

Zonta International and the Istanbul Convention

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

ZI Council of Europe Committee

Updated September 2024



What is the Istanbul Convention?

The Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.

Aims at zero tolerance and is a major step forward in making Europe and beyond safer.

**SAFE
FROM FEAR
SAFE
FROM
VIOLENCE**

Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating
violence against women
and domestic violence CETS No. 210



Groundbreaking features

Recognizes violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination.

First international treaty to contain a definition of *domestic violence* and of *gender*.



2024 – Celebrating 10th Anniversary since entry into force

Facts and Data

- **Signed** on 11 May 2011 in Turkey by 13 Council of Europe member states.
- **Came into force on 1 August 2014.**
- **As of September 2024:** signed by 45 of the 46 Council of Europe member states, ratified by 39 member states. Turkey announced withdrawal in March 2021, denunciation entered into force in July 2021
- **Ratified by the EU: 28 June 2023/ entry into force 1 October 2023!**
- **Not yet ratified:** Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Rep., Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia.
- Can be acceded by any country in the world.
- **Accessions:** Kazakhstan, Tunisia, Israel
- **Applies at all times** – in times of freedom as in times of crisis.



Can non-European countries join?

Yes!

The Convention is open to accession by any country in the world.

Provided that the country has been formally invited to accede by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The procedure for accession

- It is customary for the non-member state to request accession in a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the CoE.
- Prior to acceding, the state has to take the necessary measures to ensure that **its domestic law allows the Convention to be implemented.**
- The Committee of Ministers will ask for contributions to finance the follow-up mechanism.



What does the Istanbul Convention criminalize?

Domestic
violence

Stalking

Sexual
violence,
including rape

Sexual
harassment

Forced
marriage

Female genital
mutilation

Forced abortion
or forced
sterilization

Psychological
harm

Cyber
violence



Who is covered by the Convention?

All women and girls

- From any background
- Regardless of age, race, religion, social origin, migrant status or sexual orientation

Special groups

- Women and girls at greater risk of violence
- States need to ensure their specific needs are taken into account



Statistics on violence against women

Worldwide, intimate partner violence is the most common type of violence against women, affecting 30% of women.

An estimated 200 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation.

73% of women are abused online, in Europe 9 million women have experienced a serious form of cyber violence since the age of 15.

Worldwide, almost 650 million women alive were married before the age of 18. Some 250 million were married before 15. Every year, at least 12 million girls are married before the age of 18.

Between 40%-50% of women in EU countries experience unwanted sexual advancements, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment in their workplace.



The Core Values of the Convention

The Istanbul Convention

- Is based on recognizing violence against women as a human rights violation, based on her gender.
- Requires states to implement gender equality policies and to empower women.
- To make sure they can rebuild their own lives.

By accepting the Convention

- Governments are obliged to **change** their laws to correspond the obligations of the Convention.
- To introduce practical measures.
- To allocate sufficient resources and create a zero tolerance zone for violence.
- Preventing and combating such violence is no longer a matter of goodwill but a legally binding obligation.

For the first time in history

- The Convention makes it clear that violence against women can no longer be considered a private matter.
- States have an obligation to prevent violence, protect victims and punish the perpetrators.



Changing attitudes

Seeks to change the hearts and minds of individuals

Calls on all members of society, particularly men and boys, to change their attitudes.

Renews call for greater equality between women and men.

Recognizes violence against women is deeply rooted in inequality in society.

Recognizes violence against women is perpetuated by a culture of intolerance and denial.



Cornerstones of the Convention



1. Preventing violence

2. Protecting victims

3. Prosecuting perpetrators

4. Integrated Policies

Prevention involves

Changing attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes

Training professionals working with victims

Raising awareness

Providing teaching material on equality at all levels of education

Cooperation with NGOs and reaching out to the public



Protection includes

Ensuring that the needs and safety of victims are placed at the heart of all measures.

Setting up specialized support services.

Setting up shelters.



Prosecution ensures

Violence against women is criminalized and punished.

Excuses on the grounds of culture, custom, religion or so-called “honour” are unacceptable.

Victims have access to special protection measures.

Law enforcement agencies respond immediately.



Integrated policies

- Ensure that all of the aforementioned measures form part of a comprehensive and coordinated set of policies and offer a holistic response to violence against women and domestic violence.



The Istanbul Convention – Concrete Tool for Advocacy

The holistic approach: The 4 Ps

Prevention: Guidelines to **tackle the root problems**: stereotypes; inequality and discrimination in society, education, profession. Change attitudes, involve men and boys.

Awareness raising campaign of VAW and the traumatic effects; education material about gender equality, training material for personnel working with victims e.g. in justice and at the police, cooperation with the media, support NGOs.

Protection: **Specialized service** for medical, psychological and legal counseling, shelters in sufficient numbers, 24 h- Hotline; efficient reporting system, emergency barring orders, access to justice. Support in finding employment and in financial issues.

Prosecution: Ensure that VAW is **criminalized and appropriately punished**, domestic violence is not a “private matter,” no excuses on the grounds of culture, custom, religion or so-called „honor“, immediate response of law enforcement agencies.

Policies/Integrated Policies: **Coordinated approach**, obligation of the government to implement the measures of the three P's, to **adjust national law** to the requirements of the Convention, to install effectively working, sufficiently funded institutions. Federal coordination facility. Monitoring.



The Istanbul Convention – A role model



The Istanbul Convention is a “**role model**” for:

- The comprehensive approach of the 4 P's
- The most far reaching international treaty to combat VAW
- The first international treaty to contain a definition of „domestic violence“
- The first international treaty to define „gender-based“ violence
- Codifying established standards and jurisprudence

Challenges to the Istanbul Convention

A change in the mindset

- Has caused a pushback of gender equality and an increase in gender inequalities and discrimination – opening up an “anti-gender movement.”
- Attacks the Convention for endangering traditional family structures and gender roles – fighting the so called “gender ideology.”
- Makes governments argue they had been wrong to endorse the Convention in the past.

The COVID-19 crisis

- Has caused a “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence.
- Is projected to drive 31 million new cases of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.
- Causes a one-third reduction in progress toward ending gender-based violence by 2030.
- Will result in an additional 10 million girls at risk of child marriages.
- An estimated 2 million additional cases of FGM.



Challenges to the Istanbul Convention – the term “gender”

What the IC says:

- Prevent all forms of violence, prosecute perpetrators.
- Promote equality between women and men, the state must protect and support those who experience violence and must fight stereotypes.
- *Gender* is used to emphasize violence toward women because they are women.
- Police and justice system professionals should be trained on victims' rights and how to prevent further harm.

What the IC does not say:

- No threat to the concept of family.
- Traditions and values are not under threat, unless they justify acts of violence.
- A specific education model is not imposed for fighting stereotypes.
- *Gender* does not replace the terms *women* and *men*. A “third gender” is not introduced.
- No recognition of same-sex marriages.
- Existing migration and asylum policies are not put in question, states are asked to take into account specific needs of migrant and asylum seeking women.



The Monitoring Mechanism - a chance for civil society

CoE International Instruments	Monitoring Mechanisms
CoE Istanbul Convention	The Group of Experts GREVIO (+ civil society shadow report) + Committee of the Parties (political body)
CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention	The Group of Experts GRETA (+ civil society shadow report) + Committee of the Parties (political body)



GREVIO: Addressing gender-based cyber violence

- 1 in 2 young women 15-25 year-old abused online
- 45% of domestic violence victims abused online
- GREVIO General Recommendation No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women (2021)
- Gender-based cyber violence ↔ gender-based violence
- Presidency of the EDVAW-Platform (2022-2023)



The EDVAW-Platform: Joint venture combatting discrimination & violence against women

What is the EDVAW-Platform ?

A platform for thematic and strategic collaboration between independent UN and regional expert groups (e.g. GREVIO) on violence and discrimination against women

- Improving the implementation of existing policy framework
- Creating synergies, amplifying the recommendations of the different mechanisms

What does the EDVAW-Platform do?

- Hosting and engaging in consultations, information and discussions of common global relevance and thematic areas of priority with the participation of civil society and other stakeholders
- Developing joint positions, joint statements
- Enhancing information sharing, intensifying outreach through communication and materials



What can Zontians do with the Istanbul Convention as advocacy tool?

First in the process to push their respective states to access the Convention and **ratify** it.

Later on in the monitoring of the **implementation** of the Convention.

The group of experts in charge of the monitoring process (GREVIO) may receive info from NGOs (as a complement to the info provided by state/government itself).

ZI represents with its membership civil society in 62 countries. With its actions Zonta clubs around the world can raise awareness of the multiple forms of violence against women and domestic violence.

SAFE FROM FEAR

SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

STAND UP AND SPEAK OUT!



Why is the Istanbul Convention important to Zonta International?

The Convention is open to accession by any country in the world!

Zonta International strives to promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls and to reduce violence against women.

Whether in Europe or anywhere else in the world, Zontians can use the Istanbul Convention as a tool for advocacy.

The Istanbul Convention will give more strength to the **Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women** campaign.



What can Zontians do?

In Your Country

- Find out about the situation in your own country.
- Is your country a Member State of the Council of Europe?
- If yes, when did it sign the Istanbul Convention? Has it ratified yet?
- If no, get informed about the laws against violence and find out what type of action you could set up.
- Read more info in the “Istanbul Convention” text document published on the ZI website.

Within Zonta

- Raise awareness among Zonta clubs and convince them about the importance of supporting the Istanbul Convention.
- Decide what type of advocacy project you could set up. A conference? A round table?
- Write a letter to ask for a meeting with parliamentarians in your country. Discuss in social media.
- Send an article to important newspapers.
- Talk with like-minded organizations and decide on a joint action.





The Istanbul Convention is an essential tool for the Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women campaign and for Zonta advocacy!

A milestone reached – The EU acceded to the IC !

- 13 June 2917: Signing of the Convention
- 6 Oct. 2021: The ECJ gave green light that the EU can implement the IC without waiting for all 27 members to ratify the treaty.
- **28 June 2023: Ratification of the Convention**
- Five EU-countries have not yet ratified the IC: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia.
- **8 March 2022: Directive of the European Parliament on combating violence against women and domestic violence**



Zonta International supports ratification of the Istanbul Convention ZI Statements Sept. 2020 and April 2021

<https://www.zonta.org/Web/About/Changing the World for Women/COE Reports/A renewed call for ratification of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention.aspx>

<https://www.zonta.org/images/docs/NewsEvents/Statements/Zonta-International-reaffirms-support-for-The-Istanbul-Convention.pdf>



Equality between women and men
can only be achieved if women
do not experience gender-based violence
and can live to their full potential.



APPENDIX: Sources and References

- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/about-monitoring1>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/edvaw-platform>
- For more information on the Council of Europe: Self educating PPTs with notes and other documents on the ZI CoE Website:
https://www.zonta.org/Web/My_Zonta/Tools/Council%20of%20Europe%20Tools



Leaflet available in 23 languages



<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/leaflets1>



Further information and questions

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