

Conference on Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Precondition for Efficient Policy Making

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- Violence against women, in any of its many forms, is a violation of human rights. It is a brutal, often deadly reflection of the inequality suffered by far too many women in our societies.
- Despite positive and significant achievements in policies and practices, violence against women is still widespread at all levels of society in all Council of Europe member States and throughout the world.
- The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – the Istanbul Convention – is the first legally-binding instrument in Europe and is widely recognised and accepted as the most advanced treaty tackling violence against women and domestic violence.

- The Istanbul Convention introduces a whole new approach to violence prevention and victim protection by requiring all relevant actors to co-operate and co-ordinate: criminal justice, the police, social and health services, child protection agencies, shelters, etc.

- It also seeks to change the hearts and minds of individuals by calling on all members of society, in particular men and boys, to change attitudes. In essence, it is a renewed call for greater equality between women and men, because violence against women is deeply rooted in inequality and is perpetuated by a culture of tolerance and denial.

- Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence requires evidence-based policy-making. The collection of systematic and comparable data from all relevant administrative sources is crucial in this regard, as is information on the prevalence of all forms of violence against women.

- This implies effectively documenting the magnitude of violence by producing robust, comparative data in order to guide policy and to monitor the implementation of measures to address the problem.

- However, work and studies at the level of the Council of Europe, in the member States or other regional and international organisations, reveal that service-based administrative data are still rarely collected.
- Government agencies such as the judiciary, the police, social welfare services, as well as the public (and private) health sector often do not have data systems in place that go beyond internal recording needs of the agency.
- Information is rarely recorded and used for an analysis of the effectiveness of policies in place in support of victims of domestic violence or any other assessments, conclusions and research.
- Additionally, available data are seldom comparable across countries or over time, resulting in a limited understanding of the extent and the evolution of the problem.
- For the Istanbul Convention, data collection and research are very important to protect and support victims and to eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. Provisions under Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention contain the obligation for state parties

to regularly collect representative and comparable data to develop and implement evidence-based policies to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention.

- The Istanbul Convention also stresses the importance of co-ordination: data collection is to be co-ordinated by a national co-ordinating body, as defined in Article 10 of the convention.

- The Istanbul Convention establishes what type of data to be collected (statistical information, judicial data or administrative data), analysed and disseminated by and for the official bodies responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the convention.

- Additionally, it highlights the need to support research in the field of violence against women and domestic violence.

- It also details parties' obligation to conduct population-based surveys as a tool to provide more general sociologically oriented insights into the prevalence, nature, determinants and

consequences of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention.

- The Istanbul Convention recommends that such surveys should be conducted at regular intervals in order to make a pertinent and comparative assessment of the prevalence and the trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention.

- To help member States to both collect data and carry out research to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe commissioned a study which offers practical advice to policy makers and practitioners as to what needs to be done to implement Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention.

- It offers information about the measurement framework and data collection tools needed for the development of relevant administrative and survey data.

- It provides examples of how administrative and survey data may be collected in member States as well as pertinent research programmes.

- The study also provides a checklist which summarises the requirements on data collection and research as contained in Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention.

- The Istanbul Convention has been ratified by 26¹ member States. GREVIO, the monitoring body, has published its first two evaluation reports which contain an overall analysis of the implementation of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention including data collection and research.

- The implementation reports will be very important for building knowledge about data collection, research and surveys on violence against women and domestic violence in the state parties to the Istanbul Convention. In addition to identifying gaps and challenges, they will also bring forward good practices and issue recommendations to address the situation and ensure that member States comply with the requirements of the convention and move towards more coherence and comprehensive data collection and research on violence against women and domestic violence.

¹ 27 as of 10 November 2017 – date of ratification by Cyprus

Article 11 – Data Collection

1. For the purpose of the implementation of this Convention, Parties shall undertake to:

- a) collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention;*
- b) support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention.*

2. Parties shall endeavour to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

3. Parties shall provide the group of experts, as referred to in Article 66 of this Convention, with the information collected pursuant to this article in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking.

4. Parties shall ensure that the information collected pursuant to this article is available to the public.