

Highlights of the April 2008 part-session

- ▶ **14-18 April 2008:** PACE information stand and slide-show on the Assembly action "parliaments united in combating domestic violence" near the hemicycle
- ▶ **15 April 2008:** exchange of views between the grouping on gender equality of NGOs with participatory status of the Council of Europe and Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and José Mendes Bota, PACE rapporteur on the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe Campaign (room 2)
- ▶ **17 April 2008:** exchange of views between the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights, on a possible international treaty on domestic violence, with the participation of, i.a. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

On your agenda

- ▶ **Vienna, Austrian Parliament, 30 April 2008:** final conference of the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe Campaign.
- ▶ **Paris, National Assembly, 15 May 2008:** parliamentary symposium on domestic violence against women, organised by the French delegation to PACE and the PACE Sub-Committee on Violence against Women.
- ▶ **Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 10-11 June 2008:** closing conference of the Council of Europe Campaign

The network of contact parliamentarians gets stronger



Dina Akkelidou (Cyprus), Mirosława Nykiel (Poland) and Nursuna Memecan (Turkey) joined the network of contact parliamentarians, which today comprises 50 members.

For further information on the activities carried out by the contact parliamentarians and the national parliaments, see

www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly

The «Handbook for parliamentarians» is now available in new linguistic versions

Azerbaijan, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Ukraine now figure among the countries which have taken the initiative to translate the «Handbook for parliamentarians» and to raise parliamentary awareness at national level. This reflects the commitment shown by the parliaments of these countries to the Council of Europe campaign. The handbook is now available in fourteen languages on the campaign website.

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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. 6 – April 2008



Final Conference in Vienna

Barbara Prammer, Speaker of the Austrian Parliament, and I, have the honour to welcome the contact parliamentarians who, in their respective parliaments over the past two years, have supported the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence.

This last issue of the PACE Action Newsletter reflects the broad range of initiatives taken in national parliaments. We have shown that powerful political determination gives us the capacity to join forces across Europe against violence directed at women and defend their rights. Parliamentarians in the vast majority of Council of Europe member states and our colleagues from the observer parliaments, the IPU, the European Parliament and the Nordic Council have, with invaluable assistance from NGOs, contributed to the success of the campaign. They all spoke up and broke the silence!

We must now find effective ways of keeping up the pressure and maintaining the parliamentary impetus generated by this campaign.

Because we have a lot to share and together we can change people's mentalities, I look forward to seeing you in Vienna on 30 April 2008.

Gisela Wurm, Chairperson of the Austrian delegation to the PACE



For the past two years, national parliaments and the PACE have joined forces throughout Europe to combat domestic violence against women and implement the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe campaign launched in Madrid on 27 November 2006. The network of contact parliamentarians has worked hard to combat this unacceptable violation of human rights. The commitment of these parliamentarians invites us all to continue the struggle for all women who are the victims of domestic violence.

Lluís Maria de Puig, President of the Parliamentary Assembly

www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly

**Stop domestic
violence
against women**

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, supports the parliamentarians involved in the campaign.



At the invitation of Jukka Gustafsson, Contact Parliamentarian for Finland, Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, gave the opening address at the conference dedicated to the situation of Domestic Violence against Women in Finland, on 7 April, at the Parliament of Finland, in the presence of prominent politicians, including Sinikka Hurskainen, Chairperson of the Finnish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly and Heidi Hautala, Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee.

Singer Axelle Red highlights role of men in fighting domestic violence



“The majority of perpetrators of domestic violence are men, and since it is largely men who still hold positions of power in society, they have an important role to play in combating this crime,” said Belgian singer Axelle Red, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador involved in promoting women’s rights, introducing a Brussels lunch-debate on the role of men in fighting domestic violence organised by the Madariaga European Foundation and PACE on

the eve of International Women’s Day. PACE members Kent Olsson (Sweden, EPP/CD) and Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE) and MEP Raul Romeva I Rueda, Member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament, highlighted the contribution of parliamentarians and their national experiences to successfully involve men.

New Family Violence Prevention Act in Slovenia



Through the impetus given by Majda Potrata, Contact Parliamentarian, Slovenia adopted a new Family Violence Prevention Act, which came into force on 26 February 2008. Ms Potrata also organised, in cooperation with SOS Help-line and Amnesty International, an international conference dedicated to “Violence against Women in relation to Development Awareness”, on 7 March 2008, in the Slovenian

Parliament. During this conference, discussion panels were organised on domestic violence, violence against migrant women, trafficking in women and the victims’ position in the labour market.

Legal Aspects of Protection against Violence in Family Relations: parliamentary hearing in Azerbaijan



Bahar Muradova, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, Kristiina Ojuland, Deputy Speaker of the Estonian Parliament, Ali Huseynov, Chairman of the Milli Majlis Standing Commission on Legal Policy and State Building and Gular Ahmadova, Contact Parliamentarian for Azerbaijan, contributed to the hearing organised by the parliament in Azerbaijan on 31 March 2008. A new bill on the prevention of domestic violence should soon be submitted to the Milli Majlis.



“The campaign has helped to break the silence in Europe”

► **Mr Mendes Bota, in your capacity as PACE rapporteur, you proposed a questionnaire to assess the parliamentary dimension of the campaign. Are you satisfied with the initial results?**

I have to say that I was pleasantly surprised, as 37 delegations – representing 617 million Europeans – carefully filled out a long and detailed questionnaire. I should like to warmly thank the contact parliamentarians and national delegation secretaries. I hope to have all the replies at the earliest opportunity.

► **In the light of the initial results, can you say whether the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe campaign has been a success?**

I would say no to begin with, as no country meets all of the minimum criteria set out in my report. That shows clearly that these criteria are still not unanimously accepted, even though they should be applied universally. However, I would like to remain optimistic. Over these two years, awareness has clearly been raised. The silence has been broken, from the Atlantic to the Caucasus! Much has been done: seminars, public hearings and media campaigns have been organised. The efforts made here offer grounds for satisfaction both for national parliaments and also for the Council of Europe.

► **What has the campaign’s impact been on the parliaments of the 47 member states?**

The Parliamentary Assembly’s efforts are far from over yet! There is much to be done in the coming weeks! Now is not the time to lower our guard; instead, we should capitalise on our best practices so that the maximum possible number can benefit from them. I am particularly proud that we have succeeded in involving men more closely. The campaign has also allowed us to tackle new issues such as marital rape, the concept of stalking, education and prevention, assistance for migrant women, the necessary co-operation with NGOs and the mobilisation of a minimum level of financial resources – as domestic violence involves costs for our democracies. Many issues deserve to be looked at in greater depth. We are going to discuss together the role which the network of contact parliamentarians may play in future. It has demonstrated that exchanging our experience helps us to tackle the flaws in our legislation and raise our standards. Above all, it has highlighted that the fight must go on as wherever women are victims, human rights are flouted.



PACE action promoted at the United Nations

Carina Hägg, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Violence against Women, highlighted the parliamentary dimension of the campaign at the IPU side-event on “The role of parliaments in financing for gender equality” alongside the Session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women, in New York on

27 February 2008. Carina Hägg and Doris Stump, Contact Parliamentarian for Switzerland, also had the opportunity to speak to Yakin Ertürk, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, on the occasion of the launch of the UN Campaign to End Violence against Women (2008-2015).