

SAFE FROM FEAR

SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

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

What is the purpose of the convention?

- The new Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. It aims at zero tolerance for such violence and is a major step forward in making Europe and beyond a safer place.
- Preventing violence, protecting its victims and prosecuting the perpetrators are the cornerstones of the convention. It also seeks to change the hearts and minds of individuals by calling on all members of society, in particular men and boys, to change attitudes. In essence, it is a renewed call for greater equality between women and men, because violence against women is deeply rooted in the inequality between women and men in society and is perpetuated by a culture of tolerance and denial.

Groundbreaking features of the convention

- It recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. This means that states are held responsible if they do not respond adequately to such violence.

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- ensure that victims have access to special protection measures during investigation and judicial proceedings;
- ensure that law enforcement agencies respond immediately to calls for assistance and manage dangerous situations adequately.

Monitoring

- set up a specific monitoring mechanism to ensure the implementation of the convention. A group of experts will ensure states' compliance with the convention to guarantee its long-term effectiveness.

Who is covered by the convention?

- ∴ The convention covers women and girls, from any background, regardless of their age, race, religion, social origin, migrant status or sexual orientation, to name but a few. The convention recognises that there are groups of women and girls that are often at greater risk of experiencing violence, and states need to ensure that their specific needs are taken into account. States are also encouraged to apply the convention to other victims of domestic violence such as men, children and the elderly.

Which offences are covered?

- ∴ The convention establishes a number of important criminal offences. It ensures that the following behaviours are subject to criminal or other legal sanction:
 - physical violence;
 - psychological violence;
 - stalking;
 - sexual violence, including rape;
 - sexual harassment;
 - forced marriage;
 - female genital mutilation;
 - forced abortion and forced sterilisation.

- ∴ This sends a clear message that violence against women and domestic violence are not private matters. On the contrary: to emphasise the particularly traumatising effect of crimes within the family, a heavier sentence can be imposed on the perpetrator when the victim is a spouse, partner or a member of the family.

About the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has 47 member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals, including women and girls. Since the 1990s, the Council of Europe has actively promoted the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence, namely by adopting Recommendation (2002)5 on the protection of women against violence and by running a Europe-wide campaign on violence against women, including domestic violence in 2006-2008.

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