

Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs

Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking Division



The Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence

Introduction

Violence against women, including domestic violence, is one of the most serious forms of gender-based violations of human rights. It deprives women of their ability to enjoy fundamental freedoms. In exposing women, by virtue of their sex, to physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse in the family or domestic unit, violence against women represents a

serious obstacle to equality between women and men.

Despite positive and significant achievements in policies and practices, violence against women in its various forms is still widespread at all levels of society in all Council of Europe member states.

An overview of figures for prevalence of violence against women suggests that one-fifth to one-quarter of

all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives, and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force. Secondary data analysis supports an estimate that about 12% to 15% of all women have been in a relationship of domestic abuse after the age of 16. Many more continue to suffer physical and sexual violence from former partners even after the break-up.

Background to the Campaign

One of the primary concerns of the Council of Europe is to safeguard and to protect human rights. Violence against women, including domestic violence, undermines the core values which the Council of Europe is based on. The Council of Europe, in particular its Steering Committee for the Equality between Women and Men (CDEG), has undertaken a series of initiatives to promote the protection of women against violence. In 1993, the 3rd European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men was devoted to *Strategies for the elimination of violence against women in society: the media and other means*.

In 1997, when implementing the recommendations of the 3rd European Ministerial Conference, an *Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women*, aimed at providing a policy framework for national administrations, was developed. This Action Plan was followed up in April 2002 by the adoption of Council of Europe *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence*. This legal instrument

was the first international instrument to propose a global strategy to prevent violence and to protect victims, covering all forms of gender-based violence.

The Recommendation calls on governments to inform the Council of Europe on the follow-up given at national level. To this end, a monitoring framework to evaluate progress in its implementation was drawn up and sent to member states in 2005. Its outcome is contained in *Combating violence against women - Stocktaking study on measures and action taken in Council of Europe member States* published in spring 2006.

Reaffirming their commitment to the eradication of violence against women, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states adopted at their Third Summit (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) an Action Plan, which includes two concrete measures to combat violence against women, including domestic violence:

- setting up a *Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* to evaluate

progress at national level and establish instruments for quantifying developments at European level with a view to drawing up proposals for action

- implementing a *Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* in close co-operation with other European and national actors, including NGOs.

As a follow-up to this Action Plan, the Task Force, composed of eight international experts in the field of preventing and combating violence against women, was established in early 2006. Apart from evaluating progress at national level and establishing instruments for quantifying developments, it also developed a blueprint for the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence*. The Blueprint was approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 June 2006 and serves as a roadmap for the implementation of the Campaign

Definition of violence

In accordance with the definition contained in the appendix to Recommendation Rec(2002)5, the term “violence against women” is to be understood as any act of gender-based violence, which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to

women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. This includes:

“violence occurring in the family or domestic unit”, including, *inter alia*, physical and mental aggression, emotional and psychological abuse,

rape and sexual abuse, incest, rape between spouses, regular or occasional partners and cohabitants, crimes committed in the name of honour, female genital and sexual mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, such as forced marriages.

Aims

Recognising the different levels of progress in combating violence against women in the 46 member states of the Council of Europe, the Campaign aims at:

- Raising awareness that violence against women is a human rights

violation and encouraging every citizen to challenge it

- Urging member states to demonstrate political will by providing adequate resources to deliver concrete results in eradicating violence against women

- Promoting the implementation of effective measures for preventing and combating violence against women, through legislation and national action plans for the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2002)5 and to regularly monitor the progress achieved.

Objectives

The Campaign Blueprint reiterates four thematic areas of the Recommendation as objectives:

- legal and policy measures
- support and protection for victims

- data collection
- awareness raising

Member states are urged to make significant progress in these areas during the course of the Campaign. To this end, they are invited to assess their

national approach to preventing and combating domestic violence and identify any existing gaps, which should then be filled by appropriate measures.

Messages

The Campaign aims at spreading the following four messages:

- Combating domestic violence calls for joint public action

- Domestic violence is a human rights violation
- Domestic violence seriously injures women and damages the whole of society, including future generations

- Domestic violence calls for men’s active participation to combat violence against women.

Implementation

The Campaign consists of three dimensions: intergovernmental, parliamentary and local and regional. It is carried out by the Council of Europe as well as its member states, in partnership with intergovernmental organisations and NGOs involved in the protection of women against violence.

Council of Europe

The following activities are being carried out by different bodies of the Council of Europe:

- a series of regional information and awareness raising seminars
- meetings of the national focal points
- activities to involve national parliaments under the heading of “Parliaments united in combating violence against women”
- activities to involve the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Member States

Member states are requested to carry out the following activities:

- appoint a high-level official (highest political official within the government in charge of gender equality issues) and national focal point (medium level civil servant) for the purpose of the Council of Europe Campaign and national campaigns
- launch national campaigns in parallel or as a follow-up to the Council of Europe Campaign to assess the national situation and to define concrete objectives based on the Campaign Blueprint
- Report on Campaign activities and progress to the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence

International Intergovernmental Organisations

- Identify areas of co-operation to interlink activities and create synergy effects

NGOs

- The Council of Europe will closely co-operate with NGOs active in preventing and combating violence against women.

More information on the different activities, particularly summaries and proceedings of conferences and seminars, can be found at www.coe.int/stopviolence/intergov.

Launch and duration

The Campaign was launched during a high-level conference held in Madrid on

27 November 2006 and will end in June 2008.

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