

Committee of the Parties

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



Recommendation to Finland on building trust by delivering support, protection and justice on the basis of the Istanbul Convention

IC-CP(2025)5

Adopted on 5 June 2025

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, paragraph 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, paragraph 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 Finland on 17 April 2015;

Having regard to the baseline evaluation report adopted by GREVIO concerning the implementation of the Convention by Finland, the Committee of the Parties’ recommendations adopted on 30 January 2020 and the Committee’s conclusions on the implementation of those recommendations, adopted on 1 June 2023;

Having examined the first thematic evaluation report “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice” concerning the implementation of the Convention by Finland adopted by GREVIO at its 34th meeting (15-18 October 2024), as well as the comments of the Government received on 20 November 2024;

Welcoming the measures taken and progress achieved by the Finnish authorities in implementing the Convention and noting in particular:

- the improved alignment of the legislative framework with the standards of the Istanbul Convention, including the adoption of a consent-based definition of rape, amendments permitting the dissolution of forced marriages, reforms to the Finnish Act on Restraining Orders to strengthen protection for domestic violence victims and the planned criminalisation of forced marriage and FGM, which collectively enhance access to justice for a greater number of victims of violence against women;
- the recognition of the gendered nature of violence against women in the 2022-2025 Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention which represents a shift from the gender-neutral language adopted in the previous action plan and demonstrates Finland’s dedication to the implementation of the findings made by GREVIO in its baseline evaluation report;
- the designation of the Finnish National Rapporteur within the Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman as the responsible body to ensure the independent monitoring and evaluation of national policies on preventing and combating violence against women, in accordance with the requirements of Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention;

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- educational reforms undertaken to prioritise gender equality, prevent bullying, harassment and violence in educational institutions and to promote safe learning environments in schools;
 - the continuous expansion of the SERI sexual assault support centres network, providing more victims of sexual violence with holistic, trauma-informed support, including forensic examinations;
 - steps taken to provide specialist support and shelter services for women victims of violence with addiction issues;
 - the expansion of the MARAC risk assessment network which improves risk assessment and management for victims of domestic violence through a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach.

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

1. develop a long-term national strategy to ensure a comprehensive, co-ordinated approach as required by the Istanbul Convention, addressing all forms of violence against women and involving all relevant sectors, including social services, healthcare, law enforcement and judiciary while regularly evaluating its implementation using predefined indicators to ensure evidence-based policy making (Article 7);
2. ensure sufficient public funding for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention and establish sustainable financing mechanisms for NGOs providing specialist support to victims of violence against women, while introducing dedicated budget lines across all government entities for the prevention and combatting of such violence, with regular assessments and monitoring of public expenditures allocated to these measures (Article 8);
3. establish mandatory, standardised data categories for law enforcement, prosecution services and the judiciary to accurately document the type of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim; harmonise data collection across these entities to enable the assessment of conviction, attrition, and recidivism rates, as well as to monitor the progression of cases of violence against women and domestic violence through the justice system (Article 11);
4. regularly conduct awareness-raising campaigns on all forms of violence against women to challenge societal norms and gender stereotypes, in collaboration with human rights institutions, civil society organisations and media entities, while prioritising targeted preventive measures for women at risk of intersectional discrimination such as women with disabilities and Sami women and ensuring systematic impact assessments of awareness initiatives and prevention efforts (Article 12);
5. ensure systematic, mandatory training for professionals in justice, law enforcement social welfare, healthcare and education sectors on all forms of violence against women under the Istanbul Convention, with a victim-centred, trauma-informed and

1. The Istanbul Convention's provisions concerned by GREVIO's proposals and suggestions are indicated in brackets.

intersectional approach, supported by standardised protocols and with regular evaluation and input from women's rights organisations; ensure judges handling custody and visitation cases receive specialised training on the impact of domestic violence on children and the unequal power relations between parties, as well as on the importance of taking such circumstances into account in their decisions (Article 15);

6. establish perpetrator programmes for domestic violence throughout the country, including culturally and linguistically appropriate programmes for Sami boys and men, with sustainable funding to support long-term operation and staff retention, while incorporating these programmes into the criminal justice system to effectively reduce recidivism (Article 16);
7. establish institutionalised multi-agency co-ordination structures among governmental and non-governmental entities, including support services run by NGOs, embedding them in national policies on violence against women and domestic violence with a gender-based and victim-centred approach as well as with a focus on the victims' rights, safety, empowerment and economic independence, supported by guidelines, protocols and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, including for forced marriage and "honour-related" violence (Article 18);
8. establish comprehensive long-term support services to facilitate victims' recovery and economic independence, ensuring tailored, culturally sensitive assistance that meets the specific needs, rights and circumstances of all victims, including Sami women (Article 20);
9. increase the number and ensure the adequate geographical distribution of women-only shelters in accordance with the standards of the Istanbul Convention, providing safe accommodation for all victims, including those at risk of intersectional discrimination, such as Sami women and women with addiction issues, while guaranteeing access to immediate, medium, and long-term specialist support services, including psychological care (Article 22);
10. expand the network of SERI rape crisis centres to remote areas, in particular the Sami homeland, in order to ensure holistic support to all victims of sexual violence, including immediate and long-term psychosocial care, while eliminating barriers to access such services, such as the 30-day time limit (Article 25);
11. ensure that legislation reflects the impact of children's exposure to any of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention by establishing it as a mandatory criterion to be taken into account in custody and visitation decisions; and implement systematic screening and risk assessment procedures to identify and address instances of domestic violence in custody and visitation cases (Article 31);
12. proceed with the planned legislative amendments to exclude cases of domestic violence from mediation, while in the interim taking measures to ensure that the initiation of mediation does not result in the premature discontinuation of criminal investigations or the incomplete collection of evidence and reconsidering the power vested in the police to propose mediation in such cases in order to ensure the

effectiveness of criminal investigations and thereby maintain victims' trust in the system and their ability to access justice (Article 48);

13. equip law enforcement with the resources, skills and gender-sensitive, trauma-informed training to respond promptly to all violence under the Istanbul Convention, including their digital manifestations; ensure timely investigations and proactive evidence collection beyond victim statements to enable effective prosecution of violence against women cases, including under the consent-based sexual violence legislation; take legislative and other measures to address factors contributing to high attrition rates and delays in criminal proceedings to enhance perpetrator accountability; and ensure that sentences imposed are proportionate and dissuasive (Articles 49 and 50);
 14. take legislative and policy measures to establish a standardised, gender-sensitive risk assessment and safety management mechanism applied systematically nationwide in all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention (Article 51);
 15. increase the use of emergency barring orders by authorising all police officers to issue them immediately, broadening their scope, promoting their effectiveness, and ensuring rigorous enforcement; strengthen the use and monitoring of restraining and protection orders for all forms of violence under the Istanbul Convention and end the practice of allowing for exceptions in prohibitions on contact (Articles 52 and 53);
- B. Requests the Government of Finland to submit a written report to the Committee of the Parties on the measures taken to improve the implementation of the Convention in the above-mentioned areas by 7 June 2028.
 - C. Recommends that the Government of Finland take measures to implement the further conclusions of GREVIO's first thematic evaluation report.
 - D. Invites the Government of Finland to continue the dialogue in progress with GREVIO.