



Committee of the Parties

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

**Implementation report submitted
by the Netherlands on the conclusions
adopted by the Committee of the Parties
on 1 June 2023**

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**Council of Europe Convention on preventing and
combating violence against women and domestic
violence**

**Report by the Government of the Netherlands on the
implementation of recommendations adopted
by the Committee of the Parties on 2 June 2023**

27 November 2025

Introduction

The Netherlands appreciates the thorough and insightful work of GREVIO. The recommendations provide us with valuable starting points for critical reflection on the Dutch approach and for achieving further improvements in the protection of women and other victims of domestic violence.

Even though the baseline evaluation process ends with this implementation report, the Netherlands remains committed to the effective implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

In response to the recommendations adopted by the Committee of the Parties in June 2023, the Netherlands has taken a series of measures. The government provides the following information on the implementation of these recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Drawing up an implementation plan and taking all possible measures, including financial ones, to stimulate and assist Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten in ratifying and implementing the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and extending the application of the Convention to Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba.

In the administrative agreements on tackling domestic violence and child abuse in the BES (2017–2020 and 2021–2024), signed by the public entities and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, important steps have been taken towards ratifying the Istanbul Convention. For example, advice and reporting centers have been set up, women's shelters have been established, training courses for professionals have been developed, and awareness campaigns have been carried out by the public entities and the Ministries of Justice and Security and Health, Welfare and Sport. In addition, at the request of the Ministry of Justice and Security, a temporary barring order process has been established in the Caribbean Netherlands in collaboration with local parties, and investments have been made in strengthening cooperation in healthcare and safety consultations.

In order to comply with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, the Decree on Social Support and Combating Domestic Violence and Child Abuse came into force on January 1, 2025. This decree regulates, among other things, the definitions of domestic violence and child abuse (Article 3), the right to shelter (Article 23), the tasks of the advice and reporting centers (Article 26), and the mandatory protection code (Article 27). In addition, the Omnibus Act on Data Processing VWS I establishes the processing of special personal data (Article 26) and the right to report (Article 28).

In order to continue building an effective and sustainable approach to violence against women, domestic violence, and child abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands, a partnership has been established with the public entities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba and the ministries of Health, Welfare, and Sport; Justice and Security;

Education, Culture, and Science; Social Affairs and Employment, and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Within this context, a joint Vision for the Future: Tackling Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands has been drawn up. This vision forms the basis for an integrated and long-term approach, in line with the principles of the Istanbul Convention.

The aim of this joint effort is to create a safer and more equal society in which there is no place for violence within dependent relationships. The main objectives of the Vision for the Future have been translated into concrete actions for the next four years, laid down in the Administrative Agreement on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands. The Administrative Agreement serves as an instrument for translating the joint ambition into implementation and results.

In preparation for the acceptance of the Istanbul Convention for the Caribbean Netherlands and for the translation of the Sexual Offenses Act into Caribbean legislation, the Ministry of Justice and Security is investigating what further new legislation and legislative amendments are needed and what impact these will have on the working methods of the implementing organisations involved.

Within the No Mas No More (NMNM) partnership, Curaçao, Aruba, Sint Maarten, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba, and the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport and Education, Culture and Science are working together to tackle gender-based violence and prepare for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The collaboration is laid down in a Memorandum of Understanding (2023) and is coordinated by a working group that focuses on knowledge sharing, coordination, and progress.

A NMNM conference is held every two years to deepen the collaboration. During the 2025 conference in Sint Maarten, which focused on the Istanbul Convention, action plans were drawn up for each island around six core objectives of the Convention. The action plans form an important basis for the implementation of new administrative agreements.

In December 2024, at the invitation of the Permanent Representative in Strasbourg, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, a three-day conference was held with members of the NMNM working group, representatives of the BES islands, the Secretary-General of Sint Maarten, and various professionals from the islands and countries. The Ministries of Education, Culture and Science, the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Justice and Security, and Health, Welfare and Sport were also represented. The delegation participated in a two-day international conference with other small countries, including Monaco, Liechtenstein, San Marino, and Andorra. The conference explored how small countries can overcome implementation challenges despite their limited scale and capacity. The NMNM working group is currently investigating how knowledge sharing with these countries can be continued in order to learn from similar contexts and solutions in a targeted manner.

Finally, a human rights subcommittee was established several years ago for periodic consultation between the four countries of the Kingdom, with the aim of taking

further steps in the implementation of human rights treaties. This subcommittee is embedded in the Kingdom Relations Legislative Consultation (AWOK) and meets several times a year, focusing on sharing knowledge and expertise with each other.

Recommendation 2

Ensure stable and sustainable levels of funding for all policies and measures to combat violence against women, while examining the funding made available for services and measures to prevent and combat violence against women at the local level.

The Netherlands endorses the importance of sufficient and sustainable funding for tackling domestic violence, child abuse and violence against women. In the Netherlands, the implementation of this approach is primarily the responsibility of municipalities, which carry out this task within the legal framework of the Social Support Act (Wmo 2015). To this purpose, the national government provides municipalities with structural resources from the municipal fund, the Decentralisation Allowance for Women's Shelters and other benefits. Municipalities have policy autonomy in allocating these funds, allowing them to develop a tailored approach at the local level that corresponds to local needs. The police and judicial organisations are also financed by the national government. The Dutch government considers the current funding of the approach from the national level sufficiently stable and sustainable, in line with the Istanbul Convention.

If it becomes apparent that municipalities indicate that the funds made available to them by the national government are insufficient to implement the approach to domestic violence and violence against women, a discussion is held on this matter. In recent years, this has led to various studies and ultimately to several structural increases in the decentralization allowance.

The government considers the broader societal developments, including gender equality, both when preparing the budget and during accountability processes. This broad perspective on society is also referred to as broad prosperity. In recent years, the government has taken steps to integrate broad prosperity into the budget and accountability cycle. Reviewing developments of well-being in the Netherlands aligns with the approach of a learning government, which requires more than economic indicators alone. On Accountability Day, the Broad Prosperity Monitor and the Sustainable Development Goals of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) will also be published at the same time as the government's accountability documents. This monitor gives gender equality a prominent position. From next year, CBS's broad prosperity factsheets on well-being will also be published on Accountability Day. By integrating broad prosperity into budget documents, the government takes a step towards giving gender equality greater attention in budgetary planning.

Recommendation 3

Ensure that steps are taken to support the work of women's NGOs, including black, migrant and refugee women's organisations, and maintain their continued participation in local and national policy-making on

violence against women, while ensuring that adequate funding is provided to women's NGOs.

As indicated at the time of the policy response to the baseline evaluation, it is customary to consult NGOs in the development of Dutch policy. The Netherlands recognises the indispensable role of NGOs and also values when these partners provide critical feedback on policy. Their critical perspective and connections with the target group are an important part of the implementation of Dutch policy. We therefore do not recognize the picture presented in the evaluation report regarding this component. NGOs are already being involved, their importance is recognized, not only on paper, but also in practice. This will continue to be the case in the future.

The consultation of NGOs and other organisations is part of the implementation process of the EU directive. This is also standard practice in other legislative processes, as in the bill currently being prepared that aims to make psychological violence a separate criminal offense. In addition, the implementation bill of the EU Directive regulates the involvement of civil society organisations within a national planning cycle. Representatives of interest groups, service providers and NGOs are consulted before this planning cycle is established.

Recommendation 4

Assign the role of coordinating body to fully institutionalised entities, equip them with clear mandates, powers and the necessary human and financial resources, while ensuring that their functions apply to all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, and that they are supported by adequate data.

The Minister of Long-Term and Social Care serves as the coordinating member of government for the national approach to domestic violence, child abuse and violence against women. The Netherlands has commissioned a study on various models of coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in these policy areas, in which 47 stakeholders were consulted, including implementing agencies, NGOs and other relevant actors.

Also relevant is Article 22 of the EU Directive, which requires Member States to designate one or more bodies responsible for publishing reports and issuing recommendations on domestic violence, child abuse and violence against women, as well as for exchanging information with relevant European organisations. A number of organisations and institutions already carry out elements of these tasks, including the ministries involved, inspectorates, supervisory bodies, various implementing and advocacy organisations, knowledge institutes, NGOs, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and the Government Commissioner for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence. However, there is currently no formally designated national body that performs these tasks in a structural and integrated manner.

Based on the study and Article 22 of the EU Directive, further work is underway to define an appropriate framework for coordination, monitoring and oversight, examining both interministerial coordination within the Cabinet and the establishment of an external function. The conclusions will be incorporated into the

implementation trajectory of the EU Directive, including the creation of a statutory basis for such an external body.

Recommendation 5

Development of standardised categories of data for mandatory use by law enforcement authorities, the judiciary and all other relevant actors, covering the gender and age of the victim and the offender, their relationship, the type of violence and geographical location.

As part of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the Netherlands set up the Impact Monitor on Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in 2019. This monitor contains combined data from the police, judicial organisations, Safe Home and the youth domain, among others. GREVIO recommends expanding the existing monitor to include, for example, the healthcare sector. And to further harmonise the data, information and monitoring from the connected domains.

In recent years, the Netherlands has taken steps to further improve data collection on domestic violence, child abuse and violence against women. An important improvement from 2024 is the addition of a legal basis to the Data Processing Collection Act VWS. This will enable Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to link data from Safe Home to other CBS databases in a secure manner that cannot be traced back to individuals. This enables CBS to enrich data from Safe Home and to gain more insight into the backgrounds of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and child abuse and the help, care and any judicial interventions provided. This is necessary to improve policy and the approach in the longer term. This change in law is currently being implemented in practice. This is done with the utmost care with regard to privacy and data security. The requirements for this are laid down in the Statistics Netherlands Act. In doing so, CBS complies with the applicable European standards with regard to the anonymous processing of and reporting on the data available to CBS.

In addition, CBS is working with the affiliated sectors and relevant ministries on the further development of the Impact Monitor. The main areas for improvement include cleaning up duplicate data, in order to make (technical) capacity to adding new data categories and to develop clearer overview pages. A new objective is to add the geographical location of incidence of violence and link these to existing data on domestic violence. Another objective is to enrich existing data with the living situation and with the (presumed) relational status of those involved in domestic violence and violence against women.

The next step is to gain more insight into how victims of violence are helped in the broader healthcare domain. This is a complex challenge, as the healthcare domain, comprising both public and private care providers, serves a highly diverse population with its own registration systems, indicators and reports that are not easy harmonized. The Netherlands is also facing staffing challenges in healthcare. In order to keep these manageable, the healthcare sectors have agreed in the Integral Care Agreement that the implementation practice should not be burdened with more bureaucratic requirements than strictly necessary. The ministries involved are in discussions with CBS about how the healthcare domain can be more

involved in the collection of data on domestic violence, without creating additional regulatory pressure.

Police registration data already contain information about the gender and age of suspected victims and offenders, their relationship to each other, the geographical location and the type of violence (offence, in combination with social classifications for domestic violence and child abuse). Registration data from the Public Prosecution Service (hereinafter: OM) contain information at case level about the gender and age of suspects or perpetrators, the geographical location and the type of violence (offence, in combination with social classifications for domestic violence and child abuse). The Public Prosecution Service also registers female victimization in violent offences. In collaboration with the police, the Public Prosecution Service and Statistics Netherlands, it will be explored how this data can be further analyzed and presented at an aggregated level to provide insight into domestic violence, child abuse and violence against women, in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention and the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Furthermore, it will be examined to what extent routes of suspects or perpetrators and (alleged) victims in the care and safety chain can be visualized at an aggregated level, to support in-depth research and policy evaluation.

Recommendation 6

To increase the supply of women's shelters in order to achieve the goal of one family place per 10 000 inhabitants.

The Netherlands has a decentralised system in which the responsibility for the approach of domestic violence and child abuse is primarily rests with the municipalities. Organising and financing shelters for victims of domestic and sexual violence is a municipal responsibility, in accordance with the Social Support Act (Wmo 2015).

In 2025, the Safe Shelter Monitor of Valente and the VNG was published, providing figures on the national and regional capacity of women's shelters. In 2023, the Netherlands had 1024 shelters for victims of domestic and sexual violence, which corresponds to approximately one shelter place per 17,500 inhabitants. According to the standard set out in the Istanbul Convention, there should be about 1780 shelter places (1 per 10,000 inhabitants). The explanatory report to this recommendation states that the number of shelters should depend on the actual need in the Dutch context. All parties acknowledge that there is currently a shortage of shelter places. Various factors affect the inflow and outflow, including the availability of affordable housing. Given the persistent scarcity of affordable housing, it is expected to continue in the near future. To support municipalities to expand the capacity of women's shelters, the Dutch government allocated structurally an additional 14 million euros for women's shelters in 2020 and recently the Dutch government has also provided a further structural increase of 12 million euros.

Recommendation 7

Taking the necessary measures to ensure that courts take into account all issues related to violence against women and domestic violence when determining custody and visitation rights, adopting gender-sensitive guidelines and recognising that the risk of witnessing violence against a close person jeopardises the best interests of the child.

Following the study *Where Violence Disappears from View* (2024) by the Verwey-Jonker Institute, an improvement trajectory has been initiated with the objective of ensuring that, whenever domestic violence and/or child abuse is present, this is consistently taken into account in family law proceedings.. An important instrument that can contribute to this, among other things, and has been recommended by the Verwey-Jonker Institute, is the development of an assessment framework. According to the researchers, this entails — and which was recommended by the Verwey-Jonker Institute— is the development of an assessment framework. According to the researchers, this includes conducting risk assessments and screening for patterns of violence at the outset of proceedings, as well as improving the exchange of criminal justice information within family law cases..This recommendation aligns with the encouragement of GREVIO to screen ongoing custody and visitation cases for domestic violence.

As part of the improvement trajectory, exploratory discussions have already been held with the judiciary and the Child Protection Board, in which the recommendations of the Verwey-Jonker Institute were taken into consideration. These recommendations will continue to feature in further discussions with the judiciary, the Child Protection Board and other relevant organisations and professionals, such as the legal profession and Victim Support Netherlands. A key topic in these discussions is the necessary paradigm shift in family law. Whereas the prevailing assumption used to be that contact with both parents was generally in the child's best interests, there is now growing recognition that domestic violence and child abuse— including (the risk of) children witnessing domestic violence— must play a prominent role in that assessment. GREVIO's four recommendations in this area will likewise be incorporated into the improvement trajectory, as they are relevant to strengthening the consideration of domestic violence in family law proceedings.

Within the current statutory framework, family court judges have a passive role: the parties themselves define the scope of the dispute. At the same time, the Judiciary has established a domestic violence project group that is examining how, within existing legal boundaries, judges can obtain more and better information on domestic violence. Through training programmes and the project group, the Judiciary promotes the application of up-to-date scientific insights on contact loss and domestic violence in professional practice. Increasingly, domestic violence— including coercive control— is explicitly discussed and taken into account in judicial decision-making, sometimes with explicit reference to the Istanbul Convention. A statutory provision introducing a screening obligation could further support this development.

Through this improvement trajectory and the ongoing initiatives, the Netherlands is giving effect to GREVIO's priority recommendations in the area of custody and access, with a view to enhancing the safety of victims and their children.