



TroyMUN'26

UNWoman

Council of Europe Convention on
Preventing and Combating Violence
against Women and Domestic Violence



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I. Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Prospective Participants, On behalf of TROYMUN Family, I would like to welcome you all to the ninth edition of TROY Model United Nations Conference. My name is Baran Akarsu and it is an utmost honor and privilege to serve as the Secretary-General of TROYMUN 2026. The ninth edition of TROYMUN will be held with the collaboration of Parion Hotel and Çanakkale College once again and it will take place in Çanakkale. While the junior edition of TROYMUN will take place between 23th-25th of November, the senior edition will be held between 27th and 29th of November. Since our last edition. We are extremely delighted and excited to meet once again and discuss some of the world's current problems. This year, we will host five committees in each of our editions. The committees will be a bit more interesting, more related to our current life and new rather than our past editions. The topic of Ensuring Habitat Protection and Biodiversity Conservation will be discussed in United Nations Environmental Programme for our Junior Edition. Reminding that it will be the first time of hosting UNCoST, The discussion is going to be covered under Raising Awareness on Usage of AI and Combatting the Misuse of Artificial Intelligence for our Junior Edition. UNICEF with the topic of The Effects of Social Media Usage and Digital Bullying on Children's Mental Health: International Maritime Organization with the issue of Protecting Oceans from Plastic Pollution and Maritime Waste for our Junior Edition. Not to forget our last and another new gen committee for Junior Edition, include an exciting wait for you to shine as a star. FCC: The Galactic Senate In the Futuristic Crisis Committee, delegates will prepare for the upcoming galactic elections with their factions. There will be four factions competing in the elections. Besides the elections, delegates will also cooperate with each other to solve the problems of the galaxy. Meanwhile for our Senior Edition, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime will discuss Combating the Rise of Cyber-Enabled Transnational Organized Crime and Darknet Marketplaces. UNWomen with the topic of Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Senior Edition Of UNICEF's Agenda Item will be Ensuring the Protection of Children's Rights in Armed Conflicts: The Case of Gaza. As you knew from our last edition, We gathered together in a committee to dream about the America. We know it is in your dreams before your sleeps, American Dreams! An exciting rehandling of Historical U.S Senate comes with a new discussion; The Civil Rights. Our last and fifth for our Senior Edition will be a Crisis Committee. JCC will be with us in order to discuss The

Napoleonic Era. We are looking forward to see you as a star, a delegate, a diplomat in our ninth edition which is special and the last before the double digits. Delighted to hear your solutions on these crucial topics and wish you fruitful debates. A group of experienced MUN delegates as well as successful and exemplary individuals well versed in the topics at hand will chair and monitor our committees. I have full faith in each and every member of our Academic Team and I believe they will guide you towards enhancing your academic knowledge along with practicing your debating and negotiating skills through presenting the best environment for a spirit of diplomacy. Meanwhile, now that they can arrange physical challenges, coffee breaks and social events again, I believe our amazing and all-mighty Organization Team members are in a frenzy! They are working with great dedication to ensure that you leave TROYMUN 2026 with unforgettable memories and lots of new friends. Overall, we are all looking forward to meet you again! On behalf of TROYMUN family and Parion Hotel, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration and once again, with great pleasure, welcome you to TROYMUN 2026. Do not forget to apply, to read your study guides, prepare some speeches and motions, and buckle your seatbelts for three days of fun, discussion, games and politics! In case of any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We would be more than happy to help you. See you in November.

Your Sincerely,

Baran Akarsu

Secretary-General of TroyMUN

II. Letter from the USG

Distinguished Delegates,

To start with, I would like to welcome you all to the ninth edition of TroyMUN. I am İdil Başer, I have the honor and pleasure to serve as your Under-Secretary-General for this year's UNWomen Committee. I also would like to thank my lovely co-chairs Beren and Nil to help me write this guide for you as well as my Dear Mentor USG

Zeynep Kayalaçın to guide us throughout this journey. I believe that during these three days we will be spending together, with my experience and your dedication you will have a both academically enriching, and most importantly enjoyable conference.

I suggest that you read this Study Guide carefully to have enough knowledge on this crucial topic and to be completely prepared for the committee with the provided essential background information, context, and resources to help you. Also I recommend you to go further than the study guide to do more research, develop your ideas, find solutions and share with us when the day comes. If you have any prior questions about the guide or the committee, you can email me and I will try to respond as soon as possible to clear up any questions you may have.

I am looking forward to meeting you all.

Warm regards,

İdil Başer

The Under-Secretary-General responsible for UN Women

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III. Introduction to the Committee: UNWomen

UN Women exists to advance women's rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of all women and girls.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,



to address challenges women face. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement also has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society.

Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Therefore, working for the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally, UN Women's main roles are:

- **To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.**
- **To help Member States implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.**
- **To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.**

Headquartered at the United Nations in New York, UN Women promotes women's empowerment, rights and gender equality globally, as well as within and among individual

countries through a network of regions listed as : Africa, Americas and The Caribbean, Arab States and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia.

IV. Introduction to the agenda item

The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is a major human rights treaty establishing comprehensive legal standards to ensure women's right to be free from violence. Resulting from the Council of Europe's continuous efforts since the 1990s to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, this European legal instrument was negotiated by its 46 member states and adopted on 7 April 2011 by its Committee of Ministers. It is known as the Istanbul Convention after the city in which it opened for signature on 11 May 2011. Three years later, on 1 August 2014, it entered into force following its 10th ratification. Since then, all governments that have ratified this treaty are bound by its obligations.

Because it is not only women and girls who suffer domestic violence, parties to the convention are encouraged to apply the protective framework it creates to men who are exposed to violence within the family or domestic unit. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the majority of victims of domestic violence are women and that domestic violence against them is part of a wider pattern of discrimination and inequality.

To date, 39 parties of the Council of Europe have ratified the Istanbul Convention, and must adopt measures to fulfil their commitment to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Istanbul Convention specifies several forms of gender-based violence against women that are to be criminalised (or, where applicable, otherwise sanctioned). These are:

- **psychological violence**
- **stalking**
- **physical violence**
- **sexual violence (including rape)**
- **forced marriage**
- **female genital mutilation**
- **forced abortion**
- **forced sterilisation**
- **sexual harassment**

A. History and the purpose of the Istanbul convention

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as "**the Istanbul Convention**", is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is



committed against women because they are women. It is the obligation of the state to address it fully in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. Failure to do so would make it the responsibility of the state. The convention leaves no doubt: there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye.

The Istanbul Convention recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women. It covers various forms of gender-based violence against women, which refers to violence directed against women because they are women or violence affecting them disproportionately. Gender-based violence against women differs from other types of violence in that the fact that these are perpetrated against a woman is both the cause and the result of unequal power relations between women and men that lead to women's subordinate status in the public and private spheres which contributes to making violence against women acceptable.

Under the convention, the use of the term "gender" aims to acknowledge how harmful attitudes and perceptions about roles and behaviour expected of women in society play a role in perpetuating violence against women. Such terminology does not replace the biological definition of "sex", nor those of "women" and "men", but aims to stress how much inequalities, stereotypes and violence do not originate from biological differences, but from harmful preconceptions about women's attributes or roles that limit their agency. Hence, the convention frames the eradication of violence against women and domestic violence in the advancement of equality between women and men.

In addition, the Istanbul Convention sets out the obligation to ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” are not regarded as justification for any of the acts of violence covered by its scope.

The Istanbul Convention also covers domestic violence, including all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim. Owing to the seriousness of such violence, it requires ensuring that the circumstances in which the offence was committed against a former or current spouse or partner, by a member of the family, a person cohabiting with the victim or a person having abused her or his authority, may entail a harsher sentence either as an aggravating circumstance or a constituent element of the offence. The convention asks states to ensure the safety and support of victims of domestic violence perpetrated by family members, spouses or intimate partners, regardless of their marital or non-marital status. The convention can, and must be applied irrespective of the legal definitions of “family” or “marriage” and recognition, or not, of same-sex relationships. These are matters for each state to decide since the legal recognition of same-sex unions or adoption by same-sex couples is outside the scope of the Istanbul Convention.

The purposes of this Convention are to:

- a) protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;**
- b) contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;**

- c) design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;**
- d) promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;**
- e) 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.**

B. The Four Pillars of the Convention

1-Prevention

In simple terms, preventing violence against women and domestic violence can save lives and reduce human suffering. Governments that agree to be bound by the convention will have to do the following:

- train professionals in close contact with victims;**
- regularly run awareness-raising campaigns;**
- take steps to include issues such as gender equality and non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships in teaching material;**
- set up treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and for sex offenders;**
- work closely with NGOs;**

- **involve the media and the private sector in eradicating gender stereotypes and promoting mutual respect.**

These measures show that prevention under the Istanbul Convention is intended to take place at different levels of society. It is not limited to responding to violence after it has happened. Instead, the Convention aims to address the attitudes, behaviours and social conditions that can contribute to violence in the first place. Gender inequality, stereotypes and unequal power relations are important factors in understanding violence against women.

Preventing violence against women and domestic violence should not be left to the state alone. In fact, the convention calls on all members of society, in particular men and boys, to help reach its goal of creating a Europe free from all forms of violence against women and domestic violence. Violence against women is pervasive because misogynistic attitudes towards women persist. Each and every one of us can help challenge gender stereotypes, harmful traditional practices and discrimination against women. It is only by achieving real gender equality that violence against women can be prevented.

This broader approach is also supported by the World Health Organization. Violence against women is both a major public health problem and a violation of human rights, and gender inequality and harmful gender norms are important underlying factors. Prevention therefore requires a combination of strategies, including strengthening relationship skills, empowering women, ensuring access to services, creating safer environments, preventing child and adolescent abuse, and transforming harmful attitudes, beliefs and social norms.

Therefore, prevention requires long-term changes in society, not only legal action. Schools, families, workplaces, healthcare institutions, media organisations, civil society and communities can all contribute to creating environments in which violence is recognised, challenged and not normalised. Awareness campaigns can help people recognise different

forms of violence and know where to seek help, while education can encourage respect, equality and non-violent relationships from an early age. Professional training can also help ensure that victims receive an appropriate and sensitive response when they come into contact with public services.

Ultimately, the prevention of violence against women depends on combining these efforts. Prevention strategies are more effective when they address several risk factors together rather than operating separately. Achieving lasting change therefore requires not only stronger laws and institutions, but also changes in attitudes, social norms and everyday behaviour.

I. Education and early prevention

Prevention is one of four main principles (often referred to as the “four pillars”) outlined in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter “Istanbul Convention” or “the convention”). Preventative measures must be carried out in parallel with the provision of support services and legal protection for victims as well as the prosecution of perpetrators as part of a set of comprehensive policies co-ordinated among all relevant stakeholders (i.e.integrated policies). One of the key contexts for the prevention of violence against women and girls is education. Education is both a setting where gender-based violence against women and girls, including (sexual) harassment, can take place, as well as one where attitudes and behaviours contributing to such violence can be challenged. Thus, the Istanbul Convention recognises that formal and informal education facilities have an important role to play in enhancing the promotion of equality between women and men, mutual respect in interpersonal relationships

and non-violence, and enlightening learners about violence against women and girls. It is therefore crucial to consider how educational interventions can contribute to the prevention of violence against women and girls, as well as how appropriate support and response for victims, and longer-term prevention goals, can be achieved. A fundamental aspect of violence prevention is educating children and young people from an early age about negative gender stereotypes that contribute to inequality between men and women, and attitudes which justify and normalise psychological, physical and sexual violence, as well as other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. Through teaching materials and initiatives, formal and informal education offers space and opportunities to address the root causes of gender-based violence against women and girls and therefore to prevent it. This convention encourages state parties to design, where they deem it “appropriate”, teaching material that promotes equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity. Thus, in line with the scope of other international human rights treaties, the Istanbul Convention is built on the understanding that educational establishments at all levels (i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary or higher education) have an important role to play in promoting human rights and equality between women and men, as well as in preventing violence against women.

This approach is also consistent with the World Health Organization's **RESPECT Women** framework, which identifies the transformation of harmful attitudes, beliefs and gender norms, the strengthening of relationship skills, the prevention of child and adolescent abuse, and the creation of safe environments as important strategies for preventing violence against women. The WHO stresses that violence against women is rooted in gender inequality and that prevention therefore requires interventions that address individual, relationship,

community and societal factors rather than focusing only on individual perpetrators or victims.

To address such issues, UN Women runs educational programmes to promote gender equality and women's rights, revises formal school curricula and policies, and trains teachers, students and parents could be given as an example on a way

Education should therefore not be limited to providing information about violence after it has occurred. Preventive education can include teaching young people how to recognise unhealthy or controlling behaviour, understand personal boundaries and consent, resolve conflicts without violence, respect differences, challenge gender stereotypes and seek help when they or someone they know is experiencing violence. Such approaches can help create environments in which violence is less likely to be normalised or tolerated.

To prevent and discourage children from violence education systems should include

- 1. Parties shall take, where appropriate, the necessary steps to include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, in formal curricula and at all levels of education.**

- 2. Parties shall take the necessary steps to promote the principles referred to in paragraph 1 in informal educational facilities, as well as in sports, cultural and leisure facilities and the media.**

II. Awareness raising and public communication

The explanatory report of the Istanbul Convention indicates to encourage a broader involvement of private companies and the media in the effort to end gender-based violence.

The media and the private sector have an important role because they influence public attitudes, social norms and perceptions of gender and relationships. Their participation can therefore contribute to preventing violence rather than simply reporting on incidents after they occur.

Public communication and awareness-raising should provide clear and accessible information about different forms of violence, their consequences, and the services available to victims.

The Council of Europe explains that awareness-raising is part of a wider prevention strategy that also includes challenging stereotypes and prejudice, involving men and boys, empowering women, educating young people, training professionals and working with perpetrators.

Children and young people increasingly encounter information and content through social media, online platforms and other digital communication technologies. For this reason,

prevention also requires **digital literacy** and the ability of children, parents and educators to identify harmful, degrading or violent content and respond to it appropriately.

The WHO's prevention framework supports this broader approach by identifying the transformation of attitudes, beliefs and norms as one of the seven major strategies for preventing violence against women. It also emphasises that prevention is more effective when different strategies are combined rather than implemented in isolation.

For this purpose, Participation of the private sector and the media requires

- 1. Parties shall encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies and to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for their dignity.**
- 2. Parties shall develop and promote, in co-operation with private sector actors, skills among children, parents and educators on how to deal with the information and communications environment that provides access to degrading content of a sexual or violent nature which might be harmful.**

III. Professional training and institutional prevention

Professional training and institutional prevention constitute an important component of the framework established by the Istanbul Convention for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In particular, Article 15 of the Convention requires States Parties to provide or strengthen appropriate training for professionals who deal with victims or perpetrators of violence. This includes professionals working in the police and criminal justice systems, healthcare, social services, education and other relevant fields. Such training should address the prevention and detection of violence, gender equality, the rights and needs of victims, and the prevention of secondary victimisation. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that professionals who are likely to encounter victims of violence possess the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to cases in a sensitive, effective and rights-based manner. Professional training is particularly important because the initial institutional response can have a significant impact on the safety and willingness of victims to seek further assistance. If professionals are inadequately trained, they may fail to recognise different forms of violence, underestimate the level of risk, rely on gender stereotypes, or unintentionally contribute to further harm experienced by victims. In contrast, appropriately trained professionals are better able to identify signs of abuse, assess risks, communicate effectively with victims, provide accurate information about available services and make appropriate referrals. The Istanbul Convention therefore emphasises that training should not be understood as a one-time activity, but rather as a continuous process incorporated into both initial professional education and continuing professional development. Training should also promote cooperation between different professional groups because cases of violence frequently require intervention from several institutions simultaneously.

Institutional prevention complements professional training by ensuring that individual knowledge and skills are supported by effective organisational structures. The Istanbul Convention adopts a comprehensive approach in which States are expected to develop policies, procedures and institutional mechanisms capable of preventing violence, protecting victims and ensuring effective responses. Institutions such as the police, courts, healthcare providers and social services should therefore establish clear protocols for identifying violence, assessing risks, protecting victims and referring them to appropriate specialised services. Effective institutional prevention also requires mechanisms for confidential reporting, safety planning, data collection and regular evaluation of institutional practices. Cooperation between different agencies is particularly significant because fragmented responses can result in victims having to repeatedly explain their experiences to different authorities or being referred between institutions without receiving adequate protection. Article 15 consequently emphasises the importance of training professionals in inter-agency cooperation so that victims can receive a coordinated and comprehensive response. Furthermore, institutional practices should be designed to prevent secondary victimisation, which may occur when victims are not treated with dignity, when their experiences are dismissed or when institutional procedures unnecessarily expose them to additional psychological distress.

The convention suggests;

1. Parties shall provide or strengthen appropriate training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, on the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, as well as on how to prevent secondary

victimisation.

2. Parties shall encourage that the training referred to in paragraph 1 includes training on co-ordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in cases of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

IV. Perpetrator programmes and prevention of recurrence

Programmes for perpetrators are an important element of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. They help to ensure that perpetrators take responsibility for their acts of violence and, ultimately, do not re-offend. The objective of these programmes is to enhance the safety and well-being of victims by addressing and ending violent behaviour, and by changing the behaviour of individuals committing domestic and sexual violence against women. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) embeds preventive and intervention programmes for perpetrators in the framework of a comprehensive strategy to prevent violence against women. It obliges parties to the convention to set up and support programmes for perpetrators, whose primary focus must be

to ensure the safety and support of victims.² Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention provides specific obligations regarding the setting up or support for preventive intervention and treatment programmes

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programs aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns.**
- 2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programmes aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex offenders, from re-offending.**
- 3. parties shall ensure that the support and safety of victims, as well as the human rights of victims, are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programmes are set up and implemented in close coordination with specialist support services for victims.**

The Istanbul Convention underlines that parties should establish their own programmes or support existing ones

In practice, however, challenges remain in aligning existing programmes with the above principles. In monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) identified shortcomings in ensuring sufficient availability of programmes that are based on a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach and that work in close co-operation with specialist support services. The research conducted by the European Network for the Work

with Perpetrators also pinpointed common challenges that countries and service providers encounter when establishing and designing programmes for perpetrators that aim to respond to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. These challenges relate specifically to the principle of victim-safety orientation in work with perpetrators, the provision of risk assessment and management, and to their level of integration of a gender perspective.

2- Protection

In the context of domestic violence, women who are economically dependent on perpetrators or who have limited opportunities to establish independent lives may face a particularly high risk of repeated and prolonged abuse. Poverty, inadequate access to affordable housing, unemployment, and financial dependence can significantly restrict a victim's ability to leave an abusive relationship and establish a safe and independent life. These structural conditions are directly relevant to the second pillar of the Istanbul Convention, **Protection and Support**, which requires States Parties to take measures to protect victims from further violence and to ensure their access to appropriate support services. Article 18 emphasises that protection measures should be based on a human-rights and victim-centred approach, while also aiming at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence. Consequently, protection cannot be understood solely as an immediate police or judicial response to an incident of violence; it must also address the social and economic circumstances that may prevent victims from escaping violence. Articles 20 and 22 therefore require access to general and specialist support services, including legal and psychological assistance, financial support, housing, healthcare, employment and training opportunities, as well as immediate, short- and long-term specialist assistance. These measures are particularly significant for women experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination, as vulnerability to

violence may be intensified by factors such as disability, migration or refugee status, age, marital status, or other circumstances that can create additional barriers to accessing protection. Therefore, the protection pillar of the Istanbul Convention adopts a broader understanding of safety: effective protection requires not only preventing immediate physical harm but also creating the legal, social, psychological and economic conditions necessary for victims to regain autonomy and rebuild their lives. In this sense, protection is an essential mechanism for breaking cycles of repeated violence and addressing the structural inequalities that can keep women trapped in abusive relationships.

I. General and specialist support services

The emphasis placed on co-operation among these actors stems from the conviction that the forms of violence covered by the Convention are best addressed in a concerted and coordinated manner by a number of agencies. This principle is particularly significant within the second pillar of the Istanbul Convention, **Protection and Support**, which recognises that the effective protection of victims cannot be achieved through the intervention of a single institution. Article 18 requires States Parties to establish appropriate mechanisms for effective co-operation between relevant state agencies, including the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities, as well as non-governmental and other relevant organisations. Such co-operation is intended to ensure that victims and witnesses receive timely and appropriate protection and are effectively referred to general and specialist support services. Law enforcement agencies, who are often the first actors to come into contact with victims when called to a crime scene, therefore have an important role not only

in responding to immediate threats but also in assessing the risk of further violence, collecting evidence and referring victims to appropriate support mechanisms. In practice, this may involve referral to a shelter, crisis centre or specialist service, many of which are operated by NGOs with expertise in supporting victims of domestic and gender-based violence. These support services may subsequently assist victims through medical care, psychological counselling, legal assistance, and, where appropriate, the collection of forensic evidence, while also helping them navigate subsequent interactions with the criminal justice system. The Convention therefore conceptualises protection as a continuous process rather than as a single intervention following an incident of violence.

The importance and purpose of this article is to ensure that victims of violence receive coordinated, accessible, and continuous protection and support rather than being left to deal with the consequences of violence alone. The emphasis on co-operation among law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, social services, the judiciary, shelters, crisis centres, and NGOs reflects the understanding that the forms of violence covered by the Convention require a concerted response from different agencies. Law enforcement agencies, often being the first point of contact, should be able to refer victims to specialist support services where they can receive medical care, psychological and legal counselling, and, where necessary, forensic assistance. At the same time, the article recognises that protection must extend beyond the immediate incident and facilitate the victim's long-term recovery and independence through access to financial assistance, housing, education, training, employment, healthcare, and social services. Adequately resourced services and trained professionals are therefore essential to ensure that victims receive appropriate assistance and are effectively referred to the services they need.

1 Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence. These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment.

2 Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services

II. Helplines and Sexualsupport Services

Helplines are one of the most important ways of enabling victims to find help and support. A helpline with a widely advertised public number that provides support and crisis counselling and refers to face-to-face services, such as shelters, counselling centres, or the police, forms the cornerstone of any support service under this Convention. Many victims find themselves without documentation and resources, making it difficult to pay for a phone call; hence, helplines must be offered free of charge. Additionally, there must be easily accessible crisis and referral centres in sufficient numbers to provide medical and forensic examination, trauma support, and counselling.

The traumatic nature of sexual violence requires a particularly sensitive response by trained staff, combining immediate medical



care and forensic evidence collection with long-term psychological counselling and therapy.

The Istanbul Convention establishes telephone helplines and specialist support services as essential components of the protection framework for victims of violence against women and domestic violence. In particular, Article 24 requires States Parties to establish state-wide, round-the-clock telephone helplines that are free of charge and capable of providing advice to callers confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity. The requirement that helplines operate on a 24/7 basis is significant because violence may occur at any time, including outside ordinary working hours. Victims should therefore not be required to wait until the following day or until a public service becomes available before being able to seek assistance. The Council of Europe further explains that specialised helplines should provide immediate expert advice and assist victims in accessing appropriate services and reaching safety.

The requirement of free access is equally important. The Convention recognises that victims may face financial dependence, economic insecurity, displacement, or other practical barriers as a consequence of violence. Consequently, the cost of contacting a support service should not constitute an additional obstacle to obtaining protection. Article 24 therefore expressly requires telephone helplines to be free of charge. Furthermore, confidentiality and respect for anonymity are fundamental characteristics of these services. Victims may be unwilling or unable to immediately disclose their identity, report the perpetrator, or initiate formal legal proceedings. A confidential helpline can consequently function as a first point of contact through which victims can obtain information about their rights, available protection measures, shelters, medical assistance, counselling, and law-enforcement services without being compelled to take further action before they are ready.

1 Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

2 Parties shall provide or arrange for specialist women's support services to all women victims of violence and their children.

3. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up state-wide round-the-clock (24/7) telephone helplines free of charge to provide advice to callers, confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

III. Shelters and Safe Accommodation

Easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers are an important means of fulfilling the obligation to provide protection and support under the Istanbul Convention. In particular, Article 23 requires States Parties to take the necessary measures to establish appropriate and easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for victims, especially women and their children. The purpose of shelters is to ensure immediate, preferably around-the-clock, access to safe accommodation when victims are no longer safe in their homes and require protection from further violence. This requirement reflects the broader protection objective of the Convention, which recognises that victims must have access to practical forms of assistance that enable them to escape situations of violence and begin the process of recovery. Temporary housing alone or general shelters, such as those

intended primarily for homeless persons, are not sufficient to address the specific and complex needs of victims of domestic violence. Victims may face multiple, interlocking problems relating to their physical and psychological health, personal safety, financial situation, housing conditions, and the well-being of their children. For this reason, specialised women's shelters are particularly important because their functions extend beyond the provision of a safe place to stay. They should provide an environment in which women and their children can receive appropriate support, cope with traumatic experiences, safely leave violent relationships, regain self-esteem, and lay the foundations for an independent life. The availability of such services is also important in addressing the structural barriers that may prevent victims from leaving abusive relationships, including economic dependence, lack of affordable housing, social isolation, and responsibility for dependent children.

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children.

V. Reporting

Reporting is addressed principally in Articles 27 and 28 of the Istanbul Convention and is an important mechanism for ensuring that violence against women and domestic violence are identified and brought to the attention of competent authorities. The Convention requires States Parties to encourage persons who witness an act of violence, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that violence may occur or that further violence may be expected, to report it to the competent organisations or authorities. The purpose is to ensure that responsibility for identifying and responding to violence does not rest exclusively with the victim,

particularly in situations where fear, dependency, intimidation, or other circumstances may prevent the victim from reporting the abuse herself.

Furthermore, concerning reporting by professionals, establishes an additional safeguard. Professionals who regularly come into contact with victims—such as healthcare workers, social workers, teachers, and other relevant professionals—may become aware of serious violence or indicators that further serious violence is likely to occur. The Convention requires States to ensure that professional confidentiality rules do not constitute an absolute obstacle to reporting in appropriate circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a serious act of violence has occurred and that further serious acts may be expected.

Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage any person witness to the commission of acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention or who has reasonable grounds to believe that such an act may be committed, or that further acts of violence are to be expected, to report this to the competent organisations or authorities.

Parties shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality rules imposed by internal law on certain professionals do not constitute an obstacle to the possibility, under appropriate conditions, of their reporting to the competent organisations or authorities if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a serious act of violence 16 covered by the scope of this Convention, has been committed and further serious acts of violence are to be expected.

3- Prosecution

The convention defines and criminalises the various forms of violence against women as well as domestic violence. This is one of the many achievements of the convention. To give effect to the convention, parties will have to introduce a number of new offenses where they do not exist. These may include: psychological and physical violence, sexual violence



including rape, stalking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. In addition, parties will need to ensure that culture, tradition or violence related to so-called honour are not regarded as a justification for any of the above-listed courses of conduct.

The criminalisation of these forms of violence is important because it establishes that violence against women is not simply a private or family matter, but a serious violation of human rights that requires an effective legal response. The Istanbul Convention therefore requires states to address violence through criminal law as well as through prevention, protection and support measures. It also requires offences to be subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.

The Convention covers a wide range of conduct because violence against women can take different forms and may occur in both public and private life. In addition to physical and sexual violence, it recognises psychological violence, stalking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilisation and sexual harassment. This broad approach is significant because victims may experience several forms of violence at the same

time, and the legal system needs to be capable of responding to the full pattern of abuse rather than focusing only on physical injuries.

The Convention also makes clear that these offences should apply regardless of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Violence committed by a spouse, former spouse, partner, family member or another person cannot be treated as less serious simply because the perpetrator has a personal relationship with the victim. This is particularly important in cases of domestic violence, where the relationship between the victim and perpetrator can create fear, dependence and difficulties in reporting the offence.

I. Sexual Violence and the Principle of Consent

Sexual violence is one of the most serious forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. The Convention requires states to criminalise intentional conduct of a sexual nature carried out without the consent of the victim. This is important because the focus is placed on whether the person freely consented to the sexual act rather than on whether the victim physically resisted.

Consent must therefore be understood in the context of the circumstances of each individual case. A person may be unable to freely express their will because of fear, coercion, intimidation, abuse of authority or other circumstances. The Convention's approach recognises that sexual violence can occur without the use of extreme physical force and that the absence of resistance should not automatically be interpreted as consent.

This principle is particularly important in cases of rape and sexual assault because victims may react to violence in different ways. Some may attempt to fight back, while others may

freeze, remain silent or try to comply in order to protect themselves from further harm. An effective legal system should therefore avoid placing unrealistic expectations on victims about how they should behave during an assault.

The Istanbul Convention's provisions on sexual violence also require states to ensure that sexual offences are investigated and prosecuted effectively. The purpose is to ensure that victims are able to access justice while also ensuring that investigations respect fundamental human rights and due process.

1 Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:

- a. engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object;**
- b. engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person**
- c. causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person.**

2 Consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person's free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.

3 Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the provisions of paragraph 1 also apply to acts committed against former or current spouses or partners as recognised by internal law.

II. Unacceptable Justification for Violence

Article 42 is particularly important because perpetrators may sometimes attempt to use culture, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” to justify violence. The Convention makes clear that such factors cannot be used as an excuse for committing violence against women. A person's alleged failure to follow cultural, religious, social or traditional expectations does not justify violence against them.

This provision is intended to ensure that all women are equally protected by the law. Cultural or traditional explanations should not result in different standards of



protection depending on the background of the victim or perpetrator. At the same time, Article 42 does not mean that culture or religion itself is being treated as a cause of violence. Rather, it prevents cultural, religious or traditional arguments from being used as a legal justification for violent acts.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that, in criminal proceedings initiated following the commission of any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” shall not be regarded as justification for such acts. This covers, in particular, claims that the victim has transgressed cultural, religious, social or traditional norms or customs of appropriate behaviour.**
- 2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that incitement by any person of a child to commit any of the acts referred to in**

paragraph 1 shall not diminish the criminal liability of that person for the acts committed.

The second paragraph is particularly significant where children are involved. A person who encourages or pressures a child to commit an act of violence cannot avoid responsibility simply because the child carried out the act. This recognises that children can be manipulated or pressured by adults and that responsibility should remain with those who encourage such conduct.

This also supports the Convention's broader objective of ensuring that the protection of women from violence is applied equally and without discrimination.

III. Investigation, Prosecution and Procedural Effectiveness

Article 49 establishes that having criminal laws in place is not enough. States must also ensure that these laws are effectively applied. Investigations and judicial proceedings should take place without unnecessary delays, because delays can increase the risks faced by victims and may weaken the ability of authorities to collect evidence.

Effective investigation is particularly important in cases of violence against women because victims may face fear, intimidation, economic dependence or pressure from the perpetrator. Authorities therefore need to investigate cases professionally and independently rather than relying entirely on the victim to provide evidence.

The Council of Europe also emphasises the importance of collecting evidence beyond the victim's statement where possible. Depending on the circumstances, this may include medical

evidence, photographs, witness statements, digital evidence and other relevant information.

This can be particularly important where a victim is unable or unwilling to provide a detailed statement because of trauma or fear. The aim is to prevent situations in which violence remains unpunished simply because the victim is unable to carry the entire burden of proving what happened.

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that investigations and judicial proceedings in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention are carried out without undue delay while taking into consideration the rights of the victim during all stages of the criminal proceedings.

2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures, in conformity with the fundamental principles of human rights and having regard to the gendered understanding of violence, to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of offences established in accordance with this Convention.

III. Aggravating Circumstances and Patterns of Violence

Article 46 of the Istanbul Convention establishes certain circumstances that should be taken into account as aggravating factors when determining the sentence for offences covered by the Convention. The provision aims to ensure that circumstances increasing the seriousness of an act of violence can be reflected in the criminal justice response, provided that they do not already constitute elements of the offence under domestic law.

One important aggravating circumstance is when violence is committed against a current or former spouse or partner, a family member, a person living with the victim, or a person who has abused their authority over the victim. This reflects the particular seriousness of violence occurring within relationships involving trust, dependency, or authority. Article 46



also identifies repeated offending as an aggravating circumstance, which is particularly relevant to domestic violence, where abuse may form part of a continuing pattern rather than being an isolated incident.

The article further recognises circumstances such as the particular vulnerability of the victim, the commission of an offence against or in the presence of a child, the use or threat of a weapon, and the use of extreme levels of violence. Severe physical or psychological harm caused to the victim may also aggravate the seriousness of the offence. In addition, previous convictions for offences of a similar nature may be taken into account when determining the sentence.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following circumstances, insofar as they do not already form part of the constituent elements of the offence, may, in conformity with the relevant**

provisions of internal law, be taken into consideration as aggravating circumstances in the determination of the sentence in relation to the offences established in accordance with this Convention:

- a. the offence was committed against a former or current spouse or partner as recognised by internal law, by a member of the family, a person cohabiting with the victim or a person having abused her or his authority;**
- b. the offence, or related offences, were committed repeatedly;**
- c. the offence was committed against a person made vulnerable by particular circumstances;**
- d. the offence was committed against or in the presence of a child;**
- e. the offence was committed by two or more people acting together;**
- f. the offence was preceded or accompanied by extreme levels of violence;**
- g. the offence resulted in severe physical or psychological harm for the victim;**
- h. The perpetrator had previously been convicted of offences of a similar nature.**

4- Integrated Policies

The purpose of this approach is to ensure that violence against women and domestic violence are addressed through a comprehensive, coordinated and interdisciplinary system, rather than through isolated actions by individual institutions. Article 7 requires States Parties to develop and implement state-wide policies covering all relevant measures to prevent and combat violence and to provide a holistic response, while placing the rights and needs of victims at the centre of these measures. The Convention recognises that no single institution can adequately address the complex legal, social, economic, health and psychological dimensions of violence; therefore, effective implementation requires cooperation among government

agencies, law enforcement authorities, the judiciary, healthcare and social services, local and regional authorities, national human rights institutions, NGOs and civil society.

This structure is important because prevention, protection, prosecution and victim support are interconnected: effective protection, for example, requires cooperation between police, shelters, healthcare providers and social services, while effective prosecution depends upon appropriate legislation, evidence collection and institutional coordination.

The Council of Europe therefore describes integrated policies as a holistic response in which different actors have clearly defined responsibilities and work together at national, regional and local levels. Overall, the purpose of integrated policies is to create a sustained, coordinated and victim-centred state response to violence against women and domestic violence, supported by adequate resources, institutional cooperation, civil-society participation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

I. Comprehensive & coordinated policies

Implement policies to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. The rights of the victim must be placed at the centre of these measures. All relevant actors, including civil society, must be involved in design and implementation.

The Istanbul Convention adopts a comprehensive approach because violence against women cannot be addressed through one policy area alone. Governments need to develop policies that combine prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated measures. These policies should recognise the different forms of violence covered by the Convention and should respond to the specific needs and circumstances of victims.

Putting the rights of the victim at the centre means that policies should prioritise the safety, dignity, privacy and well-being of victims. Victims should be able to access appropriate support and protection regardless of whether they decide to report the violence to the authorities. Measures should also take into account the particular vulnerabilities that some victims may face, including children, persons with disabilities and victims who may experience social or economic dependence on the perpetrator.

A comprehensive policy also requires sufficient resources. Laws and policies are unlikely to be effective if institutions do not have adequate funding, trained staff and specialised services to implement them. The Council of Europe therefore stresses the importance of ensuring that measures adopted under the Convention are supported by appropriate financial and human resources.

The involvement of civil society is equally important. Specialist women's organisations and NGOs often have direct experience of supporting victims and identifying gaps in existing services. Their participation can therefore help governments develop policies that respond to the actual needs of victims rather than relying only on institutional perspectives.

The Convention consequently encourages cooperation between government institutions, local and regional authorities, specialist support organisations and civil society. This makes prevention and protection a shared responsibility rather than something that rests solely with one government department or institution.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to adopt and implement State-wide effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention and offer a holistic response to violence against women.**
- 2. Parties shall ensure that policies referred to in paragraph 1 place the rights of the victim at the centre of all measures and are implemented by way of effective co-operation among all relevant agencies, institutions and organisations.**
- 3. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall involve, where appropriate, all relevant actors, such as government agencies, the national, regional and local parliaments and authorities, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations.**

II. Multi-Agency cooperation

In accordance with internal law, appropriate mechanisms are in place to provide effective co-operation among relevant agencies identified by the drafters: the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities, and NGOs. By adding "other relevant organisations," the

drafters ensured that this list is non-exhaustive, allowing co-operation with any other organisation a Party may deem relevant. The term "mechanism"



refers to any formal or informal structure—such as agreed protocols, round-tables, or other methods—that enables professionals to co-operate in a standardised manner, without requiring the setting up of an official body or institution.

Multi-agency cooperation is necessary because violence against women often involves several different areas of public policy at the same time. A victim may require medical treatment, police protection, legal assistance, accommodation, psychological support and social services. No single institution is normally capable of providing all of these forms of assistance.

Effective cooperation can also help prevent victims from having to repeatedly explain their experiences to different institutions. Where agencies communicate appropriately and follow agreed procedures, information can be shared in accordance with applicable laws while reducing unnecessary delays and gaps in protection.

Cooperation is particularly important in cases where there is an immediate or continuing risk of violence. Police and other authorities need to be able to identify risks and respond quickly, while specialist support services need to be involved in protecting and assisting the victim. Prosecutors and courts may also need information from other agencies when assessing evidence and determining appropriate protective measures.

The Convention does not require every country to establish exactly the same institutional structure. Instead, it allows Parties to develop mechanisms that are appropriate to their own legal and administrative systems. These can include formal agreements, referral procedures, protocols, regular meetings, multidisciplinary teams or other forms of cooperation.

The main objective is therefore not simply to create new institutions, but to ensure that the institutions already responsible for dealing with violence communicate and work together

effectively. The Council of Europe considers such coordinated approaches essential for ensuring that victims receive a comprehensive response.

- 1. Parties shall recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant nongovernmental organisations and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organisations.**

III. Dedicated Coordinating

Official bodies are assigned four specific tasks: co-ordinating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the policies and measures devised by the respective Party to prevent and combat all forms of violence within the scope of this Convention. This can be achieved by setting up new official bodies or mandating existing ones with these tasks. The term "official body" refers to any entity or institution within government, whether established at the national or regional level. Size, staffing, and funding are to be decided by the Parties, along with determining which entity the body shall be answerable to and any reporting obligations it shall have.

Dedicated coordinating bodies are important because responsibility for preventing violence against women can otherwise become fragmented between different ministries and institutions. A coordinating body can help ensure that policies developed by different parts of government are consistent and that responsibilities are clearly allocated.

The four functions of coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are closely connected. Coordination ensures that different institutions work towards common objectives.

Implementation ensures that policies are actually put into practice. Monitoring allows authorities to assess whether measures are being carried out effectively, while evaluation allows them to determine whether those measures are achieving their intended results.

These bodies should also have sufficient authority and resources to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Without adequate staffing, expertise, funding and access to relevant information, coordination can become largely formal rather than producing practical improvements.

Monitoring and evaluation are particularly important because policies should not remain unchanged if evidence shows that they are ineffective. Governments should be able to identify gaps in protection and support, assess whether victims can access services, and determine whether prevention and prosecution measures are producing meaningful results.

The Convention therefore encourages a system in which governments are able to continuously assess and improve their response to violence. This creates greater accountability and helps ensure that policies develop in response to changing circumstances and emerging forms of violence.

- 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.**

IV. Data collection and research

Knowledge is essential to making effective policies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. Developing knowledge enables policy makers and civil society to evaluate developments and to improve policy. Data collection and research assist in the design of the policies and measures needed to protect and support victims and to eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. Furthermore, data collection and research are necessary to ascertain whether policies are working towards preventing and combating such violence. To be effective, the provision of information needs to be part of an integrated approach, duly taking into account practical developments. To this end, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter “the Istanbul Convention”) requires states parties to collect disaggregated relevant statistical data and support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention.

Systematic and adequate data collection has long been recognised as an essential component of effective policy-making in the field of preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention. Additionally, available data are seldom comparable

across countries nor over time, resulting in a limited understanding of the extent and the evolution of the problem. Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence requires evidence-based policy-making. This implies effectively documenting the magnitude of violence by producing robust, comparative data in order to guide policy and to monitor the implementation of measures to address the problem. Accurate statistical information specifically designed to target victims and perpetrators of such violence is not only important in efforts to raise awareness among policy-makers and the public on the seriousness of the problem, but can also encourage reporting by victims or witnesses.

Relevant statistical data may include administrative data collected from statistics compiled by health care services and social welfare services, law enforcement agencies and NGOs, as well as judicial data recorded by judicial authorities, including public prosecutors.

Data collection is important because violence against women is often underreported. Many victims do not report violence to the police or other authorities because of fear, shame, financial dependence, concern for children, lack of trust in institutions or fear of further violence. Official crime statistics therefore cannot always show the full extent of the problem.

For this reason, the Convention distinguishes between different types of data and recognises the importance of collecting information from a range of sources. Administrative data can provide information about cases known to police, healthcare providers, social services and courts, while population-based surveys can help identify violence that has never been reported to an institution.

Research can also help governments understand why violence occurs, which groups may face particular risks, how victims experience the justice system and which prevention measures are effective. This information can then be used to improve legislation, allocate resources and develop more targeted services.

Another important issue is comparability. If countries collect data using completely different definitions, categories and methodologies, it becomes difficult to determine whether differences between countries reflect genuine differences in the prevalence of violence or simply differences in how information is recorded. Consistent methods and appropriate statistical standards therefore make it easier to identify trends over time and compare results between different countries.

At the same time, data concerning violence must be collected and stored with appropriate safeguards. Information about victims can be extremely sensitive, and confidentiality and privacy must be protected. Data collection should therefore balance the need for reliable information with the rights and safety of victims.

The Council of Europe and its monitoring mechanism, GREVIO, use available information and statistical data to assess how Parties are implementing the Istanbul Convention. Data can therefore serve not only national policymaking but also wider monitoring and accountability.

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

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

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

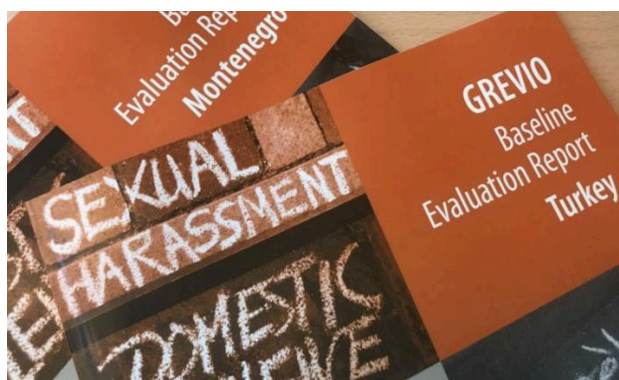
3. Parties shall provide the group of experts, as referred to in Article 66 of this Convention, with the information collected pursuant to this article in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking.

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

C. Monitoring and compliance among the member states

1. GREVIO

The purpose of the **monitoring mechanism** of the Istanbul Convention is to ensure that the obligations undertaken by States Parties are effectively implemented in practice and that states remain accountable for fulfilling their commitments under the Convention. For this purpose, the Convention establishes **GREVIO (the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence)** as an independent body of experts responsible for monitoring implementation. GREVIO evaluates the legislative, policy and practical measures adopted by each Party and publishes country-specific evaluation reports



identifying areas in which further measures may be required. The monitoring process is based on information provided by states as well as information from

non-governmental organisations, civil society, national human rights institutions and other relevant bodies, and may include country visits. In situations involving a serious, massive or persistent pattern of violence, GREVIO may also initiate a **special inquiry procedure** to investigate the situation and determine whether urgent action is necessary. In addition, GREVIO may adopt general recommendations addressing themes and concepts relevant to the Convention. The monitoring system operates through two complementary bodies: GREVIO, which provides independent expert assessment, and the **Committee of the Parties**, which follows up on GREVIO's findings and adopts recommendations concerning measures to be taken by the relevant states. Under **Article 66**, GREVIO is composed of between 10 and 15 independent experts, with the Convention providing for the enlargement to 15 members following the 25th ratification; members are elected for four-year terms, renewable once, and must possess recognised expertise in areas such as human rights, gender equality, violence against women, domestic violence, and victim protection. Therefore, the monitoring mechanism is significant because it transforms the Convention from a set of international legal commitments into a framework subject to **continuous evaluation, expert scrutiny, follow-up and institutional accountability**, encouraging States Parties to address shortcomings and strengthen their implementation of measures against violence against women and domestic violence.

1. **The Group of experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter referred to as "GREVIO") shall monitor the implementation of this Convention by the Parties.**
2. **GREVIO shall be composed of a minimum of 10 members and a maximum of 15 members, taking into account a gender and geographical balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise. Its members shall be elected by the Committee of the**

Parties from among candidates nominated by the Parties for a term of office of four years, renewable once, and chosen from among nationals of the Parties.

- 3. The election procedure of the members of GREVIO shall be determined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, after consulting with and obtaining the unanimous consent of the Parties, within a period of six months following the entry into force of this Convention.**
- 4. GREVIO shall adopt its own rules of procedure.**

D. Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. This is consistent with scholarly research and an international understanding, where the concept of gender-based violence describes and includes a continuum of violence, violations, and violent behaviours and attitudes on the basis of sex and gender and always intersects with other dimensions of inequalities, such as age, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality. Gender-based violence encompasses but is not limited to the following types of violence:

- **physical harm,**
- **sexual harm,**
- **psychological,**
- **or economic harm**
- **or suffering to women.**

It can include violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit. Although women and girls are the main victims of GBV, it also causes severe harm to families and communities.

I. Forced Marriage

Forced marriage means a marriage with 1 or more elements of force, fraud, or coercion, and where 1 or both parties do not or cannot consent to the marriage.

Consent means that you have given your full, free, and informed agreement to marry your intended spouse and to the timing of the marriage. Forced marriage may occur when family members or others use physical or emotional abuse, threats, or deception to force you to marry without your consent. Forced marriage can be both a cause and a consequence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Forced marriage can happen to individuals of any race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sex, age, immigration status, or national origin. It can happen to individuals from any economic or educational background.

Forced marriage can be both a cause and a consequence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Once a person has been forced into a marriage, the absence of genuine consent may contribute to continuing patterns of control, dependency, psychological violence, and other forms of abuse within the relationship. For this reason, forced marriage is increasingly understood not simply as a private or family matter, but as a violation of individual autonomy, dignity, and fundamental human rights. UN Women defines forced marriage as a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of forcing an adult or a child to enter into a marriage is criminalised.**
- 2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of luring an adult or a child to the territory of a Party or State other than the one she or he resides in with the purpose of forcing this adult or child to enter into a marriage is criminalised.**

II. Sexual Assault

A sexual assault is any sexual act that a person did not consent to, or is forced into against their will. It is a form of sexual violence and includes rape (an assault involving penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with a penis), or other sexual offences, such as groping, forced kissing or child sexual abuse.



Sexual assault is an act that is carried out without the victim's active consent. This means they didn't agree to it. Active consent also means that the person must be capable of agreeing to sex (not asleep, unconscious or under the influence of alcohol or drugs).

Sometimes a victim of sexual assault may have no physical injuries or signs of their assault, this doesn't matter, sexual assault is still a crime and can be reported to the police in the same way as other crimes. Most sexual assaults are carried out by someone known to the victim. This could be a partner, former partner, relative, friend or colleague. The assault can happen anywhere and at any time of day or night. Sexual violence or assault can happen to anyone of any age; men, women and children. It's important that anyone affected receives the right advice and support. Not all sexual assault involves violence or injury and quite often victims of sexual assault will have no visible marks.

A person cannot consent to a sexual act if they:

1. are substantially intoxicated (had too much alcohol to drink)
2. are asleep or unconscious.
3. are too young.
4. have a cognitive disability which results in the person requiring supervision for daily activities.
5. have agreed to the sexual act because they were physically threatened, terrorised or held against their will.
6. mistake the identity of the person they are participating in the sexual act with.
7. Are under the belief it is for a medical or hygienic reason.
8. Are tricked, intimidated or coerced by non-violent means.
9. Only agree to the sexual act because the person is in a position of authority.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:**
 - a. engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object;**
 - b. engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person;**
 - c. causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person.**
- 2. Consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person's free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.**
- 3. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the provisions of paragraph 1 also apply to acts committed against former or current spouses or partners as recognised by internal law.**

III. Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice has no health benefits for girls and women and can result in severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, menstrual difficulties, infections, as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths.

The practice of FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against girls and women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's right to health,

security and physical integrity; the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and the right to life, in instances when the procedure results in death.

FGM has no health benefits and can lead to serious, long-term complications and even death.

Immediate health risks include haemorrhage, shock, infection, HIV transmission, urine retention and severe pain.

Psychological impacts can range from a girl losing trust in her caregivers, to longer-term feelings of anxiety and depression.

In adulthood, girls subjected to FGM are more likely to suffer infertility or complications during childbirth, including postpartum haemorrhage, stillbirth and early neonatal death.

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:

- a. excising, infibulating or performing any other mutilation to the whole or any part of a woman's labia majora, labia minora or clitoris;**
- b. coercing or procuring a woman to undergo any of the acts listed in point**
- c. inciting, coercing or procuring a girl to undergo any of the acts listed in point**

IV. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. This can include actions, comments, or gestures that make you feel intimidated, uncomfortable and humiliated. Sexual harassment can be a one-off incident or happen repeatedly. Anyone can be a victim, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

These are some behaviours that could be considered sexual harassment:

- Unwanted touching, sexual jokes, or comments
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestions that sexual favours could help you in some way
- Giving gifts that make the recipient feel uncomfortable
- Wolf-whistling, staring, making unwelcome comments about someone's appearance and drawing attention to someone's body
- Asking unwelcome questions about someone's sex life or sexual orientation
- Cat-calling or following someone
- Sharing or displaying sexual images that makes someone feel uncomfortable or sharing content that can be considered image-based abuse

An important element in determining whether behaviour constitutes sexual harassment is its unwanted nature. The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes that sexual harassment generally involves conduct that is unwelcome and offensive to its recipient. Consequently, behaviour does not necessarily have to involve explicit physical violence or a direct threat in order to constitute harassment. Verbal remarks, sexual jokes, inappropriate comments about a person's body or appearance, unwelcome invitations, sexual gestures, and unnecessary physical contact may all constitute forms of sexual harassment depending on the circumstances.

Sexual harassment may also be understood as a violation of personal dignity and, particularly in the context of employment, as a form of sex-based discrimination. The ILO recognizes

sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence and harassment within the world of work.

Furthermore, sexual harassment can occur in different environments, including workplaces, educational institutions, public spaces, online platforms, and other social settings. In professional environments, it may take the form of a “quid pro quo” situation, where a person's submission to or rejection of unwanted sexual conduct is explicitly or implicitly connected to employment decisions, such as promotion, recruitment, or continued employment.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanction.**

E. Domestic Violence

a. Child Abuse

Family violence against children has long been neglected by international and national law. This was due to many reasons, including societal norms that justified violence against children thus failing to view them as rights holders. Moreover, it was assumed that parents always acted in the child's best interests and the family's private sphere was heavily



emphasized. The Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 recognized children's dignity and their right to be protected from violence in the family. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is revolutionary as the first and only regional binding treaty on domestic violence. The latter is defined as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

There are substantial differences between violence occurring in domestic settings and other environments. Family violence against children and violence against women within the household are two phenomena that directly intersect. The Istanbul Convention has brought significant changes in legislation and policies related to tackling domestic violence by recognizing violence against women and girls as a distinctly gendered phenomenon—targeted at women to control them or their sexuality. In the case of domestic violence, women are disproportionately affected to a much larger extent than men. Because of their disadvantaged position in society, women also have fewer resources and means to escape such violence and get the support they need. While most victims of domestic violence are women, many of the women have children. In some cases, violence is directed at both women and children; in other cases, violence is directed at both women and children; in other cases, children are not targeted directly but witness violence against their mothers or family members.

b. Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship.

Intimate partner refers to both current and former spouses and dating partners. IPV can vary

in how often it happens and how severe it is, ranging from one episode of violence to chronic and severe episodes over multiple years.

IPV can include any of the following types of behavior:

-Physical violence: is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by using physical force. It may include actions such as hitting, kicking, pushing, punching, choking, or using physical objects or weapons to cause injury. Physical violence can occur as a single incident or as part of a repeated pattern of abuse and may result in physical injuries, fear, psychological harm, or threats to a person's safety and well-being;

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of committing acts of physical violence against another person is criminalised.**

-Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim. It may involve behaviours such as repeatedly following or monitoring a person, making unwanted phone calls or messages, appearing unexpectedly at their home, workplace, or other places they regularly visit, or monitoring their activities online. Stalking can seriously interfere with a person's sense of security, privacy, and freedom, and may cause psychological distress and fear for their safety;

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety, is criminalised.**

-Psychological aggression is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm a partner mentally or emotionally or to exert control over a partner. It may include behaviours such as insults, humiliation, threats, intimidation, constant criticism, manipulation, or controlling a partner's activities and relationships. Psychological aggression can undermine a person's self-esteem, emotional well-being, and sense of autonomy, and may occur as an isolated incident or as part of a continuing pattern of abusive behaviour.

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of seriously impairing a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats is criminalised.**

Forced abortion and forced sterilisation: Forced abortion and forced sterilisation refer to acts that interfere with a person's reproductive autonomy by preventing them from freely making decisions concerning reproduction. Forced abortion occurs when a person is compelled to terminate a pregnancy without their free and informed consent. Forced sterilisation, on the other hand, involves intentionally performing a procedure that prevents a person from reproducing without their prior and informed consent. Both practices constitute serious violations of bodily integrity, reproductive autonomy, dignity, and fundamental human rights. They may involve physical force, threats, coercion, deception, or other forms of pressure that prevent a person from making a voluntary decision concerning their reproductive health;

- 1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:**

- a. performing an abortion on a woman without her prior and informed consent;**
- b. performing surgery which has the purpose or effect of terminating a woman's capacity to naturally reproduce without her prior and informed consent or understanding of the procedure.**

Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner. IPV occurs in all settings and among all socioeconomic, religious and cultural groups. The overwhelming global burden of IPV is borne by women. Although women can be violent in relationships with men, often in self-defence and violence sometimes occurs in same-sex partnerships, the most common perpetrators of violence against women are male intimate partners or ex-partners. By contrast, men are far more likely to experience violent acts by strangers or acquaintances than by someone close to them.

In their lifetimes, nearly 1 in 3 women and about 1 in 8 men experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence or stalking and at least one related impact. Some impacts included physical injury, missing work or school, safety concerns, medical care needs and filing a police report.

Intimate partner violence can result in injuries and even death. Data from the National Violent Death Reporting System suggests that about 1 in 5 homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner. The reports also found that over half of female homicide victims are killed by a current or former male intimate partner. Many other negative health outcomes are associated with intimate partner violence. These include conditions affecting the heart, muscles and bones, digestive, reproductive and nervous systems, many of which are chronic

c. Effects and Impacts

Many studies have found an association between IPV against women and negative social and health consequences for children, ‘including anxiety, depression, poor school performance and negative health outcomes. A large body of evidence indicates exposure to IPV against the mother is one of the most common factors associated with male perpetration and female experience of IPV later in life. A number of studies have also found an association between IPV and child abuse within the same household.

Studies from some low-income countries, including Nicaragua and Bangladesh, have found that children whose mothers were abused are less likely to be immunized, have higher rates of diarrhoeal disease and are at greater risk of dying before the age of five. Harm experienced in childhood can have significant and lasting effects and children can respond differently to what has occurred.

Children may experience a range of emotional psychological and physical problems as a result of being harmed, including:

-low self-esteem

-increased fear, guilt and self-blame

-distrust of adults or difficulty forming relationships with others

-distrupted attachments with those who are meant to keep them safe

-mental health disorders such as anxiety, attachment, post-traumatic stress and depression disorders

-learning disorders, ‘including poor language and cognitive development

- development delay, eating disorders and physical ailments**
- permanent physical injuries or death**
- violent, aggressive or criminal behaviour or other behavioural problems**
- drug and alcohol abuse and high-risk sexual behaviour**

It should be noted that for some children who have been abused, the impacts will not be evident in their behaviour.

Children who have experienced abuse and neglect are therefore at increased risk for a number of problematic, developmental, health and mental health outcomes, including learning problems, problems relating to peers, internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety, externalizing symptoms such as aggression and posttraumatic stress disorder. As adults, these children continue to show increased risk for psychiatric disorders, substance use, serious medical illnesses and lower economic productivity.

Pregnancy is a particularly high-risk period for IPV exposure. Potential harms to the pregnant person and growing fetus include physical trauma and dysregulation of the maternal hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. Studies have shown that HPA axis dysregulation throughout pregnancy may be harmful for both maternal mental health and fetal development. More specifically, cortisol, which regulates the HPA axis, may be released, leading to alterations of the uterine environment. This may lead to preterm birth and low birth weight, as well as overall poorer health and development of fetuses and infants.

Children's experience with violence ranged from shouting between parents, witnessing items being thrown and acts of physical abuse toward a caregiver and themselves, to witnessing a parent being killed by another parent. They also described varied responses to IPV, including shying away, such as turning up the music or wearing headphones to mask the violence,

interrupting such as intervening to protect the abused parent, watching or being obstructed from participating. Older siblings often distracted younger siblings from the violence or demonstrated protective behaviours toward siblings, caregivers are associated with long-term impacts on a child's emotional and behavioral health. For example, children are more likely to have internalizing behaviours including anxiety, depression, withdrawal and somatic complaints.

a. The Ripple Effect

The ripple effect is an analogy of how a single event or action can initiate a chain of consequences that expand outward, influencing various systems or stakeholders.

Without early intervention its dynamics illustrate how initial disruption can escalate, leading to broader impacts on processes, resources and relationships. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial for effectively managing and mitigating risks associated with such cascading effects. By identifying early warning signs and building resilient frameworks, organization can proactively intercept these expanding waves of disruption, ultimately protecting long-term stability and stakeholder well-being

I. Family Members

When a teen or adult experiences mental health challenges, the emotional strain often touches every household member. Parents may feel overwhelmed or uncertain, siblings may struggle to understand, and relationships may grow tense. Untreated mental health concerns can contribute to communication breakdowns, school absenteeism, and even economic strain due to time off work or added care needs. Addressing these ripple effects early through open dialogue, professional counseling and strong community resources is crucial for easing household pressure, restoring

balance and helping the entire family heal together. By cultivating an environment of patience, mutual empathy and shared coping strategies, families can transform shared hardships into an opportunity for deeper connection and long-term resilience

II. Elderly and Dependent Relatives

As dependency increases, elderly individuals often grapple with the emotional weight of losing their independence. Moving from a position of authority and self-sufficiency to one requiring assistance with Activities of Daily Living like bathing, feeding and dressing can induce feelings of helplessness, frustration and a diminished sense of self-worth. This transition often triggers anxiety about being a burden and a deep grief for lost autonomy, which can lead to withdrawal and depression. For caregivers and professionals, recognizing these psychological hurdles is vital to restoring dignity by encouraging personal choice and fostering a compassionate support system. By validating their lived experiences and prioritizing person-centered care, we can help bridge the gap between physical vulnerability and emotional resilience, ensuring they feel valued and heard throughout their later years.

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

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) — Gender-based violence and data collection.

VI. Resolution should cover

- Prevention of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, forced marriage, and other forms of gender-based violence.
- Protection and support services for survivors, including shelters, hotlines, healthcare, legal assistance, and psychological support.
- Effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation.
- Legal and institutional measures to prevent impunity and improve responses to gender-based violence.
- Training for law enforcement, healthcare workers, judges, prosecutors, and other relevant professionals.
- Public awareness and education campaigns addressing gender stereotypes, consent, healthy relationships, and prevention of violence.
- International and regional cooperation between governments, UN bodies, NGOs, and civil-society organizations.
- Adequate funding and resources for prevention, survivor services, and implementation of relevant policies.
- Data collection and research on violence to help governments identify trends and improve policies.
- The importance of the GREVIO on protecting and preventing violence.
- Preventing discrimination and gender-based crimes.
- Protection of survivors from further harm, including measures against retaliation and secondary victimization.

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