

Highlights of the June 2007 part-session

- ▶ 27 June 2007, 12 p.m.: launch of an electronic declaration “parliamentarians of Europe mobilise to combat domestic violence against women” – Consult the website www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly and mobilise your parliamentary colleagues.
- ▶ 28 June 2007, 8:30 p.m., Room “Bon Pasteur”: Conference and debate moderated by Mr José Mendes Bota, contact parliamentarian of Portugal, on “the contribution of the Portuguese Parliament to the Council of Europe campaign: the example of the fight against domestic violence against women”, organised by the Association “Chama” (12, Boulevard Jean-Sébastien Bach, Strasbourg, in French).
- ▶ 25-29 June 2007: PACE information stand on the Assembly action “parliaments united in combating domestic violence” near the hemicycle.

Seen on TV

What can be done to get the “Stop Domestic Violence against Women” campaign message across to the public at large? Several contact parliamentarians have opted for appearances on television programmes. Here are three examples of good practices:

- ▶ in Azerbaijan, Ms Ahmadova regularly appears on a talk show that follows the campaign for the national channel AzTV;
- ▶ in the Czech Republic, Ms Anna Čurdová presented the campaign on a daily television programme aimed primarily at women who watch television in the early afternoon;
- ▶ in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ms Liljana Popovska appeared alongside journalists and NGO leaders on the national channel TV Network MRTV to talk about action taken by parliament to implement the campaign in her country.

Thanks to these television appearances, the parliamentarians’ message reaches the widest possible audience and is beamed right into people’s homes.



A Serbian version of the travelling photo exhibition called “Break the silence on domestic violence” was launched in Belgrade on 24 May 2007. This exhibition has been prepared in co-operation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. It also exists in English and French. The preparation of the exhibition in other languages is under consideration.

This exhibition is at the disposal of members of parliament who would like to display it in their country.

For further information, please contact the secretariat.

Contact

Secretariat of the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
Tel.: +33 (0)3 88 41 35 17 / Fax: +33 (0)3 90 21 56 52
E-mail: pace.combatviolence@coe.int – Site: www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly

Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women

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

PACE Action Newsletter No. 3 – June 2007

Second co-ordination meeting of the contact parliamentarians: a fresh impetus for the campaign



Contact parliamentarians in action

At their second co-ordination meeting in Strasbourg on 4 and 5 June 2007, contact parliamentarians involved in the Council of Europe’s «Stop Domestic Violence» Campaign shared ideas on good practices, assessed the action taken by national parliaments so far and decided to develop the pan-European dimension of the campaign and networking in the regional groups. Over the next few

months they propose to work on the legislative aspects of the fight against domestic violence against women, to encourage developments in line with Council of Europe standards.

The joint conference with national “focal points” appointed by governments was an opportunity for contact parliamentarians to discuss the implementation of the campaign at national level and compare their experiences of working in synergy with others.

Boosting regional co-operation

Contact parliamentarians have expressed the wish to strengthen regional co-operation between national parliaments within the six regional groups set up in October 2006. Co-operation will mainly focus on legislative aspects of the fight against domestic violence against women. Regional co-ordinators will be invited to identify existing needs and to propose targeted and appropriate activities. Each regional group will be invited to meet by the end of 2007 to share national parliamentary experiences.

The list and composition of the regional groups is available on the website (www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly).

Parliaments get involved

Andorra – Thanks to the work done by contact parliamentarian Ms Maria Rosa Ferrer Obiols, there is heightened awareness in the Principality of Andorra of the need to step up the fight against domestic violence against women. Numerous awareness-raising initiatives have been organised by Andorra's General Council, including the adoption of a manifesto against domestic violence in the presence of the Principality's MPs and government members. The Andorran Parliament made a point of translating the campaign material into the national language, which is essential to ensure that the message reaches individuals, groups and agencies at the local level.



Azerbaijan – Ms Gular Ahmadova, contact parliamentarian, is sparing no effort to spread the anti-domestic violence message as widely as possible in Azerbaijan, at every level, by raising awareness among the professionals and decision makers involved in combating domestic violence against women. She has met successively with judges from the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court and presidents of district courts, as well as with regional police chiefs. The press is regularly enlisted to spread the message to the general public. An appeal was also launched in the Azerbaijan Parliament personally inviting all MPs to contribute to the campaign and report on initiatives taken in their constituencies. The involvement of the MPs will enable Ms Ahmadova to propose amendments to the Penal Code that will increase the penalties for crimes of violence against women. These efforts to raise awareness and amend the law are an example of the kind of action the Parliamentary Assembly would like to see national parliaments take.



Croatia – At the 2nd regional seminar on the campaign for “men's active participation in combating domestic violence”, on 9 May 2007 in Zagreb, Ms Carina Hägg, Chair of the PACE's Sub-Committee on Violence against Women, met Ms Gordana Sobol, Chair of the Croatian Parliament's Equality Committee, and a delegation from the Croatian Parliament. The exchange of views focused on the parliamentary implementation of the campaign against domestic violence in Croatia. The discussions highlighted the strong commitment of the Croatian Parliament to the fight against violence against women and to the promotion of gender equality in general. Ms Hägg welcomed the efforts made by the Croatian Parliament and the forthcoming appointment of a contact parliamentarian, who will no doubt make a useful contribution to the activities of the network of contact parliamentarians set up by the PACE.

Planned parliamentary activities:

The campaign goes to the Summer University for Democracy

During the Summer University for Democracy of schools of political studies supported by the Council of Europe (from 2 to 6 July 2007 in Strasbourg), about 30 parliamentarians from six countries will receive information about the PACE's “parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women” initiative. They will be told about activities already under way and invited to contribute actively to the work being done by contact parliamentarians in their own national parliaments. The Summer University programme is available on the Council of Europe's website: www.coe.int/Schools-Politics



“Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women”: mid-term assessment

Since the launch of the Council of Europe Campaign “Stop domestic violence”, numerous actions have been carried out by the national parliaments, but we are still a long way from reaching our objective. To complete our network, there is still a lack of contact parliamentarians

in several of the Council of Europe member states, and too few parliaments have involved themselves in our campaign so far.

It is nevertheless essential to develop our campaign's pan-European dimension to its fullest extent. A comprehensive grasp of the reality and the consequences of domestic violence in the 47 member states will enable us to think properly about the continuation of our campaign, also in our respective states. As far as I am concerned, I shall single out four priority areas of work: gathering data, identifying the deficiencies in our national legislation, proposing targeted activities to help Europe's parliaments improve their laws, and monitoring the implementation of the laws enacted by the parliaments.

Our campaign is aimed at changing not only the laws but also mentalities. That makes it necessary to involve men in our campaign. The Portuguese Parliament has embarked on many awareness-raising actions including the organisation of a large-scale parliamentary hearing. The multi-party parliamentary working group which I co-ordinate in the parliament will visit four of the regions that are least advanced as regards prevention of violence against women, in order to acquaint themselves with the reality at first hand. A travelling exhibition on the theme of violence against women, prepared by the Portuguese Parliament, will be shown throughout the country. A public action headed by 28 parliamentarians from Portugal (conducted in schools or on television) will take place during the “16 days of activism” (25 November to 10 December 2007).

We must, over and over again, condemn domestic violence, alert the public and carry out media work. This is important. Our irreplaceable role as legislator ought not to be forgotten, though. With you, we must frame better laws in the Council of Europe member states. This is the objective I intend to pursue and promote in the medium-term evaluation report on the parliamentary dimension which I shall have the honour to submit this autumn.

Mr José Mendes Bota

PACE Rapporteur on “Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women”: mid-term assessment

Parliamentary round table in Serbia

On the occasion of the accession of Serbia to the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly proposed a parliamentary round table on “the role of parliament in promoting gender equality and combating domestic violence” in Belgrade on 23 May 2007. This activity was organised in the framework of the PACE/EU joint initiative to support parliamentary institutions in Serbia. Ms Gülsün Bilgehan (Turkey), Chairperson of the PACE Equality Committee, PACE member Mr Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain) and Ms Darinka Stancheva (Bulgaria), regional co-ordinator for the PACE campaign, took part in this exchange of views. The meeting was attended by members of the Serbian Parliament, including Ms Gordana Čović who chaired the round table, and representatives of NGOs and local authorities.