



# Istanbul Convention

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

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The Istanbul Convention  
is based on four pillars:

-  **PREVENTION**
-  **PROTECTION**
-  **PROSECUTION**
-  **CO-ORDINATED POLICIES**

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# PREVENTION

If a country has ratified the Istanbul Convention, it will have to take the following measures:

## **Encourage the media and the private sector**

In setting standards that enhance respectful gender roles and challenge attitudes that excuse violence against women



## **Awareness-raising campaigns**

Raise awareness of the different forms of violence, their devastating nature and the impact that they have on women and children



## **Education in non-violence and equality between women and men**

Include teaching material on gender equality, gender-based violence, non-violent conflict resolution and right to personal integrity in the formal curricula at all levels of education





## Challenging gender stereotypes

Promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men



## Promoting women's empowerment

Introduce programmes and activities for the empowerment of women, and address the specific needs of people in vulnerable situations from a human rights standpoint



## Programmes for perpetrators

Establish programmes to teach perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour and sex offenders to avoid re-offending



## Role of men and boys

Encourage active engagement and contribution from men and boys in the prevention of violence



## Training of professionals

Train professionals working with victims or perpetrators to recognise and respond to violence and make appropriate referrals



# PROTECTION

The safety and needs of victims and witnesses must be at the heart of all protective measures adopted by a country. Their rights include:

## Information on their rights

Victims must be informed of their rights and know where and how to get help in a language they understand



## Support services

Victims should have access to specialist women's support services, which are often women-to-women and dedicated to a specific type of violence. Victims should also have access to general services such as legal advice/aid, psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, healthcare, social services and assistance in finding employment



## Regional and international complaints mechanisms

Victims must be informed of and have access to relevant regional and international complaints mechanisms



## Shelters

Victims must have access to a local, easily accessible shelter for women and children



## Rape crisis or sexual violence centres

Victims must have access to a nearby easily accessible centre providing immediate medical counselling, trauma care and forensic services





## Reporting violence to authorities

Everyone must be encouraged to report acts of violence to relevant authorities to prevent further incidents, and confidentiality rules should not prevent professionals from doing so, where justified



## Emergency barring orders

These will grant police the power to remove a perpetrator of domestic violence from their home for a specific period of time and order them to stay away from the victim



## Protection or restraining orders

They should be easily accessible for immediate protection to the victim without any cost



## Safe custody and visitation rights for children

If there is a history of violence, custody and visitation decisions must prioritise the rights and safety of the child and the victim



## Free telephone helplines 24/7

Victims must have access to a state-wide 24/7 free and confidential telephone helpline offering them expert advice and pointing them towards relevant services



## Rights and needs of child witnesses

The best interest of child witnesses of violence must be taken into account and age-appropriate psychosocial counselling provided



# PROSECUTION

If a country has ratified the Istanbul Convention, it will have to ensure:

## Law enforcement and judicial proceedings

### Dissuasive Sanctions for perpetrators

Ensure that criminal offences and breaches of protection orders will be subject to proportionate criminal or legal sanctions including imprisonment, extradition, monitoring and supervision, and withdrawal of parental rights



### Effective public prosecution

Investigation or prosecution of violent offences against women will take into account that women are disproportionately affected by violence; will not be dependent upon a report or complaint by the victim and may even continue if the victim withdraws their statement or complaint



### Consideration of aggravating circumstances

Ensure that aggravating circumstances are taken into account, including the victim being an intimate or close relation, crimes against a vulnerable person or in the presence of a child, in collusion with other people, extreme levels of violence or psychological harm, threat of weapons, or previous convictions for crimes of a similar nature



### Legislation criminalising violence against women

Introduce laws criminalising physical, psychological and sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. States parties will ensure that culture, tradition or so-called 'honour' are not regarded as a justification for violence



### Effective police investigation

Law enforcement agencies will have to respond immediately to calls for assistance, manage dangerous situations appropriately, and investigate all allegations of violence against women



# Victims' rights



## Protection of child victims and witnesses

- Children will be provided with appropriate special protection measures
- Child victims of sexual violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and forced abortion or sterilisation will be able to initiate legal action for a sufficient amount of time after they have reached adulthood



## Co-ordinated risk assessments

Will be carried out in co-operation with relevant agencies and institutions, taking repeat offences and access to firearms into account, as well as any new information the investigation may bring to light



## No victim-blaming

Investigations and judicial proceedings will respect victims at all stages and refrain from showing attitudes, behaviours and practices which blame victims and cause them additional distress



## Victims' right to privacy

- Ensure that the privacy and image of the victim is protected, and that contact between them and the alleged perpetrator is avoided where possible
- Victims will be enabled to supply evidence and have their needs and concerns presented directly or through an intermediary
- Victims will be enabled to testify in the courtroom through communication technologies, or at least without the alleged perpetrator present
- The sexual history of a victim will only be permitted in civil or criminal proceedings where it is relevant and necessary



## Victims' right to information and support

- To be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their case
- Access to information on victim's rights, and appropriate support services to help them represent those rights and interests
- Support and assistance from governmental and non-governmental organisations and domestic violence counsellors during the investigation and judicial proceedings
- Right to legal assistance and free legal aid
- Provision of independent and competent interpreters if needed
- Supported by law to claim compensation from perpetrators of violence and to sue state authorities if they have failed in their preventative and protective duties



## Victims' protection during investigation and judicial proceedings

- Victims of violence and their families will be protected at all stages of investigation and judicial proceedings from intimidation, retaliation and repeat victimisation
- Alternative options to resolve disputes such as mediation between victim and perpetrator will not be mandatory
- The victim will be informed of any escape or release of a perpetrator



# CO-ORDINATED POLICIES

If a country has ratified the Istanbul Convention, it will have to undertake the following actions:

## **Inter-agency co-operation**

Ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place that provide for effective co-operation among the judiciary, public prosecutors, law-enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities and NGOs



## **Support and work with civil society and NGOs**

They should be included alongside state bodies as valued partners in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention



## **Co-ordinate action and monitor implementation**

Create or designate a state body to oversee the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Istanbul Convention





### Human rights-based policies

Put in place victim-focussed laws to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women



### Whole societal response

The Istanbul Convention sends a clear message to society as a whole. Everybody must understand that violence against women and domestic violence will not be tolerated



### Funding for policies and services

Adequately fund all partners involved in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including non-governmental organisations



### Comprehensive legislation and gender-sensitive policies

Introduce laws and supporting measures to prevent all types of violence covered in this convention



### Research and data collection

Collect and collate data and conduct research into the prevalence of all forms of violence against women and the effectiveness of their measures, which shall be shared with the public, and similar agencies in other countries, for comparison and to encourage co-operation



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