

Parliamentary Network

“Women Free from Violence”

NEWSLETTER – January 2014



In January 2014, Tina Ackeftoft from Sweden concludes her mandate as Chair of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. During the last two years, Tina has strongly supported the Network and participated in many events to raise awareness on violence against women and promote the Istanbul Convention. This is an extract of the speech that she delivered in Bucharest on 25 November 2013.

The last 25 November without the Istanbul Convention

Today it is a day for the commemoration of the millions of women and girls who have died at the hands of their husbands, fathers, relatives, friends, neighbours and unknown men.

It is unacceptable that this violence is sometimes justified as a private matter, a rapture of passion, the entitlement to a woman's body, a marital right, a matter of honour, a cultural or religious practice, a weapon of war.

Violence against women is a human rights violation. Violence against women is a hideous crime.

Today, it is a day to commemorate millions of women who suffer and die at the hands of people who do not recognise them as human beings of equal worth and dignity.

Today, it is the day to remind us that this is not only a problem concerning the victims and the perpetrators. This is a problem for the whole of society. This is a problem for us, officials with government responsibilities and members of parliaments. Not only because we can all be affected, like anybody else around us. But especially because this is a fundamental problem for States which like to define themselves as democratic and abiding by human rights values.

If we really believe in democracy and human rights, we cannot close our eyes when violence is committed on such a large scale on the account of someone's gender. We cannot condone violence. We cannot allow impunity. We cannot leave victims alone. If we close our eyes, we, women and men with political responsibilities, are accomplices.

Today, it is a day to discuss, in all openness and transparency, what we can do to eliminate violence against women in our respective countries. Today it is a day to learn more about the Istanbul Convention, its added value, and what difference it will really make for thousands of women and other victims of domestic violence. Today, it is the day to pull together our energies to push for the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention, without any further delay. Let this be the last 25 November without the Istanbul Convention.



→ Parliamentarians mark the International Day to End Violence Against Women and the 16 days of activism

Regional Conference on violence against women – Bucharest, 25 November 2013

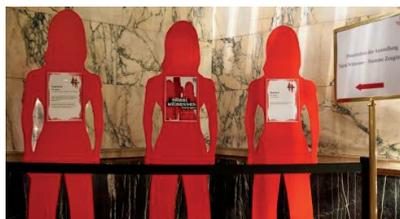
“No society can be called civilised, normal and healthy until violence against women has been eradicated” (Victor Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania)



“Violence does not stop at the borders of a country and I do believe in a concerted response to violence against women” said **Ana Birchall**, Network member for Romania, at the Regional Conference on violence against women and the Istanbul Convention organised by the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence and the Romanian Parliament. Ana Birchall encouraged parliamentarians from Romania, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, who had gathered for this occasion, to cooperate and be pro-active in combating violence against women. The Regional Conference was organised thanks to a voluntary contribution from the German government.

Exhibition “Silent Witnesses” – Vienna, December 2013

As part of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and at the initiative of Network member for Austria, **Gisela Wurm**, the Austrian Parliament hosted the exhibition “Silent Witnesses” staging life-size figures representing women murdered by their partners.



Cyprus taking steps towards signature of the Istanbul Convention – Nicosia, 25 November 2013



Athina Kyriakidou, Network member for Cyprus, convened an extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women of the House of Representatives, with a view to encouraging the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention. She stressed that “there is a pressing need to adopt this landmark Convention, which addresses

all forms of violence against women through specific measures, aimed at the protection of victims and the prevention of this appalling phenomenon that constitutes a fundamental human rights violation". Ionas Nicolaou, Minister of Justice and Public Order, added that **"the elimination of violence against women constitutes a priority for the Cyprus Government"**.

Series of events – Brussels, 25 November 2013

Fatiha Saïdi, Network member for Belgium, launched a series of events in Brussels such as the projection of the movie "Louise Michel la Rebelle" and providing information and prevention talks, including a role play on verbal abuse. A delegation of women led by Ms Saïdi also personally delivered a white ribbon to the Minister-President of the Brussels region and called for harmonisation and cooperation between the various public services to work together to prevent and combat violence against women.

Reading of Ferite a Morte - Rome and New York, 25 November 2013

Laura Boldrini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, hosted the reading of Wounded to Death (Ferite a Morte) by the writer Serena Dandini, which is a collection of monologues about women murdered by their partners. A press conference and a performance of the play also took place at the UN Women Headquarters to commemorate the International Day to End Violence against Women.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2013

Carmen Quintanilla Barba, Network member from Spain, called for more attention to be given to the situation of women and girls with disabilities, since they are exposed to higher risks of violence, including domestic violence, bodily harm, neglect, ill-treatment and exploitation. This matter will be at core of a report on equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities, which the Spanish parliamentarian is preparing in the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

→ Network meeting

"Violence against women: does the rehabilitation of perpetrators work?" – Strasbourg, 2 October 2013

"Thanks to my wife who reported me to the police, the violence stopped" testified Frédéric Matwies about his experience as a former perpetrator of violence against his wife.

The rehabilitation of perpetrators was the focus of the Network meeting on 2 October 2013 in Strasbourg, with the participation of Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of

Europe, Frédéric Matwies, author of the book “There was a monster in me”, Thangam Debonnaire, Research Manager of Respect (UK) and Rosa Logar, co-founder of Women against violence Europe (WAVE).



Thangam Debonnaire presented rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators run by her NGO. “Most men are still violence-free four years after the end of the programme”, she highlighted. Rosa Logar stressed that rehabilitation could work if there was a system in place to provide assistance to the victims. Athina Kyriakidou, Network member called on Assembly members to exercise their

power to minimise budget cuts for support programmes for victims and rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators.

“Violence against women is deeply rooted in the inequality between women and men and it is perpetuated by a culture of tolerance and denial. Preventive measures and working with perpetrators of violence should be put in a wider context and be considered as part of efforts to change mentalities and attitudes, abolish gender hierarchies and discrimination and strive for greater equality between women and men” (Gabiella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe)

Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention lays down the obligation for the authorities to support preventive interventions with perpetrators and treatment programmes designed to help perpetrators change their attitudes and behaviour in order not to re-offend. Article 16 addresses programmes targeting domestic violence perpetrators as well as programmes designed for sex offenders.

→ Network meetings to come

If you wish to participate, contact us at womenfreefromviolence@coe.int

“Sexual exploitation of girls” – Strasbourg, 29 January 2014

(in co-operation with the Parliamentary Network of the One in Five campaign on sexual violence against children)

“Breaking the vicious circle between violence against women and gender inequality” - Vienna, 4 March 2014

“Disability and domestic violence” - Strasbourg , April 2014

→ Istanbul Convention – Update

New ratifications



7 November 2013: Bosnia and Herzegovina

14 November 2013: Austria (photo)

21 November 2013: Serbia

Two more ratifications are necessary for the Istanbul Convention to enter into force!

New signatures

On 11 October 2013: Denmark

Conferences on the Istanbul Convention - Belgrade - 10 and 11 November 2013



At the initiative of the Serbian parliament, a Conference on the Istanbul Convention “Coordinated efforts - Toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence” took place on 10 November 2013. **Mendes Bota**, General Rapporteur on violence against women and Political Coordinator of the Network, stressed that **“violence against women is the result of gender inequality; in turn, unequal gender relations generate more violence against women and impunity for perpetrators. We must break this vicious circle”**.

Mr Mendes Bota also participated in the international conference “How women’s movements influenced state policies - The Participation of Women’s NGOs in the process of creation of the Istanbul Convention and its promotion” on 11 November 2013. He underlined the important role that the Istanbul Convention can play to enhance the role of NGOs in preventing and combating all forms of violence.

Translations of the handbook

Since its launch in Tirana in September 2012, the Handbook has been translated into 15 languages, including Romanian. The handbooks are available on the Network website: www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence





First anniversary of the Network's Facebook page

Since its creation a year ago, the Network's Facebook page has received 800 likes. The page is a valuable tool for sharing information on the activities of the Network, its members, and violence against women in Europe. So we invite you all to "like" it.

Call for funds

I wish to thank the parliaments that have contributed to the funding of the activities of the Parliamentary Network "Women Free from Violence". This is a tangible sign of their determination to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

These voluntary contributions have enabled us to produce a handbook for parliamentarians on the Istanbul Convention, available in 15 different languages, together with visibility material (posters, leaflets, newsletters); and to organise a series of hearings, seminars and conferences to promote the Istanbul Convention.

The Network needs your support to speed up the entry into force of the convention and to ensure that it is effectively implemented. If you wish to support us with a voluntary contribution, please contact us.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and support.

Mendes Bota

Political Co-ordinator of the Network,
General Rapporteur on violence against women



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