



COVID-19 AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A HOLISTIC RESPONSE BASED ON THE STANDARDS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ISTANBUL CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DATE AND TIME: 5 May 2020, from 15.30 to 16.30 (CEST)

Welcome Remarks:

- ▶ **Wojciech Sawicki**, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Panellists:

- ▶ **Zita Gurmai**, PACE Rapporteur on the Istanbul Convention
- ▶ **Nina Nordström**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Finland to the Council of Europe, Chair of the Committee of Parties to the Istanbul Convention
- ▶ **Julien Pellaux**, Strategic Planning and Operations Adviser, UN Women
- ▶ **Arba Kokalari**, European Parliament Co-Rapporteur on the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention
- ▶ **Sylwia Spurek**, European Parliament Co-Rapporteur on the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention
- ▶ **Nicholas Spetsidis**, Project Coordinator for DIS.CO. Greece
- ▶ **Hillary Margolis**, Senior Researcher, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

Moderator:

- ▶ **Marja Ruotanen**, Director of Committees, PACE





Lockdown and confinement measures designed to contain the spread of the corona virus, have led to an increase in violence against women, for whom it means spending more time with abusive partners and, sometimes, risking their lives.

The situation is further aggravated by limited access to preventive and protection measures and services such as shelters and emergency phone lines which either have closed as a result of confinement or were not enough to start with.

It is imperative that national authorities take adequate measures to prevent violence, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators, in line with the principles and standards of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (**Istanbul Convention**) and integrate such measures directly into all broader steps taken to fight against the current pandemic. The Istanbul Convention provides practical guidance that is fully applicable to the current situation; and the **Handbook for Parliamentarians** launched by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is a unique tool for parliamentarians at the national level to identify priority action to be taken.

Furthermore, the **declaration by the Committee of the Parties** to the Istanbul Convention, states the relevance of the principles and requirements of the Istanbul Convention in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies and provides clear guidance for governmental action under the current exceptional circumstances.

The conversation will raise awareness about the standards of the Istanbul Convention to tackle violence against women and ensure access to services, the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in advocating for its implementation including in times of crisis, as well as allow to share experience and to identify promising practice and to highlight the importance of international cooperation and coordination.