

METHODOLOGY

For civil society organisations to run communication/advocacy campaigns to promote the values, aims and main provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence



METHODOLOGY

For civil society organisations to run communication/advocacy campaigns to promote the values, aims and main provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

The reproduction of extracts (up to 500 words) is authorised, except for commercial purposes as long as the integrity of the text is preserved, the excerpt is not used out of context, does not provide incomplete information or does not otherwise mislead the reader as to the nature, scope or content of the text. The source text must always be acknowledged as follows “© Council of Europe, year of the publication”. All other requests concerning the reproduction/ translation of all or part of the document, should be addressed to the Directorate of Communications, Council of Europe (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or publishing@coe.int).

All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Gender Equality Division of the Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, E-mail: VAW.gender.cooperation@coe.int

Cover design and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (DPDP), Council of Europe

Photos: Shutterstock

This publication has not been copy-edited by the DPDP Editorial Unit to correct typographical and grammatical errors.

© Council of Europe, September 2022
Printed at the Council of Europe

Contents

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE METHODOLOGY	5
DEFINING THE PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED	7
KEY SET OF MESSAGES	9
TARGET GROUPS AND ALLIES	13
Target groups	13
Potential allies	14
MEANS OF COMMUNICATION	16
Targeting decision-makers	16
Targeting the general public	17
TOOLS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAMPAIGNS	19
Proposed tools	19
CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION	24
Decision-makers	24
General public	25
ANNEXES	27

Purpose and scope of the methodology

The present methodology was developed by the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network with the support of Council of Europe and UN Women in 2020, with the aim of designing, from a human rights-based gender-sensitive victim-centred approach, a methodology and tools to promote the values, aims and provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention.

The methodology presents a strategy for communications and advocacy campaigns to be implemented by local civil society organisations (CSOs), especially in countries which have faced political backlash against women's rights, and in particular against the Istanbul Convention.

The main purpose of these communication and advocacy campaigns is to promote the values, aims and benefits of the Istanbul Convention by generating positive narratives and dispelling myths and misinformation regarding the convention. The promotion of the Istanbul Convention in simple and plain language is expected to increase targeted groups' awareness on women's rights and eventually on how violence against women can be prevented and tackled.

In this regard, the present methodology provides key messages and tools for local CSOs to effectively implement these communication and advocacy campaigns and support them in using these tools. Proposed communication and advocacy tools can be adapted by local CSOs running the campaigns, depending on the state of the Istanbul Convention in their country.

The methodology was piloted in 2021 by selected CSOs with expertise and experience in work related to combatting violence against women and domestic violence in three countries: Czech Republic, Latvia and Poland. Depending on the country, piloted communication and advocacy campaigns were aimed either to pave the way towards the ratification of the Istanbul Convention or its better implementation. Lessons learned and recommendations were taken into consideration in finalising the methodological package for use by CSOs in all Council of Europe member states.

Defining the problems to be addressed

In light of the proliferation of **myths and misconceptions about the Istanbul Convention** and even threats of withdrawal, there is an increasing need to raise awareness and understanding amongst key decision makers and the general public on its actual content. Notably, the different manifestations of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, their consequences and the need to prevent and combat such violence should be highlighted, as well as the aims and benefits of the convention.

Initially, five countries were selected as pilot countries for designing the communication and advocacy campaigns: Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland and Türkiye¹, as they have experienced significant political backlash against the Istanbul Convention. The political landscape in these five-targeted countries does however offer opportunities that can pave the way to a ratification or the proper implementation of the convention. For this purpose, one methodology together with a toolkit was designed to support such initiatives in the above-mentioned countries and eventually all over Europe.

According to the WAVE Concept Paper², developed with the aim to support the present methodology, the following four main issues and false narratives which the campaigns intend to debunk were identified in the five-targeted countries:

1. With effect of 1 July 2021, Türkiye withdrew from the Istanbul Convention and is no longer a state party to this convention.
2. The Concept Paper was created by WAVE for the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Division in order to provide an overview for the awareness raising vision to promote the values, aims and provisions of the Istanbul Convention and dispelling myths and misinformation about it. The paper compiles information from WAVE members on the current situation regarding the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention in a number of countries, followed by an explanation of current challenges, as well as opportunities to raise awareness about the convention.

- ▶ The **term “gender”** is regarded as problematic in all targeted countries. As the word “gender” does not have a literal translation in most languages, “gender” is used by right-wing politicians, conservative and religious groups as an equivalent to the sex of a person.
- ▶ The argument of **“self-sufficient” legislation** is brought up in many discourses combined with gender-neutral discourse, stating that by punishing crimes of violence, national legislation offers enough protection in equal terms to women and men victims of violence.
- ▶ Many countries which have not ratified the Istanbul Convention voiced concerns about the belief that the convention supposedly **imposes LGBTQ+ values**, including the legal recognition of **same-sex couples**.
- ▶ The belief that, by ratifying the Istanbul Convention, an **influx of migrants** would be allowed to enter the country and **claim asylum**.

According to the information received from WAVE members, the main actors spreading these false narratives and instigating this kind of backlash in the targeted countries are mainly right-wing political groups prominent in national parliaments or governments, but also a number of conservative religious groups from different faith groups. These two groups were identified in all countries interviewed, but also from past actions such as the letter³ sent to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe signed by 333 NGOs (mostly representing religious groups) in nine member states of the Council of Europe and requesting a revision of the Istanbul Convention to replace the word “gender equality” with “equality between women and men”.

3. https://www.arci.it/app/uploads/2018/05/letter_to_secretary_general_of_coe_thorbjorn_jagland.pdf

Key set of messages

A set of messages aiming to dispel and tackle myths and miscommunications regarding the Istanbul Convention by highlighting the benefits of the convention were developed. The messages are phrased in simple terms and form the basic framework of the communication and advocacy campaigns and related tools. They are intended to highlight the benefits of the Istanbul Convention.

CSOs are invited to tailor these messages to their national context and use them as follows, e.g.:

- ▶ As the focus of a specific local campaign;
- ▶ In public discourses;
- ▶ In news articles and op-eds;
- ▶ In social media campaigns, including through profile/cover pictures;
- ▶ In storytelling;
- ▶ During presentations, briefings, or any kind of meetings, trainings, national conferences on violence against women (e.g., at the beginning of a PowerPoint presentation or as an ice-breaker exercise to get the audience's attention);
- ▶ In podcast episodes or as an introduction/opening segment of podcasts;
- ▶ On billboards or posters in bus shelters to catch the attention of passers-by.

These key messages were developed to engage target groups (decision-makers and the general public) on key issues regarding the Istanbul Convention and to build public support. The choice of messages to be conveyed to the particular target group rests with CSOs.

It is recommended that CSOs preparatorily check key messages with a communication expert in their own country, to make sure they will be as targeted as possible.

False belief: *The Istanbul Convention's inclusion of the term "gender" tries to redefine sex roles.*

Related Istanbul Convention Articles: *Arts 12-15 prevention of violence against women aims at changing how people see and perceive women and men in society and how non-violent communication is promoted.*

Messages:

- ▶ Violence against women and domestic violence are some of the most common forms of violence, as 1 in 3 women around the world experience it during their lifetime⁴. The Istanbul Convention aims to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and offers appropriate support and protection to women victims of violence.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention focuses on women, as it covers types of violence that only they suffer from or experience more often than men, such as rape or domestic violence. However, the Istanbul Convention encourages countries to apply its provisions to all victims of domestic violence, including men and boys.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention highlights the importance to talk about violence against women and domestic violence in schools, so that boys and girls learn they have equal rights and opportunities, and that violence is never the answer.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention mentions the "gendered" nature of violence against women or "gender-based violence", as it addresses forms of violence that mostly or only affect women.
- ▶ As violence against women and domestic violence happen more frequently in societies where women have less rights, or where they are flouted, the Istanbul Convention highlights the importance to address violence against women to ensure gender equality.

False belief: *The national legislation is sufficient, so the Istanbul Convention is not needed.*

Related Istanbul Convention Articles: *In particular but not limited to, Art. 7: comprehensive policies to address all forms of violence against women; Arts. 18-26: victims should be supported through general services and specialist services; Art. 33-40: criminalisation of all forms of VAW and DV.*

4. UN Women, [Facts and figures: Ending violence against women](#) (2020)

Messages:

- ▶ Most countries do not address all forms of violence against women, such as rape, conjugal rape, sexual harassment, stalking, forced abortion, forced sterilisation or forced marriage. The Istanbul Convention ensures that states take appropriate measures to prevent all forms of violence, protect all victims, and punish perpetrators.
- ▶ In most countries, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic unveiled insufficient national legislation and support to protect victims of violence against women and domestic violence. The Istanbul Convention ensures victims get immediate protection at all times.
- ▶ Where the Istanbul Convention is ratified, preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence no longer depend on the political will of a government, but is an obligation under international law.

False belief: *The Istanbul Convention promotes LGBTQ+ values and identity and harms the traditional family.*

Related Istanbul Convention Articles: *Arts. 1 to 4: aims of the IC and how no victim can be discriminated.*

Messages:

- ▶ The Istanbul Convention ensures that all victims of violence against women and domestic violence are protected, no matter whom they love.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention and other human rights conventions (e.g., the European Convention on Human Rights⁵) state that no one should experience discrimination or violence because of their sexual orientation. The principle of non-discrimination also appears in most countries' national laws.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention does not define what marriage or family is or should be. It protects victims when violence happens in any type of family.
- ▶ It is violence which destroys families, not the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ Many countries which do not recognise same-sex marriage have already ratified the Istanbul Convention, because the Istanbul Convention focuses on protecting victims of violence against women and domestic violence and not on sexual orientation.

5. https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf

False belief: *The Istanbul Convention will bring an influx of migrants seeking asylum.*

Related Istanbul Convention Articles: *Arts. 59-60: gender-based asylum claims.*

Messages:

- ▶ The Istanbul Convention ensures that all women, including refugees and asylum seekers, are protected from any forms of violence. The right to live a life free from violence applies to all women, irrespective of their migrant or refugee status.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention states that the right of a woman who experiences violence to remain in the country she currently lives in, should not depend on her being married or in a relationship with a violent partner.
- ▶ The Istanbul Convention does not set any new rules regarding refugee women. The Geneva Refugee Convention⁶ already foresees that violence against women can amount to “persecution” which is a ground to grant refugee status.

6. <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

Target groups and allies

The identified key target groups of the communication and advocacy campaigns are **decision-makers**, including key political figures and the **general public**, including victims and potential victims of violence against women.

Each CSO running the campaign will be responsible for identifying the respective decision-makers to be approached, as well as resources to use and allies to involve in order to leverage their support.

Target groups

Decision-makers are all figures who have the power to influence decisions regarding the ratification/better implementation of the Istanbul Convention and can be mobilised to support it. Targeting key decision-makers aims to create leaders of change who can themselves influence a significant part of the population.

This includes two categories of decision-makers:

- ▶ Those who are already supporting the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ Those who are not clearly and/or publicly opposing the Istanbul Convention or are undecided about their stance towards the convention. This group appears to have limited awareness and information of the impact and importance of having such a legal human rights instrument, and of the importance of promoting women's human rights and offering adequate support to victims of violence. These decision-makers can operate both at national and local level, including key community leaders.

The **general public** refers to a country's overall population with no or limited knowledge about the scope and application of the Istanbul Convention. Large audiences can be mobilised to support the Istanbul Convention through clear and relatable information on its benefits on the lives of women and society as a whole. This was shown, for example, in Türkiye and Poland where the convention received substantial public support after the governments threatened to withdraw from it.⁷

CSOs can also decide to reach out to **legal professionals, social workers** and **police officers** as specific groups working with women victims of violence. They can be part of CSOs training/capacity building initiatives, for example, if the HELP course on violence against women is used (see proposed tools below).

Potential allies

When targeting the above-mentioned groups, it is important to consider **potential allies** that can help promote the Istanbul Convention to groups of individuals which would otherwise be difficult to reach, by either political decision-makers or women's rights CSOs. Suggested potential allies include:

- ▶ **Women's rights CSOs** supporting the same cause, working directly in the field of violence against women. For the purpose of ensuring maximum impact, CSOs should work together following the same strategic approach.
- ▶ **Legal professionals** or **other professionals**, such as the police, social workers, health workers, etc. working in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, already trained and applying the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ **Unexpected allies** including:
 - **Religious leaders.** A good example is the cooperation established between women's rights CSOs and religious leaders of five main faith communities in Cyprus in 2017, which resulted in the release of a statement by these faith leaders, condemning all forms of violence against women and domestic violence.⁸

7. WAVE also supported this campaign on social media: <https://www.facebook.com/womenagainstviolenceeurope/posts/3266781466723872>
<https://www.facebook.com/womenagainstviolenceeurope/posts/3295829953819023>
<https://www.facebook.com/womenagainstviolenceeurope/posts/3275391485862870>

8. <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2017/03/cyprus-religious-leaders-unite-violence-women/>

- ▶ Male and female **role models/celebrities** dedicated to raising awareness on violence against women and domestic violence.
- ▶ **Awareness ambassadors** such as young people in local communities. A young peer group provided with tools and support from women's rights CSOs are powerful allies to disseminate messages targeting the youth on social media.
 - **Local artists** who can help designing infographics and can offer a creative perspective on promoting the main messages of campaigns accessible to the general public.

CSOs running the communication and advocacy campaigns are best placed to identify the most appropriate decision makers and unexpected allies in promoting and disseminating positive information about the Istanbul Convention.

Means of communication

CSOs should focus first on targeting identified decision-makers who can be mobilised to support the Istanbul Convention among their peers and the general public. In that respect, the following means of communication are suggested as alternatives for CSOs running the campaigns to target the mentioned groups. CSOs should identify which method is more appropriate and can be successful to achieve the aims of the campaign.

Targeting decision-makers

- ▶ **(On-line) focus groups** created by women's rights CSOs running the campaigns in order to define and increase people's understanding of the Istanbul Convention and help identify ways in which it could be positively promoted. Focus groups' participants to be considered should be found among CSOs' allies, but also among those who, at a first glance, might not seem interested in the Istanbul Convention but are open to support it. Emphasis should be placed on presenting the Istanbul Convention in plain language, its aims, its four core pillars and its benefits once ratified and properly implemented. Sharing other countries' experiences could also facilitate increasing understanding of the Istanbul Convention. These focus groups can also be used as a way of strategising how to further disseminate information about the Istanbul Convention to different decision-makers. Members of the focus groups should further act as "sample representatives" of these groups, when engaged in organising meetings/roundtable discussions.

- ▶ **(On-line) meetings/roundtable discussions** bringing together decisions-makers to directly address and debate the concerns identified during the focus groups. These meetings/roundtable discussions can be integrated in already existing national/local key meetings with the community or with the constituents the decision-makers serve. These meetings/roundtable discussions also aim to make use of allies among stakeholders, to attract other stakeholders that might be interested in learning more about what the Istanbul Convention actually stands for, and how it can ultimately influence change.
- ▶ **Promoting the “knowledge pack”** including training and other resources such as the Q&A brochure on the Istanbul Convention, WAVE materials, statistics, HELP courses on violence against women and domestic violence created by the Council of Europe, etc. These should be targeted towards decision-makers, but if so decided by CSOs, also towards professionals who interact with women experiencing violence, such as legal professionals, police, social workers, and health workers, etc. who have the capacity to immediately apply the knowledge on the convention.

Targeting the general public

When targeting the general public, the following should be considered:

- ▶ Explain in simple terms what the Istanbul Conventions is, its impact on one’s life, and how it can prevent and protect women and their children from violence by depicting a positive narrative; explaining in plain language what its articles entail; and by breaking them down into specific and clearly relatable information.
- ▶ Appeal to people’s emotions, as an effective tactic to get a message across. To this end, storytelling can emphasise individual stories of women experiencing violence and how they have overcome these challenges thanks to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Indeed, individual stories help someone to relate on a personal and emotional level to another person’s experience and enable people to grasp the human dimension behind anonymous statistics. In countries where the Istanbul Convention has not been ratified, messages aim to showcase how the provisions of the convention would have offered better support to women victims of example. For example, such a strategy was conducted

in Latvia, where personal stories⁹ of victims who accessed women's specialist services were published, followed by an explanation on how the Istanbul Convention would have supported that victim if it had been implemented.

- ▶ Statistics and data on violence against women and domestic to raise awareness and capture the public interest interest. A combination of statistics and personal stories are usually more effective in highlighting the actual impact of violence against women to the general public. Figures alone are often perceived rationally and as with factual information often more easily forgotten.

9. <https://www.facebook.com/CentrsMARTA/posts/2112202565463706>

Tools to support the implementation of the campaigns

A set of tools to support CSOs in effectively running the communication and advocacy campaigns and reach decision-makers and the general public is proposed to CSOs. CSOs will have the responsibilities to decide which tools are the most relevant to use in their country.

Tools are tailored to address the main issues and offer positive messages and easily understandable information about the key articles of the Istanbul Convention. Together with the key messages, these tools represent the core of the methodology and should be used by CSOs in whatever way they prefer.

Lastly, CSOs are encouraged to consult a communication expert when deciding which tools are advisable, so the tools and activities can be as targeted and tailored as possible to the respective national context.

Proposed tools

- ▶ **Set of key messages spreading positive narratives on the Istanbul Convention** to address the four main misconceptions regarding the convention (see above). Messages aim to address these misconceptions in a way that does not reiterate these false narratives, but rather by focusing on the benefits of the Istanbul Convention and highlighting that its sole purpose is to eliminate VAW and DV. These key messages depict a positive narrative on the Istanbul Convention by explaining in plain language what a selection of articles of the Istanbul Convention entail, and by breaking them down into specific and clearly relatable information:
 - Arts. 1-4: the aim and purpose of the Istanbul Convention and how no victim shall be discriminated;

- Art. 7: comprehensive policies to address all forms of violence against women;
 - Arts. 12-15: prevention of violence against women aims at changing how people see and perceive women and men in society, and how we promote non-violent communication;
 - Arts. 18-26: victims should be supported through general services and specialist services;
 - Art. 33-40: criminalisation of all forms of VAW;
 - Arts. 59 and 60: gender-based asylum claims.
- ▶ **Checklist for CSOs** to help in the organisation of their communication and advocacy campaigns to promote the values, aims and main provisions of the Istanbul Convention, generate positive narratives and dispel myths and misinformation about it. While the checklist should serve as a roadmap for planning the campaigns, it should not be seen as prescriptive, and it will be up to CSOs to decide which proposed actions and tools they are able to implement according to national needs and available resources.
 - ▶ **Factsheet “Why do we need the Istanbul Convention? Common myths and misconceptions”**. To further emphasise the true purpose of the convention, the facts should be adapted to the national context, and in this regard, CSOs are encouraged to think about other myths they encounter regarding the Istanbul Convention and how to address them. The factsheet can be leveraged with people undecided or misinformed about the Istanbul Convention, but also to mobilise decision-makers and the general public by highlighting the aims and importance of the convention.
 - ▶ **Brochure “Why do we need the Istanbul Convention? What changes it can bring and what measures have been adopted to comply with it”**. It highlights the importance of the Istanbul Convention by outlining positive changes the convention can bring, as well as measures adopted by countries following its ratification. This tool can be used alongside the main messages when raising awareness about the aims of the convention. It also includes an exercise for CSOs to think about how the support system available to women victims of violence in their countries must be improved following the ratification of the convention.

- ▶ **Poster “Istanbul Convention requirement of putting the needs and rights of victims at the heart of services. What does this mean for victims?”** The poster presents the five main aspects of a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach when providing help to a victim of violence: the importance for agencies supporting the victims to be mindful of their trauma; the importance of ensuring adequate specialist support for victims of violence; treating victims with respect and empathy; a prompt response by state agencies in cases of immediate danger and other essential services that should be available to victims focused on empowering the victim in the support process to avoid retraumatising. The poster is targeted to decision-makers to highlight the need for such response in order to offer adequate protection and support to women experiencing violence and can be tailored by CSOs to their national context.
- ▶ **Infographic “Journey of a domestic violence survivor to access support services WITH the support of the Istanbul Convention and WITHOUT the support of the Istanbul Convention”**, relying only on national legislation, by using storytelling to initiate actions. The poster is targeted to decision-makers and the general public to raise awareness, ensure adequate protection and support to women experiencing violence and can be tailored by CSOs to their national context.
- ▶ **“Knowledge-pack”** with additional resources to facilitate the implementation of the campaign. It includes:
 - **Raising Awareness of Violence against Women brochure**¹⁰ on how to raise awareness on violence against women for members states which join the Istanbul Convention (Article 13 of the convention).
 - **Question-and-Answer brochure on the Istanbul Convention**¹¹ produced by the Council of Europe which can be disseminated to decision-makers and the general public.
 - **Infographic**¹² **and brochure**¹³ **depicting the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention** developed by the Council of Europe which can be disseminated to decision-makers and the general public. They can

10. <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e1f1>

11. <https://rm.coe.int/istanbul-convention-questions-and-answers/16808f0b80>

12. <https://rm.coe.int/coe-istanbulconvention-infografic-en-r04-v01/1680a06d0d>

13. <https://rm.coe.int/coe-istanbulconvention-brochure-en-r03-v01/1680a06d4f>

be translated into the national languages of the targeted countries if needed.

- **Report of the Civil Society Strengthening Platform’s¹⁴ social media campaign** conducted in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and produced by WAVE. It highlights the formulation, coordination, and translation of positive messages concerning the Istanbul Convention.
- Samples of **two open letters written by WAVE** as models for CSOs wishing to write their own open letters calling for urgent actions from governments or to start a petition urging parliaments to ratify/implement the Istanbul Convention. The first letter was written in response to a letter requesting for a revision of the convention to replace the word “gender” with “equality between women and men” and signed by 333 NGOs. The second was written following the COVID-19 outbreak, urging governments and international bodies to uphold their commitments to international legislations protecting women and girls from violence and, consequently, supporting the Istanbul Convention.
- **Examples of campaigns** in social media (16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence) collected by WAVE.
- Statistics on violence against women and domestic violence:
 - [UN Women – Facts and figures: Ending violence against women \(2020\)](#)
 - [UNFPA – Cost of ending Gender-based violence \(2020\)](#)
 - [WHO – Levels of domestic violence as COVID-19 pandemic escalates \(2020\)](#)
 - [UN Women – COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls \(2020\)](#)
 - [WAVE Network – WAVE Country report 2021 – Women’s specialist support services in Europe and the impact of COVID-19 on their provision \(2021\)](#)
 - [World Bank – Gender-based violence \(violence against women and girls\) \(2019\)](#)

14. The Civil Society Strengthening Platform is a platform created as part of the EU/UN Women project: “Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans: Implementing norms, changing minds” comprising nine organisations from the Western Balkans and Türkiye and aiming to strengthen women’s organisations’ platforms and networks’ capacities in advocating for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

- UK Government – Cost of domestic abuse (2018)
- WHO -Keys facts on VAW (2017)
- FRA – Violence against women: an EU wide survey. Main results report (2014)
- **HELP course¹⁵ on violence against women and domestic violence for legal professionals** produced by the Council of Europe which can be promoted by CSOs among their peers. This online course covers in an interactive way the key concepts, the international and European legal framework and the European case law governing the prevention and protection of women and girls from violence, focusing in particular on the Istanbul Convention.
- **HELP course¹⁶ on violence against women and domestic violence for law enforcement** produced by the Council of Europe which can be promoted by CSOs among their peers. The course offers detailed, practical and comprehensive training to improve the quality of law enforcement responses to violence against women cases and support in victims' access to justice.

15. HELP online course on violence against women and domestic violence

16. Council of Europe HELP online course on Violence Against Women for Law Enforcement Professionals

Channels of communication

The channels of communication to be leveraged for the communication and advocacy campaigns differ depending on whether the focus is on targeting key decision-makers or the general public, as different means of communication are better adapted to specific audiences.

Decision-makers

- ▶ **Political forums/groups** to raise awareness on the Istanbul Convention amongst key political decision-makers who are neutral or undecided about their stance regarding the convention. They can also serve as a space to encourage political figures, who endorse the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, to engage with opposition parties and openly discuss the aims and provisions of the convention. Political forums/groups to approach remain at the discretion of the CSOs running the campaigns.
- ▶ **Social media** has become one of the main channels of communication for CSOs, but also for decision-makers to reach the general population, as well as for key policy makers. This medium presents several advantages: it is free, easily accessible, and reaches decision-makers more effectively and quickly than mainstream media. Facebook is a very effective forum for launching online campaigns highlighting key articles of the Istanbul Convention. Instagram and Twitter can also be adapted to online campaigns, notably by encouraging decision-makers to *retweet* or post different messages regarding the Istanbul Convention. YouTube can be leveraged to host videos of potential allies and/or decision makers that argue for the ratification/better implementation of the convention, which can further be shared on Facebook or other platforms. Social media is also relevant to launch a petition asking government officials to show their support for the Istanbul Convention and to push the convention on parliaments' agenda.

- ▶ **Mainstream media** including print media such as newspapers and TV channels (e.g., news broadcasting services), and independent media channels. Writing op-eds or connecting with journalists willing to write an article highlighting the importance of the Istanbul Convention could be an easier means of communication, although it is important to note that this channel will likely only reach a small fraction of the opposition. Radio channels where being popular, should be considered as another important channel of communication.

General public

- ▶ **Public advertising** is one of the most important channels of communication as it allows for quick and effective dissemination of key messages to a large section of the general public. This includes posters in bus shelters, large billboards, brochures and leaflets in public places as well as installations in open spaces. Printing brochures with information regarding the Istanbul Convention and its aims displayed in public spaces is a cost-effective way to raise awareness.
- ▶ **Social media**, as mentioned above, has not only become an important channel of communication for CSOs to reach decision-makers, but also a key channel to engage the general public. WAVE used Facebook to launch the 16 days of activism campaign, to highlight key articles of the Istanbul Convention and how they protect women from violence.¹⁷ Instagram and Twitter are also adapted to online campaigns targeting the general public by encouraging individual users to share information and stories on VAW with a common hashtag revolving around key main messages. Finally, YouTube can be used as a channel of communication to engage the general public with street videos on people's understanding of the Istanbul Convention.
- ▶ **Podcasts** can be leveraged to raise awareness about the Istanbul Convention in a more in-depth way, which offers more flexibility than traditional mainstream media sources. This channel of communication gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic as it can be created remotely and uploaded online or on mobile podcast applications accessible to large sections of the population. WAVE is able to support

17. Such examples can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/womenagainstviolenceeurope/photos/pcb.3645699842165364/3645698775498804>

CSOs in creating podcasts as it created its own podcast¹⁸ to discuss current issues regarding violence against women and key WAVE projects. CSOs are encouraged to first target popular and already established local podcasts as a channel of communication to help promote the aims of the Istanbul Convention, and then consider whether they have the capacities to create their own podcast.

- ▶ **Mainstream media** can also be an effective channel of communication to target individuals who do not have a smartphone or access to internet. While some newspapers and TV channels may be private or government-owned, making them harder to access independent media sources that can be utilised to reach the general public, and especially journalists who have already shown their support to the Istanbul Convention.

18. No More Violence Against Women (podcast of the WAVE Network):
<https://open.spotify.com/show/6p4PBAYF09M06TIP8oWVvk9>

Annexes

1. Checklist for CSOs
2. Factsheet “Why do we need the Istanbul Convention? Common Myths and Misconceptions”
3. Brochure “Why do we need the Istanbul Convention? What Changes it can bring and what measures have been adopted to comply with it”
4. Poster “Istanbul Convention requirement of putting the needs and rights of victims at the heart of services. What does this mean for victims?”
5. Infographic “Journey of a domestic violence survivor to access support services WITH the support of the Istanbul Convention and WITHOUT the support of the Istanbul Convention”
6. Knowledge-pack

www.coe.int/VAW-gender-cooperation

PREMS 124022

ENG

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all 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.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE