



# SETTING UP CO-ORDINATING BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICIES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: ARTICLE 10 OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION



A collection of papers  
on the Council of Europe Convention  
on preventing and combating violence  
against women and domestic violence

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Study based on preparatory research  
from Valentina Andrasek,  
International consultant  
on violence against women

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# Introduction

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**T**he Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) sets out the core requirements for a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to violence against women and domestic violence. Indeed, to ensure an effective response to all forms of violence covered by its scope, Chapter II of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to design and implement “integrated policies”, which are effective, comprehensive, co-ordinated and sustained by the necessary institutional, financial and organisational structures. This holistic approach to addressing violence against women, including domestic violence, shall comprise a multitude of measures to be taken by taken by all relevant sectors from relevant sectors. It shall also ensure co-operation mechanisms between public entities and civil society organisations, particularly women’s rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs), active in this field. In this respect, Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention entails the specific obligation for parties to designate or to establish one or more official bodies responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measures to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. Moreover, such bodies shall co-ordinate the collection of data as referred to in Article 11 of the convention and analyse and disseminate its results.

On 15 November 2022, in partnership with the Finnish authorities, the Council of Europe organised the first meeting of co-ordinating bodies set up in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. The aim of this meeting was to bring together state officials responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies on violence against women. It enabled them to learn from their counterparts, including through the presentation of promising examples for driving policy changes in this area. This meeting contributed to promoting synergies and knowledge exchange among state

officials, allowing them to take advantage of the added value of the Istanbul Convention and its monitoring mechanism.

The purpose of this paper is to provide policy makers and practitioners with guidance and promising examples of measures taken to set up such co-ordinating bodies. Drawing on research evidence, particularly the baseline evaluation reports of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and other Council of Europe documents, it focuses specifically on achievements and challenges faced by parties in this regard. It first details the scope of Article 10 on one or more co-ordinating bodies, as part of the obligations to design and implement integrated policies. Thereafter it provides an overview of different approaches, including promising practices, adopted by StateS parties to the Istanbul Convention to designate or establish one or more official bodies carrying out the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention. The paper concludes with a checklist for setting up co-ordinating bodies in line with the requirements of Article 10, the general principles of the Istanbul Convention and GREVIO's findings, as well as a list of key resources for further guidance.



# The scope of Article 10

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**T**he Istanbul Convention contains a set of obligations that parties are required to fulfil to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. This encompasses all acts of gender-based violence perpetrated in the public or private sphere which “*result in, or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women.*” Gender-based violence against women, which is considered to be both the cause and the consequence of deeply rooted inequalities between women and men, refers to “*violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately*”. Among its general principles, the convention calls on parties to adopt gender-sensitive and victim-centred policies which recognise and address violence against women as both a human rights violation and a form of discrimination against women.<sup>1</sup> To implement gender-sensitive policies, parties need to ensure that a gender perspective<sup>2</sup> is applied when both designing and evaluating measures aimed at addressing violence against women. In addition, under Chapter II of the Istanbul Convention, such policies must be based on a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach and entail close co-operation among all relevant sectors of government and civil society.

1. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), CETS No. 210, signed on 11 May 2011, Articles 3, 6 and 7.
2. Under Article 6, paragraph 1, parties must ensure that ensure a gender perspective is applied not only when designing measures in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, but also when evaluating their impact. This means that a gender impact assessment needs to be carried out in the planning stage of any measure which a party takes in the implementation of this Convention. In addition, during the evaluation stage, parties are required to determine whether there is a gender differential in the impact of the provisions.

A holistic response to violence against women requires strong inter-sectoral co-operation across all ministries, state agencies and civil society actors who have a role to play in preventing such violence, protecting, and supporting women victims and their children, and prosecuting perpetrators. Such comprehensive and co-ordinated response needs to include, among others, actors and agencies responsible for social affairs, healthcare, judicial matters, prosecution services, custodial institutions, financial planning, education policies, and the media sector. To ensure the co-ordination of the relevant stakeholders at the national and/or regional level, Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention sets out the obligation to designate or establish one or more official bodies in charge of co-ordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and measures to address all forms of violence against women and domestic violence. The aim of Article 10 is to ensure that state and civil actors do not operate in isolation, which could lead to gaps in implementing the Istanbul Convention. The scope of Article 10, thus, needs to be understood in the light of other provisions of Chapter II of the convention which provides key standards to devise and implement a global and co-ordinated approach to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

#### **Article 10 – Co-ordinating body**

- 1. Parties shall designate or establish one or more 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 this Convention. These bodies shall co-ordinate the collection of data as referred to in Article 11, analyse and disseminate its results.*
- 2. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article receive information of a general nature on measures taken pursuant to Chapter VIII.*
- 3. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article shall have the capacity to communicate directly and foster relations with their counterparts in other Parties.*

Article 10, paragraph 1, entails the obligation to entrust one or more official government bodies with four specific tasks: co-ordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and measures aimed to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. The Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention clarifies that the term “*official body*” refers

to any entity or institution within the government apparatus.<sup>3</sup> Parties can set up new official bodies or mandate entities already in existence at national or regional level. Article 10 offers some discretion to parties with regards to the size of their national co-ordinating bodies, the resources to be allocated to it, as well as which entity it shall be accountable to. Nonetheless, this provision needs to be understood in connection with the obligation contained in Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention regarding the allocation of appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention. The duties of the co-ordinating body or bodies to implement, monitor and evaluate policies should take into account the division of competences in a country, which means, for example, that in a federal government structure, several bodies may be appointed.

The co-ordination and implementation functions of the relevant body or bodies aim at ensuring that all measures taken to comply with the provisions of the Convention lead to a concerted and co-ordinated effort of all sectors of government, as well as the actual implementation of these measures. Their monitoring task covers the documentation of “how and how effectively”<sup>4</sup> policies and measures to address violence against women are being implemented at all relevant levels of government. The Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention clarifies that this monitoring role does not extend to assessing the level of compliance with the whole convention, which is a task performed by GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the evaluation task entails the scientific evaluation of specific measures to assess whether they meet the actual needs of women victims, as well as to uncover any unintended consequences. To that end, it requires robust administrative and population-based disaggregated data, in line with Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention. Therefore, co-ordinating bodies are assigned the task of co-ordinating the collection of the necessary data, analysing and disseminating its results. When based on solid and robust evidence, the monitoring and evaluation of policies can lead to adjustments and improvements in policies, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and that interventions result in the desired outcomes.

The setting up of one or more co-ordinating bodies is crucial for the adoption and implementation of an integrated response to violence against women,

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3. Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, CETS No. 210, signed on 11 May 2011, paragraph 70.
  4. *Ibid.*, paragraph 71.
  5. *Ibid.*

including domestic violence. It is also to be underlined that under Article 10, paragraph 1, it is required that policies, measures and data collection cover all forms of violence under the scope of the Istanbul Convention, which are physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence including rape, stalking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced sterilisation, forced abortion, sexual harassment and crimes committed in the name of the so-called honour.

Article 10, paragraphs 2 and 3, describe the role of co-ordinating bodies in the context of international co-operation, and how their function is to be organised. Indeed, Article 10, paragraph 2, allows co-ordinating bodies to receive information of a general nature on measures that the respective party has taken in the realm of international co-operation, in compliance with Chapter VIII of the convention. For data protection reasons, this obligation is limited to ensuring that co-ordinating bodies are informed, in a general manner and without references to individual cases, of international co-operation activities, including mutual legal assistance in civil and criminal matters. The knowledge acquired through the exchange of experiences and practices among parties is of great value in preventing and combating violence against women.

Finally, Article 10, paragraph 3, obliges parties to equip co-ordinating bodies with the ability to establish working relations with their counterparts created in other parties to the convention. As the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention sets out, the objective of this provision is to foster cross-fertilisation and promote harmonisation of practices and joint progress in implementing the convention across parties.

The above obligations set out in Article 10 need to be understood through the lens of the other provisions contained in Chapter II of the Istanbul Convention. In this respect, Article 7 describes general principles in relation to effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies that are to be co-ordinated, implemented, monitored, and evaluated by one or more co-ordinating bodies. It requires parties to ensure multi-agency co-operation in policy making by involving effectively different government agencies, institutions, civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in addressing violence against women and domestic violence. Such an approach shall also be inter-sectoral, by including all relevant actors, such as law enforcement agencies, healthcare institutions, social services, and the justice system, in the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive national response to all forms of violence covered by the convention. In its General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, GREVIO clarified that parties *“have an obligation to address the digital dimension of violence against*

*women as an integral part of their comprehensive approach to preventing such violence, protecting and supporting victims and to prosecuting perpetrators*”<sup>6</sup>To this end, GREVIO called for the recognition of the digital dimension of violence against women in relevant national policies as part of a holistic response as required by Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention.<sup>7</sup>

An integrated approach to preventing violence, protecting and supporting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators, must include relevant civil society actors, particularly women’s rights NGOs providing support services to women victims, or running advocacy efforts. In this regard, Article 9 emphasises the key contribution of NGOs and civil society to addressing violence against women, while requiring parties to recognise their work by tapping into their expertise and involving them as partners in multi-agency co-operation efforts and in the implementation of comprehensive government policies.

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6. GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, adopted on 20 October 2021, paragraph 35.

7. Ibid., paragraph 57.

# Key elements of co-ordinated policy making on violence against women

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**O**fficial bodies under Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention must be mandated with the specific tasks of co-ordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating measures to address violence against women and domestic violence. Thus, this section provides some key theoretical concepts and analytical tools regarding co-ordinated policy-making processes, which can be applied to the area of preventing and combating violence against women.

## **Understanding the stages of the policy-making process.**

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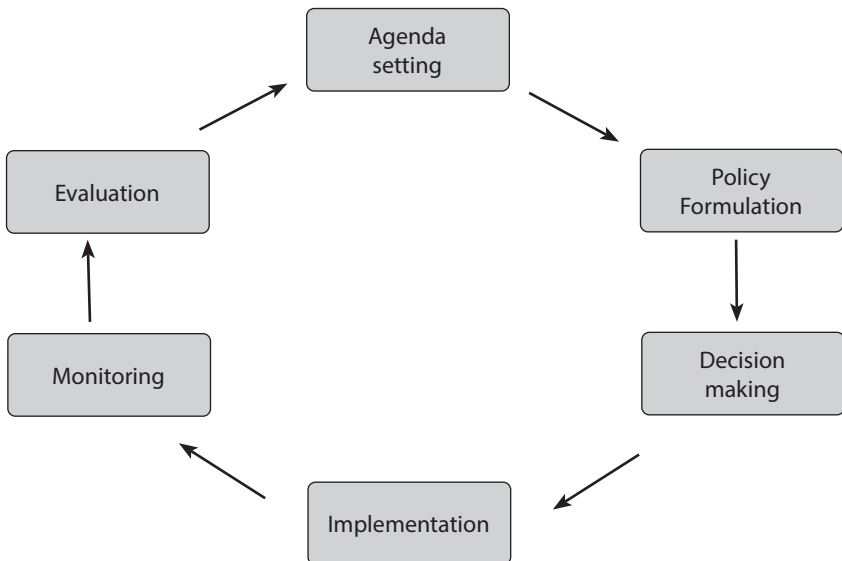
The policy cycle refers to the different phases of a theoretical policy-making process. Various models of policy cycles exist and are used to plan and analyse policy developments from their inception to their evaluation.<sup>8</sup> Based on this existing literature and Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, the following policy cycle can be used to set up and analyse public policies aimed at preventing and combating violence against women:

1. *Agenda setting*: policy makers identify, define, and prioritise concerns related to addressing violence against women and promoting gender equality.
2. *Policy formulation*: policy makers develop potential solutions and strategies to address violence against women. It requires an evidence-based approach that involves conducting research, analysing alternative options and developing policy proposals.

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8. See for example: Lasswell, H. D. (1956). *The decision process: Seven categories of functional analysis*. College Park: University of Maryland; Anderson, J. E. (1974). *Public Policy-Making*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; for the ROAMEF model (rational, objectives, appraisal, monitoring, evaluation and feedback): see HM Treasury, (2011) *The Greenbook: appraisal and evaluation in central government*. London: The Stationery Office.

3. *Decision making*: policy makers select the most appropriate policy option among the proposed alternatives. It involves political processes, negotiations, and consultations among policy makers, stakeholders and civil society organisations to determine the policy direction and make decisions regarding resource allocation and implementation strategies.
4. *Implementation*: policy makers put policies into practice by translating policy decisions into action through the allocation of resources, the establishment of programmes and services, and the engagement of relevant stakeholders. The implementation phase may involve multiple levels of government, civil society organisations and other relevant actors acting jointly.
5. *Monitoring*: policy makers carry out a systematic data collection and reporting of an ongoing policy as a mean to follow up and identify progress and gaps in the implementation of targeted policy objectives.
6. *Evaluation*: a scientific assessment of the effectiveness and the impact of policies is carried out in order to inform future policy revisions or new initiatives. It can refer to the independent scientific assessment of the effectiveness of future (*ex-ante evaluation*), ongoing (*midterm evaluation*) or completed (*ex post evaluation*) public policies.



## **Promoting gender-sensitive and inclusive policy making**

Each stage of the policy-making process can greatly benefit from active co-operation between all relevant stakeholders, including policy makers, practitioners and civil society organisations. In this respect, women and girls' sustainable participation in policy making are central to devising, implementing, monitoring and evaluating tailored policies addressing gender-based violence against them, and promoting gender equality. Therefore, the policy-making process should aim to enhance women and girls' voices, representation, and meaningful participation, including at the policy formulation, implementation and evaluation stages.

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Istanbul Convention, parties "*shall undertake to include a gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation of the impact of the provisions of this Convention and to promote and effectively implement policies of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women*". As laws, policies and measures can impact differently on the living conditions of women and men, an assessment of this gender impact is key to identify tangible consequences that a policy intervention would have on women and men. In this regard, gender impact assessments are of essence to ensure that integrated policies dealing with violence against women and domestic violence are gender-sensitive and victim-centred.

### **Gender Impact Assessment**

According to the European Commission, "*gender impact assessment is the process of comparing and assessing, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy.*"<sup>9</sup> This analysis seeks to identify whether a law, a policy or a programme will maintain, increase or reduce existing gender inequalities. Such an assessment includes both the evaluation of the current situation and the projected impact of this policy, law or measure on women's and girls' needs. It must be conducted in a systematic, analytical, and well documented manner, including through the collection of

9. European Commission. (1998), A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment, Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/91d046cb-7a57-4092-b5d3-e4fd68097bb2>



gender disaggregated data.<sup>10</sup> As a complementary tool, gender responsive budgeting takes into consideration the gender impact in the elaboration of public expenditures, to ensure an equitable allocation of resources between women and men.<sup>11</sup>

A gender impact assessment does not only require information about gender differences, but it should also be based on an understanding of the manner in which these differences trigger inequalities. It ultimately aims to ensure that a policy contributes to empowering women and girls. As an example, affordable housing policy is an area where a gender impact assessment can be carried by the competent national or local authorities. This assessment implies a gender analysis of women's and men's housing needs, including how the gendered nature of domestic violence and socio-economic inequalities can affect differently their housing insecurity, as well as their access to, and use of, existing social or affordable housing programmes. In this regard, research has stressed how domestic violence and economic inequalities increase women's vulnerability to housing insecurity, which governments need to address by providing both short-term and long-term housing solutions.<sup>12</sup> In this context, a gender impact assessment of housing policies would promote compliance with Article 20 of the Istanbul Convention, that requires parties to ensure that women victims of violence can access services facilitating their recovery, including, when necessary, legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment. In this vein, GREVIO has welcomed measures taken by national or local authorities to include victims of domestic violence among the categories of individuals meeting priority criteria for accessing social housing, even though additional criteria or the low implementation of these measures often limit women victims' access to affordable housing in practice.<sup>13</sup>

10. European Institute for Gender Equality. (2017), Gender Impact Assessment: Gender mainstreaming toolkit, Available at: [https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-impact-assessment-gender-mainstreaming-toolkit?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-impact-assessment-gender-mainstreaming-toolkit?language_content_entity=en).
11. Council of Europe. (2009). *Gender Budgeting: Practical Implementation*. Handbook. Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe.
12. OECD (2023), Integrated housing, income, and child-related supports: Addressing acute needs while preparing for a future free from violence, In OECD (eds.): *Supporting Lives Free from Intimate Partner Violence: Towards Better Integration of Services for Victims/Survivors*, OECD Publishing.
13. See for example, GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports on Albania, paragraph 91, Austria, paragraph 95, Belgium, paragraph 118, France, paragraph 145, Italy, paragraph 137, the Netherlands, paragraph 149, Poland, paragraph 131, Portugal, paragraph 127, Serbia, paragraph 115.

Moreover, a human rights approach is central to framing policies on violence against women and gender equality as a crucial mean to guarantee the rights and dignity of all individuals. Thus, policy-making processes need to consider the diverse experiences and needs of women, including when they are at risk of intersectional discrimination<sup>14</sup>. In line with Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention, a non-discriminatory approach to preventing and combating violence against women is central to considering how multiple and intersecting grounds of discrimination, including among others, gender, age, disability, association to a national or ethnic minority, sexual orientation or gender identity impact women's specific experiences of violence. It is also crucial to understand the specific barriers that some women and girls may face in accessing support, protection and justice.<sup>15</sup> Applying an intersectional lens to policy making in the area of violence against women is crucial to identify and to take into account how factors and systems of power intersect and influence the way certain groups of women might access and use existing programmes. Conducting a gender impact assessment through an intersectional approach is, therefore, essential to *understand whether and how existing or planned policies reach certain groups of women, in order to adapt these policies to these women's actual needs*. For example, applying a disability-sensitive approach to the gender impact assessment of policies would help to consider how the accessibility needs of women with disabilities (e.g., physical accessibility, availability of easy-to-understand information), as well as the negative stereotypes towards them, may impact their actual access to services (e.g., shelters, social and health services) and justice.

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14. The concept of intersectionality refers to the fact that "individuals (and groups) are affected by multiple inequalities based on various grounds of distinction rather than by discrimination based on one ground at a time. Therefore, discrimination, inequality and gender-based violence cannot be examined in relation to only one category of difference – for instance, gender – while precluding others – such as race, class, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity – because social categories intersect and interlock in multiple systems of discrimination that simultaneously affect an individual's life." See: Council of Europe (2022), Ensuring the Non-discriminatory Implementation of Measures against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention; *A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, p.12-13.

15. Ibid.

# The functions of co-ordinating bodies under Article 10

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**U**nder Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, parties must establish official bodies responsible for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, whose mandate must cover four functions: the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measures in this realm. On the basis of GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports, this section details the different approaches considered as best suited for co-ordinating bodies to carry out their functions.

## **Building and implementing integrated policies on violence against women**

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Two key functions of co-ordinating bodies are to co-ordinate and implement measures to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. As aforesaid, these measures are to be developed and implemented through effective co-operation mechanisms involving all relevant actors and agencies across sectors in order to offer a comprehensive response to violence against women and domestic violence. In this regard, the following sub-sections describe ways in which co-ordinating bodies can more effectively design and co-ordinate the implementation of evidence-based comprehensive policies on violence against women.

## **Designing evidence-based policies through a participatory approach**

Although Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention offers discretion to parties on the measures to be taken to ensure cross-sectoral policy co-ordination in preventing and combating violence against women, the adoption of national action plans and strategies has been described as an instrumental way to ensure the design of state-wide comprehensive evidence-based policies and

the participation of all relevant stakeholders.<sup>16</sup> In practice, integrated policies are the result of consultations and co-operation among all actors and agencies involved in addressing violence against women, including relevant ministries, state agencies, and NGOs. In this regard, as mentioned above, Article 9 calls on parties to establish effective co-operation with NGOs providing support services to women victims of gender-based violence, who can provide valuable insights and contributions essential to building state-wide informed policies by reporting on the specific experiences and needs of victims. Integrated policies also need to be evidence-based, which implies that their design should rely on research and data documenting the situation of violence against women and the needs of victims, including women at risk of intersectional discrimination.

As part of its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO has emphasised that, in the context of co-ordinating the design and implementation of policies on violence against women and domestic violence, a promising practice adopted by most of the reviewed states includes the adoption of national action plans, whose preparation process is supervised by co-ordinating bodies. GREVIO has also noted with interest that several states have taken steps to design comprehensive evidence-based policies.<sup>17</sup> In these countries, research was conducted to inform the drafting and evaluation of national action plans and strategies. For example, in Slovenia, the national co-ordinating body set up after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the inter-ministerial group, took an evidence-based approach to designing new policies on violence against women by evaluating the implementation of previous measures, programmes and policies.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Georgia adopted a National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims for the period 2018-2020, which followed consultations with relevant institutions.<sup>19</sup> This consultation process included gender focal points from relevant ministries and non-governmental organisations. Of particular relevance is the drafting and implementation of the national action plan co-ordinated by the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the official co-ordinating body designated by Georgia

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16. Explanatory report to the Istanbul Convention, CETS No. 210, signed on 11 May 2011, paragraph 65; Council of Europe (2022), Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraph 51.

17. Council of Europe (2022), Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraph 52.

18. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Slovenia, paragraph 39.

19. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Georgia, paragraph 35.

for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.<sup>20</sup> GREVIO commended Georgia for this evidence-based policy approach, in particular for the authorities' efforts to use the assessment of existing measures as a basis for building and improving their national action plan.<sup>21</sup>

However, as a general limitation, GREVIO found that in most countries, national action plans or strategies did not address all forms of violence against women but were mainly focused on domestic violence, which in some countries was still addressed following a gender-neutral approach.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, research carried out by civil society organisations found that most national action plans developed by states do not recognise and address the gendered nature of intimate partner violence and violence against women.<sup>23</sup>

## Co-ordinating the implementation of comprehensive policies across sectors

Under Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, the co-ordination and implementation tasks of co-ordinating bodies is crucial to ensuring the actual implementation of measures to prevent and combat violence against women. In this regard, GREVIO has commended Spain for its well-operating co-ordinating bodies which include, on the one hand, the Government Delegation for Gender-based Violence, in charge of policy co-ordination and implementation, and on the other hand, the State Observatory on Violence against Women, in charge of policy monitoring and evaluation.<sup>24</sup> As part of its duties to co-ordinate and implement national policies and measures, the Government Delegation for Gender-based Violence carries out prevention and information campaigns, promotes collaboration between relevant services, regional authorities and civil society organisations, prepares and disseminates research, and carries out the collection, analysis and publication of data on violence against women.<sup>25</sup>

As another promising example, Switzerland appointed the “violence department” of the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE), under the direct

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20. Ibid., paragraph 60.

21. Ibid., paragraph 35.

22. Council of Europe (2022) Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraph 57.

23. European Women's Lobby (2020), Towards a Europe free from male violence against women and girls: recommendations from the European Women's Lobby to end violence against women and girls in Europe once and for all., available at <https://womenlobby.org/Towards-a-Europe-Free-from-Male-Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls-Marking-10>.

24. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Spain, paragraphs 49 and 51.

25. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Spain, paragraph 59.

authority of the Federal Councillor for Home Affairs, as the body responsible for implementing the Istanbul Convention at the national level, in co-operation with other stakeholders at federal and district (i.e. cantonal) levels.<sup>26</sup> In 2018, the FOGE drew up a conceptual framework for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention assigning tasks to the various levels of government. GREVIO welcomed the leading role played by the FOGE in promoting and co-ordinating the implementation of the Istanbul Convention at all levels of government, and in developing research on violence against women, even though its mandate focused mainly on domestic violence.

## **Ensuring the monitoring and evaluation of policies on violence against women**

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The Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention and GREVIO have stressed the importance of having national bodies carrying out the functions of monitoring and evaluating national policies and measures on violence against women. On the one hand, the monitoring function implies to regularly document how, and how effectively policies are implemented. On the other hand, the evaluation tasks must be grounded on an independent and scientific assessment, based on the collection of robust data regarding the relevant measures. Throughout its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO has clarified that a setup in which close institutional ties exist between, on the one hand, the bodies that implement measures and bears political responsibility for them, and on the other hand, the bodies who are supposed to evaluate the efficacy of these measures, might not ensure the necessary objectivity to assess and independently evaluate the policies and measures taken.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, GREVIO has stressed the need to ensure that the evaluation of policies on violence against women is entrusted to an entity or entities that can carry out their task independently. While bearing in mind the discretion granted to parties in deciding on the way to ensure this independent evaluation, GREVIO has noted the added value of attributing the evaluation function to an institution separate from the one responsible for coordinating policies on violence against women.<sup>28</sup> As an alternative, GREVIO has pointed out the possibility

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26. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Switzerland, paragraph 48.

27. Ibid.

28. See for example GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports on Belgium, paragraph 42, North Macedonia, paragraph 59, Serbia, paragraph 42.

for the co-ordinating body to commission an external evaluation from an independent entity.<sup>29</sup>

## Providing regular independent evaluation of policies

Parties have adopted different approaches to ensure the independent evaluation of policies on violence against women. In most countries reviewed by GREVIO, the evaluation function was assessed as either lacking or insufficient. Another common gap is related to the fact that in most of the reviewed parties, the same body is responsible for both co-ordinating the implementation of policies on violence against women and for conducting their evaluation, which represents an obstacle to ensuring an independent evaluation process of these policies. However, in line with GREVIO's findings related to the importance of ensuring the independent evaluation of national policies to prevent and combat violence against women, some countries have entrusted the evaluation function to an independent body. For instance, in France, GREVIO noted with interest the setting up of the High Council for Equality as an independent body responsible for the evaluation of policies and measures on violence against women. The High Council for Equality includes representatives from both the public sector and civil society, allowing it to provide a global and independent evaluation of the legal framework and of the various measures contained in the inter-ministerial plans on violence against women.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, it was noted in the Conclusion of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention that, since 2022, in Finland, the Ombudsperson for non-discrimination has been mandated with monitoring and evaluating policies on violence against women and domestic violence, as well as the implementation of national legislation and international obligations in this area.<sup>31</sup> This office has, thus, the task of monitoring and evaluating measures taken to implement the Istanbul Convention. According to the national authorities, the mandate of the Ombudsperson for non-discrimination covers all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, and addresses the intersectional discrimination faced by some groups of women victims of violence, including women belonging to minorities and women with disabilities.<sup>32</sup>

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29. See for example GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Croatia, paragraph 48.

30. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on France, paragraph 59.

31. Conclusions on the implementation of recommendations in respect of Finland adopted by the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention.

32. Reply by Finland to the reporting form on the implementation of the Recommendation of the Committee of the Parties adopted on 30 January 2020, p.10.

In Italy, GREVIO welcomed the decision to entrust the role of monitoring and evaluating the National Action Plan on Violence against Women to an independent body, the National Council for Research.<sup>33</sup> More specifically, the Italian authorities mandated the National Council for Research to propose a set of criteria enabling the *ex post* evaluation of achievements and results obtained under the National Action Plan which expired in 2017.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the National Council for Research was entrusted with the task of identifying clear indicators for designing the next national action plan and to allow for a thorough analysis of its effectiveness and impacts.

### Focus on Spain

In Spain, under the Organic Law 2004/01 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender-based Violence, the State Observatory on Violence against Women is the co-ordinating body in charge of the independent evaluation of measures on violence against women.<sup>35</sup> This body is independent from the one co-ordinating these policies, the Government Delegation for Gender-based Violence. The State Observatory on Violence against Women is composed of public officials at national, regional and local levels, as well as of members of civil society organisations. The main functions of this body are to ensure the collection of harmonised data, as well as the evaluation of policies and measures to combat violence against women and domestic violence. In addition, this body is in charge of preparing reports, studies and proposals for actions on violence against women and domestic violence.<sup>36</sup> For instance, the State Observatory on Violence against Women publishes an annual statistical report in Spanish, French and English, compiling data on the number of women killed by their intimate partner, reported cases of sexual violence against women, the number of reports of gender-based violence against women to the police and the national telephone helplines, and the number of women victims who accessed general and specialist support services.<sup>37</sup>

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33. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Italy, paragraph 64.

34. Ibid.

35. GREVIO's baseline report on Spain, paragraph 49.

36. Ibid. paragraph 49.

37. Government of Spain (2022) XIII Annual report of the State observatory for violence against women, Executive Overview, 2022, available at: <https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es>.



## Co-ordinating the collection of disaggregated data across relevant sectors of government

Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention sets out the obligation for parties to systematically collect disaggregated statistical data at regular intervals on all forms of violence covered by the scope of this convention, which is an essential prerequisite for the formulation of effective policies in this area. Under Article 10, the data collection process, to be supervised by the co-ordinating bodies, includes both administrative data and population-based research on violence against women and domestic violence.<sup>38</sup> Relevant data include statistics compiled at regular intervals by relevant public authorities such as law enforcement agencies, social welfare services, health services, the judiciary and specialised services for victims. While parties have some discretion on the data categories to be used, the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention underlines the need to collect data disaggregated by sex, age, type of violence, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, geographical location, as well as other factors such as disability status.<sup>39</sup> The collection of sex-disaggregated data is crucial due to the gendered nature of violence against women. Indeed, data broken down by sex can show the differences in the prevalence of such violence and how state agencies respond to it, which can pave the way for the formulation of gender-sensitive policies that take into account differences between women and men, and the high impact that gender-based violence has on women and girls. It is also important that the information that is collected is made available to the general public.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, under Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention, in the process of collecting, storing and transforming data, parties are required to comply with standards on data protection from the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals regarding Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108) in order to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of victims, perpetrators and other persons involved.<sup>41</sup>

Co-ordinating bodies set up under Article 10 are also assigned the task of co-ordinating the collection, the analysis and the dissemination of the necessary

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38. Explanatory report to the Istanbul Convention, CETS No. 210, signed on 11 May 2011, paragraph 71.

39. *Ibid.*, paragraph 76.

40. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), Article 11, paragraph 4.

41. Explanatory report to the Istanbul Convention, CETS No. 210, paragraph 80.

data.<sup>42</sup> As noted in the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention the drafters decided to leave to the parties the decision on how to ensure the co-ordination, analysis and dissemination of data by these bodies, but it was highlighted as an example that some member states of the Council of Europe have set up observatories on violence against women which already collect a vast variety of data.<sup>43</sup> For instance, in Germany, GREVIO welcomed that, since November 2022, the National Rapporteur Mechanism on gender-based violence which forms part of the German Institute for Human Rights has been entrusted by the federal government with conducting regular and independent national reporting on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.<sup>44</sup> The National Rapporteur Mechanism on gender-based violence is tasked with gathering comprehensive, cross-sectoral and reliable data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence across the country. In October 2023, it published its first report compiling comprehensive data from all levels and sectors of government, as well as civil society.<sup>45</sup> The National Rapporteur Mechanism on gender-based violence also formulates recommendations to public institutions to improve their data collection and the design of effective measures against gender-based violence.

### Focus on France

In France, GREVIO welcomed the designation of the Inter-ministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings (MIPROF) as a national observatory on violence against women.<sup>46</sup> Placed under the administrative supervision of the State Secretariat for Equality between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination, this body created in 2013 is tasked with co-ordinating the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. The MIPROF is responsible for steering a working group on statistics on violence against women, which brings together the ministerial statistical services and research institutes. Data collected by these ministries are compiled in a single yearly publication, called “Letter

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42. Ibid., paragraph 71.

43. Ibid., paragraph 71.

44. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Germany, paragraph 48.

45. See *Berichterstattungsstelle geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt (2023) Bericht über die Datenlage zu geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt gegen Frauen und häuslicher Gewalt in Deutschland*, Deutschen Institut für Menschenrechte (DIMR), available at: [www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/](http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/).

46. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on France, paragraphs 60-63.

from the national observatory on violence against women.<sup>47</sup> GREVIO noted with interest the support given by the working group led by MIPROF to the various ministries, which had triggered methodological improvements in the data collection process. In addition, GREVIO noted with satisfaction the setting up of territorial observatories, such as the Regional Observatory on Violence against Women in Paris region (the Hubertine Auclert Centre), which contribute to the improvement of data collection and research on violence against women at the local level.<sup>48</sup>

### **Focus on Romania**

In the area of co-ordinated data collection, in its baseline evaluation report on Romania, GREVIO noted with interest that the National Institute for Statistics and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men had concluded a collaboration protocol that led to the setting up of a working group aimed at the implementation of Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention. The working group was assigned two main tasks. On the one hand, it is in charge of the implementation of an information system on domestic violence and the conduct of a survey on domestic violence based on gender criteria for the period 2022-2023. On the other hand, it is responsible for the interinstitutional co-operation of the collection of statistical data needed to carry out national monitoring and reporting procedures in accordance with international standards, particularly the Istanbul Convention.<sup>49</sup>

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47. See Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains (MIPROF), *Les Lettres de l'Observatoire national des violences faites aux femmes*, available at <https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/>.

48. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on France, paragraphs 60-63.

49. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Romania, paragraph 78.

# The functioning of co-ordinating bodies under Article 10

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**T**o effectively carry out their co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation functions, co-ordinating bodies need to be fully institutionalised, have a clear mandate detailing their role and be equipped with adequate human and financial resources. In addition, clear working methods are instrumental to sustain the operational functioning of these co-ordinating bodies, including co-operation with all sectors of government and civil society as well as ensuring that policies and measures on violence against women are based on a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and intersectional approach.

## **The institutionalisation of co-ordinating bodies**

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Pursuant to Article 10 of the Istanbul convention, co-ordinating bodies need to be official bodies of the government, whether newly established or existing public institutions. GREVIO has underlined the importance of assigning the duties of the coordinating bodies to entities equipped with clear mandates, powers, and competences to ensure sustainable policy development. These bodies must reflect the administrative structure of the country which means that in federal states, more than one body may be appointed. In addition, such bodies may also be set up at both local and regional levels. GREVIO has also underlined that sustainable human and financial resources must be allocated to these co-ordinating bodies in order for them to efficiently and sustainably carry out their mandate.<sup>50</sup> The co-ordinating bodies also need to operate based on a clear mandate that covers all forms of violence against women and domestic violence as defined under the Istanbul Convention. In

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50. Council of Europe (2022), Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraph 96.

view of political changes and staff turnover in government institutions and agencies, it is important to ensure the capitalisation of knowledge on violence against women within the co-ordinating bodies, and the transfer of expertise to new and future staff members or representatives of the bodies and the dissemination to other institutions and the public.

## **Allocating sustainable resources to co-ordinating bodies**

Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention states that appropriate financial and other resources need to be allocated for all activities aimed at the implementation of its provisions. This includes setting aside appropriate resources for the functioning of the co-ordinating bodies and the implementation of national policy strategies or national action plans on violence against women. Throughout its monitoring activity, GREVIO has observed that co-ordinating bodies often lack sufficient dedicated human and financial resources to carry out their activities in a sustainable manner.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, national strategies and action plans often lack clarity over the financial resources dedicated to the implementation of the planned measures.<sup>52</sup>

The national co-ordinating bodies in Spain, the Government Delegation for Gender-based Violence and the State Observatory on Violence against Women provide promising examples of bodies which are fully institutionalised and are provided with dedicated budget.<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, Malta has established the Commission on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence, which operates as a fully institutionalised national co-ordinating body. GREVIO has noted that budgetary entitlements and staffing of the national co-ordinating body had clearly improved following the entry into force of the Genderbased Violence and Domestic Violence Act in Malta, whose aim was to fully transpose the provisions of the Istanbul Convention into national law.<sup>54</sup>

## **Developing a clear mandate for co-ordinating bodies**

The Istanbul Convention explicitly requires that the mandate of the co-ordinating bodies encompass all forms of violence against women and domestic violence covered by its scope. GREVIO has already noted that in many countries, the mandate of the co-ordinating bodies in charge of implementing those policies are circumscribed to domestic violence, while other forms of violence against

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51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., paragraphs 65 - 66.

53. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Spain, paragraph 51.

54. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Malta, paragraph 41.

women, such as sexual violence, forced marriage, sexual harassment, forced sterilisation or forced abortion receive little or no attention.<sup>55</sup>

Spain is among the notable exceptions, as its national body tasked with the co-ordination and implementation of policies on violence against women (the Government Delegation for Gender-based Violence) extended its mandate to cover all forms of violence under the scope of the Istanbul Convention.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, despite uncertainty regarding its financial resources, the mandate of the Division for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, which was designated as the co-ordinating body in Sweden, covers all forms of violence against women.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout its baseline evaluation process, GREVIO has stressed the added value of having the co-ordinating function of the relevant bodies tied to high administrative levels, in order to ensure that policies and measures on violence against women are prioritised in the political agenda at the national level.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, previous research on the implementation of Article 10 found that co-ordinating bodies needed to be granted a certain level of authoritative or executive power allowing them to carry their co-ordinating function across relevant sectors of government.<sup>59</sup> In that sense, co-ordinating bodies which are technical, administrative or political structures with an advisory function and without executive power or ties to high political levels, may be ill-equipped to carry out their mandates.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, GREVIO has observed that co-ordinating bodies should not be fully dependent on political mandates or operate on an *ad hoc* basis. Indeed, in its baseline evaluation reports, GREVIO has stressed that *ad hoc* ministerial working groups, ministerial working groups dependent on the political mandates of ministers in power, or bodies that are dependent on the approval of national action plans, are often not equipped

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55. Council of Europe (2022), Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraphs 57 and 95.

56. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Spain, paragraph 51.

57. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden, paragraph 43.

58. See for example GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Montenegro, paragraph 46.

59. Council of Europe (2016) 'Implementing Article 10 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – establishing national co-ordinating bodies: Analytical report of common challenges and lessons learned from bodies set up under different international human rights treaties', Council of Europe, p. 24.

60. Ibid, See also GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports on Albania, paragraph 33, France, paragraph 55, Poland, paragraphs 47-48.

to carry out their mandates adequately, as they lack the required continuity and sustainability needed to effectively perform their co-ordinating role.<sup>61</sup>

## **Learning and knowledge management within and across co-ordinating bodies**

The skills, know-how and promising practices to address violence against women and domestic violence need to be preserved within the co-ordinating bodies, regardless of staff turnover or changes in government. Thus, co-ordinating bodies need to establish and keep institutional memory and learning mechanisms to ensure continuity and progress in policy making. To this end, national authorities can produce clear guidelines for the functioning of their co-ordinating bodies, as well as reporting and sharing information on their achievements. Such guidelines may also include information on the provisions and purpose of the Istanbul Convention, the relevant legislation in the country, and specialised services provided to victims, information on the rights of victims and the victim-centred approach, as well as on the importance of gender-sensitive policies. Furthermore, to ensure that relevant competences within the co-ordinating bodies are retained over time, it would be beneficial to ensure that members are selected in an open and transparent manner, that they represent all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and women's rights NGOs, and that they have clearly demonstrated experience and expertise on the subject.

To foster international peer learning and knowledge sharing on responding to violence against women, Article 10, paragraph 3, requires co-ordinating bodies to have the capacity to communicate directly and foster relations with their counterparts in other parties. In this respect, GREVIO noted with interest that technical exchanges are taking place among co-ordinating bodies set up in German-language states parties to the convention.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, at the Council of Europe level, the meeting of co-ordinating bodies organised on 15 November 2022, in partnership with the Finnish authorities, offered a forum for knowledge exchange and peer learning among the bodies set up pursuant to Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. In total, 21 states parties were represented by officials from national bodies which co-ordinate policies on violence against women. This meeting of co-ordinating bodies contributed to promoting synergies and knowledge exchange among state officials who

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61. Council of Europe (2022), Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, paragraphs 94-95.

62. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Switzerland, paragraph 48.

are the main actors involved in the design, implementation, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of policies on violence against women. This allowed them, on the basis of their discussions on their national practices and GREVIO's findings, to identify promising ways to implement Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention.

## **Working methods of co-ordinating bodies**

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Pursuant to Articles 9 and 10 of the Istanbul Convention, the co-ordinating body or bodies must develop and maintain inter-institutional co-ordination with all sectors of government, as well as regular co-operation with civil society actors active in addressing violence against women, particularly women's rights NGOs. The co-ordinating bodies also need to ensure that the implementation of comprehensive policies on all forms of violence against women are based on a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and intersectional approach.

### **Promoting inter-institutional co-ordination across all sectors of government**

Under Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention, comprehensive policies should be implemented through effective multi-agency co-operation. In this context, the role of co-ordinating bodies in sustaining multi-agency co-operation is crucial. GREVIO has welcomed steps taken by several governments to promote effective multi-agency co-operation. For example, GREVIO has commended Romania for establishing a good framework for inter-sectoral response. The National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Domestic Violence assigns clear roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the strategy. It also recognises the role of central and local public administration bodies operating in all relevant sectors and tasked with specific responsibilities.<sup>63</sup>

To ensure sustainable inter-institutional co-operation, the authorities should establish multi-agency co-operation protocols and ensure regular meetings and co-operation with all the relevant stakeholders. Protocols and guidelines can clarify the respective roles and competencies and set out a shared language and an understanding of the issues related to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In this context, although Germany had no national co-ordinating body at the time of GREVIO's baseline

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63. GREVIO's baseline report on Romania, paragraph 42.



evaluation, multi-agency co-operation existed in several federal states. For instance, institutionalised multi-agency co-operation on domestic violence cases was established in the states of Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate, with efforts to replicate it in other regions.<sup>64</sup>

## **Building sustainable co-operation with non-governmental organisations**

Articles 9 and 10 of the Istanbul Convention state the need to recognise and involve the expertise of relevant civil society actors, particularly women's rights non-governmental organisations, in the policy-making process. GREVIO has stressed that relevant NGOs and civil society actors with knowledge of the situation of women victims of violence, including women at risk of intersectional discrimination, should be included in multi-agency co-operation efforts, including in the activities of co-ordinating bodies. For instance, in Slovenia, the inter-ministerial working group responsible for co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, appointed as the national co-ordinating body, includes several NGO representatives.<sup>65</sup> In this context, GREVIO noted that co-operation between the government and NGOs is crucial to ensure that a victim-centred approach is included in the drafting of policies and legislation.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, in Norway, a forum for co-operation with NGOs working on domestic violence was established by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.<sup>67</sup> This type of formalised structure for dialogue with NGOs ensures that such co-operation is institutionalised and sustainable. In Romania, NGOs also participated in the work of existing national co-operation mechanisms, such as the Inter-ministerial Committee for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence and the National Commission for Gender Equality.<sup>68</sup> In this context, NGOs took part in the drafting of national legislation and national strategies on domestic violence and sexual violence. The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Romania also signed collaboration protocols with several women's rights NGO's working in the field of violence against women and gender equality.

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64. GREVIO's baseline report on Germany, paragraphs 33 and 130.

65. GREVIO's baseline report on Slovenia, paragraph 54.

66. Ibid.

67. GREVIO's baseline report on Norway, paragraph 39.

68. GREVIO's baseline report on Romania, paragraph 59.

## Focus on Switzerland

In Switzerland, GREVIO noted with appreciation that the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE), serving as the co-ordinating body for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, holds regular exchanges with NGOs.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the Swiss authorities have provided financial backing to the Istanbul Convention Network, which brings together nearly one hundred non-governmental organisations and services specialised in combating violence against women and working with diverse groups of women exposed to violence, including women with disabilities, migrant and refugee women, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) women. This NGO network also provides a platform for exchanges between non-governmental organisations and the authorities<sup>70</sup>. GREVIO was pleased to note that annual meetings between the FOGE and NGOs were held, and that NGOs were involved in strategic dialogue and the preparation of the national action plan.

## Applying a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to policy making

The Istanbul Convention requires parties to implement gender-sensitive, victim-centred and human rights-based policies for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, while ensuring the non-discriminatory implementation of these measures. Parties are obliged to ensure that a gender perspective is applied when designing measures to implement the Istanbul Convention and when evaluating their impact. Thus, gender impact assessment needs to be carried out at the planning stage of any measure, as well as during the evaluation stage. At the same time, parties need to promote and implement policies that ensure equality between women and men and the empowerment of women. Therefore, a gender perspective needs to be applied when carrying out the four tasks of the co-ordinating bodies. A way to adopt a gender-sensitive approach when designing evidence-based policies is to rely on data that reflect the gendered nature of violence against women and domestic violence, and to involve women's rights NGOs. In Sweden, GREVIO noted positively that all areas of policy making are anchored in gender

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69. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Switzerland, paragraph 35.

70. For more information, see Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes, Violence, available at [www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/fr/home.html](http://www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/fr/home.html).

equality principles, with gender impact assessments being routinely carried out by trained civil servants.<sup>71</sup>

As mentioned above, the Istanbul Convention, pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 3, requires that measures to address violence against women shall be secured without discrimination on any ground. This implies that these measures must be tailored to the actual needs of women victims of violence, including women at risk of intersectional discrimination on the ground of gender, disability, age, association to a national or ethnic minority or sexual orientation, among others. A way to ensure that co-ordinating bodies adopt an intersectional approach is to provide for the active involvement of actors with knowledge of the specific situation of these women. For instance, in Malta, GREVIO welcomed the diverse membership of the national co-ordinating body, the Commission on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence, which includes among its members a person with disability, a victim of violence against women, a representative of NGOs and a representative of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.<sup>72</sup> In addition, parties need to collect data and conduct research on the situation of women at risk of intersectional discrimination in order to inform policies on preventing and combating violence against women. Such an intersectional approach requires that co-ordinated evidence-based policy making relies on robust data, broken down by gender but also by other additional factors such as the age, disability status, sexual orientation or socio-economic status of the victim.

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71. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden, paragraph 10.

72. GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Malta, paragraph 41.

# Conclusion

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The Istanbul Convention provides a detailed list of actions and measures to ensure the adequate design and implementation of integrated policies and data collection on violence against women and domestic violence. For all measures to be implemented in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner, Article 10 requires that parties appoint or designate one or more official bodies to ensure the co-ordination, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation of integrated policies. The aim of Article 10 is to ensure that the different state institutions and civil society organisations do not operate in isolation from each other, which could lead to gaps in implementing the convention.

The co-ordination and implementation functions of the co-ordinating bodies aim at ensuring that all measures are taken through a joint effort of all relevant stakeholders. The monitoring task covers the documentation of how, and how effectively, policies and measures to address violence against women are implemented, while the independent evaluation task comprises the scientific evaluation of specific measures with the aim of assessing whether they meet the actual needs of women victims of gender-based violence.

As part of its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO has emphasised that a promising practice adopted by most reviewed countries includes the adoption of national action plans to prevent and combat violence against women, whose preparation is co-ordinated by co-ordinating bodies. GREVIO has also stressed the limitations of having a single body responsible for co-ordinating, implementing monitoring and evaluating measures on violence against women. Indeed, GREVIO has pointed out the added value of separating the independent evaluation function from the co-ordination and the implementation functions of the co-ordinating bodies. Moreover, co-ordinating bodies set up under Article 10 are also assigned the task of co-ordinating the collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant disaggregated data on violence against women.

To effectively carry out their roles, co-ordinating bodies need to be fully institutionalised, have a clear mandate detailing their role, and be vested with adequate human and financial resources. In addition, clear working methods are instrumental to sustaining the operational functioning of these co-ordinating bodies, including multi-agency co-operation with all sectors of government and civil society. It is also important to ensure that policies and measures on violence against women are based on a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and intersectional approach.

Engaging in international co-operation, sharing promising practices, and learning from other countries' experiences can contribute to the effective functioning of co-ordination bodies. Collaboration at the regional and global levels enables knowledge exchange and the adoption of effective strategies. Articles 9 and 10 of the Istanbul Convention recognise the need to make use of the expertise of relevant civil society organisations in policy making, particularly the experience of women's rights non-governmental organisations. GREVIO has stressed that relevant NGOs and civil society organisations with practical and in-depth knowledge of the situation of women victims of violence, including women at risk of intersectional discrimination, should be included in multi-agency co-operation efforts, including in the activities of the co-ordinating bodies. The setting up of co-ordinating bodies, equipped with the adequate resources and competences, is crucial for achieving and implementing an integrated response to violence against women, including domestic violence.

# Checklist

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**B**ased on the above research, which relies particularly on GREVIO's findings, this section provides a practical checklist for establishing and ensuring the operational functioning of co-ordinating bodies, in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention.

## **Setting up dedicated co-ordinating bodies**

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1. Has/ have a dedicated body or several bodies been established or assigned with the functions of co-ordinating and implementing national policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention?
2. Does the mandate of the co-ordinating body or bodies cover the co-ordination of policies addressing all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention?
3. Has/have the co-ordinating body or bodies been given a clear mandate which specifies their objectives, competencies and working methods, in order to ensure continuity and sustainability in the co-ordination and the implementation of policies on violence against women?
4. Has/have the co-ordinating body or bodies been granted a certain level of executive power or have ties to high administrative or political levels of government allowing them to carry their co-ordinating function across relevant sectors of government? Does the mandate of the co-ordinating body or bodies extend beyond a mere advisory role and encompass decision-making powers?
5. Are safeguards in place to ensure that the co-ordinating body/bodies is/are not entirely dependent on political mandates and on an *ad hoc* working method?

6. Has/ have the co-ordinating body or bodies been allocated dedicated financial and human resources? Has there been an assessment of the resources currently allocated to the co-ordinating body or bodies to assess whether they are sufficient to allow it/them to carry out its/their co-ordination and implementation functions? Is its budget stable, sustainable and independent from the approval of a national action plan or other policy document?

### **Co-ordinating and implementing evidence-based policies:**

1. Does/do the co-ordinating body or bodies in charge of designing and implementing evidence-based policies on violence against women rely on robust disaggregated data and gender impact assessment collected and carried out on a regular basis?
2. Is there open communication and collaboration between the co-ordinating body or bodies and research institutions, academia, civil society and other institutions involved in research on violence against women, to ensure a participatory approach in devising and implementation of evidence-based policies in this realm?
3. Do policies and measures on violence against women co-ordinated and implemented by the co-ordinating body or bodies adopt a gender-sensitive, victim-centred and intersectional approach?

### **Multi-sectoral approach to policy co-ordination and implementation:**

1. Has/have the co-ordinating body or bodies developed working methods to ensure multi-sectoral co-ordination in policy making on violence against women, including through the involvement, consultation and co-operation with ministries and state agencies from all relevant sectors (e.g., law enforcement, judiciary, healthcare, social affairs, education, finance) as well as civil society organisations, particularly women's rights NGOs?
2. Is/are the co-ordinating body or bodies responsible for the design and implementation of national action plans and strategies on all forms of violence against women? Has the preparation of these national action plans or strategies involved the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including all sectors of government and civil society organisations?

3. Has/ have the co-ordinating body or bodies established collaboration and consultation with civil society actors, particularly women's rights NGOs that provide gender-sensitive specialised support services to women victims, lead preventive interventions or work with women at risks of intersectional discrimination, in order to ensure that national policies and measures adequately reflect the actual needs of all women victims of gender-based violence?
4. Has/have the co-ordinating body or bodies established sustainable means to collaborate with relevant government bodies at regional or local levels, with the aim to co-ordinate effective policies on preventing and combating violence against women across the territory of the party?

### **Monitoring national policies:**

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1. Is/are there a co-ordinating body or bodies tasked with regularly monitoring how and how effectively policies and measures to address violence against women are being implemented at all relevant levels of government?
2. If yes, have they been granted with financial and human resources to carry out this task? Has there been an assessment of current resources allocated to these bodies to check whether they are sufficient to allow them to carry out their monitoring functions?
3. Are policies on violence against women, particularly national action plans or policy strategies, consistently monitored through a specific policy framework establishing specific indicators and targets?
4. Is there a practice of submitting progress reports on the implementation of policies and measures for preventing and combating violence against women, particularly national action plans, to the national parliament and/or the parliaments of federal entities for review?

### **Evaluating national policies:**

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1. Is/are the co-ordinating body or bodies mandated to carry out a regular scientific independent evaluation of national measures and policies addressing violence against women, on the basis of robust administrative and population-based disaggregated data?



2. If yes, is/are this body or these bodies able to carry out their evaluation function independently?
  
3. If yes, has/have this body or these bodies been allocated specific financial and human resources? Has there been an assessment of whether the current resources allocated to these bodies are sufficient to allow them to carry out their independent evaluation functions?

## **Coordinating the collection of disaggregated data**

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1. Has/have the co-ordinating body or bodies been assigned with the mandate and resources necessary to co-ordinate the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data across all relevant sectors? Are data collected and stored across relevant sectors of government in a harmonised manner?

# Key resources

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## **Council of Europe resources**

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The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and explanatory report, *CETS No.210, signed on 11 May 2011*.

GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, adopted on 20 October 2021.

The Mid-term Horizontal Review of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, reedited in 2022.

HUDOC-GREVIO database (includes GREVIO evaluation reports, comments submitted by Governments, recommendations by the Committee of the Parties and GREVIO General Activity Reports).

Council of Europe, Ensuring the non-discrimination implementation of measures against violence against women and domestic violence: Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention, *A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, 2022.

Council of Europe, Ensuring data collection and research: Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention, *A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, 2016.

Council of Europe, Implementing Article 10 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – establishing national co-ordinating bodies: Analytical report of common challenges and lessons learned from bodies set up under different international human rights treaties, 2016.

Council of Europe, Gender Budgeting: Practical Implementation. Handbook. Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, 2009.

### **Other international organisation resources**

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European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Gender Impact Assessment: Gender mainstreaming toolkit, 2017.

European Commission, A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment, 1998.

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Council of Europe. (2022), *Ensuring the Non-discriminatory Implementation of Measures against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention; A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*.

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European Women's Lobby. (2020), *Towards a Europe Free from Male Violence against Women and Girls: Recommendations from the European Women's Lobby to end violence against women and girls in Europe once and for all*, available at <https://womenlobby.org/Towards-a-Europe-Free-from-Male-Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls-Marking-10>.

Bureau fédéral de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes, *Violence*, available at [www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/fr/home.html](http://www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/fr/home.html).

Government of Spain (2022) *XIII Annual report of the State observatory for violence against women, Executive Overview, 2022*, available at: <https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es>.

HM Treasury. (2011) The Greenbook: appraisal and evaluation in central government. London: The Stationery Office.

Lasswell, H. D. (1956). The decision process: Seven categories of functional analysis. College Park: University of Maryland.

Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains (MIPROF), Les Lettres de l'Observatoire national des violences faites aux femmes, available at <https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/>.

## Article 10 – Co-ordinating body

1. Parties shall designate or establish one or more official bodies responsible for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by this Convention. These bodies shall co-ordinate the collection of data as referred to in Article 11, analyse and disseminate its results.

2. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article receive information of a general nature on measures taken pursuant to Chapter VIII.

3. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article shall have the capacity to communicate directly and foster relations with their counterparts in other Parties.

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