

Committee of the Parties

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

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence by the United Kingdom

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Secretariat of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on
preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The Committee of the Parties to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), acting under the terms of Article 68(12) of the Convention;

Having regard to the purposes of the Convention to protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence; to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women; to design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence; to promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence; and to provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

Bearing in mind the provisions of Article 66 (1) of the Convention concerning the monitoring role of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as “GREVIO”);

Having regard to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties;

Having regard to the instrument of ratification deposited by the United Kingdom on 21 July 2022;

Having examined the Baseline Evaluation Report concerning the implementation of the Convention by the United Kingdom adopted by GREVIO at its 35th meeting (24-27 March 2025), as well as the comments of the Government received on 4 June 2025;

Considering the overarching priorities set out in Chapter I of the Convention (purposes and scope of the Convention, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, due diligence and gender-sensitive policies);

Bearing in mind the primordial importance of the provisions set out in Chapter II of the Convention, in particular the obligations to (1) ensure a holistic response to violence against women by devising a set of comprehensive and co-ordinated policies implemented by way of effective multi-agency cooperation; (2) institutionalise and fully mandate one or more co-ordinating bodies as required by Article 10 of the Convention; (3) adequately resource policies, measures and mandates introduced to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, including government and nongovernmental specialist support services; and (4) to collect relevant statistical data disaggregated, at a minimum, by sex, age, type of violence, relationship of the perpetrator to the victim and geographic location;

Welcoming the measures taken and progress achieved by the authorities of the United Kingdom in implementing the Convention and noting in particular:

- the introduction of important legislative building blocks for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the lead-up to its ratification, as well as the adoption of several related action plans and strategies in all four nations, which have established important legal frameworks for addressing violence against women and domestic violence; the regular production and use of a wealth of prevalence data, studies, research reports, independent inquiries, and evaluation reports on laws and policies in the area of violence against women and domestic violence, demonstrating the authorities' strong commitment to evidence-based policymaking;

- the implementation of promising and innovative practices in prevention and support to victims of violence against women; the adoption of high-quality, comprehensive perpetrator programmes that operate with a gendered perspective and a victim-centred approach;
- the systematic implementation of domestic abuse-related death reviews, which also include suicides related to domestic violence;
- the existence of various forms of multi-agency intervention schemes across the United Kingdom, which allow professionals to respond to various forms of violence against women in a concerted manner;
- the availability of detailed guidance for decision makers assessing asylum claims on how to apply a gender-sensitive interpretation to all forms of persecution and how to assess credibility in cases involving delayed disclosure of gender-based violence.

A. Recommends, in light of the considerations indicated in the preamble above, that the Government of the United Kingdom to take the following measures identified in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report¹ for immediate action to:

1. ensure that children under the age of 16 are fully covered by the respective definitions of domestic violence; harmonise, where necessary, the existing legal definitions across all areas of law and practice, in line with the definitions set out in the Istanbul Convention; and ensure a gender-sensitive implementation of laws and policies on all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention while reviewing any gender-neutral policies and service commissioning (paragraphs 19-21, Articles 2 and 3);
2. implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention without discrimination, in particular on the grounds of residence or migrant status, offer equal levels of access to support and protection measures, and integrate the perspectives and needs of women exposed to intersectional discrimination into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive and co-ordinated policies in partnership with relevant women's rights NGOs (paragraph 31, Article 4);
3. ensure greater awareness of and respect, among officials across the law enforcement agencies, the justice system and the healthcare sector, for the need to act in full compliance with the due diligence obligation to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for victims of any of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention; implement findings from various inquiries into police misconduct and violence perpetrated against women, as well as domestic homicide reviews, and hold to account all state actors who, in failing in their duties, engage in any act of violence, tolerate or downplay violence, inadequately respond to reports of such violence or engage in victim-blaming (paragraph 39, Article 5);
4. address the long-term consequences of the widespread institutional violence perpetrated against women in Magdalene Homes and similar institutions in the past (paragraph 51, Article 7);
5. ensure appropriate and sustainable financial resources for all policies, measures and legislation aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and for the institutions and entities mandated for their implementation, including by introducing separate budget and funding lines; and ensure sustainable and multi-annual funding for women's rights organisations specialised in preventing and combating violence

1. The number of the paragraph setting out GREVIO's proposals and suggestions in the report is indicated in brackets, which also indicate the relevant provision of the convention.

against women and community-based organisations through transparent public and procurement procedures (paragraphs 61-62, Article 8);

6. establish and reinforce recognition of and support for the expertise of specialist women's rights organisations, including community-based and grassroots organisations and those representing specific groups of women such as migrant women, women belonging to minorities, women with disabilities, women in rural areas and Roma and Traveller women (paragraph 66, Article 9)
7. equip the national co-ordination body with the necessary mandate, competences and resources to ensure that it works towards more cohesion of policy aims established for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in co-operation with the devolved governments; ensure the co-ordination and implementation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and their independent monitoring and evaluation, supported by relevant data (paragraphs 72-73, Article 10);
8. adapt the data categories in use by the criminal justice sector and law-enforcement agencies to ensure harmonisation across these sectors and allow cases of violence against women to be tracked throughout the different stages of the criminal justice system; collect data on the number of breaches of a police barring order or a civil protection order; ensure the systematic collection of comparable data on all forms of violence against women, disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim and the perpetrator, the type of violence, the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim and the geographical location; collect and publish the number of asylum claims made by women and girls on the basis of gender-related persecution, and their outcomes; ensure that prevalence data are regularly collected on all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and conduct qualitative and quantitative studies on female genital mutilations, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation (paragraphs 103-105, Article 11);
9. equip law-enforcement officers, judges, magistrates/sheriffs, and Crown prosecutors with the knowledge and skills to adequately respond to and investigate all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in their digital dimension, by introducing mandatory initial and in-service training (paragraphs 147-148, Article 15);
10. remove legal and other barriers to accessing general support services, in particular barriers created by the "no recourse to public funds" condition, from women and girls victims of violence lawfully residing in the United Kingdom, including on a temporary residence permit (paragraph 204, Article 20);
11. provide adequately staffed and resourced specialist support services to victims of all forms of violence against women in an appropriate geographical distribution, while catering to the specific needs of women subject to intersectional discrimination, while also increasing the number and capacity of appropriate, accessible specialist shelters providing safe accommodation in relation to all forms of violence in an adequate geographical distribution, and provide safety-oriented and empowering domestic violence shelters for all women irrespective of local residency (paragraphs 224 and 234, Article 22 and 23);
12. ensure that professionals, where a duty to report is imposed on them in relation to victims of violence, provide full and sensitive information to allow the victim to make an informed decision and seek the victim's consent before reporting suspected criminal acts (paragraph 262, Article 28);

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13. guarantee the safety of victims and their children by ensuring that the negative impact that violence against women has on children is reflected in legislation and that incidents of violence against women are made a mandatory legal criterion to be taken into account when deciding on custody and visitation rights; systematically screening pending cases on custody and visitation for instances of domestic violence; banning the use of the so-called “parental alienation syndrome” by judges and court experts; incorporating safeguards to ensure the full and free consent of the victim and a risk-assessment procedure in any mediation procedure in the context of divorce or of custody and visitation proceedings; and providing safe premises for supervised visits (paragraph 228, Article 31);
 14. remove any and all exceptions from the application of offences of physical violence committed by parents against their children and prohibit any defence of consent to acts of physical violence against women, especially in the context of sexual violence (paragraphs 309 and 310, Article 35); take legislative or other measures to fully criminalise forced abortion and forced sterilisation and ensure that these forms of violence against women are prosecuted in practice (paragraph 330, Article 39); ensure that violence against a child under 16 can be taken into account as an aggravating factor regardless of the relationship of the perpetrator to the child (paragraph 353, Article 46);
 15. reduce secondary victimisation of victims of violence against women and under-reporting by increasing the degree of specialisation of law-enforcement and prosecution services in relation to all forms of violence against women while increasing their sensitivity towards all women and girls, including those at the intersection of discrimination; taking measures to reduce the high levels of attrition in relation to all forms of violence; taking measures to reduce the processing time at all stages of the criminal justice chain by equipping all relevant law-enforcement and criminal justice authorities with sufficient resources (paragraph 391, Article 50);
 16. ensure the introduction and the rigorous implementation of emergency barring orders where they are currently underused or lacking in primary/secondary legislation, in order to protect the right to safety of women victims of domestic violence and their children in their own homes (paragraph 407, Article 52);
 17. ensure access to adequate and safe accommodation for all women and girls during the asylum procedure and the implementation of universal gender-sensitive standards in all reception facilities, including temporary facilities and placements in hotels (paragraph 469, Article 60).
- B. Requests the Government of the United Kingdom to report to the Committee of the Parties on the measures taken to improve the implementation of the Convention in the above-mentioned areas by 8 December 2028.
- C. Recommends that the Government of the United Kingdom take measures to implement the further conclusions of GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report.