

Jukka Gustafsson

Mrs Chairperson,

I would like to, for my turn, to welcome you all to the Finnish parliament to discuss this very difficult issue, concerning all European states. It is very important to remember indeed, that this is a major problem also in the Nordic countries, which often are presented as models when speaking about the equality between men and women. This statement is without any doubts justified in many cases, for example concerning the political representation of women, but cannot lead to an assumption that everything is perfect in the Northern Europe.

Finland has in recent years been at the top of many international surveys, such as education, anti-corruption and competitiveness surveys. Unfortunately, it has also been very successful in surveys, that assess the violence the women experience. According to a recent survey, about 20 percent of women older than 15 years have experienced physical violence or threat in her present relationship. Besides the fact that it is a clear human rights assault against women, it affects also to the children living their lives under violence creating new problems. It also incurs enormous costs to the society both directly (police, health care) and indirectly (criminal and civil justice). Therefore it should be a major concern for everyone, also for male parliamentarians. Personally, I do not see any contradictions in being a man and combating violence against women. It should be evident, that it is everyone's responsibility to oppose violence, especially when it is directed towards women or children.

In brief, I would like to wish you all very pleasant meeting and hope that we will be able today to change ideas and elaborate good practices for parliamentarians to contribute this important issue – not only within the Council of Europe campaign, but longer perspective, in order to find durable approaches to the problem of domestic violence.

Thank you for your attention.