

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



Monitoring
mechanism

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the **Istanbul Convention**, entered into force on 1 August 2014. It is the first international treaty that establishes a comprehensive set of legally binding obligations to ensure a holistic response to all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. It combines detailed provisions concerning

- ▶ preventing violence,
- ▶ protecting and supporting victims, and
- ▶ prosecuting perpetrators

with the obligation to develop a set of comprehensive policies that are to be implemented in a co-ordinated manner.

■ The Istanbul Convention contains many innovative features. It recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. It requires the criminalisation of a wide range of abuse of women and girls and emphasises the importance of tackling the root causes of such abuse (gender inequality, stereotypes and prejudice).

■ The Convention sets up a monitoring mechanism to assess how its provisions are put into practice and to provide guidance to the parties. This monitoring mechanism consists of two pillars: the Group of Experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence (**GREVIO**) and the **Committee of the Parties**.



GREVIO

GREVIO is a specialised independent body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention by the countries that have ratified it. It draws up and publishes reports evaluating legislative and other measures taken by these countries to give effect to the provisions of the Convention (evaluation procedure). In specific circumstances, it may initiate inquiries (inquiry procedure).

GREVIO may also adopt general recommendations on themes and concepts of the Convention.

Who are the members of GREVIO?

GREVIO members are **independent and impartial experts** of high moral character, known for their recognised competence in the fields of human rights, gender equality, violence against women, or assistance to and protection of victims, or having demonstrated relevant professional experience in these fields.

Initially composed of **10 members**, GREVIO will be enlarged to **15 members** following the 25th ratification of the Convention. Its membership takes into account a gender and geographical balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise. GREVIO members are elected by the Committee of the Parties among nationals of the parties to the Convention and come from various professional backgrounds (judges, prosecutors, academics, social workers, civil society representatives, etc.).

The term of office of GREVIO members is **four years, renewable once**.



How does GREVIO carry out evaluations?

Working on a country-by-country basis, GREVIO carries out a first (baseline) evaluation of each country that has ratified the Convention. GREVIO initiates this procedure by addressing its questionnaire to the country concerned, inviting the authorities to respond by way of a comprehensive report. GREVIO also collects **additional information from various other sources** including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other members of civil society, national human rights institutions, Council of Europe bodies (Parliamentary Assembly, Human Rights Commissioner and other pertinent bodies) as well as other international treaty bodies. Following an initial examination of this report and the additional information, GREVIO holds a dialogue with representatives of the country concerned.

GREVIO then carries out an **evaluation visit**. The content of meetings between GREVIO's delegation and its interlocutors (officials, NGO representatives, victims, etc.) is confidential.

GREVIO subsequently draws up its draft evaluation report and sends it to the relevant government for comments. These comments are taken into account by GREVIO when drawing up its final report which, once again, is transmitted to the authorities. **GREVIO's report is made public** (on the Istanbul Convention website) after its adoption, together with any **comments** received from the party concerned.

How does GREVIO initiate inquiries?

GREVIO may initiate an inquiry procedure when there is **reliable information** indicating that action is required to prevent a **serious, massive or persistent pattern of any acts of violence** covered by the Convention.

GREVIO may request the urgent submission of a **special report** by the country concerned.

Taking into account the information made available, GREVIO may designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry. Where warranted, and with the consent of the authorities concerned, the inquiry may include a visit to the country.

What does GREVIO not do?

GREVIO is not a complaints body. The only Council of Europe body entitled to process individual complaints of human rights violations in relation to violence against women and domestic violence is the European Court of Human Rights.

GREVIO does not intervene in legal proceedings.



COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES

— The Committee of the Parties is composed of representatives of the parties to the Convention. On the basis of GREVIO's reports, the Committee may adopt **recommendations** concerning the measures to be taken to implement the conclusions contained in GREVIO's report. It also supervises the implementation of its own recommendations.

— The Committee **examines the findings of any inquiry** conducted by GREVIO members at the earliest opportunity and considers any necessary measures pursuant to these findings.

PARLIAMENTARY INVOLVEMENT IN MONITORING

— One major innovation of the Convention is the obligation placed on the parties to invite their **parliaments to participate in the monitoring process** and to submit GREVIO's reports to them.

— The Convention also foresees a significant **role for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**, which is invited to take stock of the implementation of the Convention at regular intervals.

THE ROLE OF NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

— NGOs and other members of civil society (for instance, academia, trade unions, bar associations) are **major partners** in monitoring the implementation of the Convention. They are **crucial sources of information** and GREVIO treats all information received from them as confidential.

— NGOs are strongly encouraged to give their input and share their concerns at any time.

— When starting the monitoring of a particular country, GREVIO may invite NGOs to give relevant information. Its delegations also hold **meetings with NGO representatives** during visits.

For contacts and further information

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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