the criminal justice system, with the aim of identifying reasons that may contribute to low conviction rates as well as attrition in rape cases and in other cases of violence against women while also collecting data on the number of breaches of emergency barring, restraining and protection orders, the number of sanctions imposed as a result of such breaches and the number of cases where

¹ The number of the paragraph setting out GREVIO's proposals and suggestions in the report is indicated in brackets.

the woman was revictimised or murdered as a consequence of such breaches (paragraph 60 and paragraph 264);

8. establish mandatory guidelines and/or protocols for relevant professionals on how to respond to cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention on the basis of multi-agency co-operation (paragraph 113);
 9. set up a state-wide, free-of-charge, round-the-clock helpline dedicated to all forms of violence against women that is capable of providing crisis support and counselling to victims, with due respect for the confidentiality and anonymity of all callers and operated by trained staff (paragraph 146);
 10. ensure that victims of sexual violence receive immediate trauma care and counselling; and that girl victims of sexual violence receive immediate, short- and long-term psychological support on an equal footing with adult victims (paragraph 153), by improving the human resources allocated to Barnahus for psychological support for children (paragraph 161);
 11. ensure that all relevant professionals, including social workers, child-protection officers, members of the judiciary, court experts and child psychologists, when deciding on custody and visitation, are duly aware of and take into account incidents of violence by one parent against the other (paragraph 189), and evaluate the effects on the safety of women victims of domestic violence and their children of the current practice by the District Commissioners and the civil courts of deciding on custody and visitation rights, by analysing relevant case law and collecting data on the use that is made by judges and District Commissioners of limiting or withdrawing parental or visitation rights in the context of domestic violence (paragraph 190);
 12. criminalise forced sterilisation (paragraph 222), and ensure that for any sterilisation of women with mental or physical disabilities their prior and informed consent is obtained on the basis of a thorough understanding of the procedure (paragraph 223);
 13. significantly reinforce their investigative and prosecutorial capacity and ensure a prompt and appropriate response by law-enforcement agencies in all cases of violence against women, including by ensuring that a holistic multi-agency assessment is undertaken at all stages of the criminal investigation process and ensure that law enforcement agencies are sufficiently resourced both financially and in terms of adequately trained staff to enable such measures to be implemented (paragraph 259);
 14. ensure that in cases of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, systematic and gender-sensitive risk assessment and safety management become standard procedure for all agencies involved, and ensure that an effective multi-agency approach is taken to such a risk assessment in order to ensure the human rights and safety of the individual victim, and to ensure that women's organisations, shelters and the healthcare sector are formally included in the process (paragraph 273).
- B. Requests the Government of Iceland to report to the Committee of the Parties on the measures taken to improve the implementation of the Convention in the above-mentioned areas by 4 December 2025.
- C. Recommends that the Government of Iceland take measures to implement the further conclusions of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report.