

2025

Norwegian Civil Society's Shadow Report no. 2 on the Istanbul Convention

*Periodic report 2025: follow-up and implementation of
recommendations from GREVIO/State Party Committee*



Preface

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter “the Convention”) is a ground-breaking framework in the fight to ensure a life free from violence and abuse for all. The Convention is based on a key recognition that violence and abuse especially affect women and girls.

In order for the Convention to be an effective tool in the prevention of violence and abuse, States must implement specific and targeted measures to back up their commitments. This requires both political action and strong collaboration between the authorities and civil society. In addition, implementation requires continuous effort over time. The monitoring and reporting processes managed by GREVIO are a key mechanism in ensuring such continuity. Furthermore, these monitoring and reporting processes help hold authorities accountable for their compliance with the Convention.

At the same time, it is important to consider the status quo of violence from multiple perspectives. Civil society organisations assisting women and other groups who are victims of violence play an important role in this work. These organisations not only contribute to compliance with the Convention, they also highlight real-life challenges and experiences from this field.

As part of the periodic reporting round, Norwegian civil society has therefore prepared a shadow report to supplement the report prepared by the Government. We hope that this report provides a broader and more nuanced picture of the practical implementation of the Convention in Norway.

This report has been prepared with funding from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Work on the report completed on 06/11/2025. The coordinating organisations JURK, KSS and NKS would like to thank the Council of Europe for the opportunity to contribute to the monitoring mechanism under the Convention, which is an important breakthrough in the fight against violence against women. We look forward to the evaluation process and are at GREVIO’s disposal if there should be any further questions or anything that requires clarification.

Sincerely,

JURK: Åsne Solberg and Elena Buznik; KSS: Mina Hennum Mohseni; and NKS: Eli Beenfeldt and Liv Bjørnhaug Johansen

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Introduction

General overview – current status of violence in Norway

Violence and abuse are a serious societal problem in Norway. Despite the commitment of Norwegian authorities to prevent and reduce gender-based violence, developments since the last evaluation round show that the situation has got worse in several areas. Among other things, new prevalence surveys show that one in five women report having experienced rape, which is a marked increase from previous levels.¹ At the same time, one in ten women have experienced serious intimate partner violence². This violence does not only affect the individual; ripple effects are felt through generations. The costs are borne by the victims and those close to them, but also by the healthcare system, employers, the voluntary sector and society in general.

In recent years, Norway has seen an alarming increase in the number of intimate partner murders, and nine out of ten victims are women.³ At the same time, clearance rates for domestic violence and rape cases are going down, and the percentage of cases that are dropped is concerningly high. In addition, multiple legislative amendments have weakened the legal position of victims of violence. A consistent problem is the absence of any clear gender perspective in the development of policies, regulations and measures. This weakens the ability of our authorities to accurately analyse and address societal problems. Furthermore, a lack of coordinated data collection means that key aspects of violence issues are not accurately reflected in official statistics.

In recent years, our government's action against domestic violence and rape have been heavily criticised by multiple expert committees, including the Government-appointed Rape Committee (*Voldtekstutvalget*)⁴ and the Office of the Auditor General (*Riksrevisjonen*)⁵. These experts have clearly expressed that, despite violence and abuse reportedly being areas of priority for our government's policies, the Government has failed to take action to prevent and fight violence and abuse in Norway. It is pointed out that these phenomena are under-communicated as societal problems and problems for public health, and that they generally are not

¹ NKVTS (2023), p. 71.

² NKVTS (2023), p. 100.

³ Brenna (2025).

⁴ NOU 2024: 4.

⁵ Office of the Auditor General (2022).

prioritised in the allocation of public resources⁶, despite the socioeconomic cost of domestic violence being estimated at NOK 93 billion in 2021.⁷

As these problems increase, civil organisations report increasingly limiting constraints for their work to reduce violence. The current funding model for crisis shelters means the sector is vulnerable to cuts due to tight municipal budgets. Multiple shelters have been closed in recent years, and other services aimed at victims and perpetrators of violence have also experienced frequent budget cuts. Civil society also reports that assistive services for victims of violence are often perceived as fragmented, complex and poorly coordinated.

There are, however, some positive developments. Amendments in the statutory provisions concerning rape, where a lack of freely given consent is now the defining element, is a key step forward.⁸ The same applies to amendments granting the police a wider authority to impose so-called reverse personal security alarms⁹, as well as the establishment of a permanent intimate partner murder commission to strengthen prevention efforts in this area.¹⁰ Multiple expert committees have been appointed in recent years, providing a more comprehensive knowledge base of different types of violence, abuse and exploitation. Nevertheless, these measures are not enough, given the scope of domestic violence and sexualised violence.

Norway has not yet incorporated the Istanbul Convention into domestic law. When the Convention's provisions do not take precedence if its provisions conflict with other legislation, it is a clear indication of political unwillingness to prioritise the fight against violence.

A unified civil society points out that a far more ambitious and comprehensive effort is needed to combat the serious societal problems of violence and abuse in Norway. We hope this report will contribute to putting these issues on the agenda and mark a change of pace in the fight against violence and abuse in Norway.

Methods

In our preparation of this report, we have focused on highlighting developmental trends in violence since the last report. This report therefore focuses heavily on the

⁶ NOU 2024: 4 p. 102.

⁷ Menon Economics (2023) p. 6.

⁸ The Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2025a) and Penal code § 291.

⁹ Chapter 17 d of the Criminal Procedure Act.

¹⁰ The Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2025a).

situation in the period 2020–2025.

This shadow report has been prepared by 21 Norwegian non-governmental organisations, each contributing expertise from their respective fields. The report reflects the challenges we believe the Norwegian civil society is facing in terms of violence and offers concrete recommendations for measures we believe our Government should implement for better compliance with the Convention.

This work was coordinated by Legal Counselling for Women (JURK), the Secretariat for the Shelter Movement (KSS), and the Norwegian Women's Public Health Association (NKS). JURK is an independent legal aid organisation. We offer free legal aid to all women in Norway, and we work to promote gender equality and make all women better aware of their legal rights. KSS is an umbrella organisation for crisis shelters in Norway that works towards a future without domestic violence, violence against women and human trafficking, as well as towards strengthening shelter services in Norway. NKS is Norway's largest women's organisation that works to promote women's health and better living conditions, including combating violence against women.

Norwegian civil society has based its preparation of this report on GREVIO's questionnaire to authorities. A translated, plain language questionnaire was made available to civil society and non-profit organisations, along with an invitation for input. This input has been collected, processed and supplemented by the coordinating organisations. In connection with their processing of the input, the coordinating organisations also communicated closely with researchers and other stakeholders in this field to gain a better understanding of the themes highlighted by civil society in its input.

A draft report was sent out for consultation to all of the organisations that had been invited to provide input, allowing them to submit corrections or join the report in its entirety. The completed report has been signed by 32 organisations. All organisations involved have been listed below.

Contributors to the shadow report

Civil society organisations that have contributed input to the civil society shadow report:

JURK (Legal Counselling for Women), Secretariat for the Shelter Movement (KSS),

Norwegian Women's Public Health Association (NKS), Aldri Alene/Omsorgsjuss, Caritas Norway, Foreningen mot psykisk vold, Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (FFO), Jussbuss, Krisesenteret i Midt-Troms, Norwegian Association Against Sexual Abuse (LMSO), Centre for Equality, KUN Centre for Equality and Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Network (LIN), MiRa Centre, Norwegian Women's Lobby, Oslo Crisis Shelter and Competence Centre for Domestic Violence, Oslo Red Cross/Red Cross Helpline on Negative Social Control and Honour-related Violence, Save the Children Norway, Alternative to Violence (ATV), Stopp Diskrimineringen, and VAKE - kirkelig ressurscenter mot seksuelle overgrep.

Other organisations that have joined the report in its entirety:

Amnesty International Norway, Norwegian Center against Racism, Hjelpekilden Norge, Women's Front of Norway, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Norway (IKFF), Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, Nok. Norge, Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), Sex og samfunn, Soroptimist International Norway, and Stine Sofies Stiftelse.

Challenges in preparations for the shadow report

One main issue in the preparations for this shadow report for the thematic evaluation round (Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice) has been that the reporting cycle coincided with the periodic evaluation round for GREVIO and State recommendations from the baseline evaluation round. Norwegian civil society has therefore been forced to prepare two complete shadow reports in the same time frame. The fact that many of the same articles have been addressed in the two different reporting cycles/questionnaires has also been a source of confusion among the civil society organisations that have been asked to contribute input. While the Government's official report on the thematic evaluation round was published in October 2025, time constraints did not allow for Norwegian civil society to prepare its thematic shadow report based on the official report, due to the fact that preparations for the shadow report were already in their final phase when the official report became available.

Another challenge was the fact that the invitation to prepare a shadow report came with a very short deadline, in early summer 2025. In practice, this meant that many Norwegian civil society organisations were unavailable at the beginning of the period due to summer holidays. Because Norwegian civil society was given a relatively short time frame in which to prepare input for two relatively

comprehensive questionnaires, we could have missed out on important information because we were unable to procure it in time. As the two reporting processes were concurrent, they will provide the most accurate depiction of violence in Norway if read in context.

Article 4: Fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination

Background

The Istanbul Convention requires States to ensure that measures are implemented without discrimination on any grounds. This is especially important in order to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and women with young children, people with disabilities (including intellectual and cognitive), people who live in remote areas, people in active addiction, prostitutes, indigenous and ethnic minorities, migrants (including undocumented immigrants and refugees), LGBT individuals, HIV-positive individuals, homeless persons, children and the elderly.

When services offered to women who are victims of violence generally are inadequate, the consequences are especially dire for the most vulnerable groups. Several civil society organisations emphasise that increased funding, earmarked funding, specific measures with clear timelines, competence-building and national guidelines are essential for meeting the protection needs of especially vulnerable groups. In addition, those whom the law is aimed at or intended to protect, must receive information and knowledge about their rights. Norwegian civil society believes we currently fall short in all of these areas.

The challenges described below are based on specific input from contributors to this report. The list is not exhaustive, and other groups may also be facing considerable challenges.

Minority women

Women with immigrant or refugee backgrounds may be especially vulnerable to domestic violence or sexual violence. In 2024, 61 percent of residents in Norwegian crisis shelters had immigrant backgrounds.¹¹ Many face challenges, including limited language proficiency, poor digital proficiency, and weak ties to the labour

¹¹ Bufdir (2025).

market.

Civil society organisations report that a lack of knowledge about their rights and available assistive measures means that many do not report the violence. Despite several information campaigns aimed at victims of violence, women with immigrant backgrounds who have experienced violence find they do not have access to sufficient information about assistive services due to language barriers or limited understanding of the system. This is especially true for the group of women with short residency in Norway. Several civil society organisations also point out that many local support services lack the resources required to offer information in languages besides Norwegian and English.

For minority women who come to Norway on the basis of family reunification, their residence permit is normally contingent on them living with their spouse. There is an exception, under which they can be granted a residence permit on an independent basis if they have experienced abuse,¹² but many women are not aware of this right, or they find the risk of applying for an independent residence permit to be too high. We must ensure that they get clear information about the so-called “abuse provision” early – in encounters with public authorities, in adult education and as part of their integration process. In addition, recent studies show that immigration authorities apply a too stringent interpretation of the conditions for granting residence on an independent basis.¹³

Stricter amendments to immigration legislation, such as increasing requirements for residency and income, pose additional barriers that may prevent women with immigrant backgrounds who have experienced violence from breaking out of a violent relationship.

Women with disabilities

Violence and discrimination disproportionately affect women with disabilities.¹⁴ Despite most crisis shelters being able to provide some form of adaptations for users with reduced mobility¹⁵, many shelters still do not have universal design, despite as many as 38 percent of shelter residents having some form of disability.¹⁶ Civil society organisations also point out that many crisis shelters do not offer sign

¹² Section 53 of the Immigration Act.

¹³ NIM (2024) and LDO (2025)

¹⁴ Bufdir (2025a)

¹⁵ Bufdir (2025a)

¹⁶ Bufdir (2025a).

language interpretation. Some also point out that information on major informational websites on violence are not accessible for women/persons with disabilities. Support services for victims of violence are largely dependent on municipal economies, and many support services do not have access to expertise on violence against people with disabilities.

Women with intellectual disabilities risk being subjected to invasive procedures without legal authority. As recently as September 2025, it was revealed that multiple patients with disabilities had intrauterine devices inserted at a Norwegian hospital without documentation that consent for this procedure had been assessed.¹⁷ Norway has also been criticised by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for allowing forced abortions for women with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, often without true consent.¹⁸

Some also find that rape against women with disabilities is still investigated and prosecuted pursuant to Section 295 of the Penal Code (abuse of unequal power relationship) instead of the provisions on sexual assault in Section 291. As a consequence, the rapist may receive a lesser sentence, as the sentencing framework for Section 295 is much less severe than the sentencing framework for Section 291, despite GREVIO in the previous baseline evaluation expressed concerns for incorrect subsumption in these types of cases.¹⁹

At the same time, civil society organisations point to good initiatives aimed at strengthening prevention efforts and competence-building, including the VIP project, which aims to provide people with intellectual disabilities with a better understanding of boundaries, emotions and abuse.²⁰

LGBTQI persons

The ability of crisis shelters to accommodate queer and trans people varies, and many shelter employees have limited knowledge on the needs of these groups. Efforts have been initiated to improve this knowledge, including training for low-threshold support services through the measure "Skeivt perspektiv på vold" (Queer perspectives on violence).²¹

¹⁷ County Governor of Innlandet (2025).

¹⁸ Section 9 of the Abortion Act, CEDAW (2023), CRPD (2019).

¹⁹ GREVIO (2022) p. 53.

²⁰ Centre for Equality (undated).

²¹ Centre for Equality (2025).

Under the Crisis Shelter Act, everyone, including LGBTQI persons, has the right to crisis shelter services that meet the user's individual needs.²² At the same time, experiences from crisis shelters show that queer people do not take advantage of shelter services to the same degree as other groups. Research into the experiences of this group with support services is extremely limited. One recent study into the experiences of queer women with minority backgrounds showed that this group faces unique challenges when they experience intimate partner violence, among other things due to an intersection of minority stressors linked to both sexual orientation and ethnic background.²³ The study concluded that more research into intimate partner violence in queer relationships is needed, as this could contribute to the development of more effective prevention and support measures.

Women in active addiction

Women in active addiction are an especially vulnerable group. Support services working with this group report that female addicts increasingly experience horrific violence and rape, but that they rarely contact sexual assault referral centres or other support services.²⁴

Women in active addiction are among the groups that currently do not have access to adequate shelter services.

In its report on addiction and human rights from 2022, the Norwegian Human Rights Institution (NIM) pointed out that people in active addiction did not have true access to shelter services in many areas, and that support services available to this group generally are limited.²⁵ According to crisis shelter statistics for 2024, 8 of 43 crisis shelters were unable to offer accommodation to female users with known substance abuse issues.

In connection with parliamentary hearing of a new Crisis Shelter Act, a decision was made to more clearly define municipal responsibility for providing crisis shelter services to vulnerable groups. If a user's accommodation needs cannot be met within the existing framework, the municipality must provide an equitable alternative for users who are unable to take advantage of the standard service.²⁶ This entails that the obligation of municipalities to offer shelter services for women

²² Section 3 of the Crisis Shelter Act.

²³ Ummak (2022).

²⁴ Sverdrup (2024) and Actis (2024).

²⁵ NIM (2022).

²⁶ Prop. 122 L (2024-2025).

and others in active addiction is increased when this Act takes effect in 2026. Civil society organisations take a positive view of this amendment, but point out that more stringent requirements for crisis shelters cannot be implemented without earmarked funding.

Civil society organisations are positive to a stronger focus on addiction and mental health in the escalation plan against violence, as well as in the Report to the Storting on addiction from 2025²⁷, but emphasise that both of these works nevertheless feel relatively non-committal toward violence against women in addiction and their need for protection from violence.

Elderly women

Multiple civil society organisations report that violence against elderly women is an under-appreciated problem that requires special attention in order to meet the requirements of the Istanbul Convention on non-discrimination and equal protection. Elderly women are highlighted as an especially vulnerable group, and this vulnerability is amplified when age is combined with other factors, like minority background, weak pension rights, limited knowledge about their rights, and poor digital proficiency. This creates barriers to seeking help and getting out of violent relationships and negative social control.

Age-related disorders, like dementia, can also increase the risk of violence and neglect. A recent Norwegian cross-sectional study showed that two thirds of family members of people with dementia had committed at least one form of violence or abuse against the person with dementia in the past year.²⁸ The risk was highest when the family member was a spouse or partner, whereas access to a dedicated contact person within the municipal health service appeared to reduce the risk. This study shows how violence against the elderly often occurs in close relationships, as well as how evaluation can contribute to the identification of risk factors and implementation of effective measures.

Civil society calls for more systematic research and better data on violence against elderly women, both in the home and in institutions, with a particular focus on intersectionality. A more solid foundation of knowledge will make it possible to develop targeted, more effective measures for prevention and protection for this group.

²⁷ Meld. St. 5 (2024-2025).

²⁸ Steinsheim (2025).

Sami women

Research shows that Sami women experience intimate partner violence more often than non-Sami women. A study from 2021 shows that 17.2 percent of Sami women report having experienced physical, psychological or sexual violence from their partner, compared to 11.8 percent of the non-Sami population.²⁹ Research points to various factors, such as generational violence, strong attachments to family and the local community, a culture of silence, and generational trauma from Norwegianisation policies as concurrent causes that could help explain the increased prevalence of violence and abuse in Sami communities.³⁰

In order to address these unique challenges, authorities have in recent years taken steps to strengthen the rights of Sami victims of violence. Parliament recently decided that the Crisis Shelter Act shall include express provisions that crisis shelter services must protect the rights of Sami users.³¹ The Government also included a dedicated chapter on violence and abuse in Sami communities in its escalation plan against violence.³²

Nevertheless, support services for Sami women who have experienced violence have considerable shortcomings. Norway's only Sami crisis shelter closed in 2019.³³ This was a dedicated Sami crisis and incest centre located in Karasjok, and the centre also served inhabitants in Kautokeino and Porsanger. Civil society organisations emphasise that we urgently need to reestablish services that provide protection for Sami women and children who have experienced violence.

Ordinary crisis shelter services in other parts of the country are not adapted for the Sami population. Crisis shelter statistics show that only nine shelters have expertise on Sami victims. There is also very little information about crisis shelter services available in the Sami languages.³⁴ Civil society organisations emphasise the urgency of establishing better services for this group.

Incarcerated women

Women make up 5–6 percent of Norway's prison population, around 150 inmates.³⁵ A higher percentage of female inmates have experienced sexual assault compared

²⁹ Eriksen (2021).

³⁰ NKVTS (2025).

³¹ Legislative enactment 128 (2024–2025). The amendment takes effect 01 January 2026.

³² Prop. 36 S (2023–2024) pp. 111–125.

³³ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024) p. 123.

³⁴ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024) pp. 123–124.

³⁵ KDI (2025).

to male inmates, and many have traumatic experiences and severe mental health disorders when they start their sentence.³⁶ As an example, the SERAF report from 2024 shows that as many as 78 percent of female inmates had a mental health disorder, and 42 percent of female inmates had a serious mental health disorder.³⁷ These figures are significantly higher for women than for men. The percentage of women with addiction disorders is also higher than for men.

The fact that the histories and health conditions of female inmates differ from those of male inmates is indication that authorities should structure prison conditions to accommodate the specific needs of female inmates. Civil society organisations, however, point out that prison conditions for female inmates are consistently worse than prison conditions for male inmates.³⁸ For a long time, mentally ill and aggressive women in prison have been met with isolation, restraints or other means of coercion as solutions to aggressive behaviours or self-harm.³⁹ Civil society organisations point out that such means of coercion can be especially traumatising for individuals who have experienced violence or assault in the past.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) reports that 25 percent of decisions involving the use of security cells in Norwegian prisons concern women, even though women only make up around 5 percent of the total prison population.⁴⁰ Civil society organisations appreciate the recent report from the Parliamentary Ombud's visit to Skien women's prison, which shows that the prison has changed its practices concerning restraint beds and isolation cells in the past year.⁴¹ Similar changes in practice should be implemented in all women's prisons.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is a serious form of violence and exploitation, and human trafficking victims often experience different types of violence. Many have been controlled by a person on whom they have been emotionally and/or financially dependent, and this person would have seemed like their partner, friend or family member. This is especially true for women and others who have been exploited for prostitution.

While the preparatory works to the Crisis Shelter Act specifies that victims of

³⁶ Hellebust (2021) p. 7.

³⁷ SERAF (2024) p. 45.

³⁸ JURK (2025).

³⁹ NOU 2023: 5, pp. 92–93.

⁴⁰ LDO (2024).

⁴¹ Parliamentary Ombud (2025) pp. 13–14.

human trafficking have the right to be provided with safe accommodation in crisis shelters, this is not explicitly stated in the wording of the Act.⁴² Civil society points out that this could allow for differing interpretations of municipal obligations to ensure that victims of human trafficking are able to access crisis shelters.

Recommendations:

- Earmark funds for measure for especially vulnerable groups.
- Establish a national grant scheme giving crisis shelters and other support services the opportunity to develop universally designed and culturally sensitive services, with information in multiple languages.
- Build expertise on violence against women with disabilities, queer people, elderly women, women in addiction and women with minority or Sami backgrounds.
- Establish by law the right to safe accommodation in crisis shelters for victims of human trafficking.
- Provide victims of violence, especially women with immigrant backgrounds, with clear information about rights and support services.
- Implement a comprehensive evaluation of immigrant legislation to ensure protection for women and children with minority backgrounds who have experienced violence.
- Strengthen research and documentation of violence against vulnerable groups.
- Implement *TryggEst* in all municipalities to uncover and prevent violence and abuse.

Articles 7 and 10: Comprehensive and coordinated policies and coordinating bodies

National action plans, committees, reports and legislative amendments

Norwegian civil society recognises the Government's efforts and initiatives against violence in its Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse against Children and Domestic Violence (2024–2028); establishment of the Rape Committee and introduction of new, consent-based rape legislation; establishment of the Commission for Intimate Partner Homicides; and establishment of the Commission on Negative Social Control, Honour-Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Genital

⁴² Ot.prp. nr.96 (2008–2009), p. 46.

Mutilation and Psychological Violence and the subsequent action plan against negative social control and honour-motivated violence (2025–2028).

One issue with this effort, involving action plans, official reports and legislative amendments, is that it takes too long. A wave of intimate partner homicides in late 2023 and 2024 clearly illustrated that we urgently need effective measures against gender-based violence and femicide, but it is the experience of Norwegian civil society that the implementation of recommendations from evaluations take a disproportionately long time. As an example, the Commission on Negative Social Control included multiple specific proposals for legislative amendments in its report in 2024, but none of these recommendations had been taken any further as at November 2025. Multiple other official reports from recent years, including the report prepared by the Commission on Intimate Partner Homicide, also include specific proposals for measures. These should be given top priority.

The last action plan against rape and sexual violence ended in 2022, and no new plan has yet been prepared. At the same time, recent statistics show that the share of women who report having experienced rape is as high as one in five.⁴³ The Rape Committee presented its report in 2024. The report included several specific measures to reduce rape, but Norwegian civil society cannot see that the Government has implemented any effective measures in accordance with the report to reduce the prevalence of rape. At the same time, Norwegian civil society would like to point out that the amendments to penal provisions concerning rape, which took effect in the summer of 2025, are a key step forward in terms of strengthening the legal position of rape victims.⁴⁴

The Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse against Children and Domestic Violence is more comprehensive than previous plans.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, multiple consultation parties pointed out that the plan is non-specific and non-committal, and that sufficient financial resources have not been allocated for the implementation of the measures. The first official report, presented in 2025, shows that 25 measures had been implemented, 74 were pending, and 23 measures had not yet been started.⁴⁶

⁴³ NKVTS (2024), p. 71.

⁴⁴ For a more detailed description of the amendment, see section on “Recommendation A.11, IC-CP/Inf (2022)13: Consent-based rape legislation.”

⁴⁵ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024).

⁴⁶ Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2025).

Some forms of violence have been excluded

Civil society finds that the existing action plans include limited solutions for financial violence. This topic does not seem to have been prioritised in the design of current policies, despite financial violence often being used to lock women into violent relationships and sometimes having life-long consequences. The same applies to stalking.⁴⁷

Municipal action plans

Currently, municipalities are not required to prepare action plans against domestic violence. Only 68 percent of municipalities reported having prepared municipal or intermunicipal action plans against domestic violence in 2023.⁴⁸ In 2024, Parliament asked the Government to propose draft legislation for this and to send the proposal out for consultation by the spring of 2025. Norwegian civil society is not aware of any such draft legislation having been prepared. While it is positive that initiatives have been made to explore new legislation, it is essential that this work be given higher priority.

The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) has developed guidelines for the preparation of action plans against domestic violence, which municipalities can use in the preparation of their own municipal action plans.⁴⁹ Norwegian civil society believes that any new legislation should be based on the NKVTS guidelines, to ensure that municipal action plans are anchored in best practices. Research shows, however, that action plans alone are not sufficient, unless they are followed by earmarked allocations and sufficient economic resources.⁵⁰ The legislation should therefore include a duty for municipalities to ensure sufficient funding and follow-up of municipal action plans.

At-risk groups have poorer access to services

It is well-documented that violence affects women with additional challenges more severely than women who do not have other challenges beyond the violence itself.⁵¹ However, assistive services are less accessible by many of these groups. Several groups of women who experience violence, such as women with addition problems, women with immigrant backgrounds, women with mental health

⁴⁷ These topics have been discussed in more detail in Norwegian civil society's shadow report (2025) on "1st thematic evaluation round: Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice" under "Emerging trends"

⁴⁸ Aas-Hansen (2025).

⁴⁹ NKVTS (2022).

⁵⁰ NKVTS (2019) p. 61.

⁵¹ NKVTS (2010) p. 7–9, and Elvegård et al. (2019), p. 20–22.

problems, and women with physical or intellectual disabilities, often have highly limited, or in some cases non-existent, access to shelters and other assistive services.⁵²

On gender-neutral language

The language in Norwegian policies and legislation on violence is consistently gender-neutral. When legislation and political initiatives are prepared without acknowledging the perspectives of women and girls, they will be less accurate. A gender-neutral practice may contribute to an obfuscation of structural causes behind violence and weaken the effect of preventive measures.

GREVIO has pointed this out on multiple occasions, most recently in the previous Baseline Evaluation Report on Norway.⁵³ The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concerns that Norway's gender-neutral policies and legislation may lead to insufficient protection for women and their unique needs.⁵⁴ Multiple respondents from civil society have expressed concerns that gender-neutral language and legislation undermine the gender perspective in efforts to reduce violence and challenges the principle of centring the victim's needs. Furthermore, the Government's plan for its efforts against violence also does not have a gender perspective. Instead, its title is "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse against Children and Domestic Violence".

Coordinating body

Norwegian civil society describes a need for a national coordinating body to ensure that measures are uniform and effective in accordance with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. A directorate group on domestic violence and violence and abuse against children has been established. This group will be working to improve cross-sectoral collaboration in accordance with the Government's escalation plan against domestic violence.⁵⁵ It is unclear whether this body is intended to serve in the role of coordinating body. Civil society takes a positive view of a stronger effort within coordination and cross-sectoral collaboration and looks forward to seeing the results of this work.

⁵² For a more detailed description of the services offered to these groups, see the chapters relating to Art. 4 and Arts. 8/9.

⁵³ GREVIO (2022) p. 10-11

⁵⁴ CEDAW (2023) p. 3-4.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2025) p. 8.

Civil society emphasises that the coordinating body or bodies should also be responsible for supervising the collection of statistics. As described in the section on Article 11, this effort is currently fragmented and impenetrable across agencies and sectors. Civil society describes the need for a body that can coordinate registration practices, secure comparable data across regions and sectors, and prioritise collection of data on under-reported forms of violence, such as financial violence and stalking. This is a condition for being able to develop effective, knowledge-based measures and prevent violence against women.

Recommendations:

- National and local action plans must include specific measures with a realistic timeline for implementation.
- Municipal action plans against domestic violence must become required by law as soon as possible. These plans must reflect NKVTS's guidelines and, among other things, include outlines for a specific pathway for how to support victims of violence.
- Authorities must ensure actual compliance with existing legislation and plans, and new legislation must be followed up by specific plans for implementation.
- Measures proposed by relevant expert committees must be given top priority, as well as be followed up by specific legislative proposals and plans for implementation and funding.
- Work on a new action plan against rape should begin as soon as possible.
- The language used in connection with gender equality and violence issues should be gender-specific to accurately reflect and highlight women's unique challenges. Phrasings concerning women's unique position in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act should be retained.
- A national coordinating body should be established, with a clear mandate and responsibility for implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

Articles 8 and 9: Financial resources and non-governmental organisations and civil society

Despite what seems to be considerable political agreement that efforts to prevent violence should be strengthened, Norwegian civil society report a gradual dismantling and deprioritisation of violence in budget allocations. While several action plans and escalation plans have been developed to address violence as a societal problem, these are not followed up with sufficient allocations in public

budgets. The proposal for the Norwegian National Budget for 2026 does not allocate any dedicated resources for the implementation of measures proposed in the escalation plan. Nor have any new resources been allocated for long-term funding of volunteer organisations or coordination of measures.

Among other things, Norwegian civil society emphasises that insufficient funding for implementation of the Government's strategy for sexual health⁵⁶, as well as insufficient earmarked resources for sexual education, will weaken prevention efforts aimed at sexual violence and abuse. Furthermore, no resources have been allocated for implementation of consent-based rape legislation, adopted in the spring of 2025, despite funding being essential for the amendment to have the desired preventive and awareness-raising effect.⁵⁷ The proposed cut of NOK 20 million for legal aid measures will affect initiatives like JURK, which, among other things, provides legal aid for women who are victims of violence.⁵⁸ In addition, no part of the increase in resources allocated to the police in the proposal for the 2026 budget have been earmarked for investigation and prosecution of cases involving violence in close relationships or sexual crimes.⁵⁹

This state of funding overall is an indication that violence and abuse against women is not a priority, despite prevention of such violence and abuse being an express political objective.

The role and framework conditions of volunteer organisations

Volunteer organisations play a pivotal role in the effort to prevent and reduce violence against women and domestic violence. At the same time, Norwegian civil society believes that the current framework conditions for volunteer organisations are not strong enough.

The fight against domestic violence is an on-going process that requires predictability continuity and trust, especially in order to sufficiently protect the interests of vulnerable groups of victims. However, the collaboration between the public sector and volunteer organisation is described as unstructured and too dependent on dedicated individuals. Norwegian civil society reports a lack of mechanisms to ensure long-term and predictable funding for organisations

⁵⁶ Ministry of Health and Care Services (2025).

⁵⁷ Prop. 1 S (2025–2026) For the fiscal year 2026 – National Budget. For a more detailed account of this amendment, see "Recommendation A.11, IC-CP/Inf (2022) 13".

⁵⁸ Prop. 1 S (2025–2026) For the fiscal year 2026 under the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

⁵⁹ Prop. 1 S (2025–2026) For the fiscal year 2026 under the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

working with at-risk groups. As a consequence of this, the ability to handle complex and time-consuming cases is weakened.

The Government claims that allocations for the fight against violence are not reduced, but rather redistributed and reprioritised to strengthen certain focus areas. Norwegian civil society, however, find that the Government does not take into account the significant increase in the number of people who have experienced domestic violence in the past five years, nor that this increase ties up capacity and resources in assistive services. Refraining from making cuts in the funding of volunteer assistive services is therefore not sufficient to meet the actual needs for assistance.

We need earmarked funds and paid management in order to ensure continuity and professional expertise over time, as volunteer efforts alone cannot be sustained over time. Civil society calls for a financial lift for the field and more long-term, predictable solutions. Three-year grants are considered a minimum to ensure stable operations and professional development.

In the proposed National Budget for 2026, multiple organisations working in violence-prevention lose their earmarked funding, having to instead apply for grants from a shared pool. When different services have to compete for funding from a shared pool, it is not only detrimental to the stability and predictability of important services; it also means these services have to spend more time and resources on application and reporting work. In addition, it will be more difficult for Norwegian civil society to hold the Government accountable for cuts in specific services over time.

On efforts to combat negative social control and honour-based violence

In recent years, Norwegian authorities have strengthened their efforts to combat negative social control and honour-based violence, among other things through the action plans *Freedom from negative social control and honour-based violence (2021–2024)*⁶⁰ and *In Charge of Your Own Life – Strengthened Efforts against Negative Social Control and Honour-Motivated Violence*⁶¹. We have also seen a certain increase in resources, including Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) diversity advisers, special representatives and funding for volunteer organisations as part of the integration strategy.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Education and Research (2021).

⁶¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (2025)

Norwegian civil society supports this strengthened effort, but would also like to point out that collaboration with public sector and civil society organisations in this area remains fragmented and highly dependent on dedicated individuals. The lack of long-term, predictable funding for civil society organisations makes it difficult to build and retain the necessary expertise and collaborative partnerships. To ensure that measures are accurate and comprehensive, the Government should establish more formalised collaborative structures and allocate earmarked funding to organisations with specialised expertise in the field.

Municipal economies and funding for shelters and other assistive services

Never before have so many people taken advantage of the services provided by crisis shelters in Norway as in 2024.⁶²

At the same time, Norwegian civil society reports that crisis shelter services are underfunded and underprioritised. In 2023, Menon Economics published a report, “Societal cost of domestic violence” on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.⁶³ In this report, it is estimated that the societal costs of domestic violence totalled NOK 92.7 billion in 2021.⁶⁴ In comparison, only approx. 0.5 percent of this amount is used to fund crisis shelters.⁶⁵

The municipalities are responsible for financing the operation of crisis shelters. The economies of Norwegian municipalities vary, but they are consistently strained.⁶⁶ Many shelters report that insufficient funding has negative consequences for their operations. One of the shelters, for example, reports that underfunding has led to multiple discrepancies, such as understaffing, a lack of accommodation for men, and buildings that are not suited for shelter operations. This has consistently been reported, for years, to the municipalities the shelter serves, but the situation has not improved to any significant degree. At the same time, this shelter now reports that it will be able to upgrade its building due to a grant from Bufdir.⁶⁷ These centralised measures afford crisis shelters the opportunity to upgrade their services despite strained municipal economies, and this could help counterbalance regional differences.

⁶² Bufdir (2025b)

⁶³ Menon Economics (2023)

⁶⁴ Menon Economics (2023) p. 6.

⁶⁵ Menon Economics (2023) p. 54.

⁶⁶ KS (2025).

⁶⁷ Bufdir (2025c).

Strained municipal economies have also led to the closing of many crisis shelters, as well as to contracts with local assistive services through Alternative to Violence and Nok. centres being renegotiated or terminated. Poor municipal economies lead many municipalities to purchasing shelter services from other crisis shelters, which increases commutes for victims who need their services. Financial considerations will often be a determining factor when municipalities decide which shelter to partner with, and the closest shelter is not necessarily the cheapest. This is a clear trend in areas with low population densities and long distances, such as in Northern Norway and in Sami areas. Vague statutory requirements for the specific structure of shelter services, in combination with variable economic prioritisations, mean that shelter services are at risk of cuts to operation and staffing. This, in turn, leads to considerable regional differences in the ability of shelters to help victims of violence who need protection.

Crisis shelter services for at-risk groups

When assistive services are underfunded or cut, various at-risk groups, such as women with disabilities, minority women, women in active addiction, LGBTQI individuals or elderly women, are often hit the hardest. This is because services for these group often need specialised solutions, such as universal design, sheltered units, or specialised expertise among staff.⁶⁸ Amendments to the Crisis Shelter Act would require municipalities to provide alternative shelter services when the ordinary service cannot be customised to meet individual needs. Even so, Norwegian civil society points out that an amendment in itself cannot ensure that the needs of at-risk groups are met without earmarked funding.

Shelter services for men must be strengthened. When shelter funding is tight, a simple solution is to introduce shared accommodation services for women and men. Under the current Crisis Shelter Act, accommodation services for women and men must be kept physically separate.⁶⁹ In 2024, they considered amending the act to allow municipalities to introduce shared accommodations for women and men, based on experiences from one shelter that had completed a pilot project.⁷⁰ A wide range of civil society organisations, as well as the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, were critical of this proposal.⁷¹ Many shelters also wanted to maintain the requirement of separate accommodations, considering, among other things, a concern that shared accommodation could raise the threshold for women, who

⁶⁸ For a more detailed description of these groups' specific needs, see Art. 4.

⁶⁹ Section 2 (5) of the Crisis Shelter Act.

⁷⁰ Prop 122 L (2024-2025) pp. 20–21.

⁷¹ LDO (2024), JURK (2024), MiRa Centre (2024).

make up 90 percent of shelter residents, to seek help.⁷² The proposal was shelved, pending further evaluation, but Parliament has allowed that municipalities, upon application, can carry out pilot projects with integrated crisis shelters/shared accommodations for men and women as part of knowledge development.⁷³ Norwegian civil society expresses concern for the future of this statutory requirement and would like to emphasise that other measures exist that are more accurate and less triggering than shared accommodation, such as true service upgrades with more staff and better/more flexible buildings with the option of increased sheltering.

Recommendations:

- The Government must allocate earmarked resources for the implementation of escalation plans and new legislation on violence.
- Allocations/grants to civil society organisations and relevant public sector stakeholders must be adjusted in accordance with the recent increase in the number of women who experience domestic violence, to ensure that services are maintained and developed.
- The Government must take a more proactive approach to funding for civil society initiatives and introduce three-year, earmarked operative funding for organisations working to prevent and reduce violence.
- Greater responsibility for funding must be taken at the national level for crisis shelters and other key services for victims of violence and abuse, to ensure these services are less vulnerable to deprioritisation and cuts due to strained municipal economies.
- Crisis shelters must be ensured sufficient funding for staffing, building upgrades and universal design, to ensure that their services meet the needs of at-risk groups.
- The police should receive earmarked funding to prevent domestic violence and sexual crimes.

Article 11: Data collection and research

Norway keeps a wide range of statistics on violence against women. Statistics Norway (SSB) annually publishes figures on reported criminal offences and their victims, which can be sorted by type of offence, gender and age. These statistics are

⁷² Secretariat for the Shelter Movement (2024), Gjøvik Crisis Shelter IKS (2024), Crisis Shelter for Tromsø and the surrounding region (2024).

⁷³ Innst. 439 L (2024–2025).

based on the police database of criminal offences. The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) annually collects statistics from all Norwegian crisis shelters. They keep and publish statistics on who use these services, the relationship between users and violent offenders, and how accessible the service is for at-risk groups.⁷⁴ In addition, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) carry out national prevalence surveys on violence and abuse⁷⁵, which supplement these statistics by mapping out incidents that are not necessarily reported to the police.

GREVIO's previous Baseline Evaluation Report (2022) established that Norway had a number of good initiatives, but that data collection generally did not meet the requirements established by Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention.⁷⁶ The report especially highlighted that a lot of the statistics published in Norway lacks information about age and gender, that it rarely includes information about the relationship between the victim and the offender, and that the opportunity to follow a case from initial complaint to a final court ruling is limited. Data collection was described as fragmented and lacking coordination between various actors, such as the police, prosecuting authority, courts and the health sector. Norwegian civil society finds that the situation largely remains unchanged in 2025.

Experiences from Norwegian civil society

Civil society organisations assist women who experience various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, financial and digital. This violence is often intersectional – involving criminal, family, immigration and welfare aspects. Civil society finds that current data collection practices do not sufficiently reflect this diversity, which means that neither public authorities nor assistive services have an accurate image of the situation. There are still considerable differences in how different sectors and services register violent incidents, which makes it difficult to get a comprehensive and reliable overview of the situation. Multiple civil society organisations highlight NKVTS's surveys as important and valuable when it comes to establishing an overview of violence in Norway, but point out that these also fall short in certain areas, such as honour-based violence and forced marriage.

Norwegian civil society finds that some forms of violence are insufficiently documented or entirely absent from official statistics in Norway, such as psychological, financial and digital violence, as well as stalking. Rapid technological

⁷⁴ Bufdir (2025a).

⁷⁵ NKVTS (2023).

⁷⁶ GREVIO (2022), pp. 21–22.

developments have led to an increase in types of violence perpetrated through digital channels with the help of technological tools, but the phenomenon has not been sufficiently defined or explored.

Norwegian civil society also finds there is a lack of statistics on especially vulnerable groups and more complex cases. As an example, current statistics do not sufficiently reflect violence against minority women and violence and abuse among the immigrant population. There is also limited data on violent offenders with and without immigrant backgrounds, as well as on the number of people who are granted residence in Norway on an independent basis after experiencing intimate partner violence.⁷⁷ In order to develop more targeted measures, we also need more knowledge on how domestic violence is related to living conditions, poverty and employment.

On subsumption of intimate partner violence

Multiple civil society organisation report that cases involving domestic violence or intimate partner violence is “subsumed” (categorised) in police statistics for lesser offences, such as harassing conduct or assault. This makes it difficult to get an accurate overview of the true prevalence of intimate partner violence. That is why we call for a dedicated statistics on complaints against romantic partners, including non-spouses. We also need better statistics on cases that have been dropped and why they have been dropped. Read more about subsumption in the chapter on Articles 49 and 50.

Recommendations:

- Standardise and improve data collection across agencies with fixed variables: type of violence, gender and age, relationship between the parties and location of incident.
- Ensure that the police categorise cases involving domestic violence correctly and publish statistics on dropped cases, including the reason why a case was dropped.
- Expand categories and metrics for digital violence, financial violence and stalking, to ensure these are visible in the statistics.
- Make it possible to follow a case from complaint to conviction, including data on exclusion orders, protection orders, violations and sanctions, as well as any limitations of parental responsibility.

⁷⁷ Section 53 of the Immigration Act.

Article 31: Custody, visitation rights and safety

In connection with separation and parental disputes, all parents with joint children under 16 years old must attend conciliation meetings with the family counselling office. The purpose is to help parents establish a parental cooperation agreement. If the parents cannot agree on an arrangement, they can bring the matter before the court.⁷⁸ This model was implemented in 2004 and entails that the courts are involved, to a much higher degree than in other types of civil cases, to mediate between the parties with the goal of establishing a settlement.⁷⁹

The preparatory works state that cases involving violence or other causes for concern shall not be handled using this model.⁸⁰ Reports from civil society organisations and research communities show, however, that this still occurs in practice. Civil society organisations also point out that recently adopted amendments to the Children Act could potentially reinforce this trend.

Conciliation and court proceedings

Several civil society organisations report that violence against mothers and children is generally not emphasised in parental disputes. Often, considerations of best possible “parental contact overall” or the “biological principle” will be determining factors in these cases, even in cases where it has been documented that the father has been violent with the mother and the child.

Civil society organisations, including crisis shelters, point out that a history of violence in conciliation and court proceedings is often described using phrases like “alleged violence”, “parental conflict”, or “dysfunctional interaction”. This type of linguistic framing of the parental dispute contributes to an obfuscation of the violence and the asymmetrical relationship between the parents, and it leads to mothers being forced to accept agreements on contact and parental responsibility in conciliation.⁸¹

Research also shows considerable variation in expert witness reports in terms of how much attention is paid to the violence in the report and the relevance assigned to the violence in the report.⁸² Expert witnesses often refrain from assessing

⁷⁸ Section 36 of the Children Act.

⁷⁹ Section 61 of the Children Act.

⁸⁰ Ot.prp. no. 103 (2004–2005), p. 56.

⁸¹ Bredal (2025) p. 68.

⁸² Torvik (2024).

whether the mother and child are traumatised, or they dismiss how the violence has affected the victims.⁸³ In several of these cases, the violence against the mother is seen as separate from violence against the child, which does not align with the updated professional understanding of violence. Even in cases where the father has been reported or convicted of violence against the mother, this violence is not often seen in context of the child's care environment.⁸⁴

The consequence of this lack of focus on violence in expert witness reports is that the violence has no impact on the father's exercise of parental rights vis-à-vis the child. This means considerations of the child having a relationship with their father trumps considerations of safety and security for the mother and the child in these cases.

Continued violence and systemic violence

A wide range of organisations also describe how the same tendencies often result in the violence continuing in the same or new forms after the separation of the parties. This includes direct violence, in the form of physical, psychological or sexual violence in connection with pick-ups and drop-offs for contact, or by the child's father continuing to contact the mother after their separation to threaten her. Violence can also occur as financial control, in the form of refusing to pay child support, repeatedly violating contact agreements or by manipulating the child.

Women who are victims of violence and have children are faced with conflicting expectations from different parts of the system. For example, child welfare services may require that mothers who have left an abusive husband protect their children by suspending contact with the children's father, while they, in a parallel parental dispute, are required to show a willingness to cooperate with the same man.⁸⁵ Many organisations point to how public schemes and systems can contribute to continued violence and control, e.g. when a violent father repeatedly initiates a child welfare investigation, or paints a picture of the mother as mentally ill to support services, kindergartens or schools.⁸⁶ As a result, women are met with suspicion by the services they need help from, and their reactions to and fear of the violent offender is interpreted as evidence that they are psychologically unstable and unfit caregivers. Civil society organisations describe how women in these types of cases are often accused of "contact sabotage" in connection with the parental

⁸³ Torvik (2024).

⁸⁴ Torvik (2024).

⁸⁵ Bredal (2025) and Bredal (2022)

⁸⁶ Bjørnholt (2024)

dispute. Many women also describe that others don't believe them, or a fear that they will be seen as confrontational, which makes them keep quiet about the violence they experience.

Increased vulnerability of minority women

Civil society organisations point out that minority women are especially vulnerable to systemic violence in parental disputes. Manipulative partners can exploit language and cultural barriers to appear credible with child welfare services, schools and kindergartens, health services and courts. Many women describe situations where they are not believed when they report violence, and that language barriers and limited social networks increase their risk of being perceived as confrontational. This makes it difficult to break out of a violent situation and go through with a legal process. For many minority women, their limited access to free legal aid is an additional barrier in these types of cases.

The new Children Act

In the spring of 2025, Parliament adopted a new Children Act, despite strong objections from a majority of experts, including violence researchers, the Ombudsperson for Children, district court judges, the Norwegian Courts Administration and crisis shelters.⁸⁷ The Standing Committee on Family and Cultural Affairs also received a joint appeal against the Act before voting, signed by many of the most prominent organisations, researchers and stakeholders in the field of violence.⁸⁸ The Act will take effect in 2027. Multiple civil society organisations have expressed strong concerns that the extensive research on domestic violence and violence against children had not been taken into account in the design and adoption of the new Act.

The main principle has not changed; in a separation, parents can agree on the solution they want for their parental cooperation. The new Act establishes, however, that the new main principle shall be *joint daily authority* for both parents after separation if the parents cannot agree. This is different from the current solution, where the right to make major decisions about the child's daily life rests with the custodial parent, who, in practice, has primary custody of the child.

An arrangement with joint authority requires that the parents are able to agree on various questions to do with the child's daily life. This includes decisions related to

⁸⁷ Andenæs (2025), OsloMet (2025), Ombudsperson for Children (2025), Oslo District Court (2025), Stine Sofies stiftelse (2025a), Secretariat for the Shelter Movement (2025) et al.

⁸⁸ Stine Sofies Stiftelse (2025b).

the child's education, kindergarten and leisure activities, as well as where the child should live. In the consultation round, a majority of experts pointed out that forced cooperation on such decisions would facilitate for extensive continued and systemic violence, and many were disappointed that intimate partner violence was not included as a separate phenomenon in the legislative proposal.

In addition, the new Act requires consent from both parents for relocations within the country. Under this new Act, a violent parent has the authority to deny a mother and child who have experienced violence the right to move away, if this main principle of joint authority is applied.

A majority of civil society organisations and experts in the field pointed out that parents who have a relationship characterised by cooperation and equality already have the option to agree on divided residence due to the Act's provisions on *contractual freedom*. It is only in cases where the parents cannot agree due to violence, control or risk of neglect that the provisions of the Children Act will apply. The new Act and joint daily authority will entail, however, that considerations of "equal parenting" take precedence over women and children's protection from violence.

Taking into consideration that research already shows that the support system fails to identify and handle cases where violence is clearly a factor, this new Act will entail further erosion of the legal protection of women and children who are victims of violence.

Recommendations:

- The new Children Act should be evaluated as soon as possible in light of the Government's obligation to protect women and children from violence. The arrangement with joint daily authority and consent being required to relocate within the country must be reversed. In this evaluation, decisive importance must be attached to input from prominent experts on violence and abuse.
- Violence must be a determining factor in cases concerning residence and contact. The courts, child welfare services and family counselling offices must increase their competence on violent dynamics and trauma reactions, so that support services are better able to identify cases where there is a history of violence.
- Psychological violence must be recognised more often, and it should be

possible to argue psychological violence in parental disputes.

- Violent parents should not be allowed to have contact with children who live in crisis shelters, unless the contact is supervised.
- Contact practices should be reevaluated to protect children and parents who have experienced violence from continued violence. If intimate partner violence has been documented, the main rule should be supervised contact.
- Clear procedures should be developed to make it possible for specialist support services to assume responsibility for arranging and executing supervised contact, in order to protect the parent who is a victim of violence.

Article 50: Immediate response, prevention and protection

Investigation and clearance of cases involving domestic violence and rape

Domestic violence – prevalence and prosecution

The most recent prevalence survey by NKVTS from 2023 showed that 11 percent of women report having experienced serious physical violence from a partner.⁸⁹ The survey also shows that 69 percent of those who had experienced serious physical violence from a partner chose not to report the violence to the police.

In terms of cases where the abuse is actually reported, the clearance rate is very low. In the period 2015–2021, the clearance rate for reported cases involving domestic violence dropped by 15 percentage points, from 39 to 24 percent.⁹⁰ In 2022, 2023 and 2024, the clearance rates were 24 and 23 percent, respectively.⁹¹

Rape – prevalence and prosecution

The NKVTS prevalence survey shows that 1 in 5 women report having experienced rape in their lifetime.⁹² The number of reported rapes has varied somewhat in the last 5 years, but remains relatively stable at between 1,500 and 1,700 cases per year.⁹³

⁸⁹ NKVTS (2023, p. 103.

⁹⁰ Office of the Auditor General (2022) pp. 15–16.

⁹¹ Director General of Public Prosecutions and National Police Directorate (2024) p. 54

⁹² NKVTS (2023, p. 71. The survey covers rape cases involving force/coercion and rape cases where the victim is unconscious or asleep, but does not cover rape without consent, which would be covered under the new provisions on rape in Section 291 of the Penal Code.

⁹³ Director General of Public Prosecutions (2025) p. 26.

Rape cases have been an express priority for the police and the prosecuting authority for many years. At the same time, the clearance rate for these types of cases is the lowest it has been since 2013. The cases are handled by investigators and prosecutors without specialised expertise, and in 2019, the National Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos) discontinued the rape team with expertise in the investigation of rape cases.⁹⁴

The acquittal rate in rape cases has steadily increased over the last five years. In 2024, the acquittal rate was at 37 percent, and there were only 87 rape convictions in 2024.⁹⁵

Factors that are barriers to reporting

Many civil society organisations point to long processing times, high drop rates and few convictions as key factors that could help explain why so many victims choose to not report intimate partner violence and rape to the police.⁹⁶ In addition, victims of violence can have prior experiences that mean they do not trust the police and the legal system. This may be an additional barrier in their encounter with the legal system and support services. Several organisations emphasise that this is especially the case for women with minority or indigenous backgrounds, or women who have additional risk factors, such as mental health disorders or addiction problems.

Residence on an independent basis

Several organisations point out that women who have been granted residence on grounds of family reunification have protection from being forced to remain in violent relationships through the so-called “abuse provision” in Section 53 (1) (b) of the Immigration Act. This provision allows for them to apply for residence on an independent basis if they have experienced domestic violence. Civil society organisations find, however, that few people are aware of this provision, and that women refrain from reporting violence for fear of losing their residence permit. In order for this key provision to work as intended, we need better collaboration between authorities like the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Nav, health services and crisis shelters, to ensure documentation and support for victims of violence.

A recent report by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) furthermore shows that the threshold for what is considered abuse under this provision is too strict, and that UDI’s practices for the assessment of and emphasis on different types of violence vary considerably. In addition, the LDO expresses concern that the

⁹⁴ NOU 2024: 4 p.14.

⁹⁵ Kolsrud (2025) and Director General of Public Prosecutions (2025).

⁹⁶ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024). Long processing times also often lead to sentence discounts in court proceedings.

requirement of “reduced quality of life” could lead to the threshold of what is considered abuse being set too high.⁹⁷ Civil society organisations emphasise that immigration authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the legal framework and practices reflect current human rights standards, so that all women who need it actually have access to protection from violence.

Regional differences and lack of resources

Several civil society organisations describe considerable regional variations in how the police and prosecuting authorities handle cases involving domestic violence. While there is some awareness of this issue, a lack of resources and expertise often means that follow-up and investigative quality vary between police districts. There are few forensic specialists with relevant expertise, and they are geographically far apart, which means that many cases are handled by police officers without specialist backgrounds. This requires strict training, guidance and control procedures, as well as clear and verifiable requirements for documentation and storage of evidence.

Several civil society organisations emphasise that specialist sections investigating domestic violence, such as RISK, so far are limited to Oslo and other large cities.⁹⁸ The RISK section focuses on the prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims of violence. Their work is based on an integrated approach to protection and psychosocial support, where risk analysis specialists within the police work closely with representatives from health and social services. This teamwork covers risk assessment, risk management, information and guidance, support interviews and coordination with various support services.⁹⁹

Several civil society organisations emphasise the need for earmarked resources for investigation of abuse cases in all police districts.

Accessibility and alternative options for reporting violence

Some crisis shelters report that the police in some cases will come to the shelter to conduct interviews or receive statements from victims of violence. This practice is considered safe and good by shelter staff and emphasised as a measure that should be continued and expanded. At the same time, reports show that there are considerable differences from district to district and even from investigator to

⁹⁷ LDO (2025) p. 9.

⁹⁸ A pilot project was initiated in 2025, where the RISK method has been implemented in three new police districts. See Director General of Public Prosecutions (2025) p. 55.

⁹⁹ Menon Economics (2025) p. 53.

investigator.

Civil society organisations furthermore point out that there are as of yet no simple, accessible solution for reporting domestic violence or report concerns digitally through the website of Norwegian police. This could be a true barrier for those living with ongoing violence who cannot leave their home for multiple hours in order to go in person to a police station. The opportunity to file a digital complaint is emphasised as a key measure to lower the threshold for seeking help.

Subsumption of intimate partner violence: less serious penal categories

Civil society organisations report that one barrier to proper investigation and follow-up of cases involving abuse in close relationships (Section 282 of the Penal Code) is a subsumption to a less serious penal provision, often assault. As a result, these cases are transferred to units that do not have specialist expertise.

It has furthermore been pointed out that the understanding of what constitutes “close relationships” varies. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships are not covered by Section 282, and the conditions for cohabitation are often interpreted more stringently than a common linguistic interpretation would indicate. This means that many cases involving violence cannot be investigated as abuse in close relationships, and serious cases are instead reclassified as offences with a shorter period of limitation. The result is an under-reporting of the prevalence of this type of violence.

Recommendations:

- Reestablish the rape group within Kripos to ensure expertise in the investigation of rape cases.
- Allocate earmarked resources to the police and prosecuting authority for the investigation of cases involving violence and sexual offences.
- RISK should be implemented in all Norwegian police districts as soon as possible.
- Immigration authority practices for cases involving the so-called “abuse provision” of the Immigration Act should be reviewed to ensure that all victims of violence have a true opportunity to leave their violent partners. The requirement of “reduced quality of life” should be removed.
- Provide alternative options for filing a report in cases involving violence and sexual offences beyond going to the police station in person.
- Ensure that cases involving violence in less formalised romantic relationships are covered by the so-called abuse provision and ensure uniform practices

for handling these cases.

Articles 52 and 53: Emergency barring orders and restraining or protection orders

The Commission on Intimate Partner Homicide presented its report in late 2020.¹⁰⁰ The report includes reviews of 19 intimate partner homicides. In 15 of 19 cases, the victim was a woman, and the Commission emphasised that women are the victim in a majority of cases involving serious intimate partner violence.¹⁰¹ The reviews showed that most intimate partner homicides occurred following one or more precursors, and that there had been intimate partner violence before the homicide in all 19 of the cases. The Commission concluded that the police and support system did not implement preventive measures that could have reduced the risk of serious intimate partner violence or femicide in time.¹⁰²

The same was pointed out by the Office of the Auditor General in a report from 2022, which criticised the approach of Norwegian authorities in cases involving domestic violence and intimate partner homicide.¹⁰³ The report emphasised serious systemic weaknesses related to restraining orders, such as a lack of clarity among support services on how to report violence, and a lack of follow-up on protection measures from the police.

The number of homicides by a current or former partner has remained consistently high in the last ten years. In 2024, as many as 65 percent of all homicide victims had a close relationship with the person who killed them, and Kripos reports that the number of homicides where women are killed by someone they are in a close relationship with is increasing.¹⁰⁴

Protection and restraining orders

While protection measures exist, in the form of protection and restraining orders, Norwegian civil society points out that these do not, in practice, work as immediate and permanent protection measures for most victims of violence. Insufficient resources and a lack of prioritisation of these types of cases mean that many victims of violence do not get the protection they need.

¹⁰⁰ NOU 2020: 17, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ NOU 2020: 17, p. 20.

¹⁰² NOU 2020: 17, p. 19.

¹⁰³ Office of the Auditor General (2022) pp. 8.

¹⁰⁴ National Criminal Investigation Service (2025) p. 4.

A protection order (Norwegian: *kontaktforbud*) can be imposed against a violent offender by the court in connection with a conviction for a criminal offence.¹⁰⁵ Protection orders may be imposed for more or less indefinite time periods. As protection orders may only be imposed by the courts in a criminal conviction, they are not a suitable means of protection in cases that are dropped or in cases where the offence is subsumed under a less serious penal provision.

Restraining order (Norwegian: *besøksforbud*) can be imposed on a violent offender, either on its own or in combination with a so-called reverse personal safety alarm. The restraining order may be imposed by the police for up to one year at a time, without requiring a conviction.¹⁰⁶ Formally, the victim is not required to file a complaint, but several civil society organisations point to police practices as a de facto requirement for such a complaint. In addition, several organisations point to the threshold of being granted a restraining order being too high, and the duration is normally very short (3–6 months). A renewal of the restraining order normally requires a violation of the order by the violent offender, which subjects the victim to more risk.

The rules for restraining orders require weighing the offender's right to freedom of movement against the victim's right to life, freedom and safety. Many civil society organisations find that the police and the courts often attach too much weight to the offender's right to freedom of movement, without taking the victim's situation sufficiently into account. The rules for restraining orders have not been revised or amended since ratification of the Istanbul Convention. In order for Norwegian law to be in alignment with the Istanbul Convention and the ECHR, one must perform a true weighing of interests, where the victims' right to protection is given precedence in these types of cases.

It should be possible to implement protective measures for an unlimited time or until the victim themselves requests for the measure to be lifted. Geographic restraining orders should be designed to give the victim of violence the freedom to safely move around their local community, and it should be possible to define extended protection zones when necessary.

While violation of protection and restraining orders can be considered a criminal offence, several civil society organisations report that such violations often have no

¹⁰⁵Section 57 of the Penal Code.

¹⁰⁶ Section 222a (4) of the Criminal Procedure Act.

consequences, or that sanctions are not imposed until there have been multiple, serious violations. Many say that digital violations of protection and restraining orders are not taken sufficiently seriously. Inadequate investigation and collection of evidence also weakens enforcement of these orders, and many have pointed out that in practice, the victim of violence is often the one who has to document violations of protection and restraining orders.

Restraining orders barring the offender from their own home

While the legal framework does include the option to impose restraining orders where the offender is barred from their own home, civil society organisations find that this is seldom imposed against violent offenders. Crisis shelters and other civil society organisations report that the female victim and her children are usually the ones who have to leave the home. The police hesitate to impose restraining orders that bar the offender from their own home or contact with their children in consideration of visitation and parental contact, and women who are victims of violence therefore risk not receiving sufficient protection in acute situations. Civil society organisations argue that the police should develop clear guidelines to consider restraining orders where the offender is barred from their own home in cases where there is suspicion of gender-based violence/domestic violence.

Several organisations believe that the police should be obligated to implement temporary barring and restraining orders in cases where there is a risk of further or serious violence, and that these measures should remain in place until the risk is considered to have passed.

Increase in the use of reverse personal safety alarms

Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act were adopted in 2024 to include orders of reverse personal safety alarms.¹⁰⁷ Reverse personal safety alarms require the offender to wear an electronic ankle monitor preventing him from entering a geographically defined exclusion zone. If the offender enters the exclusion zone or attempts to remove the monitor, the police will be notified and will implement protection measures. Civil society believes that reverse personal safety alarms are an important measure to protect victims and shift the burden onto the offender in situations where threats are involved.

The amendments from 2024 entail, among other things, that the police may order a violent offender to wear a reverse personal safety alarm without having to go

¹⁰⁷ Prop. 128 L (2022–2023)

through the courts. In the wake of these amendments, the use of reverse personal safety alarms has increased many times over, from approx. 20 orders per year to 191 orders in 2024.¹⁰⁸

In April 2025, a protection order was imposed on an offender in combination with an unprecedentedly large geographical area of 80,051 km² after serving out a sentence for, among other offences, aggravated abuse in close relationships and threats against his wife and children.¹⁰⁹ This case shows that a reverse personal protection alarm can be a key tool for keeping the victim safe and giving them freedom of movement in a relatively large area.

Recommendations:

- Violation of protection and restraining orders should, as a norm, lead to reverse personal safety alarm orders or more stringent sanctions, depending on the severity of the violation.
- It should be possible to implement protective measures for an unlimited time or until the victim themselves requests for the measure to be lifted.
- Geographic restraining orders should be designed to give the victim of violence the freedom to safely move around their local community, and it should be possible to define extended protection zones when necessary.
- Practices for imposing restraining orders should be reviewed in consideration of Norway's human rights obligation to protect victims of violence.
- Authorities should take on more responsibility for the collection of evidence, including through use of technical solutions that could help prevent order violations and provide documentation.
- Practices for imposing restraining orders where the offender is barred from their own home should be reviewed.
- Restraining orders where the offender is barred from their own home should be used more frequently in cases where necessary to protect the victim of violence.

Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee of the Parties

Based on GREVIO's baseline evaluation report from November 2022, the

¹⁰⁸ Gangnes (2025).

¹⁰⁹ LH-2024-182441, also discussed in Einangshaug (2025).

Committee of the Parties made recommendations to Norway on 12 December 2022. Norwegian authorities will report on their implementation of these recommendations in December 2025. Based on the recommendations from the Committee of the Parties, Norwegian civil society has specifically addressed the amendments in the provisions on rape in the Penal Code (A.11, IC-CP/Inf (2022)13) and conditions for women seeking asylum (A.16, IC-CP/Inf (2022)13).

Recommendation A.11, IC-CP/Inf (2022)13: Consent-based rape legislation

In GREVIO's Baseline Evaluation from 2022, one of the recommendations made to Norwegian authorities was to amend the penal provisions on rape to ensure that they are expressly based on the lack of freely given consent, cf. Article 36 (1).¹¹⁰

In response to considerable pressure from civil society over many years, Parliament adopted amendments to the chapter on sexual offences in the Penal Code in the spring of 2025.¹¹¹ One key amendment is that Section 291 of the Penal Code, on sexual assault, has been amended to specify that non-consensual sexual activity is considered rape, in line with Article 36 of the Convention.

Under Subsection 1 of the new provision, any person who engages in sexual activity with a person who by word or action has not consented to such activity, shall be subject to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 years. The provision reflects that inaction cannot be construed as consent and entails that even cases of rape where the victim responds with tonic immobility are covered by the wording of the provision.

In addition, Subsection 2 of the provision lists various aggravating circumstances. The listed circumstances are subject to a sentence of imprisonment for a period not exceeding 10 years. These include obtaining sexual activity through "violence or threatening conduct" and engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "unconscious or for other reasons incapable of resisting the act".¹¹² In addition, the provision establishes that it constitutes an aggravating circumstance to engage in sexual activity with someone who "by word or action indicates that they do not want to".

At the same time, Parliament decided to remove the minimum sentence for rape,

¹¹⁰ GREVIO (2022) p. 54.

¹¹¹This includes *Samtykkeallianssen*, a network of organisations that have demanded that the Norwegian Penal Code be amended to establish that non-consensual sexual activity is rape.

¹¹² These circumstances were covered under the previous provision on sexual assault.

which until now has been three years. The intention is to grant the courts greater discretion to adjudicate the severity of individual cases and impose an appropriate sentence. The motivation for removing the provision on minimum sentencing is that the high acquittal rate in rape cases could be indication that a minimum sentence, in some cases, has had the opposite effect. In less serious cases, the courts have often found the offender not guilty, as the minimum sentence has been considered disproportionate. At the same time, the Government has clarified that the intention is for the average sentencing level in rape cases to remain the same.¹¹³

Limited implementation of the amendment

Civil society organisations consider this amendment to be a considerable victory for women's legal protection and right of sexual agency. At the same time, many point to a limited implementation of the provisions. The amendments took effect on 01 July 2025, less than one month after being adopted by Parliament. While it is good that the amendments could be enacted so quickly, civil society organisations point out that the various parties in the criminal justice system have not received any information or instructions on how to interpret the new provisions or how investigations of sexual assault should be structured to align with the new provisions. Nor is it clear whether any earmarked resources have been allocated for the investigation and prosecution of the increased number of sexual assault cases that will follow from this amendment.

Civil society organisations also point out that the amendment has not really been communicated to the public through information campaigns or updated sex education materials.

Some organisations point out that the implementation of amended provisions on sexual assault is an important opportunity to correct the current practice of applying incorrect penal provisions in cases involving rape against people with disabilities. Several organisations have observed a practice where penal provisions on "abuse of unequal power relationship", cf. Section 295 of the Penal Code, have been applied in these types of cases, instead of investigating the matter as sexual assault.

When the authorities have not taken steps to ensure a successful implementation of the amendments, there is a clear risk that the Act will not have the normative and preventive effects intended. Civil society encourages Norwegian authorities to

¹¹³ Prop. 132 L (2024-2025) p. 6.

prioritise additional measures against sexual assault, e.g. by implementing the recommendations made by the Sexual Assault Committee.¹¹⁴

Select issues from the Act and associated preparatory works

In connection with adoption of the amendments to the Penal Code, a decision was also made that the general exemption from the rules of limitation periods shall not apply to the amended Section 291. This entails that the general periods of limitation for sexual assault were reinstated at the same time as the substantive scope of the provision was expanded. The new period of limitation is 10 years.¹¹⁵ Civil society has pointed out that the reinstatement of periods of limitation seems poorly founded, and that many rape victims take a long time to come forward with their rape. The reinstatement of periods of limitation therefore weakens legal protection for rape victims.

Civil society also points out that the Standing Committee on Justice, in its hearing of the amended provision, added a clarification that could negatively affect victims of sexual assault. The Committee decided that cases where one of the parties initially had given consent and had later fallen asleep, whereupon the other party continues engaging in sexual activity with the sleeping party, shall not be considered sexual assault pursuant to Section 291.

Recommendations:

- Norwegian authorities should prioritise better implementation of the new, consent-based provisions on sexual assault through information campaigns and allocation of resources to the police and prosecuting authority, broad information campaigns aimed at the general public, and improved sex education.
- Norwegian authorities must implement the recommendations made by the Sexual Assault Committee.
- Practices where cases involving sexual assault against people with disabilities are investigated as “abuse of unequal power relationships” must be changed.
- The exemption from ordinary periods of limitation for sexual assault cases must be reinstated.

¹¹⁴ NOU 2024: 4

¹¹⁵ Section 86 (c), cf. Section 291 (1) and (2), of the Penal Code

Recommendation A.16, IC-CP/Inf (2022)13: Asylum

Background

Civil society is not aware of any specific measures that at present have been implemented by Norwegian authorities in connection with Recommendation A.16 since 2022.

In its escalation plan against domestic violence and abuse (2023), the Government noted that recently arrived refugees are at risk of violence and abuse.¹¹⁶ One of the measures under this escalation plan is to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including asylum reception centres and refugee services, are knowledgeable on the duty to avert, duty of confidentiality, right to information and duty to report in matters concerning violence. According to the Government's latest status report from June 2025, this work is underway, but not yet completed.¹¹⁷ Another measure that is underway, but not yet completed, is to make it easier for recently arrived refugees who have experienced violence or threats to relocate to a different municipality as needed.¹¹⁸

There are already a number of requirements and guidelines on violence as it concerns asylum seekers. Requirements concerning identification of and support to victims of violence follow from both general requirements for the operation of asylum reception centres¹¹⁹ and from special guidelines issued by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) on vulnerable residents.¹²⁰ In addition, there are procedures for reporting serious incidents, including domestic violence and unwanted sexual advances in asylum reception centres.¹²¹

Early identification

The Norwegian Directorate of Health currently recommends that all refugees and asylum seekers are offered health examination from the municipality within three months after arrival.¹²² Such services are available in various places, including the City of Oslo, where free interpretation services are also offered. It is the experience of civil society organisations, however, that the refugees are often expected to book

¹¹⁶ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024) p. 17.

¹¹⁷ Prop. 36 S (2023–2024), pp. 9–10.

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2025), p. 46.

¹¹⁹ UDI (undated)

¹²⁰ UDI (2015).

¹²¹ UDI (2017).

¹²² Norwegian Directorate of Health (undated)

the appointment themselves, and that they often lack the language proficiency and knowledge of the system required to do so. There are no statistics on how many actually do take advantage of the offer.

An automatic summons to a health examination for all recently arrived refugees is a simple measure that could contribute to early identification of violence and help ensure that people who need support are put in contact with support services as soon as possible. This type of measure should be combined with training for health personnel on how to safely and in a culturally sensitive manner ask questions about violence and abuse, as well as with the establishment of procedures for coordination between health services, asylum reception centres and crisis shelters.

Furthermore, civil society organisations recommend that identification of issues with violence is introduced as a mandatory step in the asylum interview and assignment to asylum reception centres, and that standardised tools for such identification are developed. Civil society organisations support the ongoing effort by Norwegian authorities to develop expertise, and would like for staff at asylum reception centres and in municipal settlement services to receive mandatory and regular training in gender-based violence, in order to make them better prepared to identify and address these issues at an early stage.

Settlement

Currently, refugees in Norway cannot move out of the municipality where they have been settled without waiving their right to social benefits and services. Refugees who live in asylum reception centres while awaiting settlement also waive their right to social services if they choose to move.¹²³

Civil society organisations find that the settlement system is associated with a wide range of practical problems. As part of its legal aid work, JURK has been in contact with several refugee women who have experienced violence in Norway and have wanted to move away from the man who was violent with them, but who, in practice, were prevented from doing so. Crisis shelters report similar problems in asylum reception centres, including one case where both the victim and the perpetrator of the violence had to remain living in the same centre after the breakdown of their relationship, despite a formal complaint to the police, a restraining order and a personal safety alarm.

¹²³ NAV (2012) and Section 3 of the Social Services Act

Civil society welcomes the work of Norwegian authorities to strengthen protections for female victims of violence in the asylum system, including their work to evaluate the rules prohibiting relocation between municipalities. Civil society looks forward to seeing the results of this work, including clear guidelines and funding to ensure that asylum reception centres and municipalities have the capacity and expertise necessary to protect women who have experienced violence.

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Ot.prp. no. 96 (2008- 2009)	<i>Om lov om kommunale krisesentertilbud (krisesenterlova)</i>
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Prop. 80 L (2016-2017)	<i>Lov om Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet og Diskrimineringsnemnda (diskrimineringsombudsloven)</i>
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Judgments

LH-2024-182441