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

**Meeting of Regional Group D**

**organised by the National Assembly of Bulgaria  
in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

**National Assembly of Bulgaria, Sofia**

**29 November 2007**

## **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING LIST OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES**



Regional Group D of contact parliamentarians involved in the "Stop Domestic Violence against Women" campaign met at the Bulgarian Parliament building on 29 November 2007, at the invitation of Ms Darinka STANTCHEVA, contact parliamentarian for Bulgaria and regional co-ordinator of the group. The meeting was opened by Mr Younal LOUTFI, Chair of the Bulgarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Ms Gülsün Bilgehan, Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the PACE, presented the legal measures listed in Recommendation (2002) 5.

The Rapporteur Mr José Mendes Bota invited participants to discuss these measures which were adopted by PACE on 5 October 2007. These measures are considered as the minimum legislative standards to combat violence against women.

The meeting was held to exchange good practices relating to the prevention of domestic violence, examples of this kind being vital to the parliamentary activities.

Consideration was given to the aspects needing improvement. On the basis of the [ongoing] consultations involving all members of group A, groups C and F, group D and group E, new lines of action were to be suggested for the second - and last - phase of the campaign.

## Conclusions

Participants in the seminar placed particular emphasis on the need to improve communication about the setting up of a system to prevent violence against women, including domestic violence. 22% of the Bulgarian population, for instance, had never heard of the 2003 Act. **Mr Loutfi**, Chair of the Bulgarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, said that it was vital to start awareness-raising, as the Bulgarian Parliament had pledged to support the Council of Europe campaign.

In **Ms Bilgehan's** view, domestic violence had reached epidemic proportions, with victims at greater risk of losing their jobs and of suffering from depression; they were more likely to resort to tranquillisers. This posed a real public health problem.

**Ms Stantcheva** invited members of Regional Group D to adopt a list of activities to be carried out during the domestic violence campaign. This list also contained proposals for activities which might receive Parliamentary Assembly support, subject to availability of the requisite funds.

## List of activities

No.	ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING THE CAMPAIGN	DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES	CONTACT PARLIAMENTARIANS
D 1	<b>TV promotion of the system</b> for combating domestic violence	<b>As soon as possible</b>	.....
D 2	<b>Raising of awareness among young people</b> , by every possible means, that domestic violence is a crime	<b>As soon as possible</b>	.....
D 3	<b>Organisation of free psychiatric counselling</b> for victims	<b>As soon as possible</b>	.....
D 4	<b>Evaluation of each country's financial contribution</b> to the prevention of domestic violence, <i>with a minimum target of an average of 1 euro per head in all member states</i>	<b>As soon as possible</b>	.....
D 5	<b>Organisation of events for majority</b>	.....	.....

	<b>and opposition political party representatives</b>		
D 6	<b>Recording of cases in which domestic violence</b> was a factor in suicide	.....	.....
D 7	.....	.....	.....

## Minutes of the meeting

The seminar was opened by Mr Loutfi, Chair of the Bulgarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He said that the elimination of gender inequality was one of the political priorities of the day.

### **The history of the fight against domestic violence in Bulgaria**

**Ms Dikova** wished to thank NGOs for their contributions during the drafting of the Act. She particularly pointed to Ms Tisheva's radio broadcasts, which had touched a chord with the public.

The bill brought before Parliament in 2003 had been designed as a list of best practices in the European Union and United States. After a difficult passage, it had been adopted in 2005.

Often perceived as a means for women to retaliate against men, the Act had required a great deal of communication work. It defined the concept of domestic violence (physical or sexual violence, but also attempted violence). Under the Act, those who had harassed women were prohibited from going near the victim's home. Only on second reading had this particular provision been accepted.

Under the Act,

- the authorities were able to force perpetrators of violence to follow a rehabilitation programme;
- summary proceedings were possible;
- protection orders could be issued.

No provision was made for appeals with suspensive effect.

The statutory deadline for follow-up by the authorities of requests for protection was a maximum of two months. In emergencies, the deadline could be reduced to 14 days. Emergency protection orders had to be dealt with within 24 hours.

In 2007, 377 cases had been recorded, with 91 complaints being withdrawn and 20 cases dismissed (no protection was provided).

### **The importance of awareness-raising efforts in the prevention of violence against women**

**Vice-Minister Hristova** said that, early in November 2007, a special opinion poll had been commissioned with a view to the current meeting. This opinion poll had revealed that young people needed to be given particular attention.

*Disappointment often underlay violence, and this was just as damaging as indifference to public manifestations of power.*

A prevention programme had been started in October 2006, making it possible for investigations to be ordered. Ivanka Hristova had been an MP at that very time. Another campaign was just starting, with the aim of training judges to make better use of the new legislation at their disposal. The special phone service had been improved, as had shelters.

During 2007 and 2008, it was planned to improve the training of police officers, judges and all whose work brought them into contact with victims. A guide to the help available was being written.

Specific meetings were being held with NGOs with a view to implementation of the campaign.

**Ms Dimitrova-Mozer** introduced Ms Bilgehan and Mr Mendes-Bota, who presented the parliamentary dimension of the campaign against domestic violence. She thanked the organisers for being the first to point to the significant contribution made by NGOs. She applauded the NGOs' role in drawing attention to other forms of harassment.

As one of the women who had worked on the draft of the first Act on domestic violence, she recalled the battle that had taken place with those of her colleagues who had taken the view that the Constitution offered adequate protection for gender equality. She emphasised the role that MPs played in raising public awareness.

It was a matter of regret to her that only one TV channel had attended the seminar, although television beamed violence into people's homes every day.

During the round-table moderated by Mr Mendes Bota, a lot of interest was also shown in the campaign's communication deficit.

On 25 November 2007, Mr Mendes Bota sent a letter to all the Portuguese male Members of Parliament to create a network of male parliamentarians involved in the fight against domestic violence.

In the framework of the 16 Days of Activism he organised 11 seminars in different regions of Portugal, explaining that *Prevention is the best therapy available*.

**Mr Mendes-Bota** added that the success of this campaign would bring a great improvement in the statistics. Domestic violence came at a great cost, and combating it was a kind of *civil war*.

### **The need for reform**

800,000 cases of abuse (both physical and mental) a year were thought to result from domestic violence in Europe.

**Ms Koicheva**, from the Health Ministry, had just attended a WHO meeting. It was the WHO's wish that national health strategies should all take account of domestic violence, which gave rise to suicide and depression. The Council of Europe campaign afforded an opportunity to emphasise the need for alcohol abuse to be treated and for a suicide prevention programme to be run.

She pointed out that all cases of domestic violence should be recorded, so that a statistical tool was available which would more accurately reflect the true cost of such violence.

The Bulgarian Health Ministry had just begun an experimental investigation of the various reasons which prompted people to attempt suicide.

**Ms Venelinova**, of the Nadja Foundation, called for greater co-operation on putting budget appropriations to proper use, so that no gaps occurred in the services provided.

She commended victim support programmes, but regretted the inadequacy of the programmes run to assist people who had committed acts of violence.

NGOs' work had, since 2005, been made much easier by the Act, which made funding available for shelters, although national provision was inferior to that in the other EU countries.

Mr Mendes Bota drew attention to the significant cooperation that had been established with universities in Portugal.

Ms Bilgehan highlighted the importance of traditions and the role of religious authorities to combat domestic violence. *No religion forbids tolerance. Religious officials in churches and mosques must be involved.*

## **The situation in Albania and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"**

Ms Bozinovska's contribution had been submitted by e-mail and distributed to participants<sup>1</sup>.

An Act had been passed in 2007 on the basis of the Council of Europe recommendation.

An advertisement featuring the Speaker of the Albanian Parliament, Ms Jozefina ÇOBA TOPALLI, had been shown on the national TV channels.

A text message and poster campaign had been carried out in co-operation with advertising companies and telephone operators.

These measures had been part of the joint activity programme run during a 16-day effort in co-operation with the UNDP and the Council of Europe's Tirana office. Funding had come not only from sponsorship, but also from the Dutch Embassy and the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA).

The Speaker of Parliament had announced the setting up of an all-male sub-committee against domestic violence. The Prime Minister had pledged that at least 40% of MPs would be women after the next parliamentary elections.

### **Monitoring of the application of the legislation adopted by parliament to prevent violence against women**

**Ms Alexieva**, a Member of the Bulgarian Parliament, pointed out that, in 2008, it was planned to revise the legislation. The seminar would provide welcome assistance to the MPs who would be asked to assess the application of the current legislation.

From 14 to 18 February 2008, an international conference was to take place in the context of the Council of Europe campaign against domestic violence. This would afford another opportunity to evaluate Bulgaria's legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Also available at [http://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/bozinovska\\_sofia\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/bozinovska_sofia_en.pdf).

## List of participants

### *Parliamentarians*

#### **Bulgaria**

**Mr Younal LOUFI**

Chair of the Bulgarian delegation to the PACE  
National Assembly

**Ms Darinka STANTCHEVA**

Regional co-ordinator of Group D  
National Assembly

**Ms Sylvia ALEXIEVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Aneliya ATANASOVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Marina DIKOVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Anastasia DIMITROVA-MOZER**

National Assembly

**Ms Hristina HRISTOVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Minka ROUSSEVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Nadka BALEVA**

National Assembly

**Ms Diana HITOVA**

National Assembly

**Dr Stanka MARINCHEVA**

National Assembly

**Mr Kemal EYOUP**

National Assembly  
Chair of the Anti-discrimination committee

#### **Albania**

**Mr Mehmet HOXHA**

MP

#### **Portugal**

**Mr José MENDES BOTA**

PACE Rapporteur on "Parliaments united to combat domestic violence against women": mid-term assessment  
Contact parliamentarian for Portugal

#### **Turkey**

**Ms Gülsün BILGEHAN**

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

***Apologised for absence***

- Albania**      **Ms Lajla PERNASKA**  
Contact parliamentarian for Albania
- Moldova**     **Ms Eva GUDUMAC**  
Contact parliamentarian for Moldova
- Romania**    **Ms Cornelia CAZACU**  
Contact parliamentarian for Romania
- Serbia**       **Ms Gordana COMIC**  
Contact parliamentarian for Serbia

**“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

- Ms Ljiljana POPOVSKA**  
Contact parliamentarian for "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
- Ms Valentina BOZINOVSKA**  
MP
- Ms Lence GLIGOROVSKA**  
Adviser to the Committee on equality between women and men

***Participants***

**Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**

- Ms Ivanka HRISTOVA**  
Vice-Minister
- Mr Baki HYUSEINOV**  
Vice-Minister

**Ministry of Education**

- Ms Mariana BANCHEVA**  
Chief expert

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs**

- Ms Yordanka PARPAROVA**  
Chief expert  
Directorate of “Human Rights and international organisations“

**Ministry of Justice**

- Ms Victoria NESHEVA**  
Adviser
- Ms Tatiana KOSTOVA**  
Adviser

**Ministry of the Interior**

- Ms Blagorodna MAKEVA, PhD**  
Senior legal adviser



Directorate General of Police

**Mr Vassil STOYCHEV**  
Deputy Director  
Directorate General of Police

**Ministry of Finance**

**Ms Iliana VLADOVA**  
Senior expert

**Office of the Chief Prosecutor**

**Ms Krasimira KOTEVA**  
Prosecutor

**National centre for the protection of public health**

**Ms Fanka KOICHEVA**  
Chief expert

**NGOs**

**Ms Lora BELCHEVA**  
Animus Foundation

**Ms Genoveva TISHEVA**  
Bulgarian foundation for gender research

**Dr Rossanka VENELINOVA**  
"Nadja" centre

**Ms Pepa RIZOVA**  
Liberal women's network

**National centre for opinion polls**

**Ms Lidia YORDANOVA**  
Director

**Ms Elena DARIEVA**  
Chief expert

**Ms Kameliya RASHKOVA**  
Senior expert

**City of Sofia**

**Ms Lilyana SABEVA**  
Secretary to the Committee for the prevention of juvenile delinquency

**Other participants**

**Ms Joslyn MACK-WILSON**  
Attachée, Political affairs  
Embassy of the United States of America

**Council of Europe Office in Sofia**

**Ms Teodora KALEYNSKA**  
Director

***Secretariat of national parliaments***

**Bulgaria**      **Mr Petko BAEV**  
Director, International relations

**Ms Zlatina KHRISTOVA**  
Secretary to the PACE delegation

**Ms Zornitsa ILIEVA**  
Adviser

**Croatia**      **Mr Igor ŠRIBAR**  
Secretary to the Croatian delegation  
National Parliament of Croatia

***Secretariat of the PACE***

**Guillaume PARENT**  
Deputy Secretary to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men