

Supporting sexual violence victims in Greece: The Istanbul Convention in practice



Conference organised
by the Council of Europe Gender Equality
Division in co-operation with the Ministry
of Social Cohesion and Family
of the Hellenic Republic

31 March 2025
NYX Esperia Palace Athens
Stadiou 22 and
Edouardou Lo,
Athens, Greece



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL COHESION
AND FAMILY
GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR
EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS



EUROPEAN CONVENTION
ON HUMAN RIGHTS
CONVENTION EUROPEENNE
DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
1950 - 2025

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CONCEPT NOTE

Background information

A 2023 study by the National Centre for Social Research in Greece, funded by Eurostat in the framework of the EU survey on Gender-Based violence against women, found that 23.49% of women aged 18-29, and approximately 20% of women aged 30-44, have experienced sexual violence, including rape and attempted rape. Notwithstanding these alarming figures, reporting rates remain low. This underreporting is driven by deeply ingrained social taboos, widespread mistrust in the police and justice system, limited awareness of available support services and insufficient assistance to victims throughout the legal and other processes. For migrant women, these barriers are even more pronounced, as concerns relating to their legal status further discourage them from seeking help.

While Greece has established a solid legislative framework and a national network of support services to address domestic violence, the [baseline evaluation report](#) of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) emphasises the need to strengthen efforts to combat all forms of violence against women, in particular sexual violence. The [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (Istanbul Convention), as outlined in Article 25, mandates the creation of rape crisis centres or sexual violence referral centres, which should provide immediate medical care, trauma-informed victim support, forensic examinations, and long-term psychological assistance. These services should be provided by qualified professionals who can offer victim-sensitive care, in line with the convention's standards.

The [Committee of the Parties](#), the second pillar of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism, has made specific recommendations to the Greek government on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual violence. These include:

- ▶ setting up rape crisis centres and/or sexual violence referral centres providing immediate medical care, psychological trauma-informed victim support, forensic examinations and immediate, short- and *long-term* psychological assistance by qualified professionals who can provide victim-sensitive examinations, in line with the standards set by the Istanbul Convention;
- ▶ introducing standardised protocols for all health professionals on the treatment of women victims of rape/sexual violence, including protocols on their referral to specialist services;
- ▶ taking measures to ensure that a victim's access to different support services is not conditional on her willingness to lodge a complaint;
- ▶ taking additional measures to ensure timely access to forensic examinations across the country.

In 2024, at the request of the Greek government, the Council of Europe developed a report on *“Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Hellenic Republic”* as part of the *“Ending violence against women: multi-country programme”*. This report aims to support the Greek government in strengthening support services for victims of sexual violence, ensuring compliance with the Istanbul Convention, and identifying key gaps in the existing systems. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of support services in Greece, highlights challenges and gaps in service provision, and presents best practices from other Council of Europe member states. By examining these promising practices, the report offers recommendations for improving services and better meeting international standards in supporting victims of sexual violence.

Conference goals

The conference aims to support Greece’s efforts in enhancing victim support services for sexual violence. Specifically, it seeks to:

- ▶ **Establish the context and framework to ensure a shared understanding of key issues:** Provide a clear understanding of the Istanbul Convention, Greece’s obligations, and the critical role of specialised victim support services.
- ▶ **Present key findings and recommendations:** Share insights from the 2024 report, identify gaps in Greece’s victim support system, and propose concrete, actionable measures for improvement.
- ▶ **Showcase best practices:** Highlight successful models from other countries to inspire effective solutions and inform national strategies.
- ▶ **Encourage collaborative dialogue:** Facilitate discussions among key stakeholders to explore pathways for strengthening victim support services and for ensuring a more coordinated response to sexual violence.

Targeted participants

- ▶ 70 representatives from relevant Ministries, government agencies, police, civil society organisations and other experts.
- ▶ Representatives and experts from the Council of Europe, including GREVIO.

Languages

- ▶ Greek and English (interpretation available)

PROGRAMME

9:00 – 9:30	<i>Registration</i>
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Greetings and opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Elena RAPTI, Deputy Minister of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family of the Hellenic Republic ▶ Katerina PATSOGIANNI, Secretary General for Equality and Human Rights, Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family of the Hellenic Republic ▶ Caterina BOLOGNESE, Head of the Gender Equality Division, Council of Europe
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, obligations of Greece, with a specific focus on sexual violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Francoise KEMPF, Violence against Women Division, Council of Europe <p>Presentation of the findings of the report <i>“Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Hellenic Republic”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Susana PAVLOU, Director, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Council of Europe international consultant (<i>on-line</i>) ▶ Stalo LESTA, researcher, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Council of Europe international consultant <p style="text-align: center;">Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Larissa KIREEVA, Project Manager, Capacity Building and Co-operation Unit, Gender Equality Division, Council of Europe</p>
11:00 – 11:20	<i>Coffee break</i>

11:20 – 12:00	<p>International practices and the report's recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Susana PAVLOU, Director, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Council of Europe international consultant (<i>on-line</i>) <p>Good practice from Ireland: the rape crisis centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ellen O'MALLEY-DUNLOP, GREVIO member in respect of Ireland, former Chief Executive Officer of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centres (<i>on-line</i>) <p>Moderator: Stalo LESTA, researcher, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Council of Europe international consultant</p>
12:00 - 13:00	<p>Panel discussion: supporting victims of sexual violence in Greece</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Angeliki PAPAZOGLU, Deputy Head, Directorate of Social Protection and Counselling, General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights, Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, representative of the Hellenic Republic in the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention ▶ Despina KEMERLI, Legal expert, Department for combating violence against women, General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights, Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs ▶ Georgios CHARALAMPOUS, MD, MSc, PhD, General Surgeon, Director of Emergency Department, "Hippocratio" Hospital, Prof. Health Policy, Representative of the Hellenic Ministry of Health ▶ Police Captain Maria Sofia KYRIAKOU, MSc, Psychologist, Ministry of Citizens Protection, Minister's Office <p>Moderator: Dr Elisa FERKIDOU, Scientific adviser in the Deputy Minister's Office, Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family</p>
13:00 - 13:30	Closing remarks
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch

Council of Europe

Ending violence against women: multi-country programme

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