

Committee of the Parties

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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

Report of the 16th meeting

Strasbourg, 31 May 2024

IC-CP(2024)RAP16

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Agenda item 1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to, respectively, as “the Committee” and “the convention”) held its 16th meeting on 31 May 2024 in Strasbourg. It adopted the draft agenda of the meeting as it appears in document IC-CP(2024)OJ16prov, which is set out in Appendix I.

The Chair welcomed the members of the Committee, extending a special welcome to the representatives of Latvia, as it was the first time that they participated as a new Party to the convention.

Agenda item 2. Administrative and budgetary information

The Executive Secretary informed the Committee about additional human resources allocated to the Violence against Women Division since the last meeting, consisting of an additional A grade which had been recruited, and an additional B grade, for which recruitment was underway. The Executive Secretary also informed the Committee of the increase in the annual budget for the monitoring work carried out by GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties, explaining that it accounted for the actual expenditure necessary to carry out the evaluations as set out in the Organisation’s Programme and Budget, which was nine evaluation procedures per year. The Executive Secretary provided further details on these evaluation procedures, most of which were being carried out under GREVIO’s first thematic evaluation procedure, while two were being conducted under its baseline evaluation procedure (Latvia and Ukraine). In addition, a working group had been set up within GREVIO to prepare its baseline evaluation procedure in respect of the European Union, for which a timeline was being drawn up.

Last, she informed the Committee that the question of the European Union’s annual financial contribution linked to the Istanbul Convention was being discussed as part of an on-going process.

Agenda item 3. State of signatures and ratifications of the Istanbul Convention

a) Action taken by member States of the Council of Europe towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention: tour de table

The Chair invited signatory states to share information on progress towards ratification, mentioning the progress being made in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands towards compliance with the Istanbul Convention, increasing the likelihood of the extension of the territorial scope of application. The representative of Czechia informed the Committee that a bill of ratification had been presented to parliament. While a debate held in January had been concluded without a formal decision on the bill, it was still a possibility for it to be transmitted to the Chamber of Deputies for further discussion.

b) Action taken by non-member States of the Council of Europe invited to accede to the Istanbul Convention: tour de table

Continuing the exchange, the representative of Tunisia informed the Committee of the renewed efforts that were underway towards accession to the Istanbul Convention. While activities to this extent had stalled previously, they had recently resumed, and would hopefully lead to a successful outcome within the period of invitation to accede to the Istanbul Convention. In a similar vein, the representative of Kazakhstan provided an overview of measures taken to align law and policy with the aims of the Istanbul Convention, focusing on recent legislative changes. Finally, the Chair gave the floor to the representative of the European Union to explain the scope and nature of the recently adopted Directive on violence against women.

c) *Declarations and reservations*

As regards reservations, the Executive Secretary informed the Committee that since its last meeting, Andorra, Croatia, Greece and Serbia had renewed their reservations in full, while Ireland had done so partially. Reservations made by North Macedonia had expired on 1 January 2024.

Agenda item 4. Draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties, as regards voting, following the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention

The Chair recalled that in view of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention in respect of the EU on 1 October 2023, several steps had been taken to respond to the arising need to address, in the Committee's Rules of Procedure, the question of voting rights. These included a first exchange of views on this issue held at the Committee's meeting on 1 June 2023, followed by the circulation of information document IC-CP(2023)4, dated 28 August 2023, and an extraordinary meeting held on 26 September 2023. The information document (IC-CP(2023)4 contained a proposal for the amendment of the Rules of Procedure in respect of the voting rights, which Parties had been invited to comment on. The United Kingdom had availed itself of this opportunity, offering proposals presented in document IC-CP(2023)22, dated 7 November 2023. The EU had adopted its position on the proposal made by the Secretariat earlier this year and had submitted, on 22 April 2024, its proposals to amend the Rules of Procedure.

The Chair explained that the proposals presented by the UK and the EU were set out in document IC-CP(2024)7 prov, circulated on 6 May 2024. Attention was drawn to a small correction necessary in relation to the proposal made by the EU on Rule 20, paragraph 1. This proposal had been made by the EU in replacement of the entire subparagraph 2 and not the last sentence, as erroneously indicated in IC-CP(2024)7.

Following these explanations, the Chair emphasised that any decision taken by the Committee with regard to the voting rights would be specific to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, given its specific context. She then invited the United Kingdom and the European Union to take the floor.

The representative of the UK recalled the importance they attached to the Istanbul Convention and the work of both GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties. For this reason, they had presented a few minor amendments to the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure which introduced the principle of double majority – a position they generally aligned with, but which they considered to be applicable in the specific context of the Istanbul Convention only, if adopted.

In presenting the proposed amendments by the EU, the representative of the EU emphasised the EU's general recognition of the principle of double majority and that of non-additionality to avoid adding an extra vote to the EU in addition to its member states. She emphasised, however, that certain issues such as that of variable geometry needed to be respected because of the difference in levels of engagement which Denmark and Ireland are bound by within the EU. She recalled that of the 39 Parties to the convention, 22 were currently EU member states, while the two-thirds majority within the Committee of the Parties was currently at 26. As the number of votes of EU member states did not yet amount to this, the EU proposal made the applicability of the principle of double majority conditional upon the number of votes with which the EU exercises its right to vote being equal to or greater than two-thirds of all votes attributed to the members of the Committee. The EU representative furthermore pointed to the fact that accession to the Istanbul Convention by non-EU member states in the future would reduce the influence of the EU and its member states within the Committee. In conclusion, she confirmed the principle of applicability of any decision taken to the specific context of the Istanbul Convention only.

In the subsequent discussion, several members took the floor to express their concern regarding the EU proposal on the double majority, as it would not be immediately applicable. In fact, the amendments as proposed by the EU would render the principle of double majority applicable only once the number of EU member states having ratified the Convention, and thereby members of the Committee, represented a two-thirds majority. Among the scenarios in which this condition was to apply was EU accession of a number of existing Parties to the Istanbul Convention, and thus in the far future.

The need for further discussion on the various options was voiced, together with the request for more information on voting rights in force in other Council of Europe treaties. Recalling that there was no legally imposed solution to the matter but that the purpose of the double majority requirement was to counterbalance the fact that the EU already had a simple majority on the Committee and thus to provide reassurances to the members that do not form part of the EU that their vote still carried weight, the Director of the Department of Legal Advice and Public International Law offered to make available an overview of the existing voting rights and on-going discussions in the form of a paper to be circulated after the meeting.

Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted the concerns expressed around the issue of the quorum and the need for further discussion. She proposed to enable such discussion by holding informal consultations over the summer with all members of the Committee as represented by their delegations in Strasbourg. Expressing her desire to ensure, as Chair of the Committee of the Parties, that all members feel they have the same weight in decisions of the Committee, she recalled that it is in the Committee's interest to take decisions on the basis of consensus. However, it is of equal importance to ensure robust rules are in place for situations in which such consensus cannot be reached.

Agenda item 5. Exchange of views with Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou, President of GREVIO

The President of GREVIO, Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou, held her second exchange of views with the Committee since her election as GREVIO President on 21 June 2023. Referring to the successful conference organised by the Council of Europe in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention the day before, she presented the Committee with information on progress made in the implementation of the convention over the past decade as identified by the monitoring. Moreover, she informed the Committee of the on-going evaluations under GREVIO's first thematic evaluation procedure dedicated to the theme of "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice". These concerned Albania, Austria, Denmark, Monaco as the first set of Parties, and Finland, Montenegro, Spain and Sweden as the second set of Parties. The first reports are expected to be published in September 2024, with several more following in November. The GREVIO President explained that under its first thematic evaluation procedure, GREVIO's aim was to address the very articles of the Istanbul Convention that require parties to build a responsive, empowering and victim-oriented system of support for women and girls experiencing gender-based violence. She emphasised that the choice of articles covered allowed GREVIO to delve deeper into vital elements of implementation, and that by the end of this year the Committee would be receiving new thematic evaluation reports detailing progress in many areas. Stressing the strong alignment in the progress identified both by GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties in their respective procedures, the GREVIO President stressed the strong interconnection between the two, as GREVIO reports indeed referred to the recommendations and conclusions adopted by the Committee. She praised the Committee for its role in the supervision of the implementation of these important documents, which was important in view of the persistent misrepresentations of the aims of the Istanbul Convention.

Turning to a practical issue of great importance to GREVIO, she reiterated the requirement set out in Article 79, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention, which obliged Parties to provide GREVIO with an explanation of the reasons for the renewal of a reservation upon expiry. She welcomed several withdrawals of reservations over the last years and expressed her encouragement by the

recent examples of Parties providing the required explanations but invited all Parties to comply with this unique obligation.

In taking the floor, several members of the Committee expressed their appreciation for the work of GREVIO, highlighting in particular the in-depth findings made and the constructive approach employed. In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chair concluded that the monitoring system as envisaged by the Istanbul Convention is producing positive results, as can be witnessed by the mutual praise, with both bodies operating on a basis of constructive dialogue, trust and mutual recognition. She invited all members to continue to share the message of progress of implementation of the Istanbul Convention for the purpose of preventing and combating violence against women in the face of on-going contestations of women's rights.

Agenda item 6. Recommendations on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention

The Chair recalled the procedure for the Committee to adopt recommendations on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, on the basis of GREVIO's evaluation reports, which was agreed by the Committee at its 4th meeting and described in document IC-CP(2018)6. She reminded Parties that they are given a period of three years to implement the recommendations and report back to the Committee. She further recalled that, as GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Liechtenstein had been published the day before the last meeting, the consideration of the draft recommendation addressed to this Party had been postponed to this meeting of the Committee.

The Chair subsequently invited the representative of Liechtenstein to take the floor, who thanked GREVIO for the findings and analysis contained in the baseline evaluation report and informed the Committee about the latest developments at the national level to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. The recommendations addressed to Liechtenstein was adopted by the Committee.

Agenda item 7. Supervising the implementation of recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties

On the basis of the framework for supervising the implementation of recommendations addressed to parties as set out in document IC-CP(2021)2 prov, the Chair presented to the Committee the draft conclusions in respect of Andorra, Belgium, Malta and Spain. Following brief statements by the respective state representatives, each welcoming the measures listed and pledging further implementation, the Committee adopted the conclusions as set out in documents IC-CP/Inf(2024)2, IC-CP/Inf(2024)3, IC-CP/Inf(2024)4 and IC-CP/Inf(2024)5.

Moreover, a total of four parties to the convention reported on the implementation of the remainder of recommendations, completing the full baseline evaluation supervision cycle. The Committee took note of these implementation reports as submitted by Albania, Austria, Denmark and Montenegro, as set out in documents IC-CP/Inf(2023)19, IC-CP/Inf(2023)20, IC-CP/Inf(2023)21 and IC-CP/Inf(2023)22, noting the important progress made.

Agenda item 8. Preliminary discussion of the Committee's approach to GREVIO's first thematic evaluation reports and its conclusions adopted

In view of the upcoming transmission of the first thematic evaluation reports adopted by GREVIO, the Chair invited the Committee to hold a preliminary discussion, on the basis of discussion paper IC-CP(2024)6, on the Committee's approach to take towards these reports and the recommendations to adopt on their basis. She recalled the approach taken by the Committee under the baseline evaluation procedure, which consisted of recommendations issued on the basis of those findings by GREVIO that required urgent action as well as those from chapters I and II of the convention which required action in the immediate future. Several members expressed their desire for a similar approach to be taken under the first thematic evaluation report, supporting the idea of written

recommendations issued on the basis of GREVIO's thematic evaluation reports, focusing again on those findings by GREVIO requiring urgent action and possibly those requiring action in the near future as well. The members who took the floor expressed their preference towards recommendations that focused on the findings made by GREVIO under specific articles of the convention, leaving aside the emerging trends section of the new reports. Moreover, agreement existed towards focusing recommendations by the Committee on country-specific action to be taken to enhance the convention's implementation at national level, while any co-operation beyond national implementation measures were to remain voluntary. The delegation from Norway gave the example of Nordic-Baltic co-operation on violence against women for which the Istanbul Convention was considered the baseline.

As regards any reporting obligations on the implementation of recommendations adopted under the first thematic evaluation reports, several delegations expressed the desire to limit such obligations to one written implementation report, and avoid any reporting overlap by well defining the reporting period. Finally, the need for effective procedures and reductions in any overlap of reporting obligations, including towards other human rights monitoring bodies such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW Committee) was raised by several delegations.

Summarising the discussion, the Chair pointed to the express wish of the Committee to opt for recommendations on the basis of GREVIO thematic evaluation reports, focusing on those findings made by GREVIO of a particular urgency, and followed by a written reporting obligation. She concluded that the Committee did not wish to issue recommendations on the emerging trends as identified by GREVIO and instructed the Secretariat to provide a draft proposal on the Committee's approach towards recommendations to be circulated well ahead of the December meeting for any questions to be raised by members. Last, she invited the delegate from Norway to report back to the Committee on the nature and outcome of the Nordic-Baltic co-operation on violence against women.

Agenda item 9: Thematic discussion: Preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence (Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention)

Alessandra Pauncz, Executive Director, European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence e.V. presented the new Council of Europe study on Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention: "Guidance for safe and effective perpetrator programmes", prepared with the support of the European Network. It offers a comparative analysis of programmes for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence in Council of Europe member states, providing essential guidance and recommendations for the design and implementation of such programmes. Drawn up to respond to the need expressed in the [Dublin Declaration](#), a declaration on the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence adopted by European Ministers of Justice, gathered in Dublin, on 29 and 30 September 2022, in the context of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, it offers guidance based on quality standards drawn from the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

After the presentation, breakout-sessions on different sub-topics related to perpetrator programmes were organised for the members of the CoP. The two groups discussing early intervention and prevention concluded that such programmes should be mandatory, where legally feasible. They underlined that the safety of the victim should trump data protection constraints, which required a bold move from governments. Further primary prevention measures should include long-term campaigns for men's helplines, and a strong focus on prevention through education in schools, including through sexuality education. The group that discussed sexual violence perpetrator programmes considered that voluntary and mandatory measures should be complementary, and available in sufficient numbers, taking into account the nature of the crime committed. Sexual offender registers were also discussed and the extent to which they may control rather than treat perpetrators of sexual violence. The group debating intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence underlined the promising practice of linking emergency barring and protection orders to mandatory attendance of perpetrator programmes, as currently practiced in Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Agenda item 10. Date of next meeting

The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on 17 December 2024.

Agenda item 11. Other business

The representative of the EU requested that future draft recommendations and conclusions for approval by the Committee included references to the specific articles of the Istanbul Convention, in order to render the link between the recommended action and the legal requirement of the convention immediately visible. The Chair and the Secretariat took note of the request.

Agenda item 12. Adoption of the list of decisions taken

The Committee adopted the list of decisions as set out in document IC-CP(2024)LD16.

Appendix I: Agenda

- 1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**
- 2. Administrative and budgetary information**
- 3. State of signatures and ratifications of the Istanbul Convention**
 - a) *Action taken by member States of the Council of Europe towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention: tour de table*
 - b) *Action taken by non-member States of the Council of Europe to accede to the Istanbul Convention*
 - c) *Declarations and reservations*
- 4. Draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties, as regards voting, following the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention [[IC-CP\(2024\)7-prov](#)]**
- 5. Exchange of views with the President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)**

Baseline evaluation round

- 6. Recommendations on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention**
 - **Liechtenstein** [[IC-CP\(2024\)1-prov](#)]
- 7. Supervising the implementation of recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties**
 - **Andorra**
 - Draft conclusions [[IC-CP\(2024\)2-prov](#)]
 - Reporting form submitted by the Government [[IC-CP/Inf\(2023\)23](#)]
 - **Belgium**
 - Draft conclusions [[IC-CP\(2024\)3-prov](#)]
 - Reporting form submitted by the Government [[IC-CP/Inf\(2024\)2](#)]
 - Additional submissions from:
 - [Pôle de ressources spécialisées en violences conjugales](#)
 - [GAMS Belgique](#)
 - **Malta**
 - Draft conclusions [[IC-CP\(2024\)4-prov](#)]
 - Reporting form submitted by the Government [[IC-CP/Inf\(2024\)3](#)]
 - **Spain**
 - Draft conclusions [[IC-CP\(2024\)5-prov](#)]
 - Reporting form submitted by the Government [[IC-CP/Inf\(2024\)4](#)]
 - Additional submission from:
 - [AIETI, Red de Mujeres Latiomericanas y del Caribe and Fundacion ASPACIA \(joint submission\)](#)

- **Austria**
 - Implementation report on conclusions [[IC-CP/Inf\(2023\)22](#)]
- **Albania**
 - Implementation report on conclusions [[IC-CP/Inf\(2023\)19](#)]
- **Denmark**
 - Implementation report on conclusions [[IC-CP/Inf\(2023\)20](#)]
- **Monaco**
 - Implementation report on conclusions [[IC-CP/Inf\(2023\)21](#)]

First thematic evaluation round

8. **Preliminary discussion of the Committee's approach to GREVIO's first thematic evaluation reports and its conclusions adopted**
 - Preliminary discussion paper [IC-CP(2024)6-prov]
9. **Thematic discussion: Preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence (Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention)**
 - Alessandra Pauncz, Executive Director, European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence e.V.
 - Breakout session: Group discussion on different sub-themes
10. **Date of the next meeting**
11. **Other business**
12. **Adoption of the list of decisions taken**

Appendix II: List of Participants

16th meeting CoP

BUREAU

Mme Tanja GONGGRIJP
Chair
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe

Mr Gilberto JERÓNIMO
First Vice-Chair
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Council of Europe

Ms Daniela CUJBĂ
Second Vice-Chair
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of The Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe

MEMBERS / MEMBRES

ALBANIA / ALBANIE

Ms Etleva SHESHI
Director general of Social inclusion and gender equality
Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

ANDORRA / ANDORRE

Mr Joan Forner ROVIRA
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe

Ms Olimpia TORRES BARROS
Deputy Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe

AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

Ms Marie-Theres PRANTNER
Head of National Coordination Unit of the Istanbul-Convention
Federal Chancellery, Directorate General for Women and Equality Department III/4 - Prevention of
and Protection from Violence

Ms Katharina ENZESBERGER
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of Austria to the Council of Europe

Ms Victoria-Lola KUNZ
Permanent Representation of Austria to the Council of Europe

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Ms Marijke WEEWAUTERS
Senior strategic policy advisor
Institute for Equality between Women and Men

CROATIA / CROATIE

Ms Sandra BATLAK
Head of Service for Childrens and Family Policies, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

Ms Gordana KUČAN ŠARFI
Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

CYPRUS / CHYPRE

Ms Georgia NICOLAOU
Intern
Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the Council of Europe

DENMARK / DANEMARK

Ms Kristine THORND AHL
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of Denmark to the Council of Europe

ESTONIA / ESTONIE

Ms Anne KRUUSEMENT
Adviser
Penal Law and Procedure Division, Criminal Policy Department
Ministry of Justice of Estonia

EUROPEAN UNION / UNION EUROPEENNE

Ms Katja LENZING
Deputy Head of Unit - Gender Equality
European Commission
Directorate General Justice and Consumers

Ms Lisa COLLSTE
Legal officer – Gender Equality Unit
European Commission
Directorate General Justice and Consumers

Ms Dora SCHAFFRIN
Legal Adviser
Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe

FINLAND / FINLANDE

Ms Marjatta HIEKKA
Legal Counsellor
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

FRANCE

Mme Stefania CHIRU
Bureau des affaires européennes et internationales
Ministères des Solidarités/ Egalité F-H/ Handicap/ Enfance

Mme Léa CORNU
Adjointe au Représentant Permanent
Représentation Permanente de la France auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Mme Aude-Cécile MONNOT
Adjointe au Représentant permanent
Représentation Permanente de la France auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE

Ms Katharina WIATR
Unit 403 - Protection of Women from Violence
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

GREECE / GRÈCE

Ms Angeliki PAPAZOGLOU
Deputy Head of Directorate of Social Protection and Counselling Services
General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

ICELAND / ISLANDE

Ms Kolbrún ÁRDAL
Legal advisor for the Ministry of Justice

IRELAND / IRLANDE

M Deaglán Ó BRIAIN
Principal
Criminal Justice, Community Safety Policy
Department of Justice

ITALY / ITALIE

Mr Francesco FORTE
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe

Ms Elena PALLONI
Department for Equal Opportunities
Office for International Affairs
Presidency of the Council of Ministers

Ms Mariella PAGLIUCA
Expert
Department for Equal Opportunities
Office for International and General Affairs
Presidency of the Council of Ministers

LATVIA / LETTONIE

Ms Lelde KĒLA
Senior Expert
Children and Family Policy Department
Ministry of Welfare

LIECHTENSTEIN

Ms Julia FROMMELT
Diplomatic Officer
Office for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein

LUXEMBOURG

Mme Isabelle SCHROEDER
Juriste
Département Lutte contre les discriminations

MALTA / MALTE

Ms Sasha NA JEONG FARRUGIA
Senior Manager
Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA / REPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA

Ms Viorica ȚÎMBALARI
General director
National Agency for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

MONACO

M. Gabriel REVEL
Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire
Représentant Permanent de Monaco auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

MONTENEGRO

Ms Violeta BERIŠAJ
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of Montenegro to the Council of Europe

NETHERLANDS/ PAY BAS

Ms Jitske BOSCH
Senior policy advisor
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports

NORTH MACEDONIA / MACEDOINE DU NORD

Ms Svetlana CVETKOVSKA
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Sector for Equal Opportunity

NORWAY / NORVEGE

Ms Hilde Marit KNOTTEN
Senior Advisor
Ministry of Justice and Public Security
Police Department

Ms Kari H. RIISØEN
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of Norway to the Council of Europe

Ms Inger Elisabeth HAALAND SUNDKVIST
Intern
Permanent Representation of Norway to the Council of Europe

POLAND / POLOGNE

Mr Pawel KOSMULSKI
Head of Department of Equal Treatment and Human Rights
Ministry of Family and Social Policy

PORTUGAL

Ms Marta SILVA
Head of the Domestic Violence / Gender Violence Unit at the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality

ROMANIA / ROUMANIE

Ms Ramona MIHAILA
Head of Secretary of State's Office

SAN MARINO / SAINT-MARIN

Mr Eros GASPERONI
Permanent Representative of San Marino to the Council of Europe

Ms Elisabetta BUCCI
Deputy Permanent Representative of San Marino to the Council of Europe

SERBIA / SERBIE

Ms Gordana PREDIC
Special Advisor to the Vice-President of the Government and Minister of Culture
Ministry of Culture

SLOVENIA / SLOVENIE

Ms Sara SLANA
Secretary
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

SPAIN / ESPAGNE

Ms Paula ROCHE PAREDES
Senior Advisor at the Cabinet
Government Delegation against Gender Violence
Ministry of Equality

SWEDEN / SUÈDE

Ms Frida HANSSON
Deputy Director
Division for Gender Equality
Ministry of Employment

SWITZERLAND / SUISSE

M. Gian BEELI
Responsable du domaine Violence
Département fédéral de l'intérieur DFI
Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes BFEG

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

Mr Sandy MOSS
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe

Ms Nadia HASHMI
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe

UKRAINE

Ms Nataliia BOGDANOVA
State expert of the expert group on combatting human trafficking, home violence and gender equality
Directorate of Social Services Development of this Ministry

Mr Viktor NIKITIUK
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe

Mr Volodymyr KALENSKYI

PARTICIPANTS**STATES WHICH HAVE SIGNED BUT NOT YET RATIFIED THE CONVENTION****CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE**

Ms Kornélie GATICA GRONSKÁ
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the Council of Europe

KAZAKHSTAN

Ms Ayman UMAROVA
Lawyer, founder of the online law school "AU"

TUNISIA / TUNESIE

Mme Hanan BENZARTI
Ministère de la Femme

OTHER

Ms Maria Andriani KOSTOPOULOU
GREVIO President

Ms Alessandra PAUNCZ
Work with Perpetrators

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Mr Roberto OLLA, Head of Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity

Ms Gisella GORI, Advisor on Strategy and Work Co-ordination, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity

Mr Jorg POLAKIEWICZ, Director, Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law, Secretariat General

Ms Houda CHÉRIF, Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, Council of Europe Office in Tunis

SECRETARIAT

Secretariat of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence / Secrétariat du mécanisme de suivi de la Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la prévention et la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes et la violence domestique

Ms Johanna NELLES

Executive Secretary / Secrétaire exécutive

Head of the Violence against Women Division / Cheffe de la Division Violence à l'égard des femmes

Ms Françoise KEMPF

Administrator

Ms Francesca MONTAGNA

Administrator

Ms Elif SARIAYDIN

Administrator

Ms Sabrina WITTMANN

Administrator

Mr Mihail STOJANOSKI

Administrator

Ms Kerstin SCHINNERL

Senior project officer

Ms Sara PRIFTI

Project officer

Ms Christine EBEL

Principal administrative assistant

Ms Ioana VOELKEL

Principal administrative assistant

Ms Zsuzsanna MOLNAR
Management support assistant

Ms Joanna SZELEZNIAK
Administrative support assistant

Ms Floriane GICQUELAY
Intern

INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES

Mr Jean-Jacques PEDUSSAUD
Ms Lucie DEBURLET-SUTER
Ms Remy JAIN