

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 and 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 adopted at this Conference, an *Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women*, aimed at providing a policy framework for national administrations, was developed. This 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.

Its implementation is regularly monitored using a monitoring framework to evaluate progress. To date, two monitoring cycles have been completed and their outcome is assessed and published in two analytical studies.

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 envisaged the following two measures:

- 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, a Task Force, composed of eight international experts in the field of preventing and combating violence against women, was established in early 2006. Based on the blueprint developed by the Task Force and approved by the Committee of Ministers on 21 June 2006, the *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* was launched on 27 November 2006 in Madrid. Consisting of three dimensions: intergovernmental, parliamentary and local and regional, the Campaign was 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.

Aims

Recognising the different levels of progress in combating violence against women in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, the Campaign aimed to:

- raise awareness that violence against women is a human rights violation

and encourage every citizen to challenge it

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

- 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 and to regularly monitor progress.

Objectives

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

- legal and policy measures
- support and protection for victims

- data collection
- awareness raising.

Member states were urged to make significant progress in these areas during the course of the Campaign. To this end, they were 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 aimed 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 and results of the Campaign

The *Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* (2006-2008), was one of the most successful and visible campaigns of the Council of Europe. The widespread support it received from key actors in local, regional and national governments as well as parliaments ensured that the messages of the Campaign reached a large and varied audience. 46 governmental focal points/high-level officials and 48 contact parliamentarians were appointed to implement the Campaign at national level. As a result, many different campaign activities were carried out, including activities by local and regional authorities.

Implementation by the Council of Europe

At the core of the Campaign, the different bodies of the Council of Europe carried out the following activities:

- a series of regional information and awareness raising seminars
- meetings of national focal points
- activities involving national parliaments under the heading of

“Parliaments united in combating violence against women”

- activities to promote the Campaign at local and regional level
- publication of studies and material to expand the knowledge base in different areas of preventing and combating violence against women.

In addition, the Council of Europe provided campaign material to facilitate effective campaigning, (TV and radio spots, posters, stickers, pens, campaign website etc), which were widely disseminated in member states.

Implementation by Member States

Council of Europe member states contributed significantly to the success of the Campaign by actively implementing it at national level. More than half of all member states carried out national awareness raising campaigns, while many others reviewed their policies and legislation or implemented other measures. Many national parliaments placed the issue of domestic violence on their agenda through parliamentary debates, hearings or tabling amendments to the law.

Results of the Campaign

The primary result of the Campaign has been the recognition by the different actors that violence against women is a human rights violation – not a private matter. Secondly, the Campaign placed violence against women at the highest level of the political agenda of member states. Thirdly, it has shown that joint public action of all national and international actors is necessary to combat violence against women. Lastly, promoting the implementation of measures contained in *Recommendation Rec(2002)5* has yielded significant results.

The Campaign ended during a high-level conference in Strasbourg in June 2008. On this occasion, the *Task Force* presented its assessment of the impact of the Campaign as well as its recommendations for future Council of Europe action in the field of violence against women, including the drafting of a legally binding instrument in this field.

More information can be found at www.coe.int/equality or www.coe.int/stopviolence/intergov.

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