

Highlights of the April 2007 part-session

- ▶ Tuesday 17 April, 1 p.m., lobby of the Assembly: opening of the exhibition "Breaking the silence on domestic violence" by Gülsün Bilgehan, Chair of the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.
- ▶ 16-20 April: PACE information stand on the Assembly action "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence" near the hemicycle.

Strasbourg students take action against domestic violence



Domestic violence affects people in all walks of life, especially young adults. An initiative was launched in March 2007 by the Portuguese students' association Chama, the Marc Bloch University and the City of Strasbourg, with support from the Council of Europe. A conference, a projection followed by a debate, theatrical improvisation, a quiz evening and an information stand on the campaign drew students' attention to the problem and fuelled a lively

week-long debate on the subject of violence within the couple, in which more than 250 students took part. This is an initiative MPs and local elected representatives could propose to other university campuses in Europe. For more information: www.coe.int/stopviolence/congress.

www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly

The Internet site on the action taken by the Parliamentary Assembly and the national parliaments is regularly updated thanks to contributions by contact parliamentarians and national parliaments involved in the effort to combat violence against women.

Country fact sheets have now been added to the site. Each one describes the action of a national parliament (contact data of the national contact parliamentarian, action taken in connection with the campaign, publications, documents and campaign material translated into the national language, useful contacts for implementing the campaign).

This Internet site was designed to be a practical tool for exchanging good practices and facilitating exchanges between parliaments. Feel free to send in any suggestions and useful information (documents, reports on activities, photos, etc.) concerning the implementation of the campaign in your parliament to the following address: pace.combatviolence@coe.int.

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Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women

Council of Europe Campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" (2006-2008)

PACE Action Newsletter No. 2 – April 2007

Breaking the silence surrounding domestic violence



On 17 April 2007 the Parliamentary Assembly will open a photo exhibition sponsored by the Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, in the presence of Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The photographer Sandro Weltin portrays people in different lights: parliamentarians, representatives of local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations, people active in the field, and above all the victims themselves. The regional coordinators of the parliamentary dimension of the campaign contributed to this work and expressed their commitment to the cause. *Give your opinion, too, and sign the visitors' book.*

This travelling exhibition is available to parliamentarians for presentation in their national parliaments. They can break the silence on domestic violence by showing these different visions and telling the moving stories of the victims. For more information, please contact the Secretariat.

Dates for your diary



Contact parliamentarians will be getting together in Strasbourg on 4 June 2007 for their second co-ordination meeting, half way through the campaign, to evaluate the measures taken by the national parliaments to implement the campaign, exchange good practices, identify any obstacles and propose new parliamentary actions for 2007.

On the following day, 5 June, the contact parliamentarians will meet the focal points appointed by governments to strengthen co-operation between national parliaments and governments on the implementation of the campaign. Good partnership practices will be presented and participants will be able to discuss their various experiences at the national level.

www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly

Stop domestic
violence
against women

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Eleven parliaments organised **Days of Parliamentary Hearing** on or around 8 March 2007, International Women's Day, to say "Stop domestic violence against women!"

In Denmark, at the initiative of the contact parliamentarian Morten Østergaard, four MPs from different political parties questioned four speakers. Sixty participants representing NGOs, police organisations, women's associations and civil society took part in the debate.

In Sweden contact parliamentarian Carina Hägg presented the Swedish version of the *Handbook for parliamentarians*. MPs and parliamentary officials were invited to a conference entitled "There is a sexist inside every one of us", in the presence of the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr Per Westerberg.



In Cyprus, at the proposal of the national contact parliamentarian Sotiroulla Charalambous, the parliament brought together 250 people – parliamentarians, judges, personalities, women's associations and citizens, to learn more about the fight against domestic violence. The Speaker of the Parliament, Mr Demetris Christofias (see photo), expressed his determination to engage the Cypriot Parliament in the battle to stop domestic violence against women.

Andorra, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the European Parliament have also taken part in parliamentary hearing days or intend to do so.

Planned parliamentary activities:

- ▶ Parliamentary contacts on the occasion of the 2nd Council of Europe Seminar on Men's Active Participation in Combating Domestic Violence (Zagreb, 9-10 May 2007) (to be confirmed)
- ▶ Side-event at the meeting of the Standing Committee in Belgrade (23-24 May 2007)

For further information, please consult the website: www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly.

A parliamentary blog to make online contributions to the campaign

Jean-Guy Branger, member of the French Senate and contact parliamentarian, has launched a blog dedicated to domestic violence, an original initiative in the framework of the Council of Europe campaign. It is open to everyone who wishes to exchange information, share experiences and points of view and put questions to French members of parliament. This blog will also cover issues concerning laws and recent developments in France, Belgium, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, countries for which Senator Branger was appointed regional co-ordinator in October 2006 in the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly action "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women".

www.stop-aux-violences-domestiques.com



Continuing our commitment against domestic violence

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men elected me to its Chair on 26 January this year. This is an honour for me and a strong signal to everyone of either sex fighting for the advancement of women's rights and their equal access to decision-making posts, and

against violations of women's rights, in particular crimes of honour, trafficking in human beings and domestic violence.

The Assembly's April 2007 part-session gives prominence to a review of the state of human rights and democracy in Europe. This is the very context in which we want to place the action "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women". I intend to make this theme a major focus of our committee's work and thus to carry on the efforts undertaken by the committee for several years past.

Tirelessly, we must rally our fellow parliamentarians and act to condemn domestic violence against women. The early months of this campaign have been very intense. Parliamentarians have come out in force to organise parliamentary hearings, appeal to their governments and create awareness among their colleagues. A special session of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, for instance, brought together Minister of State Ms Nimet ÇUBUKÇU, parliamentarians of different political parties and numerous NGO representatives on 7 March 2007. The message of the Council of Europe has also been carried into other parliamentary arenas, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Nordic Council and the European Parliament.

The next meeting of contact parliamentarians (4-5 June 2007) will be a good opportunity to declare once again our determination to combat this evil together. United beyond political divisions, we shall be better able to formulate the answers that parliaments can and must give in order to condemn domestic violence, punish the culprits, protect the victims and guard against this societal problem through energetic measures promoting equality between women and men.

Gülsün Bilgehan

Chair of the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Exchange of views with the European Parliament

Ms Bilgehan, Chair of the PACE Equality Committee and Ms Hägg, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Violence against Women, took part in a mini-hearing devoted to domestic violence, organised by the Equality Committee of the European Parliament in Brussels, on 11 April 2007. Many contacts were made with a view to future common actions.