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# **PARLIAMENTS UNITED IN COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Meeting of the Regional Group A**

**Organised by the National Parliament of Finland  
In co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

**Parliament of Finland, Helsinki**

**10 October 2007**

## **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING LIST OF SUGGESTED ACTIONS**



The Regional Grouping A of Contact Parliamentarians involved in the campaign "Stop domestic violence" met on 10 October 2007 on the premises of the Finnish Parliament on the invitation of Mr. Jukka GUSTAFSSON, contact parliamentarian for Finland. Ms Carina HÄGG, contact parliamentarian for Sweden and regional coordinator of the regional grouping co-chaired this working seminar. The meeting was opened by Ms Sinikka HURSKAINEN, chief of the Finnish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council Europe.

The aim of this meeting was to exchange best practices to combat domestic violence, which are necessary for parliamentary work.

Aspects needing improvement were discussed. As a result of a consultation procedure with all members of group A [still in progress], new lines of action for the second - and final - phase of the campaign were proposed.

## Conclusions

Ms HÄGG concluded the seminar by repeating that Domestic violence is **not a private issue but a question of human rights**. She highlighted the responsibility of the Contact Parliamentarians to co-operate with each other and to learn from each other.

She invited the members of the Regional grouping A of Contact Parliamentarians involved in the Campaign "Stop Domestic violence" to adopt a list of actions to be implemented within the framework of the campaign. This list also encompasses suggested actions that could be supported by the Parliamentary Assembly, subject to financial availability.

## List of Actions

NR	ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED DURING THE CAMPAIGN	DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS	CONTACT PARLIAMENTARIANS/
A 1	<b>Exchanging action plans:</b> providing the secretariat with the electronic format in national language or/and English version for publication on the website of the Campaign	<b>As soon as possible</b>	1. Ms. Carina HÄGG 2. .... 3. ....
A 2	<b>Study visit between parliaments</b>	<b>As soon as possible</b>	1. .... 2. .... 3. ....
A 3	Use the opportunity provided by the <b>Nordic Council</b> and the <b>Baltic Assembly</b> to encourage initiatives to combat domestic violence against women	<b>As soon as possible</b>	1. .... 2. .... 3. ....
A 4	<b>Evaluate the financial contribution</b> spent by each country to combat domestic violence: <i>a minimum objective of 1 Euro on average per inhabitant in all Member States</i>	<b>As soon as possible</b>	1. Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN 2. Jukka GUSTAFSSON 3. Carina HÄGG 4. Morten ØSTERGAARD 5. Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ 6. Mailis REPS 7. Steingrímur J. SIGFÚSSUN
A 5	.....	.....	.....
A 6	.....	.....	.....
A 7	.....	.....	.....

## Minutes of the meeting

**Ms HURSKAINEN** welcomed participants and praised Mr. Mendes Bota's report, although she regretted the limited participation in the plenary debate and vote on 5 October 2007.

### Historical Development of the Fight against Domestic Violence in Finland.

**Johanna NIEMI KIESILÄINEN** gave an introduction describing the situation in Finland. The country had witnessed numerous positive developments in the fight against domestic violence. Nevertheless she emphasised that, despite positive progress, domestic violence still remains pervasive.

**Ms NIEMI KIESILÄINEN** considered that the criteria identified in PACE Resolution 1582 (2007) were less ambitious than the provisions contained in Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Women against Violence. She was therefore disappointed by the Resolution adopted by PACE.

The current Finnish Programme to prevent domestic violence is centred on the combating of alcohol-related violence.

The main legal interference in the implementation of a concrete policy is the neutral tone which is adopted for regulation. There is no possibility to include gender in the law. In fact, there is no definition of violence against women. She stressed that **reform laws are gender-blind**.

Thanks to the innovation of **Aggravated Battery**, it was possible to raise the level of awareness about this matter. A maximum penalty of 10 years can be applied in case of knife or weapon attacks, grievous bodily injury, brutal or cruel injury or "aggravated battery" as defined in the Finnish criminal code. It gave the legislative body the capacity to introduce a kind of nuanced gendering if one considers that men are potentially more harmful than women.

### The Role of Mediation to Combat Domestic Violence

There has been a long tradition of using mediation in Finland, especially within the context of combating domestic violence. It takes place when the police and the prosecutor agree to it.

Mediation is complicated because:

- It is not a private issue;
- Society may send an unclear message;
- There is no equality in the mediation.

**Johanna NIEMI KIESILÄINEN** indicated that she stood **against the use of mediation** in cases of domestic violence. It is only when the facts are analysed that domestic violence starts to be considered as a crime. This is due to the work of the police force, which is in charge of:

- The gathering of evidence;
- The use of detention and other measures (Reform of Detention Act in 2002)

In 1999, a good reform of the Protection Order was launched. However, this reform was not applied in the context of domestic violence. The victim had to gather the evidence and to report suspected crimes.

This was modified in 2005 with the reform of the Protection Order, which introduced the capacity **to remove the prosecutor from his home**. It is usually implemented in very violent cases but this can mean that help arrives too late. **Ms NIEMI KIESILÄINEN** also recalled that the protection order is not a substitute for criminal prosecution.

## The reforms which are needed

**A change in attitudes is needed.** The perpetrators should be the ones who have to deal with the problem. It is necessary to obtain more knowledge about gender violence and the effectiveness of laws. **Ms NIEMI KIESILÄINEN** considered that **gender impact analysis** is necessary.

Men's response to this is often displaced:

- Violence of women towards men;
- The situation of children when a divorce occurs.

An **action plan is needed** in Finland.

There are many good examples of action plans:

- Sweden;
- Norway, United States, Spain, Portugal;
- Denmark, which has launched a 3rd action plan.

Amnesty International indicated the priorities that should be considered in the future action plan of Finland:

- Fill the white spaces in the map: there is no shelter in Lapland and a big difference in standard between the existing shelters. Sometimes, the shelter is only a hotel room rented by the municipality;
- Support the victim;
- Support the witnesses (children) and the perpetrator;
- Develop a professional approach (she recalled Helena EWALD's work to give efficient education tools to professionals);
- Funding. In Sweden, the Parliament can evaluate the cost of domestic violence. Women's Rights belongs to the domain of Human Rights (There is also the necessity to monitor the expenses);
- The action plan will be necessary to correct this process;
- Prevention. A communication policy is required to move people;
- Combat electronic violence (non-solicited survey, humiliation via the internet);
- Research and data collection. It is important to gather local statistics;
- International Cooperation. Amnesty is standing for an international action plan;
- It is necessary to create a body dedicated to combating domestic violence (the Prevention Unit listed the needs of such an administration).

This position was supported by **Pirja PEKHONEN** from National Women's Line in Finland.

## The situation in Lithuania and Sweden

### *The situation in Lithuania*

**Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ**, recalling Lithuania's past, indicated that Lithuania seems not to have made as much progress in this area, although the country has achieved so much during the last decade compared to other countries represented in the seminar. Only a small team of people understand the issue of domestic violence in Lithuania. Passing laws costs a lot of energy. Because of History and also the Lithuanian traditions, the **Family is likened to a castle**. She recently introduced a concept of Law that should lead to a draft bill to criminalise domestic violence. This is the second attempt to that effect.

**Carina HÄGG** indicated that at first Sweden did not **associate sufficiently combating domestic violence with the promotion of human rights**. She indicated that the cost of combating domestic violence is nothing if one considers it is an assault of Human Rights. The Amnesty International representative commented that "there should not be any violence in the castle" i.e. the Lithuanian family.

### *Why the Swedish Model?*

Active feminist movements have the support from all political parties. The publication of figures indicating the cost of domestic violence had a very strong impact in Parliament. The fact that 40% of the MPs in the Swedish Parliament are women was a definite advantage to taking the cause on board. The **action plan is definitely a plus as hidden problems become more apparent**. It provides the opportunity to deal directly with deeper problems.

The aim of the governmental action is to **give victims “the opportunity to recover properly”** and the capacity to start a new life somewhere else.

### **Budgeting the fight against Domestic Violence**

The budgetary priority in Finland is to **set-up a focal point** at national level. **Ms HAUTALA** would suggest that the chairpersons of the parliamentary committees dealing with this issue meet to negotiate with the technical group of ministers on combating domestic violence. To be fully operational and efficient, the national focal point would need to work in close co-operation with local and regional administrations.

**Ms HAUTALA** indicated that Finland would use the experience of Sweden to draft its own action plan.

**Carina HÄGG** also stressed the importance of making use of external aid to combat domestic violence. Sweden recently adopted an [action plan on External Aid](#). The action plan is published on the website of the Campaign. She encourages other parliamentarians to adopt such an action plan.

## List of Participants

### *Parliamentarians*

#### **Finland**

##### **Jukka GUSTAFSSON**

Vice-Chairperson of the Employment and Equality Committee  
Contact Parliamentarian for Finland

##### **Heidi HAUTALA**

Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee

##### **Sinikka HURSKAINEN**

Chairperson of the Finnish delegation to the PACE

#### **Lithuania**

##### **Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ**

Deputy Chairperson of the Women Parliamentary Group  
Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on European Affairs  
Contact Parliamentarian for Lithuania

#### **Sweden**

##### **Carina HÄGG**

Regional Co-ordinator of Group A  
Contact Parliamentarian for Sweden

### *Excused*

#### **Denmark**

##### **Morten ØSTERGAARD**

Contact Parliamentarian for Denmark

#### **Estonia**

##### **Mailis REPS**

Contact Parliamentarian for Estonia

#### **Iceland**

##### **Steingrímur J. SIGFÚSSON**

Contact Parliamentarian for Iceland

#### **Norway**

##### **Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN**

Contact Parliamentarian for Norway

### *Participants*

#### **Elena EWALDS**

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
Senior Officer

Member of the Council of Europe Task Force to combat violence against women, including domestic violence

#### **Johanna NIEMI-KIESILÄINEN**

National Research Institute of Legal Policy  
Docent/researcher

#### **Pia Puu OKSANEN**

Amnesty International Finland  
Women's Rights Expert

#### **Pirja PEKKHONEN**

Naisten Linja  
National Women's Line in Finland

***Secretariat of National Parliaments***

**Maria KURIKKALA**

Secretary of the Department of International Affairs of the Finnish Parliament (Eduskunta)

**Kirsti PULKKA-ERICSON**

Senior Advisor in the International Department of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag)

***Secretariat of the PACE***

**Lamine DIALLO**

Deputy Secretary to the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

**Guillaume PARENT**

Deputy Secretary to the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men