

# **Committee of the Parties**

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

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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

IC-CP(2025)3

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 Austria on 14 November 2013;

Having regard to the baseline evaluation report adopted by GREVIO concerning the implementation of the Convention by Austria, the Committee of the Parties’ recommendations adopted on 30 January 2018 and the Committee’s conclusions on the implementation of those recommendations, adopted on 7 December 2021;

Having examined the first thematic evaluation report “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice” concerning the implementation of the Convention by Austria adopted by GREVIO at its 33rd meeting (18-21 June 2022), as well as the comments of the Government received on 3 September 2024;

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

- the authorities’ engagement with GREVIO’s findings from the baseline evaluation report and the recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, for example by increasing the available specialist support services for women victims of forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and by expanding the network of rape crisis centres to all nine regions of the country;
- the importance given to gender budgeting, which is enshrined as a principle in Austria’s constitution, and the increase in budget allocation to several federal ministries and entities, in particular the tripling of the budget allocated to the Women’s Section of the Federal Chancellery, the provision of additional funds by the Ministry of Social Affairs for anti-violence work with perpetrators, and the increase in the funding for the violence protection centres, including the move towards multi-annual funding frameworks for these centres;
- the adoption of the Violence Protection Act 2019, which added a prohibition to approach the victim to the system of emergency barring orders and court-issued protection orders; introduced mandatory anti-violence counselling for perpetrators of domestic violence; strengthened victims’ rights; and reintroduced multi-agency risk-assessment conferences (MARACs);

- that the criminal sanctions for rape through the use of force, threat or coercion, for stalking and for the continuous use of force have been raised;
- the legislative amendments made to address the digital dimension of violence against women and online misogynistic hate speech, including the criminalisation of “upskirting” and other non-consensual image-taking of intimate body parts, and the introduction of accompanying measures such as the provision of training to police officers and staff at the violence protection centres, the institution of cybercrime competence centres at public prosecutors’ offices, and the setting-up of a counselling service for victims of online hatred and violence;
- the efforts made to protect children from digital forms of violence, including by making digital literacy a compulsory subject in schools, as recommended in GREVIO’s General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, and by setting up a “Digital child protection agency”, which offers support to experts and organisations on aspects of the digital environment in child protection concepts and conducts awareness-raising activities such as workshops for children on the topics of “sexting” and “cybergrooming”;
- the publications based on administrative data collected which offer a comprehensive picture of domestic violence and of gender-related killings of women, in particular the Violence Protection Report 2020-2022 and the factsheet “Data and facts on murders of women in 2021”, as well as the government-commissioned study on murders of women in Austria between 2010 and 2020 to identify possible causes for the high number of women killed;
- the support provided by social welfare services, for example through specific programmes offered by the Labour Market Service which include job training, counselling and targeted advice for women victims of domestic violence striving for economic independence after ending an abusive relationship, and the unique practice by the City of Vienna of reserving state-owned apartments for rent by women victims of domestic violence.

A. Recommends in light of the considerations indicated in the preamble above, that the Government of Austria take the following measures identified in GREVIO’s first thematic evaluation report<sup>1</sup> for immediate action to:

1. adopt a universally applicable legal definition of “domestic violence”, which would include violence perpetrated within a family and between former or current spouses or partners who do not share the same residence, for use by all relevant parties and in line with Article 3b of the Istanbul Convention (Article 3);
2. develop a long-term comprehensive action plan/strategic policy document giving due importance to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention (Article 7);
3. adapt their data categories for use by the justice sector on the type of relationship of the perpetrator to the victim that would allow the nature of their relationship to be more specifically documented, and ensure that those and any other data categories in use are harmonised across the various sectors, with the aim of tracking cases of violence against women during their passage through the different stages of the criminal justice system; and collect data on the number of women and girls who contact the social services seeking help in relation to their experiences of violence against women, including domestic violence, disaggregated by the type of violence, the victim’s sex, age and relationship with the alleged perpetrator (Article 11);

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

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4. step up their efforts to eradicate prejudice, gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes in Austrian society, through wider prevention measures on violence against women and with a view to the measures set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on preventing and combating sexism, and make primary prevention of violence against women a priority in future action plans and measures; pursue their efforts to regularly promote awareness-raising campaigns or programmes on the different manifestations of all forms of violence against women and girls covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, targeting in particular sexual violence and rape; informing victims of the availability of general and specialist support services; and evaluating their impact (Article 12);
  5. monitor how teachers make use of the existing teaching materials on the topics listed in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention and how the materials approach issues related to domestic violence and violence against women, and where necessary, include programmes on these topics in the formal curriculum (Article 14);
  6. ensure that judges and public prosecutors receive systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training on all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, while focusing on the victims' human rights, safety, individual needs and empowerment and the prevention of secondary victimisation; provide systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training on these topics to staff in general support services; and ensure that family law judges and court-appointed experts in family law cases are trained on domestic violence, on the impact that witnessing violence has on children and on their obligation to ensure the safety of women victims of violence and their children in any decisions related to custody and visitation rights (Article 15);
  7. take the necessary legal or other measures to ensure that women victims of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention have access to affordable and sustainable housing options across the country; further implement standardised care paths in the public and private healthcare sectors; ensure the issuance of forensic reports documenting injuries; and that informed consent is sought from a victim of violence for the reporting of a suspicion of a criminal act, outside of those cases where there is a reasonable suspicion that there is an imminent danger to the victim or another person, or where the victim is a child, as stipulated in the Violence Protection Act 2019 (Article 20);
  8. ensure that shelter places are available in a sufficient quantity, with an adequate geographical distribution throughout the country, and to ensure that all women victims of violence, regardless of their income have free of charge access to dedicated domestic violence shelters (Article 22);
  9. set up further sexual violence referral centres in an even geographical distribution that provide medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and immediate psychological assistance by qualified professionals who provide victim-sensitive examinations and who refer victims to specialist services providing short and long-term psychological counselling and support; and in the interim ensure that the pathways for the reception and treatment of victims of sexual violence and rape within the existing medical services are always followed in practice (Article 25);
  10. ensure that civil courts duly investigate allegations of violence against women in the context of proceedings concerning child custody and visitation rights and always consider the negative impact that violence against women has on children and

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recognise it as jeopardising their best interests, without having recourse to concepts that position women victims of violence as “unco-operative” or “attachment intolerant”; reinforce co-operation and information sharing between criminal courts, law enforcement, prosecution services and family law judges in cases concerning child custody and visitation rights while ensuring that no direct or indirect pressure is placed on a victim of domestic violence to agree to an out-of-court settlement; and take measures to incorporate a systematic screening in cases concerning the determination of custody and visitation rights to establish whether there is a history of violence, and conduct a risk assessment (Articles 31 and 48);

11. ensure that sanctions are commensurate with the gravity of the offence in all cases concerning forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, and in particular cases of rape and sexual violence (Articles 49 and 50);
  12. inform schools and other childcare facilities without exception when police barring orders are issued in respect of children or a child’s parent or guardian; ensure that in practice, protection orders are made use of in cases of all forms of violence against women covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, in particular for psychological violence and stalking; and that no gaps in the protection of victims arise between police barring orders and court ordered protection orders for victims of stalking (Articles 52 and 53);
- B. Requests the Government of Austria 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 Austria take measures to implement the further conclusions of GREVIO’s first thematic evaluation report.
  - D. Invites the Government of Austria to continue the dialogue in progress with GREVIO.