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

prepared by the Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including domestic violence (EG-TFV) and adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 June 2006

Outline of the Campaign

I. Introduction

Violence against women is the result of an imbalance of power between women and men, leading to serious discrimination against women, both within society and the family. Violence in the family or domestic unit occurs in every Council of Europe member state despite positive developments in law, policies and practices. Violence against women is a violation of human rights, the very nature of which deprives women of their ability to enjoy fundamental freedoms. It often leaves women vulnerable to further abuse and is a major obstacle to overcoming inequality between women and men in society. Violence against women is a detriment to peace, security and democracy in Europe.

States have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all their citizens. Therefore, states must ensure that they have taken all reasonable measures to prevent, investigate and punish all forms of violence against women, including in the family and domestic unit. Violence against women is a complex issue, particularly when it occurs within the home, which can be compounded by the response of authorities to whom women turn for help.

While the specific approaches of governments to violence against women will vary depending on particular country situations, all require a multifaceted response. This needs to address both the root causes of violence and its consequences, as well as challenge attitudes and behaviours and extend to legal, policy and practical measures.

A recent Stocktaking Study prepared by the Council of Europe¹ pointed out that not all member states provide adequate resources for victims of violence, collect national data on the number of cases of violence occurring in the family or domestic unit that come to the attention of the police and/or health services and track neither referral nor judicial outcomes in a systematic process. Thus, there is no baseline from which the effectiveness of legal and other measures for combating violence against women can be measured.

To this end, member states of the Council of Europe are urged to prioritise preventing and combating violence against women, including violence in the family or domestic unit and are encouraged to become actively involved in implementing this Council of Europe Campaign that calls for strong commitment at the national level.

¹ Stocktaking Study on the measures and actions taken in the Council of Europe member states to combat violence against women, 2006.

II. Definition

In accordance with the definition contained in the appendix to *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence*, 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.

This definition is used for the purpose of the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence*.

III. Main theme

Bearing in mind the Action Plan adopted during the Third Summit of the Council of Europe and Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers, the theme of the Campaign will be: *Prevent and combat violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit (domestic violence)*.

IV. Aims of the Campaign

The aims of the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* are:

- 1) To raise awareness across the Council of Europe member states that violence against women is a human rights violation and encourage every citizen to challenge it;
- 2) To urge states to demonstrate political will by providing adequate resources to deliver concrete results in ending violence against women;
- 3) To promote 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 of the Committee of Ministers and to regularly monitor the progress achieved;

V. Objectives

Protection of women against violence in the family or domestic unit should be placed at the highest political level in all Council of Europe member states, and should consequently be allocated the necessary financial resources. All member states should be committed to preventing this type of violence, to protect its victims and provide adequate services, legal redress and compensation as well as to prosecute, punish and provide treatment to the perpetrators. In addition, member states should raise awareness of this problem with all available means, in particular through the media and educational curricula.

Patriarchal culture is an important force in legitimising power inequalities between women and men. It is therefore essential that member states address discriminatory traditions and attitudes as well as gender stereotypes as root causes of violence against women.

Low income, unemployment and poverty are major risk factors for violence against women in the family or domestic unit. Therefore, states should take effective measures to promote economic independence of women.

Member states should commit themselves to elaborate and implement concrete and effective measures for preventing and combating violence against women as contained in Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 through legislation and national plans of action and, at the end of this Campaign, to report on progress achieved.

All measures contained in this Recommendation are equally important and should be fully implemented. Recognising the different stages of member states in implementing this Recommendation, member states are urged to make significant progress during the Campaign in the following areas:

a. Legal and policy measures

- review and amend, where necessary, national legislation in order to identify and fill gaps in the protection of women from all forms of violence occurring in the family or domestic unit, repeal laws that discriminate against women and criminalise any act of such violence against women including rape between spouses;
- establish effective legal protection, including protection orders, for all women victims of violence, and regularly monitor and evaluate its effective implementation;
- ensure that immigration laws and administrative procedures do not prevent women from leaving violent relationships due to fear of deportation, loss of legal status or revoked custody over the children;
- identify and put in place measures to increase the rate of reporting, prosecution and sanctions of perpetrators of violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit;
- provide victims with legal aid, psycho-social support and guarantee protection for witnesses;
- develop risk assessment and safety planning as standard procedure in crime prevention to prevent violence against women, and ensure special attention is given to high risk victims who face repeated incidents of violence.

b. Support and protection for victims

- provide the necessary resources for free 24 hour help lines staffed by adequately trained personnel and other emergency services for all women victims of violence;
- provide adequate support and advocacy services, that meet quality standards, to all victims of violence and empower women and ensure that services are accessible to all women, including socially excluded women and recent migrants, refugees, women from ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities;
- provide resources for an adequate number of safe shelters for women victims of violence who have to flee from violence (one place in a women's shelter per 7.500 inhabitants) as well as for women's advocacy services and crisis centres in all regions of the country and provide these services with the necessary human and financial resources;
- develop a coordinated well resourced multidisciplinary specialist sector to increase capacity building across core national and local agencies such as health, justice, social welfare and education, in order to provide women victims of violence with immediate, comprehensive and coordinated support;
- organise integrated training on the continuum of violence against women for professionals who deal with women victims of violence occurring in the family or domestic unit (e.g. police, medical professionals, judicial officials etc.);
- include the issue of violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and a public health issue in the education curricula of all studies and training for judicial and security personnel, health care professionals, social workers, teachers and others;
- encourage at all levels the work of NGOs involved in combating violence against women, and establish active cooperation with these NGOs, including appropriate logistic and financial support;
- provide financial support, housing, independent rights to residence as well as training and employment to women victims of violence to enable them to freely decide whether or not to leave their violent partner;
- encourage the establishment of nationally coordinated and locally based programmes for perpetrators. These programmes must have at their core the need for women's safety and be organised in close cooperation with services for women victims.

c. Data collection

- ensure the systematic collection of statistical data disaggregated by sex, by type of violence as well as by the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim in all fields. This collection should be carried out by national statistics offices or other bodies (e.g. national observatories on domestic violence);
- develop and use a methodology that allows for gender analysis and comparison with other member states of the Council of Europe;
- collect and disseminate good practices for preventing violence occurring in the family or domestic unit, protecting its victims and prosecuting the perpetrators at national, regional and local level.

d. Awareness raising

- publicly denounce violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit as a violation of women's human rights and commit to taking action against it at the highest political level;
- raise awareness on violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit using all available means, in particular through the media and educational curricula to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes, and discriminatory cultural norms and public opinion about its acceptability;
- encourage national and community leaders and opinion formers to publicly acknowledge the gravity of violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit, to condemn its perpetration and the use of custom, tradition or religion to excuse it;
- translate, if they have not done so, into their national language(s) and disseminate Recommendation Rec(2002)5 and its Explanatory Memorandum;
- support specific awareness raising initiatives aimed at men in order to mobilise them to take an active part in eliminating all forms of violence against women, including violence in the family or domestic unit.

VI. Messages

Combating domestic violence calls for joint public action

Violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit (domestic violence) continues to be a serious problem that extends to all Council of Europe member states, regardless of culture, religion, times of peace, conflict or disaster. It takes on many forms and is too frequently tolerated. Therefore, urgent action is required by governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and international governmental organisations as well as civil society to stop violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit.

Domestic violence is a human rights violation

Violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit should not be regarded as a private matter. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, states have the responsibility to act with due diligence to prevent this type of violence, to protect its victims, to award them compensation and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. Consequently, states have an obligation to take all reasonable measures to ensure that women are not exposed to violence and provide protection for those at risk as well as redress for victims. Culture, custom, family or religion should never be used as an excuse for turning a blind eye to human rights violations against women in the home.

Domestic violence seriously injures women and damages the whole of society, including future generations

Many women in many countries die as a result of violence occurring in the family or domestic unit. Furthermore, the physical and psychological health of the surviving victims is seriously affected. This type of violence also has serious consequences for the families as well as society as a whole and is often perpetuated from one generation to another. Violence against women, over and above the personal and social consequences, has a high economic cost (medical care, psychological treatment, absenteeism, less productivity at work etc.). Ending violence against women in the family or domestic unit is the responsibility of everyone. Being silent means complicity.

Domestic violence calls for men's active participation to combat violence against women

During this campaign, active participation of men in activities aimed at combating violence against women should be encouraged. Men have the responsibility to stand up and challenge violence occurring in the family or domestic unit. To this end, they have an important role to play and can bridge the gap to other men as well as encourage them to speak out against such violence.

VII. Target groups

The Council of Europe will work with a variety of partners and target groups to deliver the *Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence*. These include:

- Heads of States
- Heads of Governments
- Ministers of national governments
- Presidents of parliaments
- Members of parliaments
- Members of Regional and Local Authorities
- International intergovernmental organisations
- International and regional women's and human rights non-governmental organisations
- National opinion formers
- Local community leaders
- Regional and national business leaders
- Law enforcement officials
- Members of the judiciary
- Social and health care workers and state-run social services organisations
- National women's NGOs providing support services to women
- Education professionals and groups
- Trade Unions
- All women
- Women victims and survivors
- Men as agents of change
- Youth audience
- Youth workers

VIII. Slogan

The slogan of the Council of Europe Campaign is "Stop domestic violence against women".

IX. Duration

Preparations for the Council of Europe Campaign began at the beginning of 2006. A high-level conference to launch the Campaign, with participants from governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, international intergovernmental organisations and NGOs was organised in the Spanish Senate in Madrid, Spain, in November 2006 (around International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November and marking the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence). The Campaign will end in the first half of 2008.

X. Division of responsibilities

The implementation of the Campaign is carried out involving the Committee of Ministers through the Directorate General of Human Rights – DG II (Equality Division) for the intergovernmental dimension of the Campaign, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for the parliamentary dimension and the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities of the Council of Europe for the local and regional dimension. Furthermore, this Campaign is carried out in partnership with governments and parliaments of the member states, international intergovernmental organisations as well as NGOs involved in the protection of women against violence.

Appendix 1

Action to be carried out in the framework of the Council of Europe Campaign

The Council of Europe Campaign includes two implementation levels through which the Campaign is carried out. The first level includes activities directly carried out by the Council of Europe, reflecting its intergovernmental, parliamentary and local and regional dimensions. The second level consists of national campaigns and national activities carried out by the member states of the Council of Europe at national, local and regional level.

I. The Council of Europe Activities

a) A launching conference

A high-level conference to launch the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* with participants from governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, international intergovernmental organisations and NGOs was organised on 27 November 2006 in the Spanish Senate in Madrid, Spain.

The Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence had recommended that the launching conference of the Council of Europe Campaign be organised at the highest political level and with wide participation of NGOs working in this field.

b) Media and campaign activities

The launching Conference of the Campaign was given wide media coverage throughout Council of Europe member states.

c) Regional seminars

Five high-level seminars will be organised in the requesting Council of Europe member states highlighting the different objectives of the Campaign. Member states are encouraged to undertake this activity.

d) Activities to be carried out by the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will implement the parliamentary dimension of the Campaign. Similarly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will implement the local and regional dimension of the Campaign.

e) Setting up a special Campaign website

A special website devoted to the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* was created at www.coe.int/stopviolence, providing detailed information on the campaign and its activities. The website also provides information on national activities and campaigns and provides a link to national campaign websites. In addition, it serves as an interactive forum for exchanging information and good practices.

f) Dissemination of Campaign material for member states and Council of Europe Information and Field offices

- Campaign material was distributed to participants at the Council of Europe's launching Conference and will be further distributed to participants at regional seminars as well as to the Council of Europe's Information and Field Offices.
- Campaign material will be distributed to NGOs and the general public by the Council of Europe Secretariat.

II. Activities organised by the member states

a) Setting up *Focal Points*

Each member state will appoint a high-level official and a focal point for the purpose of the Council of Europe Campaign as well as for national campaigns. The high-level official will champion the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence*, with the support of a Focal Point. Focal Points should be supported by a national Task Force on violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit which should include women's NGOs and others working to combat violence against women. The role of the national Task Force is to support the delivery of member states' national campaigns to combat violence against women, including violence in the family or domestic unit.

It should be advisable that this Focal Point appointed by national authorities would be a person holding responsibilities at national level in the field of combating violence against women. National Focal Points will contribute to the Council of Europe Campaign by providing information and making available national good practices to combat violence against women which will be published on the Council of Europe website. The Council of Europe will encourage member states with experience and expertise in legislative, policy and other measures to share their knowledge with other member states to support the national campaigns.

Focal Points are encouraged to disseminate campaign material as widely as possible for all requesting actors at national level, in particular social and health care workers, the police, the judiciary, policy makers and NGOs working to combat violence against women.

Each member state will inform the Council of Europe Secretariat about the appointment of a national Focal Point. Subsequently, information concerning all 46 national Focal Points will be published on the Council of Europe's website.

b) Campaign Action Plans

National Task Forces are encouraged to develop their own National Campaign Action Plan based on the Blueprint. The following steps should be included:

- Analysis of the country situation to identify success and gaps in combating violence against women.
- Collection and/or organisation of existing data to develop a baseline national information sheet.
- Define concrete activities based on the objectives in the Blueprint to fill the gaps.
- Earmark appropriate resources, identify timeframe etc.
- Campaign Action Plans should be shared with the Council of Europe for information and exchange.

Member states are invited to submit to the Council of Europe Secretariat an interim report by 2 July 2007 and a final report on activities and concrete results of their national campaigns in 2008 for consideration by the Task Force. In accordance with its mandate, the Task Force will evaluate progress at national level and establish instruments for quantifying developments at pan-European level with a view to drawing up proposals for action.

c) Key Opportunities for Campaigning

1) Date: 8 March

Significance: International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a key opportunity to organise public events and carry out media work in partnership with women's organisations in the field of violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit. All member states participating in the Council of Europe Campaign are invited to prioritise this type of violence as their theme for International Women's Day 2007 and 2008 and to promote the messages of the Campaign.

2) **Date:** 15 May

Significance: International Day of the Family

International Day of the Family provides an important opportunity to highlight violence against women in the family or domestic unit. Member states are invited to organize public campaigning and media activities to speak out against such violence.

3) **Date:** 25 November – 10 December

Significance: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 16 Days of Activism campaign provide an opportunity for media action and campaigning. Member states participating in the Council of Europe campaign are invited to speak out publicly on violence against women occurring in the family or domestic unit and join women's non governmental organisations and others at the national level that are participating in the 16 Days of Activism to campaign together on ending violence against women.

Member states are also invited to use key national dates to publicly highlight the Campaign and to issue joint statements during Committee of Ministers' meetings over the course of the Campaign.

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Appendix 2

Campaign material

Printed material produced:

- Posters
- Fact sheets
- Bookmarks
- Folders
- Booklets
- Stickers
- Calendars

Audiovisual material to be produced subject to the availability of funds

- Television and radio spots
- Public service announcements
- Video packages
- Photographic exhibition
- Video
- Web animation
- Web viral

The Campaign material produced is available at the Council of Europe website devoted to the Campaign at www.coe.int/stopviolence.

Appendix 3

Timetable

Year 2006

- The blueprint for the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence was finalised by the Task Force during its second meeting 25-27 April and adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 June.
- The Launching conference took place in the Spanish Senate in Madrid, Spain, on 27 November.
- A special Council of Europe website devoted to the Campaign was set up at www.coe.int/stopviolence.
- Council of Europe member states have been requested to appoint high-level officials and national focal points and to launch national campaigns as far as possible in 2006.

Year 2007

- Regional seminars will be organised in the Council of Europe member states.
- National campaigns will continue to be carried out and launched by those member states which have not yet done so.
- Interim national reports on Campaign activities will be submitted to the Task Force for consideration.

Year 2008

- Closing conference of the Campaign will be organised.
- Final national reports on Campaign activities will be submitted to the Task Force for consideration.
- Final activity report of the Task Force (including evaluation of the Council of Europe Campaign) will be adopted.