



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES



**EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY
COUNCIL OF EUROPE
JOINT PROJECT:**



**Europe mobilises against rape and
for the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention
as a tool for change**

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS FOR THE PROJECT:

Europe mobilises against rape and
for the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention as a tool for change

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INTRODUCTION

This report contains a description of the main characteristics and the main activities and main outputs developed by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) under the framework of the project "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!": a joint project between the EWL and the Council of Europe (CoE) that was possible thanks to the financial support of the Government of Finland to the Council of Europe.

The outstanding cooperation between the CoE, the European Women's Lobby, the Experts of the EWL observatory on violence against women and EWL member organisations and partners¹ has been crucial for the success of the project in achieving its main aim: initiating a debate at national and European levels to promote the Istanbul Convention.

Overall, the project has been very successful in promoting the Istanbul Convention by raising awareness on the positive changes it can bring with a special focus on sexual violence, including rape.

The European Women's Lobby acted as coordinator of this project, ensuring coherence in achieving the common objectives, providing support and visibility to the project. In this regard, the EWL organised a consultative meeting in Brussels, has provided guidance to the partners organisations with whom a contract was signed; and have launched a [website](#) to show the widespread mobilisation thorough Europe.

Furthermore, the EWL has developed a number of activities aiming to promote the debate at EU level around the positive changes that the Istanbul Convention can bring if it is ratified by the EU and its member states. All the activities of the EWL and its outputs are described below in this report.

The role of EWL members and its partner organisations has been crucial in the organisation of the public events in the form of seminars, debates, talks, etc. that were organised in 28 European countries² around the sixteen days of activism against violence against women, between 25 November and 10 December 2013. In all the 28 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom) the EWL member organisations organised public events to raise awareness around inadequate criminal legislation in the area of sexual violence, and to promote the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, tailoring messages to the context in the respective country. The description of all the public events can be found in chapter 8 of this report.

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Why the project was focused on rape? Rape continues to be one of the most devastating forms of gender-based violence, yet it is too often a taboo subject and it remains shrouded in silence. Reference at European level indicates that only between 2% and 10% of rapes are reported³. Being crucial for the European Women's Lobby (EWL) to improve awareness of the scale and gravity of this form of male violence against women, and focus attention on the need for improved responses in the criminal justice system, the 2013 [EWL Barometer on Rape in Europe 2013](#) focused on the criminalisation of rape and

¹ A full list of the EWL partner organisations in this project is provided in the annex 1 to this report.

² Despite the efforts done by La Strada –Ukraine in the organization of an event in Kiev, the event in Ukraine, foreseen for the 3rd of December, had to be postponed due to political reasons. It was celebrated in April 2014.

³ European Women's Lobby (2013): [EWL Barometer on rape in the EU 2013](#). Brussels: Creative Commons.

especially the definitions used in criminal codes. The Barometer provides an important European overview of legislation and data collection practices comparing European countries with regard to the extent of their compliance with human rights standards for legislation on rape.

Aims:

- Put sexual violence and rape up on the political agenda by initiating public debate around inadequate criminal legislation, the lack of services and support for survivors, the lack of investment in prevention and limited access to justice for victims of rape.
- Promote the use of the Istanbul Convention as a concrete tool for change to eradicate all forms of male violence against women, and specifically rape.

Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness** and **Inform** on the phenomenon of rape as one of the most devastating and very common forms of violence against women.
2. Raise awareness about the Istanbul Convention and its specific provisions on sexual violence and rape.
3. Taking into account the results of the EWL Barometer on rape in Europe 2013, find and highlight possible ways forward in the country, the obstacles to overcome and the progress to accomplish in order to improve legislation, services and data collection mechanisms.

The Council of Europe *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (also known as the Istanbul Convention) sets standards for comprehensive measures to prevent and combat violence against women, recognising that “violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men” (Preamble). The Istanbul Convention requires States Parties to adapt their criminal legislation on sexual violence and rape to focus on the **lack of consent** as a constituent element of crime and move away from the still widespread requirement of use of physical force.



What change will the Istanbul Convention bring for preventing and combating sexual violence?

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence requires States Parties to:

- **Adapt criminal legislation** to ensure that the definition of the criminal offense of sexual violence, including rape is based on the **lack of consent** as a constituent element of crime (Article 36)
- **Ensure there is no 'marriage exemption'** for rape, so that rape against current or former spouses or partners is criminalised on the same basis as rape against any other person (Article 36)
- **Collect disaggregated relevant statistical data** at regular intervals on sexual violence and rape (Article 11)
- **Provide** specialist services to support women victims of sexual violence, including rape. (Chapter IV. Specifically, Article 25)
- **Invest in measures to prevent** sexual violence through awareness-raising, education, media and involvement of the private sector (Chapter III)
- **Promote access to justice for victims of rape, in particular by ensuring that:**
 - o prosecution of sexual violence is not fully dependent on the victim's complaint (Article 55)
 - o evidence relating to the sexual history and conduct of the victim is permitted only when relevant and necessary (Article 54), since such evidence is sometimes used to challenge the respectability, the credibility and the lack of consent of the victim
 - o mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing, including mediation and conciliation, are prohibited (Article 48)
 - o victims are protected at all stages of investigations and judicial proceedings (Article 56)
 - o victims have access to legal assistance and to free legal aid (Article 57).



Key Messages

“Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!” was the slogan of the Project.

It was chosen because:

- It combines both aims of the project: raise awareness against rape and promote the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
- It is addressed to our main target audience which are political decision makers, calling them to take action on the topic of rape.
- It is sufficiently open to be inclusive of all the specificities in each country regarding the status of adoption the Istanbul Convention (signature, ratification and/or implementation).

Besides the common slogan, key messages were developed in relation to:

1. The phenomenon of rape in Europe.
2. The provisions of the Istanbul Convention compared to the actual situation in Europe, according to the EWL Barometer on Rape in 2013.

The key messages were adapted to the context of each country by including reference to statistical data and studies.

1. Key messages on the phenomenon of rape in Europe

- **Sexual violence against women and specially rape continues to be one of the most devastating forms of gender-based violence, yet it is too often a taboo subject and it remains shrouded in silence/‘forgotten’.**
- **Rape is a serious form of violation of human rights as a violation of the individual’s sexual autonomy and bodily integrity.**
- **Sexual violence, including rape, is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men.**
- **A great majority of sex crimes remain undisclosed and sexual violence remains underestimated.** Reference at European level indicates that only between 2% and 10% of rapes are reported. Many experts highlight that a large number of rapes remain unreported because women are afraid to ask for protection, do not know where to go and/or do not believe that the existent legal system is going to protect them. Moreover, gender stereotypes as well as societal expectations with regard to women and men’s behaviour (gender roles) can contribute to an atmosphere where rape is possible and indeed acceptable⁴.
- **The road ‘from report to court’⁵ is paved with many obstacles for women’s access to justice.** Many reported rapes are never prosecuted and from those that are prosecuted, the vast majority

⁴Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Date Rape Cases among Young Women: Strategies for Support and Prevention, University of Nicosia Press, Nicosia, 2008.

⁵ Borrowing the title of the following report: Hester, M 2013, ‘From Report to Court: Rape and the Criminal Justice System in the North East’. Bristol: University of Bristol.



do not end in a conviction. Existing comparative research shows that in Europe, on average, 14% of reported rapes end in a conviction, with rates falling as low as 5% in some countries.⁶

- **Official data on sexual violence are difficult to find and studies on the prevalence of violence against women often fail to estimate the extent of sexual violence.**

2. Key messages on the provisions of the Istanbul Convention compared to the actual situation in Europe, according to the EWL Barometer on rape in 2013.

- **The Istanbul Convention is a very important tool to improve legislation and policies on rape.**
- **The Istanbul Convention should be signed, ratified and implemented in a timely manner as an effective tool to prevent and combat rape and protect its victims.**
- **The Istanbul Convention sets comprehensive standards for legislative and other measures to prevent and combat rape, in particular:**
 - a) **the legal definition of rape;**
 - b) **data collection on all forms of violence against women, including rape;**
 - c) **protection and support for women victims;**
 - d) **prevention;**
 - e) **access to justice, and**
 - f) **protection for migrant women, refugee women and women asylum-seekers.**

a. Legal definition of rape

- **The Istanbul Convention is a very important tool to improve legislation on rape.**

Force-based definitions of rape offer inadequate protection for women against sexual violence. In the case of *M.C. v. Bulgaria*, the European Court of Human Rights has stated this and considered rape legislation that focusses exclusively or unduly on proving the use of force rather than the lack of consent of the victim to be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Istanbul Convention incorporated this judgement by requiring States Parties to adapt their criminal legislation on sexual violence and rape to focus on the lack of consent as a constituent element of the crime.
- **The Istanbul Convention states clearly that a non-consensual act of sexual nature is violence and should be criminalised.** (Article 36) The consent, and not the use of force, is the constituent element of the crime.
- The lack of consent has sometimes also been denounced as difficult to prove and that “may, in practice, result in the secondary victimization of the complainant/survivor by forcing the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the complainant/survivor did not consent. In an attempt to avoid such secondary victimization, some countries have developed definitions of rape which rely on the existence of certain circumstances, rather than demonstrating a lack of consent.”⁷

⁶ Jo Lovett and Liz Kelly (2009) *Different systems, similar outcomes. Tracking attrition in reported rape cases across Europe*. London: CWASU, London Metropolitan University. (Funded by Daphne II). Hester, M 2013, ‘From Report to Court: Rape and the Criminal Justice System in the North East’. Bristol:University of Bristol.

⁷ [UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women, 2010.](#)



- The Explanatory Report of the Istanbul Convention further clarifies that “Prosecution of the offence of rape will require a context-sensitive assessment of the evidence in order to establish on a case-by-case basis whether the victim has freely consented to the sexual act performed” (para 192). A minimalist view of consent may obscure the extent to which social stereotypes about ‘appropriate’ gendered behaviour, as well as material considerations and structural power differentials configure an unequal terrain of choice and communication about sexuality between women and men. There is substantial evidence that “a woman who exhibits other non-conforming behaviour, for example, by drinking alcohol, dressing in a way that may be perceived as ‘provocative’, or initiating intimacy will often be deemed – by defendants, criminal justice officials and jurors – to have sent out signals of sexual interest which cannot easily be revoked when subsequently relied upon by a male perpetrator”.⁸ It is important to ensure that the interpretations of rape legislation and the prosecution of rape cases are not influenced by such gender stereotypes and myths about male and female sexuality.

- **The Istanbul Convention specifies that “Consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances”.** (Article 36) This points the need to go beyond minimalist notions of consent towards a possible notion of ‘consent+’ that integrates societal and contextual considerations of inequality and power.

b. Data collection and recording

- **Available data on women victims of rape is poor:** with few exceptions, information on women victims for reported rapes is non-existent. The police and judicial systems, when recording the cases, do not publish or even collect sex-disaggregated data.

- **The Istanbul Convention requires States Parties to collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on all forms of violence against women, including rape; to conduct population-based surveys to assess the prevalence of and trends of forms of violence against women, including rape; and to support research in the field to identify root causes and effects, incidences and conviction (Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention).**

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c. Provision of services and support to victims

- The lack of **specific services and resources for victims/survivors of rape is still a common issue in Europe.** Following the results of the EWL Barometer on Rape in Europe 2013, in the majority of countries there are no specific services and/or special help lines for women victims of rape. And everywhere, experts denounce resources dedicated to dealing with this matter, which are insufficient at best and derisory to non-existent at worst.
- **The traumatic nature of rape requires a particularly sensitive response by trained and specialised staff.** Victims of this type of violence need immediate medical care and trauma support combined with immediate forensic examination to collect the evidence needed for prosecution. Furthermore, there is often a great need for psychological counselling and therapy – often weeks and months after the event.

⁸ For a more elaborate discussion see Vanessa E. Munro, From consent to coercion: Evaluating international law and domestic frameworks for the criminalization of rape, pp. 17-29, in Clare McGlynn and Vanessa Munro (eds.) *Rethinking Rape Law*, London: Routledge, 2010.

- **The Istanbul Convention obliges States Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms to protect and support victims of violence**, including victims of rape. The Istanbul Convention requires :
 - Ensuring that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence, including legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment (Article 20 – General support services).
 - The setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims (Article 25 – Support for victims of sexual violence).
- Importantly, the Istanbul Convention recognises that specialist support services, such as the rape crisis centres, are best when provided by women’s organisations, which have experienced staff with in-depth knowledge of gender-based violence that are able to address the multiple and specific needs of women victims of rape.

d. On prevention

- **Gender myths and stereotypes about male and female sexuality and sexual behaviour are still prevalent in society, as well as notions about ‘appropriate’ gender behaviour.** There is a consistent and alarmingly high range of prejudicial attitudes held by the public who blame women for their victimisation and compound an already traumatic experience by attributing the assault in whole or in part to some aspect of women’s demeanour or behaviour.

- **The Istanbul Convention has a whole chapter dedicated to prevention** in order to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and other practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men. Among the measures that the states should implement, the Istanbul Convention promotes awareness-raising campaigns preventive programmes, the inclusion of gender equality in formal curriculum at all levels of education and training for relevant professionals (Articles 12 to 17).

e. On access to justice

- Gender myths and stereotypes are present not only in the larger society; they are still widespread among police, prosecutors and judges. Therefore, women often face additional risks when reporting rape to the authorities, and there is often no guarantee that they will be treated respectfully by the judicial system.
- The Istanbul Convention puts in place a number of measures designed to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, as well as the protection of victims of such crimes at all stages of judicial proceedings.

- **Measures to protect victims of rape at all stages of investigations and judicial proceedings**
- The Istanbul Convention requires law enforcement agencies to promptly and appropriately respond to all forms of violence, including rape, by offering adequate and immediate protection to victims (Article 50).



- The Istanbul Convention requires States Parties to make available the following support to victims of violence, including victims of rape: specialist support services for victims during investigations and judicial proceedings, such as trained counsellors (Article 55(2)); appropriate support services for victims so that their rights and interests are duly presented and taken into account at all stages of investigations and judicial proceedings (Article 56(1e)); legal assistance and legal aid (Article 57)
- Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure the possibility for governmental and non-governmental organisations and to assist and/or support victims, at their request, during investigation and judicial proceedings (Article 55(2)).

- In judicial proceedings evidence relating to the sexual history and sexual conduct of a victim is sometimes exploited in order to discredit the evidence presented by the victim. The defence sometimes uses previous sexual behaviour evidence in order to challenge the respectability, the credibility and the lack of consent of victims. As NGO and experts denounce, at court proceedings victims are still asked about their sexual preferences, sexual history, possible abortions, drug and alcohol use.

This may lead to *de facto* inequality, since victims are more likely to be provided with this protection if they are judged to be ‘respectable’.

- **The Istanbul Convention obliges States Parties to take the necessary measures to ensure that in any civil or criminal proceedings, evidence relating to the sexual history shall be permitted only when is relevant and necessary** (Article 54). Past sexual behaviour should not be considered as an excuse for acts of violence against women. Sexual history evidence should be only presented in a way that does not lead to secondary victimisation. Victims should have access to legal recourse without suffering additional trauma because of their sexual history and conduct.

- Furthermore, when prosecution and investigation depends on the victim’s complaint, if the victim refuses to support prosecution the case will be dropped. The main risk is that the victim may waive the complaint under pressure from the perpetrator. Taking this into consideration and taking into account the emotional complexity of criminal proceedings for the victim, including pressure from the perpetrator, the majority of rape cases stay under-reported or do not reach the court.

- **The Istanbul Convention requires Parties to ensure that investigations into or prosecution of rape offences shall not be wholly dependent upon a report or complaint filed by a victim (Article 55).** Law enforcement authorities should investigate in a proactive way in order to gather evidence in order to make sure that the proceedings may be carried out even if the victim withdraws her complaint.

f. Protection for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women

- Migrant women victims of gender-based violence, including rape are extremely vulnerable as fear of expulsion or the risk of losing the residence status is acting as an impediment for them to seek assistance, report, or ask for separation or divorce. Migrant women victims of gender-based violence, including rape can be trapped in situations of abuse, if their status in the country depends on that of their abuser. Undocumented women migrant workers in domestic service



victims of violence, sexual violence and rape, are especially vulnerable to being abused by their employers.

- **The Istanbul Convention introduces the possibility of granting migrant women an autonomous residence permit if they are trapped in an abusive relationship because their residence status depends on that of their abusive spouse or partner; and that their expulsion proceedings, if initiated, are suspended.** Furthermore, Parties shall issue a renewable residence permit to victims if the authority considers that this is necessary for their personal situation or/and if the investigation or criminal proceeding requires the cooperation and testimony of the victim (Article 59).

- Rape and sexual violence have been massively used as a weapon of war and as a form of persecution against women in conflict areas and war affected zones. However, generally at international level, there is an alarming lack of understanding of the different causes of persecution affecting women and men. Overall, the criteria for establishing refugee status are often gender blind. Only a small minority of countries in the world recognise the status of refugee for women fleeing from gender-based violence.

- **The Istanbul Convention requires States Parties to:**
 - ensure that gender-based violence against women may be recognised as a form of persecution within the meaning of the 1951 Refugee Convention (Article 60 paragraph 1).
 - ensure that the grounds for asylum listed in the 1951 Refugee Convention are interpreted in a gender-sensitive manner (Article 60 paragraph 2).
 - introduce gender-sensitive procedures, guidelines and support services in the asylum process (Article 60 paragraph 3).



MAIN EWL ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

1. Consultative meeting

On the 11 September 2013, a consultative meeting was held between the representatives from the European Women's Lobby and the Council of Europe. Four experts from the EWL Observatory on violence against women (from France, Ireland, Portugal and Serbia) attended the meeting in order to provide their insights and opinions.

To feed the meeting, the EWL launched a grid to all the Experts of the EWL Observatory in order to obtain relevant information to prepare the consultative meeting. Experts were asked about their opinion on what should have been the key messages (taking into account their national context) and their ideas of which type of public events and public actions could be relevant.

During the meeting, several decisions were taken regarding: the aims and expected outcomes of the project, the target audience, the common slogan and key messages, the visual identity requirements and the content of the Action Kit (type of public events, media outreach, resources to include, alliances to build, etc.).

2. Guidelines

Following the decisions taken at the Consultative meeting, the EWL prepared guidelines that were sent to all the Experts of the EWL Observatory on violence against women and EWL members in order to clarify the objectives, the expected outputs and outcomes and the type of collaboration needed. The guidelines helped the organisers at country level to start planning the public events and start contacting the speakers and participants.

3. Action Kit

The EWL drafted an Action kit for the project "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!", in close cooperation with the Council of Europe who provided support in drafting the key messages and objectives and also in proofreading the document.



The action kit detailed the objectives of the project and the key messages, providing detailed description of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention to combat sexual violence and rape regarding:

- a) the legal definition of rape;
- b) data collection on all forms of violence against women, including rape;
- c) protection and support for women victims;
- d) prevention;
- e) access to justice, and
- f) protection for migrant women, refugee women and women asylum-seekers.

Furthermore, the Action kit contained hints and practical information for the organisation and the design of a communication strategy. It also provided with some tools as for example a template model for press release and a list of possible posts and tweets.



The action kit detailed as well the visual identity requirements and the reporting requirements.

An Action kit was sent to all the EWL Experts of the Observatory on violence, to all the EWL member organisations (not only, at country level but also to all the Paneuropean Networks members).

Furthermore, the Action kit was uploaded in the dedicated section in the website in order to broaden the impact of the project allowing other organisations to use the information.

The action kit can be downloaded following this link: <http://www.womenlobby.org/get-involved/ewl-campaigns-actions/act-against-rape-use-the-istanbul-286/action-kit/?lang=en>

4. Communication strategy

Several tools were developed in the framework of the communication strategy:

- a. **Dedicated section in the EWL Website:** A [dedicated section](#) was developed in order to give visibility to the public events organised at EU and country level. To this aim, the main tool in the website is a map informing of all the events all over Europe. The dedicated section included also links to relevant resources (campaigns, reports and other materials) and a link to the dedicated website on the Istanbul Convention of the Council Of Europe. The EWL Barometer on rape in Europe 2013 was also made available for being the report in which this project, “Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!” is grounded.
- b. **EWL pages in [facebook](#) and [twitter](#):** Both pages in this two social networks served as a tool to raise awareness among more than 10.000 followers on the issue of rape as a form of violence against women; to inform about the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, the deficiencies on the legislation on rape in several countries and to give visibility to the public events organised all over Europe. The hashtags [#actagainstrape2013](#) [#IstanbulConvention](#) [#16days](#) [#stopVAW](#) [#orangepyourworld](#) [#whiteribbon](#) [#HRD13](#) were used to promote the visibility of the posts.
- c. **EWL weekly newsletter.** Articles were published regularly in the newsletter informing about the recent developments regarding the joint project between the EWL and the CoE. Every week, the EWL called for the timely signature, ratification and adequate implementation of the Istanbul convention.
- d. **Press release** launched to mark the International Day for the elimination of violence against women, 25th November and to draw attention on the fact that rape continues to be one of the most devastating forms of gender-based violence, yet it is too often a taboo subject and thus remains shrouded in silence. The press release can be downloaded [here](#).
- e. **Video-clip** to speak out and draw attention to the fact that rape needs to be seriously addressed by the authorities in terms of access to justice, prevention and support to victims. As the video illustrates, the Istanbul Convention is a tool for change!



Watch the video following this [link](#).

The video clip has also been downloaded at the dedicated website of the CoE on the Istanbul Convention. To this moment, it has reached more than 1000 views on Youtube.



5. Publishing an Overview of the EWL barometer on rape in Europe

In the framework of this project, the EWL has produced an Overview of the EWL Barometer in two languages (FR/EN) in which the methodology and main general conclusions of the EWL barometer are explained. Furthermore, this overview contains a description of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention regarding rape in four areas: legal definition of the crime; data collection on all forms of violence against women including rape; provision of services and support to victims and access to justice.

The Overview was made available to the public during the Round table at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. It will be also made available in other relevant occasions as a tool to promote the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change.

6. Support to the organisers of the events at country level

The EWL Secretariat has provided constant support to the organisations and the experts involved at country level. Furthermore, the EWL secretariat has been constantly monitoring the processes at country level with two objectives: ensure the internal coherence of the project; and disseminate the information mainly through the dedicated section of the EWL website.

PUBLIC EVENTS

1. Round Table “Promote rights! Act against rape!” at the European Parliament – 10 December- Strasbourg

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On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day (10 December), the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) organised a round-table “Promote rights! Act against rape!”, co-hosted by MEPs Mikael Gustafsson and Antonyia Parvanova. Please, download the agenda [here](#).



The first panel highlighted that rape is a devastating form of violence against women and a persistent violation of women’s rights and discussed in which ways an action at European level can help to promote the Istanbul Convention. The panel started by reminding the symbolic date of International Human Rights day but also highlighting that still today many women’s rights are violated. Mr. Mickael Gustafsson (GUE, Sweden), Ms. Antonyia Parvanova (ALDE, Bulgaria), Ms. Teresa Jimenez-Becerril (EPP, Spain) and Ms. Zita Gurmai (S&D, Hungary), as members of the European Parliament, and Ms. Ismeta Dervoz as member of the Parliamentary Network “Women free from Violence, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (Bosnia and Herzegovina) presented the Europe-wide challenges in responding to sexual

violence and highlighted the positive changes that the Istanbul Convention can bring in this field. They called for the EU to be more engaged for the elimination of violence against women by adopting a European strategy, an EU Year on violence against women and by ratifying the Istanbul Convention.

Ms. Liri Kopaci-Di Michele, Head of Division Gender Equality and Violence against Women of the Council of Europe, reminded how the Istanbul Convention is a model instrument and the need for stronger action to transpose it concretely. She welcomed the partnership with the European Parliament and women's NGOs, hoping this could help to make the Convention effective in a very near future.

At the second panel, Ms. Hilary Fischer (Director of Policy, Voice and Membership, Women's Aid Federation England) presented the first evidences from the inquiry "Justice for Women: From Reporting to Sentencing", highlighting the obstacles women face to access justice, especially in cases of sexual violence in intimate partnership. She also mentioned the dangers of a decreasing funding for support services and gave a brief feedback on the 16 days of action campaign Women's Aid is running on ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

Ms. Nora Kiss (Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights, Portugal), explained that while women's NGOs welcome the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by Portugal, they are aware of the challenges ahead for the implementation of the Convention, specifically regarding the needed changes in the legislation and the provision of services. She informed on the lack of services to support women victims of sexual violence and the lobbying strategy to keep promoting the adequate and timely implementation of the Convention.

Ms. Colette De Troy, Director EWL Observatory on Violence against Women, presented some of the first results of the joint project between the EWL and the Council of Europe and provided an overview of the events at country level and their outcomes. She also reasserted that this project has settled the ground for future actions and further cooperation in the promotion of the Istanbul Convention.

To close the event, the European Women's Lobby screened the video-clip "Act against rape!" to the audience.

At the end of the event, all the MEPs attending the event showed their strong commitment and high engagement to promote the Istanbul Convention, as it can be seen in the pictures at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/get-involved/ewl-campaigns-actions/act-against-rape-use-the-istanbul-286/article/meps-join-women-s-ngos-and-the?lang=en>



2. PUBLIC EVENTS IN 28 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

- 18 November, Paris, France
- 22 November, Sofia, Bulgaria
- 25 November, Zagreb, Croatia
- 25 November, Aarhus, Denmark
- 25 November, Stockholm, Sweden
- 25 November, Vilnius, Lithuania
- 25-26 November, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 26 November, Valletta, Malta
- 27 November, Lisbon, Portugal
- 3 December, Prague, Czech Republic
- 4 December, Athens, Greece
- 4 December, Bucharest, Romania
- 4 December, Dublin, Ireland
- 4 December, Helsinki, Finland
- 4 December, Skopje, Macedonia
- 5 December, Glasgow, Scotland
- 5 December, Rome, Italy
- 6 - 10 December, Diyarbakir, Turkey

- 9 December, Belgrade, Serbia
- 9 December, Tallinn, Estonia
- 10 December, Budapest, Hungary
- 10 December, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 10 December, Riga, Latvia
- 10 December, Warsaw, Poland
- 11 December, Vienna, Austria
- 16 December, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 19 December, Madrid, Spain.
- 16 and 28 April 2014, Kiev, Ukraine (the event was organised for the 3rd December 2013 but it had to be postponed due to political reasons).

Bellow, a summary description of all the events can be found. The reports sent by the organisations' can be made available.

AUSTRIA

As Austria has already ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Austrian Women's Ring organised a round table on the 11th December in Vienna with a focus on the participation of the NGOs in its implementation. The mechanisms to establish a monitoring process were also analysed: the prerequisites for a platform to follow the implementation and the monitoring process were discussed, as well as the participation of NGOs and of Members of the Austrian Parliament.



The Austrian Member of Parliament Gisela Wurm, who is the leader of the Austrian delegation to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, was the keynote speaker. She informed about the process leading to the convention and pointed out the 4 main pillars: Prevention of Violence, Protection against Violence, Criminal Justice and (international) Monitoring.

In the Round Table Discussion, moderated by the Chair of Frauenring Christa Pözlbauer, the experts Katharine Beclin, Marion Breiter, Ursula Kussyk and Catharina Grau discussed legal prerequisites to implement the Istanbul Convention, such as changes in the criminal law

in particular sentences for perpetrators and the rights of victims. They underlined the need for compulsory awareness building programmes for judges and legal staff, similar to those for the police force. Furthermore the Social services have to be strengthened and adequate funds provided for help-lines and shelters. Legal changes may be necessary in order to provide information to persons dealing with family members of victims, e.g. teachers, medical doctors.... Most important for preventing violence against women is awareness building in all strata of society, the elimination of stereotypes from teaching materials, media and advertising. Participation of NGOs was discussed as well as a framework to support such participation.

Finally, a letter to the Minister for Justice was sent to ask for the appointment of more women for the expert group of lawyers analysing the reform of the criminal law. A meeting will also take place between expert from the Austrian Women's Ring and standing committee on gender equality at the Parliament. Furthermore, a platform of experts from the Austrian Women Ring will meet civil servants involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Istanbul Convention.

BULGARIA

The second event of the series “Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!” was organised by the **Bulgarian National Coordination of the European Women’s Lobby** ([the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation](#)) on the **22 of November** at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Bulgarian Platform of the European Women’s Lobby (BWL) together with the Alliance for Protection against Domestic Violence (APDV) launched 16 days Campaign on 22 of November in Sofia. More than 60 women holding balloons and a big poster started the Campaign in front of the Bulgarian Parliament demonstrating for urgent ratification of the Istanbul Convention.



The Bulgarian National Coordinator of Women’s Lobby is demanding the urgent signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

On the same date, after the demonstration, BWL and APDV held a round table in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The event was opened by Lazar Lazarov, Deputy Minister of the Labour and Social Policy. The Deputy Minister of Justice, Ms. Sabrie Sapundjieva congratulated the initiative and sent an official letter to the organizers. A presentation of the Barometer 2013 focusing on

Bulgarian situation has been done by Iliana Balabanova-Stoycheva, Coordinator of the Bulgarian Platform and National expert in the EWL Observatory against VAW. The figures and data presented provoked serious discussion and all the participants agreed on the urgent need to improve legislation, prevention and protection services. Genoveva Tisheva, Chair of APDV presented the Istanbul Convention

as a tool for eliminating VAW and Irina Ivanova, Chief Expert in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs presented Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria to implement recommendation of the CEDAW Committee in relation to violence against women.

The authorities agreed that Bulgaria needs to harmonise its legislation in accordance to the Convention. They recognize the existence of lot of gaps regarding the definition, statistics, prevention, support to the NGOs, etc. The main obstacle identified was the legislation and the lack of resources for implementation.

Finally, the event was closed by inviting all participants to sign the petition to the Bulgarian

authorities to ratify the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The petition was signed by the Ministry of Labour and social affairs.

Furthermore, letters were sent to the Council of Ministers and all the 240 Bulgarian Parliamentarians asking for the urgent ratification of the Convention.

The BWL and APDV disseminated among the participants brochures, postcards, stickers and calendar with fact and figures on rape and other form of violence against women.



This event was part of a long term Campaign in Bulgaria, asking for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. In this regard, after the event in Sofia, events were organized in several Bulgarian cities (Burgas, Plovdiv, Plevna, Plovdiv, Silistra, Veliko Tarnovo) by organisations members of the BWL and APDV.

As direct impact of the project, the Presidency of the Republic asked for a meeting between BWL and APDV in order to discuss eventual further common action regarding the Convention. There was a first discussion for the organisation of High Level International Conference on Violence against women in Sofia.

For 2014, BWL is organizing meetings with the Chair of the National Assembly and the Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee.

CROATIA

The Center for Women War Victims, ROSA organised the event together with the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality at the Croatian Parliament. 60 people attended the event, including MPs, representative of various state agencies, courts, associations of women's rights, the ministry of



social policy and youth, the office of the Croatian president, UNDP and academics and several journalists. The speakers discussed on the following topics: how Croatian legislation is complying with the CoE Convention, particularly criminal offences against sexual freedom in the new Penal Code; the process of signing and ratifying of the Istanbul Convention; on EWL and CoE action in 33 states, and EWL Barometer on Rape 2013 in 32 countries; the project of the Ministry of Defense in cooperation with UNDP in Croatia, on protection of war rape survivors in Croatia; the situation and needs of women rape survivors; on existing practices in court cases of rape; and finally, the analysis on court cases of rape in marriage;

presentation of the NGO campaigns such as I SIGN aimed the supporting of the process of ratification and implementation of Istanbul Convention. Several MPs stressed the importance of the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change. One MP proposed to start an initiative and sign a motion for the ratification.

CYPRUS

The **Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies** organised an event in the House of Europe at Nicosia, aiming at starting the debate on the need to take immediate measures to prevent sexual violence and rape, and to protect and support victims. Also , to promote the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence as one of the most important tools on the Elimination of all forms of violence against women.

During the event there were interventions from Susana Pavlou, President of the Cyprus Women's Lobby and expert of the EWL Observatory on violence against women, Mr. Rikkos Mappourides, Member of the House Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities, Ms. Nasia Dionysiou, Officer of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) and Human Rights, and Dr. Dimitra Sorvatzioti, Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Nicosia. There were also significant interventions by



representatives of NGOs such as the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, the Movement for Equality, Support and Anti-racism (KISA) and Hands across the Divide.

Through the discussions held, it was made clear that the Cyprus legislative framework in relation to rape and sexual violence does not meet the minimum standards set by the Istanbul Convention. For example, in the Cyprus Criminal Code rape, indecent assault, and the 'corruption of a woman through the use of threats, fraud, or the administration of drugs' is classified as a criminal offence against 'morals' and not as a human rights violation. While in the Cyprus penal code rape is narrowly defined, the Convention broadens the definition of rape and sexual violence includes all non-consensual acts of a sexual nature.

Furthermore, through the discussion and the interventions by NGOs and women's organisations, it was revealed that there are no specialized services for the support and protection victims of rape and sexual violence. During the event, a survivor of rape talked about the lack of support and the poor treatment she received from the health services. The lack of support and protection also has a huge impact on the ability of victims to go through the criminal justice process.

The Minister of Justice has committed to signing the Istanbul Convention once the results of a study that is being carried out by the Government to examine the legal and financial implications of signing and ratifying the Istanbul Convention are finalized. This is expected by end of January 2014.

Media coverage of the event:

<http://www.cytoday.eu/index.php?id=357&nid=2637859>

<http://www.24h.com.cy/component/k2/item/44031-gnorise-kai-diekdikise-ta-dikaiomata-gia-isi-ekprosopisi-antron-ginekon.html>.

CZECH REPUBLIC

ProFrem o.p.s. organised a press conference and a round table at premises of the Senate of the Czech Republic on the topic of Violence against women, specifically rape and the adoption of the Istanbul Convention. The press Conference was opened by the Vice-President of the Senate Alena Gajdůšková. Among the participants at the round table were representatives of the city hall, local police, NGOs,



professionals providing support to victims of rape. Among the topics debated, the deficiencies in the provision of services to victims and the secondary victimization during the criminal proceedings (especially police and medical services) were highlighted. As consequence, women victims tend to prefer to be attended at NGOs and not to go to the police or doctors. The positive changes that the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention would bring towards the eradication of sexual violence were highlighted. For example the need of training of the different professionals involved in order to avoid second victimization; the need for prevention strategies

towards the eradication of predominant myths about rape.

A recommendation was sent to the Committee for prevention of domestic violence of the Government to take into account the Istanbul Convention and its definition of different forms of violence against women when drafting the National Action Plan for the Prevention of VAW (2015-2019)

Find more information in Czech following this [link](#). In this [link](#) you can find a video of the press conference.



DENMARK

The Women's Council held two public events in Aarhus and Denmark in order to create awareness on the Istanbul Convention. The Women's Council together with the Women's Museum organised a public meeting on the 25th November in Aarhus that was focused on sexual violence against women with a focus on counseling, campaigns and prevention. "Sexual violence against women, what can we do to stop it?". 50 people attended and the speakers were: Ulla Thornemann from the Danish Everyday Sexism project (<http://everydaysexism.com/>), Stine Schou Kvistgaard from 'Center of rape victims' and Susanne from the Joan Sisters, an NGO that helps and supports victims of rape and domestic abuse.



The need to ratify the Istanbul convention was highlighted as a tool to reform the current laws, which are today serving to maintain the rape culture.

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ESTONIA

The Estonian Women's Association Rountable Programme organised an event in which the results of the EWL barometer on rape 2013 were presented by Eha Reitemann, expert of the EWL Observatory on violence against women. Estonia's current situation of sexual violence prevention, intervention responses to violence and collection of relevant statistical data was introduced from the perspective of the following institutions/entities: gynecologists by Mairi Kaha, board chairwoman of the Estonian Sexual Health Association; women's shelters by Külli Piirsild, board member of the Estonian Women's Shelters' Union and manager of Võru County Women's Shelter; the police, by Kerli Palu, leading officer of the Central Criminal Police; prosecuting authorities, Enda Ülviste, leading prosecutor of the North District Prosecutor's Office; Ministry of Social Affairs, by Helen Sööl, chief specialist of the gender equality department; Ministry of the Interior, by Jenny Jakobson, adviser of the law enforcement and criminal policy department; Ministry of Justice, by Laidi Surva, adviser, Criminal Statistics and Analysis Division; Ministry of Education and Research, by Kadri Ann Salla. The presentations were followed by a discussion.



Lack of comparable and sex disaggregated data, lack of adequate training of professionals dealing with rape cases, lack of specialised services as rape centre crisis were highlighted.

A new project, funded by the European Commission will be carried out with a focus on combating sexual violence against young women.



The Estonian Women's Association Roundtable will work more on sexual violence trying to obtain funding from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. The Ministers and NGOs attending will be invited as partners of the project.

EWAR will send a letter to all the Ministries involved detailing the gaps identified in Estonia and the recommendations to improve.

FINLAND

Nytkis organised a **panel discussion** in Helsinki to which candidates to the new European Parliament Elections were invited. The Istanbul Convention has been strongly on Nytkis' political agenda this year. On the International Day for the Elimination of VAW, 25.11, Nytkis carried out 63 events all around Finland where they raised awareness on the need of shelters (crucial question in Finland) in connection to Istanbul Convention.

On the 4th of December, Nytkis held a public event in relation to the European Parliament elections next spring. The first part was dedicated to the 50/50 Campaign, the need for parity democracy and equal political participation of women and men.

The second part of the event was dedicated to the Istanbul Convention. The main theme discussed was the need to adapt the legal definition of rape to the Istanbul Convention which will ensure that the lack of consent is the constituent element of crime, moving away from the requirement of use of physical force. Therefore, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention is considered as a crucial step towards the eradication of violence against women and rape.

Panelists, Candidates to the European Elections agreed on the importance of adequately addressing the problem of violence against women. Panelist agreed that the current law on sexual violence in Finland should be change towards a definition based on the lack of consent as the constituent element of crime. The small number of shelters was also highlighted, In general the Istanbul Convention was considered by all the panelists as a key element for change. Finally, candidates agreed to include the issue of violence against women in their campaigns.

More information at website of the [facebook event](#) and Nytkis website:

<http://www.nytkis.org/index.php?k=15485>.

FRANCE

The [French Coordination of the European Women's Lobby](#) (CLEF) held in Paris the first event of the series: a European Conference on the topic of rape and to present the [EWL Barometer on rape in Europe 2013](#).



The French Coordination for the European Women's Lobby reasserted that sexual violence should be combated with no delay and calls for France, which signed the Istanbul Convention in May 2011, to ratify it as soon as possible and too take the necessary legislative measures to bring the French law into conformity with the requirements of the Convention of the Council of Europe. The CLEF press release can be downloaded in french [here](#).



GREECE

The Coordination of Greek Women's NGOs for the EWL, held a Conference "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention" at the premises of the European Parliament in Greece. The Key speaker was a very well known criminologist and professor in the University of Athens, emphasized that sexual violence is a hidden violation of human rights and mentioned the changes that the Greek criminal law needs to comply with the Istanbul Convention Standards. The Minister of Internal Affairs, the Representative of the Minister of Justice, the General Secretary on equality referred to the obstacles to ratify the convention. They agreed on the need of involving women NGOs when negotiating the next legal changes. The Greek Ombudsman referred to the measures they are implementing to protect victims of further victimization. Women NGO's highlighted the problems. Journalists and more than 120 women and men were also present to share the common will to eliminate violence using the Istanbul Convention.



A conclusion from the event was the fact that rape cases remain underreported because of the fear of victimization. Furthermore, the austerity measures have undermined the resources of women organizations to provide support to victims.

Urgent need is needed to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

There is also need to enforce the dialogue between the State and the NGOs.

Violence against women should be placed as a priority during the Greek presidency to the EU.

A video of the public event can be watched following this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=KwbPauwe-Qc

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HUNGARY

The Hungarian Women's Lobby organised two events:

A cultural event at the University of Arts in Budapest: opening of the exhibition "posterfortomorrow Gender Equality Now". The chair of HWL opened the event informing and introducing the Istanbul Convention. The HWL psychologist expert, Eva Horváth talked with Veronika Czapáry, a young writer who published a novel about incest from the viewpoint of a little girl (Megszámolt babák- Dolls counted). The event was advertised through the social media, and included young art students and general supporters of the women's cause.

Expert forum at the Parliamentary House on the 10 December, with the support an MP from the green



party LMP. The forum consisted of two parts: lectures by NGO experts, civil servants and politicians, which was followed by a general discussion. The forum was opened by Ms. Borbála Juhász, chair of the Hungarian Women's Lobby, the Importance and Main Principles of the Istanbul Convention was explained by Dr. Enikő Pap, legal expert, Hungarian Women's Lobby. Two of HWL member organisations, the NANE Association and the PATENT Association were represented at the event as speakers. Dr. Judit Wirth legal expert, NANE Women's Rights Association presented what

are the national experiences regarding the Response of the Legal and Institutional System to Sexual Violence: National Experiences.

From the part of the Government, Dr. Katalin Kiszely deputy state secretary at the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice responsible for the interministerial Working Group Dealing with Violence against Women, informed on the Activities of this Working group and promised to invite the NGOs to the coming meetings from January.

The two MP invited, Dr. Attila Gruber MP – Fidesz, Hungarian member of the Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence” of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and Katalin Ertsey MP – LMP, agreed on the usefulness of the Istanbul Convention and the need of political will to sign and ratify and explained the Role of Parliaments in Combating Violence against Women and for the Ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

Finally, a general discussion took place in which the future Steps to be taken for the effective response to violence against women was discussed as well as the room for and framework of cooperation between state actors and NGOs.

The forum was closed by His Excellency, the Ambassador of Finland, Mr Pasi Tuominen.

A video message of Mr Mendes Bota, Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence” of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, was made available in the FB page of the HWL (www.facebook.com/vacsisok).

IRELAND

The National Women’s Council of Ireland, NWCi, and the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women held a seminar to launch a new publication by the Irish Observatory on VAW entitled “Violence Against Women: An Issue of Gender” aimed at highlighting the issue of gender in analysing and responding to violence against women. Statistics and recommendations from the report were presented.

The document was launched by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, (also responsible for the new Family Agency under which VAW funding and services will be placed). The Minister agreed that the Istanbul Convention should be signed and ratified and acknowledged the role male power plays in women experiencing violence. She also called for more women to move into decision making as key factor in combating this issue.

It was followed by a panel discussion including a keynote speaker from Senator Ivana Bacik, Professor of Criminal Law at Trinity College in Dublin who spoke about the barriers to women accessing help. She highlighted the underreporting of these crimes and the legal changes needed in this area. Speakers on the panel included Anne Ferris, TD (i.e. MP); Greg Heylin, Director, COSC; Jim Clarken, CEO, Oxfam; Margaret Martin, Director, Women’s Aid. Topics covered included the importance of further research, the need for coordination of services, the need for new legislation and the importance of signing and ratifying the Istanbul Convention without delay.

In Ireland, one in five women will experience rape or gender based violence at one point in their lifetime. The SAVI report tells us that some 42% of women have experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime.

There can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye.

The Observatory called on for Ireland to sign, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, to eradicate all forms of violence against women, specifically rape.



Orla O' Connor Director of NWCI said, "There can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale, and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye. The Council of Europe Convention is a benchmark at international level, and Ireland must show its commitment to eradicating all forms of male violence against women by signing, ratifying and implementing the Convention as a matter of urgency."

ITALY

The Italian Coordination to the European Women's Lobby organised an event at the Office of the European Parliament in Rome to sensitize on the importance of an adequate implementation of the



Istanbul Convention as a tool to eradicate violence against women including rape. The subtitle was: "Stupro de l'Aquila: un banco di prova per l'attuazione dei principi della Convenzione": Lef-Italia and its expert to the EWL Observatory, Oria Gargano have decided to frame the event in relation to an Appeal Process for a case of very violent rape that would take place the following day at l'Aquila (Abruzzo Region). Since Italy has already signed and ratified (June 2013) the Convention and has recently adopted a package of laws in matters of femicide and violence against women (August 2013), LEF Italy thought to bind the EWL and CoE Rape Joint Project into a to very

concrete event with twofold purposes: to raise awareness on rape and to act as a lobbying action towards the l'Aquila Appeal Process.

Lef-Italia invited as guest speakers: MEP Silvia Costa who outlined the great work of the FEMM Committee in advancing EU gender legislation and policies. The Lawyers Siusi Casaccia (LEF-Italia President), Franca Mina (Forum delle Giuriste), Carla Quinto (Bee Free), Maria Claudia Ruggeri and Simona Giannangeli (defense lawyers of the raped girl of l'Aquila) described the difficulties of implementation of the measures provided for by the law due to the length of processes and to the bureaucracy related to the judicial system in Italy. All the lawyers present highlighted the lack of training of judges and law enforcement agencies within the provisions of the new antiviolenza package of laws. Moreover they agreed in pointing out: the punitive nature of the law itself, the absence of intervention on the cultural aspects of violence and its prevention. Elisabetta Parmegiani mother of the raped girl stressed the importance of the event organized by LEF-Italia outlining claiming that the l'Aquila Appeal process would be a test for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Italy.

The event served to raise awareness on rape and on the provisions of the Istanbul Convention that need to be implemented. It also served to create synergies between LEF-Italia and other NGOs and institutions.

LATVIA

On the week from December 2nd, the Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia organised daily flashmobs in partnership with radio stations of Latvia. Latvians were invited to rise and dance to call for an end of violence against women. Latvian politicians, leaders and civil servants sent videos calling the Latvian society to rise to put an end to VAW.



In the week commencing November 25th 2013 a public letter by the Deputy State Secretary on sectoral policy of the Ministry of Justice Ms. Laila Medina was released and distributed to the wider public on the latest developments in the field of Istanbul Convention. Ministry of Justice is the leading ministry for these initiatives. A number of changes are going to be taken regarding the legislation, including the definition of rape.

To mark the International Human Rights Day, on the 10th December, the Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia organised a Roundtable discussion in Riga with the parliamentarians representing diverse political spectrum. The discussion was organized in an interactive way identifying the current state and desired state, obstacles and drafting an action plan together with the representatives of national coordination of European Women's Lobby in Latvia. On the same day, Ms. Edite Kalnina, board member of EWL, participated at a meeting of the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the



National Parliament on giving feedback about the round table discussion and promoting a platform for collaboration in 2014.

At the Round table, the NGOs learnt about the changes foreseen. For example they were able to realise that no resources were allocated for public awareness campaigns to inform the society about their rights and opportunities.

The round table discussion also served the NGO to identify friendly MP with gender perspective who are willing to support women's rights NGOs. The need to increase cooperation between the 23 female MP at the Parliament, regardless their political background, was highlighted.

Furthermore, the Women's rights NGO were informed that the sexual and reproductive health issue was on the agenda brought up from very conservative and extremists groups. A letter will be prepared by the EWL coordination in Latvia to raise awareness on the situation in Latvia and the allocation of funds to religious and extremists groups.

Finally, there was an agreement that the EWL national coordination in Latvia and the Committee on Human Rights and Public Affairs of the parliament will organise jointly a High level Conference at the Latvian Parliament in March 2014 (being 2014, year of elections in Latvia).

LITHUANIA

The **Women's Issues Information Centre (WIIC)** organised a **half day seminar** at the Parliament, supported by the MP Giedre Purvaneckiene (women's rights activist). The main topics of the Seminar were the provisions of the Istanbul Convention compared with the current situation in Lithuania. The EWL Barometer was introduced and the Key messages of the Action kit were translated, printed and disseminated.

Before the event, WIIC organized press conference in which the 16 days campaign in Lithuania was opened and the conference on rape and Istanbul convention was presented. The event started at 11 o'clock with a screening of a short film about gender-based violence. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWnd...>



There were 8 lecturers talking about the problem of sexual violence against women from different views: legal, medical, social, myths and stereotypes around rape. Victims are still blamed in Lithuania preventing women from reporting. As a way forward in this field, the project “Women’s Initiative against violence”, which will create a mechanisms for victims of sexual violence (counseling, spreading information, volunteer’s training, etc.), was presented.

This was followed by a discussion over coffee, tea and finger food. 62 people attended the event, including several members of the Lithuanian Parliament, journalists, lawyers, psychologists, doctors, government representatives, NGO’s etc. They were all engaged to promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. At the end everyone raised hands for ratification of Istanbul convention. Justina Vitkauskaitė, member of the European Parliament, could not attend the meeting but released an article on sexual violence. www.pajurionaujienos.com/?sid=10412&act0exp

The media coverage was very high in the press, online press and radio.

Majority of participants informed that they want to hear more about sexual violence against women and encourage WIIC to do more events on this subject.

MACEDONIA

The Macedonian Women’s Lobby organised a debate focusing on the issues related to sexual violence, including rape and the need for immediate ratification of the Istanbul Convention not only as a tool for prevention but also for prosecution of such violence.

The following topics among others were discussed at the debate: the role of the NGO’s regarding violence against women and different forms of gender based violence (stalking, rape); the gender based violence with accent on rape in the context of international and domestic legislative; the Juristic prosecution and challenges in the process of ratification of Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention); and the role of the National Parliament in the process of ratification of Istanbul Convention. Several MP’s from different political groups participated in the event. Three of them clearly supported the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and suggested to be keen to open the debate in the Assembly as of January 2014. Representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Appeals Court in Skopje.

Ms. Daniela Dimitrievska, executive director of Macedonian women’s lobby launched the debate presenting the EWL-CoE joint project Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!. Ms. Dimitrijevska also gave a short overview of the standards regarding sheltering the victims of sexual violence and rape using different legal acts (Council of Europe, European Commission and UN Women) as benchmarks for standardized services. The expert of the EWL Observatory on VAW, Biljana Nastovska gave a short overview of the standards regarding shelters according to different legal acts (Council of Europe, European Commission, UN).

Ms. Sofija Spasovska Advisor at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy had presentation regarding the process for ratification of the Convention. She also shared information with the participants that the government of the Republic of Macedonia recently enacted decision for drafting of a new for Prevention of Domestic Violence. Judge Cvetanka Peric – Appellate Court in Skopje discussed the criminal proceedings applied to victims of sexual violence and rape. Member of Parliament Ms. Liljana Popovska gave examples of ratification processes for several different conventions and she made a parallel with the needs for the ratification of Council of Europe Convention on Prevention of VAW and DV. She also ensured the participants that she will take active role in the ratification process as member of the Parliament and as President of the Parliamentary Commission for equal opportunities between man and woman. Representative from National Council for gender equality gave small information about the



project/campaign "Sign" - "Coordinated Efforts - Toward new European Standards in Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence".

Among the outcomes of the event, there was a decision to collaborate between the Macedonian Women's Lobby and MPs (Committee for equal opportunities between men and women), to further cooperate to lobby together for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, using the drafting process of the new Law of Prevention of Domestic Violence to align the legislation to the Istanbul Convention provisions. The President of the Parliamentary Commission for gender opportunities between men and women suggested the organization of public hearings from January 2014 regarding the benefits of the Istanbul Convention trying to involve relevant institutions (judiciary, police, medical experts, NGO's, academics, etc.).

NGO's also agreed to work in cooperation and join forces lobby the municipalities to be more actively involved to address gender based violence.

MALTA



Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (MCWO) organised a seminar which was held at Europa House in St Paul's Street Valletta. The Event was opened by the Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer affairs and Civil Liberties and the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity do the closing address. The Minister said that Malta will ratify the Istanbul Convention although no timescale was given.

Experts, representatives of civil society, state agencies, practitioners and policy makers participated in the seminar. One of the issues that received a lot of attention was the statement by a police officers that they have problems accessing social work help for victims. **As a result of the discussion, a new protocol is being planned between the police and the main state social work agency.**

The event has had wide media coverage as it can be seen [here](#).

THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch National Coordination for the European Women's (NVR) Lobby organised an event on the 16th of December at the House of Europe in The Hague. The event aimed at raising awareness on the Council of Europe (CoE) Istanbul Convention and the situation in the field of combating violence against women.



NVR presented the latest developments in the Netherlands when it comes to dealing with violence, and the need for care facilities, and good practices how women who have been victims of violence are in control of their lives. Moreover, the NVR called the Dutch Government to ratify the Convention Istanbul as this treaty gives countries the tools to address



violence against women and domestic violence: preventing and countering them, and to monitor the policy. The need of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention also in the Dutch provinces overseas was specifically discussed. During the event, it was agreed that an (informal) group of NGO's, with close contacts in civil society on these islands, and representatives of the relevant Dutch ministries will meet in spring 2014, to discuss a joint strategy.

They attendees learned that the government of the Netherlands is working on the ratification process: parts of the criminal law systems have been adjusted.

The NGOs also come to the conclusion that more pressure needs to be given to the local government as they have a key role in prevention and addressing VAW.

POLAND



The Network of East-West Women organized a round table as part of a one big, two days event called "War on Gender" with the participation of many distinguished guests including the Minister for Equal Treatment, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, the Director of her office Monika Ksieniewicz, the Plenipotentiary for Women's Rights of the Polish Army, a Polish representative of the European Network of Police Women, the Swedish Ambassador, the Head of Criminology Department of Warsaw University and guests from Hungary, Lithuania, Serbia, Romania and Spain and almost all main women NGOs from Poland. The video-clip on Rape was screened and the EWL-CoE joint project

presented together with the results of the EWL Barometer on rape. Furthermore, the situation of rape victims at the local level in Poland was presented by Beata Kubica who is a member of the Polish Women's Lobby and also a member of the city council in Opole.

Together with the Minister for Equal Treatment and the Director of her office the next steps for ratification of the Istanbul Convention we discussed. During the event, the Director of the office of the Minister announced that she got a phone call from the Council of Ministers office with an information that the Prime Minister expects that the final amendments to five legal acts that need to be changed in order to ratify the convention should be presented by the Minister of Equal Treatment no later than the end of February. The announcement about the planned changes in legislation aiming at the ratification can be found in the Polish press: <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/kozłowska-rajewicz-rzad-zajmie-sie-wnioskiem-o-ratyfikacje-konwencji-ws-przemocy-w/ylq6n> .

The main obstacles for the ratification is the raise of the conservative forces which have brought about the war on gender in Poland.

One of the main outcomes of the event was the petition to ratify the Istanbul Convention as quickly as possible. The petition was already signed by all the participants of the conference. The petition will be sent to all the parliamentarians and to the President of Poland and placed on their websites (neww.org.pl) and in social media.



PORTUGAL

On the **27 of November**, in **Portugal**, Association of Women against Violence (AMCV) held an event at the auditory of the Portuguese Parliament with the support of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees. The focus of the event was on the adaptation of the existing legislation to the definition of the Istanbul Convention (as ratified by Portugal), the introduction of the issue of sexual violence on the next NAP (2014-2017) and the need to develop specialized support services (there are any rape crisis centre in Portugal) according to the minimum standards set at the Istanbul Convention.

The speakers were members of the Portuguese Parliament and general rapporteur on VAW of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, representatives of the General Prosecutor office, of Women NGO. The event was opened by the Fernando Negrão, from the Commission of Constitutional Affairs, Rights and Liberties and by Margarida Medina Martins from the Association of Women against Violence (AMCV). Helena Gonçalves participated in representation of the Procuradora Geral da República. Different NGOs brought the perspective from Women organisations. Finally, the event was closed by José Mendes Bota, General Rapporteur on Violence against Women of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Download the [Brochure](#) and the [Press Release](#) (in Portuguese). The video Act against rape translated into Portuguese was also presented.

AMCV was invited to participate in a Campaign called Today Not initiative of the Portuguese association on women jurists, consisting on a simulation of a court trial on rape.

In December the text of the **new NAP** was submitted to consultation and it included for the first time a broader perspective on VAW and specific measures for prevention and intervention on sexual violence and the promotion of rape crisis centers.

ROMANIA

The Community Safety and Mediation Centre and the Romanian Women's Lobby held an event at Romanian Parliament House with participation of MPs, press and ministries representatives, under the slogan "Acționează împotriva violului! Folosește Convenția de la Istanbul!". The event covered a wide range of topics of high importance in the fight against VAW, as for example: the results of the EWL Barometer on rape 2013, the legislative initiatives in Romania in the protection of women against violence; the main provisions of the Istanbul Convention and the situation regarding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Romanian State; and the reality regarding the national services support women victims of violence, with focus on sexual violence. Download the agenda (in Romanian) [here](#).



Download the press release (in Romanian) [here](#). This event served to gain support from the MP Petru Movila who facilitated discussions with key stakeholders from the Ministry of Justice, of Exterior and labour. The aim was at speeding up the ratification process foreseen for the end of 2014.

A second event took place same day afternoon with the participation of over 25 NGOs representatives from national level, covering services and advocacy NGOs working in the field of protection of women against gender based violence. The RWL gained enhanced their membership gaining two new NGOs very active in the advocacy on women's rights.

Among all NGOs they drafted some letters for MP and



a signature campaign to advocate for a timely ratification of the Istanbul Convention. By the end of the year, 10 MPs have already signed the petition.

In January and February 2014, the campaign will continue trying to gain signatures from MPs calling for a better application of the laws on VAW. In 2014 the RWL will also participate in large public events and try to include the Istanbul Convention on the agenda. They will try to gain the support of relevant public figures in the advocacy work to reach a broader audience.

SERBIA



The Autonomous Women's Center, the Network of Women Against Violence and the Network for the European Women's Lobby organized in Belgrade a round table to raise awareness about rape and other sexual offenses in Serbia. The aim of the roundtable was to review existing legislation and practices in relation to criminal offenses against sexual freedom and the necessity of their compliance with the standards set by the Istanbul Convention. It was highlighted the necessity of implement legislative changes in order to unify the actions of all the institutions involved in accordance to the Istanbul Convention. Among the speakers at the round table were representatives of the Women Parliamentary Network, Ministry of Health, Ministry

of Interior, Women's NGOs.

The event was also attended by representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia , state institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior , Public Prosecutor), independent mechanisms (Ombudsman) , civil society organizations and the media.

The speakers agreed to engage in following lobbying activities:

Monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The Parliamentary Council for Human and Minority rights and gender equality should be in charge. A Special committee should be created to specifically monitor this implementation.

Autonomous women's centre will organise a mutual learning meeting with the representatives of the Women's Parliamentary Network to plan further steps for lobbying.

Autonomous women's center will organize working meeting with Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Health to access further steps for the establishment of the rape crisis centres in four main centres in Serbia and the need to create a special protocol in cases of sexual violence.

Consider the establishment of the fund for compensation for the victims.

The video "Act against rape!" was translated into Serbian and made public in several websites and social networks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wll_heIPxc&feature=youtu.be.

Video report of the event created: www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7UFRilzi0E&feature=youtu.be

In December 2013, the Autonomous women's centre meet with the deputy minister of Health. At the meeting, the Ministry of Health informed that they will send an invitation letter to the Ministry of Interior, Justice and Labour and social affairs to initiate a inter-sectoral working group for the implementation of a new protocol on cases of sexual violence and the establishment of Rape crisis centres.



SLOVENIA

The Association SOS HELP LINE combined the activities of the project “Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!” with the project “Towards new European Standards in protection of women from gender based violence” co-funded by the European Commission. As part of this project a public campaign focused on VAW started in Mid November with several events during the 16 days of activism (press conference; a main event and a signature petition). A specific emphasis was made on rape as a devastating form of violence which remains taboo and highly underreported in Slovenia.

Several challenges were highlighted during the campaign:

- Lack of willingness of the Government (mainly, Ministry of Justice) to speed up the ratification process.
- Problems regarding the definition of threats in the Penal code. In 2012 a new provision was introduced. Threats were no longer prosecuted through public prosecution but through personal lawsuit.
- Problem of practical non existence of specialized services for victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence.
- Problem of worsening practices of institutions in the field of preventing and dealing with VAW.

The campaign served to consolidate alliances with the Ministry of Labour, Family, social affairs and equal opportunities and the Municipality of Ljubljana. Furthermore, contacts were initiated with the ministry of Foreign Affairs and several Slovenian MP’s and MEP’s.

The campaign highly criticized the role of the Ministry of Justice regarding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and their attitude in general towards human rights.

The campaign was highly visible and was covered by all channels of communication.

SPAIN

CELEM organised a round table in Madrid on the 19th December at the premises of the Offices of the European Commission. Representatives from the academia, NGO sector and media analysed the positive aspects that the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention could bring to

effectively address sexual violence.

Julia Sevilla, professor of the University of Valencia and president of the Valencian Coordination for CELEM, informed that education is a fundamental measure to prevent violence against women. Ana Pelaez, member of the UN Committee on Rights of people with disabilities and member of the EWL board, informed that the phenomenon of violence against women with disabilities is still invisible and not well addressed. Manuel Alcaide, police inspector of the sexual crimes unit of Madrid, explained the areas that need to be improved to better combat rape and



protect its victims. Ana de Miguel, Professor of the University of Rey Juan Carlos, made a presentation on the topic of the socialization of women and the rape culture: the trivialization of rape impedes its eradication.

During the second panel, Soledad Maruaga, president of the Association Women to Health, talked about the second victimisation of women victims of rape at the social and health services, the penal process, etc. She also mentioned the phenomenon of incest as a very taboo and invisible form of sexual abuse. Barbara Tardon, representative of Fundacion Aspacia and the Campaign "Violadas y Expulsadas" informed on the high vulnerability of undocumented migrant women. Finally, Nuria Varela, journalist and feminist, presented the Istanbul Convention

The documentary "[Pourquoi?](#)" by Ouka Leele was screened on the phenomenon of sexual violence in Democratic Republic of Congo. Caddy Adzuba explained her story as survivor.

To close the event, Marta Torres, lawyer and consultant on human rights and gender equality, presented the conclusions of the event highlighting that the objectification and sexualization of women's body is against human and women's rights.

Find out more: www.celem.org and <https://twitter.com/CELEMLobby>

SWEDEN

The Swedish Women's Lobby (SWL) held a talk about rape. The event started with a screening of the short film "Porn Damaged" by Roxane von Gerber Hedayat and Moa Kjellstrand. It was followed by discussion on rape culture and how the legal system in Sweden can be improved. The demand for having a law based on consent is very big in Sweden right now due to some recent controversial cases of rape. Currently in Sweden there are 5 parties promoting such a law, while 3 parties do not. Among the 3 parties that have not taken a stand for law based on consent are the Social Democrats and the Moderate party, which are the two largest parties in Sweden. Therefore, some of the discussions focused on what can be done to influence them. This was where the Istanbul Convention came in. The convention is a very important tool since Sweden would be obliged to introduce such a law if it was to be ratified.

The debate was also about what impact sexual violence in popular culture, music videos, movies, video games etc. has on violence against women in reality; how it affects how men and boys look at women and girls, but also how it affects the definition of rape. The increasing and brutal sexual violence in popular culture have an impact on what we believe to be rape. For example not all victims of rape are certain that it was actually rape unless it was like in the movies, where a lot of violence is usually involved. A law based on consent would definitely help to define that rape is a situation

where consent has not been given and not only a situation where violence has been used. About 130 people attended the event. In this link you can download the press release in Swedish.

The representative from the committee on Justice was positive that Sweden will ratify the convention in due time. Since there are elections next fall she thought both the current government and the opposition will see this as an important signal. The SWL got a lot of good suggestions on how to act lobby wise to



fasten the process and move the positions forward. She suggested to write debate articles, letters to the government and to ask members of the parliament to raise the issue. She also advised to take contact with the women's committees in the political parties.

The SWL, together with a bunch of other women NGO's, asked for a meeting with the Swedish minister of Justice, Beatrice Ask in January. The meeting will be specifically about rape and how the legal system has failed and will be an opportunity to promote the for ratification of the convention

The SWL also wrote a debate article in the newspaper Feminist perspective

<http://feministisktperspektiv.se/2013/11/25/sverige-maste-agera-mot-valdtakt/>

TURKEY

KAMER Foundation and all its centers in the region of Southeast and Eastern Anatolia held a series of meetings with the Governors of 23 provinces in order to raise awareness and sensitivity on the issue of rape and call for the adequate implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The Governors are the main offices coordinate the security forces and social services, they were the target of the group in Turkey to provide better quality in the services to the women in need. The governors were very interested in the campaign and the solidarity of women in Europe and Turkey.

In order to prepare these meetings with the Governors, KAMER Foundation held a briefing with all representatives from its 23 Women Centers. They shared information and coordinate on the common messages to be given to the Governors in all the provinces.

The key messages of the Action Kit and the EWL Barometer on rape in Europe in 2013 were provided in Turkish to the Governors.

The main obstacle discussed was the implementation of valid legislation. The problems experience in the field and rape still being a taboo which stops reporting is raised.

It was emphasized that violence against women is caused by gender; rape being the most devastating form of violence and also human rights' violation. Most of the governors said that the results of KAMER house visits were very similar with the EWL Barometer results. KAMER representatives pointed out that gender awareness and using the tools like Istanbul Convention would change the rates dramatically.

The Governors of the 23 provinces were eager to further collaboration. KAMER representatives will visit the departments of social services and security to share the information.

SCOTLAND, UK

The Rape Crisis Scotland and Engender organized an event that brought together women's organizations to discuss the Istanbul Convention in the context of UK and Scotland. They discussed on the Istanbul Convention as an opportunity and as a useful lobbying goal for the women's sector in Scotland and UK. This short discussion event provided an opportunity for women's organisations to be briefed on the Istanbul Convention and possibilities for its use as a lobbying tool in Scotland, and to discuss possibilities for individual, organizational, or joint activism around it. The meeting agreed that the implementation or ratification of the Istanbul Convention offered a significant opportunity to formalize a feminist analysis of men's violence against women as well as a gendered approach. However, the meeting did note a possible area of concern, in that the Convention appears to require state parties to specifically criminalise forced marriage. Although Scotland has a range of legislative



proscriptions, it is thought that it does not meet this standard. The violence against women sector is apprehensive about criminalization, because Scottish evidence suggests that this may not be helpful.

The meeting agreed on next steps in terms of lobbying for the implementation of the Convention by Scotland and ratification by the UK. They also agreed that it would be helpful to reconvene a further meeting with organizations that did not attend (a huge storm and rail network cuts impeded all the participants to attend) and discuss how to resolve outstanding tensions and use Istanbul to best effect in Scotland.

UKRAINE

The event, which was at first planned and organised for the 3rd of December had to be postponed due to the political situation in the country and the tensions and protests.

La Strada-Ukraine organized and coordinated an expert group on April 16 which included representatives of NGOs, independent experts of women's rights and gender discrimination. As Ukraine signed the Convention in 2011, national activities were aimed to lobby ratification of the document. The expert group developed the recommendations for improving the law and practice of Ukraine in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. The recommendations were addressed to each related authority with the concrete steps according with its portfolios. The recommendations were sent to the legislative, executive and judicial authorities of Ukraine.



Also, in order to draw public attention to the issue, a press event was organized on April 28. The press conference took place in the Maidan Press Center, the main resource of news devoted to new social and political changes in the country. 10 representatives of media participated in the event, also it was online broadcasted. The speakers were representative of the relative committee of the Ukrainian Parliament, representative of the Ministry of Social Policy, public

known experts of gender discrimination. The focus was given on the news about upcoming entering into force of the Convention and importance of paying special attention to women rights protection in Ukraine while going through difficult times of conflicts.



CONCLUSIONS

The project “Europe mobilises against rape and for the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change” has been a great success and an example of good cooperation between all the parties involved.

The topic of sexual violence has been included on the agenda. The Istanbul Convention was highlighted as a tool for change. Building from the national results compiled in the EWL Barometer on Rape in Europe 2013, the events have served to increase awareness on the national situation compared to the standards set by the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and highlight the changes needed.

The events have been a tool that has allowed the NGO’s to gather more precise information regarding the political and legislative processes that are taking place and or the changes foreseen to sign, ratify or implement the Istanbul Convention in their countries. In many cases, the organisation of the event has also served the organisers to better identify the units of the government and the Parliament leading or involved in the process of signature, ratification or implementation and the key stakeholders.

Furthermore, the events also served to consolidate alliances between the NGOs and key stakeholders involved and build new contacts and possibilities of cooperation with MPs or other authorities. For example in Latvia, round table discussion also served to identify friendly MP with gender perspective who are willing to support women’s rights NGOs. In Slovenia the project served to consolidate alliances with the Ministry of Labour, Family, social affairs and equal opportunities and the Municipality of Ljubljana and to initiate contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several Slovenian MP’s and MEP’s. In Estonia, the Estonian Roundtable organisation will ask the Ministers and NGOs attending the event to be part of a funding grant application to develop jointly a project on sexual violence. In Macedonia, there was a decision in the event to increase collaboration between the Macedonian Women’s Lobby and MPs (Committee for equal opportunities between men and women), to further cooperate to lobby together for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

In some cases, the cooperation and involvement of the NGOs in the processes of signature/implementation or ratification have been formalised or further explored. For example, in Austria the mechanisms and requisites to establish and be part of a monitoring process were analyzed. In Austria and Serbia, the events served to clarify the monitoring mechanisms regarding the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and to explore possible ways of participation or following the process.

In several countries, relevant stakeholders from the Government expressed their commitment to sign/ratify the Istanbul Convention (Malta, Cyprus). In Finland, the event was linked to the European Elections and the candidate MEPs committed themselves to include the topic of violence against women and the Istanbul Convention as part of their campaign.

The organisations events have also served to design further lobbying strategies to ensure ratification of the Istanbul Convention and adequate implementation. New lobbying tools have been developed. For example, letters have been sent to relevant decision makers (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Slovenia, Poland, Romania). In Bulgaria, letters were sent to the Council of Ministers and all the 240 Bulgarian Parliamentarians asking for the urgent ratification of the Convention. Petitions, online petitions or joint declarations were initiated in several countries. For example, in Poland, an online petition was launched; in Slovenia and Romania, signatures of MPs and other Government Representatives were collected; in Croatia, an MP proposed to start an initiative and sign a motion for ratification.



The project has also served to increase cooperation between NGO's and key experts and academics working in the field of violence against women to develop a common strategy (Romania, Spain, UK) . In Scotland, the meeting served to the different NGOs to draw a common strategy and agreed on the use of the Istanbul Convention as a lobbying tool for change. In Romania for example, two new NGOs joined the Romanian Women's Lobby after being invited to the public event. Furthermore, in some countries also local members of the EWL national Coordinations were also involved organising events at local level.

In many cases thanks to this event, new meetings are going to be held between key decision makers and the NGOs (Bulgaria, Serbia, Sweden). For example, in Bulgaria the Presidency of the Republic asked for a meeting with the NGOs involved in order to discuss eventual further common action regarding the Convention.

In this regard, the events have also promoted further engagement between the NGOs and different units (from Ministries or Parliament) to organise further events on the Istanbul Convention. For example In Latvia, there was an agreement that the EWL national coordination in Latvia and the Committee on Human Rights and Public Affairs of the Parliament will organise jointly a High level Conference at the Latvian Parliament in March 2014, In Macedonia, the President of the Parliamentary Commission for gender opportunities between men and women suggested the joint organization of public hearings from January 2014 regarding the benefits of the Istanbul Convention trying to involve relevant institutions (judiciary, police, medical experts, NGO's, academics, etc.).

This project has been a milestone in a more in the work towards a Europe free from violence against women, and has been a first step for more actions aiming at promoting the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.



ANNEX

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

List of EWL partner organization that have

participated in this project

Austria



Austrian Women Ring

Servitengasse, 19/5

A - 1090 Wien

Tel/fax: +43 19236910

Email: marlene.parenzan(a)chello.at

Email: office(a)frauenring.at

Website: <http://www.frauenring.at>

Bulgaria



Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation,

National Coordinator of Women's Lobby

c/o Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation

5, Evlogii i Hristo Georgiev Blvd.

BG - 1142 Sofia

Tel/Fax: 359 2 9635357

Email: t_krumova(a)mail.bg

Email2: office(a)bgrf.org <http://www.bgrf.org/en/>

Croatia



CENTAR ZA ŽENE ŽRTVE RATA-ROSA

Centre for Women War Victims - ROSA

KRALJA DRŽISLAVA 2/2, 10 000 ZAGREB

TEL/FAX: + 385 1 455 11 42

TEL: + 385 1 455 1128

MAIL: cenzena@zamir.net

www.czzzr.hr

Cyprus



Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)

Cyprus Women's Lobby

46 Makedonitissas Avenue,

P.O.Box 24005, Nicosia 1703, Cyprus

Tel: +35722 351274 (ext.115) Fax: +357 22 353682

<http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org>

Czech Republic



Zabýváme se tématy domácího násilí, stalkingu a kyberšikany. Poskytuje přímou pomoc a osvětu.

proFem o.p.s.

Plzeňská 66, 150 00 Praha 5

Tel. 00420 224 910 744

Fax:: 227 077 969

E-mail: info[at]profem.cz

www.profem.cz

Denmark

kvinderådet



The Women's Council in Denmark

Niels Hemmingsens Gade, 10

Postboks 1069

DK - 1008 Copenhagen K

Tel: +45 33 12 80 87 Fax: +45 33 12 67 40

Email: kvr(a)kvinderaad.dk

Website: <http://www.kvinderaadet.dk>



Estonia



ESTONIAN WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATIONS
ROUNDTABLE

Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable

Narva mnt 25-410
EE – 10120 Tallinn
Tel: +372 526 5927
Email: enu@enu.ee
Website: <http://www.enu.ee>

Finland



Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations

NYTKIS - Naisjärjestöt Yhteistyössä -

Kvinnoorganisationer i

Bulevardi 11 A 1, FIN - 00120 Helsinki
Tel: +358 50 4696242
Email: tanja.auvinen(a)nytkis.org
Website: <http://www.nytkis.org>

France



La Coordination Française
pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes

La Coordination française pour le lobby européen des femmes- CLEF

6, rue de la Rochefoucauld
F - 75009 Paris
Tel/fax: +33 1 5550 45 64
Email: clef.femmes(a)gmail.com
Website: www.clef-femmes.fr

Greece

Coordination of Greek women's NGOs for the EWL

Panepistimiou 56 str.
GR - 106 73 Athens
Tel: +30 210 3628574 / 3614833
Fax: +30 210 3643696
Email: ioanidou.e.g(a)dsa.gr

Hungary



MAGYAR NŐI
ÉRDEKVÉDELMI
SZÖVETSÉG

Hungarian Women's Lobby

Dohány u. 71
HU - 1074 Budapest
Fax: +36 1 337 2865
Email: noierdek(a)noierdek.hu
Website: <http://www.noierdek.hu>

Iceland



Stígamót

Hverfisgötu 115,
105 Reykjavík, Iceland
Simar: 562-6868/800-6868
E-mail: stigamot@stigamot.is
<http://www.stigamot.is/>

Ireland



National Women's
Council of Ireland
Comhairle Náisiúnta
na mBan in Éirinn

National Women's Council of Ireland

2-3 Parnell Square East IRL - Dublin 1
Tel: +353 1 878 7248
Email: anneg(a)ncwi.ie
Website: <http://www.nwci.ie>

Italy



COORDINAMENTO ITALIANO
DELLA LOBBY
EUROPEA DELLE DONNE

Italian Coordination for the EWL

Via Mentana, 2b
I - 00185 Roma
Tel: +39 06 494 14 91
Email: m.tranquillileali(a)virgilio.it
Website: www.coordinamentoitalianolobbyeudonne



Latvia



Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia

Valnu 32,
Riga, LV-1050, Latvia
Tel: (+371) 2 9493300, (+371) 2 646 8079

Macedonia



GENDER
TASK
FORCE
MACEDONIAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Macedonian Women's Lobby
11 Oktomvri 42a
House for Humanitarian Activities "Dare Dzambaz"
office 60/61
MK - 1000 Skopje
Tel: +389 23231933
Fax: +389 2 3112128
Email: info(a)mzl-mk.org
Website: www.mzl-mk.org

Netherlands



National Coordination for the European Women's Lobby- Nederlandse Vrouwenraad

Zeestraat, 100
NL – 2518 AD Den Haag
Tel: +31 70 3469304
Fax: +31 70 3459346
Email: info(a)de-nvr.nl
Website: <http://www.nederlandsevrouwenraad.nl>

Portugal



Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência (AMCV)

R. João Villaret, 9
1000-182 Lisboa Portugal
<http://www.amcv.org.pt/pt/amcv-mulheres>

Lithuania



Women's Issues Information Centre

S.Konarskio g. 49 806 kab. LT-03123 Vilnius, Lithuania
Website: <http://www.lygus.lt/>

Malta



Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations

3c/o Keimar Bldgs, Level 4,
Giovanni Mamo Street,
Birkirkara BKR2961
Tel: +356 7959 2626
Email: mail(a)mcwo.net
Email2: lorspiteri(a)gmail.net
Website: <http://www.mcwo.net/>

Poland



Network of East West Women/Polish Women's Lobby

80-239 Gdansk, ul. Miszewskiego 17/100, Poland
<http://www.neww.org.pl/>

Romania



Romanian Women's Lobby

5, Viticultori Street, 700490 Iași, Romania
Tel: +40 332 211713 Fax: +40 332 401005
Email: office[a]dearnetwork.ro
Site web: www.dearnetwork.ro



Serbia



Autonomous Women's Center

Tiršova 5a
11000 Belgrade
mail: azc@azc.org.rs
<http://womenngo.org.rs/>

Spain



Spanish Coordination for the European Women's Lobby-CELEM

C/Génova 11 1º dcha
28010 - Madrid
Teléfono: 91 319 11 95
Fax: 91 319 27 82
E-mail: celem@celem.org
Website: www.celem.org

Turkey



KAMER Vakfi

Address: Aliemiri 3.Sok. Es-şal Apt. Kat: 1 No :1
Yenişehir / Diyarbakır
Telephone : 0 412 228 10 53
<http://www.kamer.org.tr/>

United Kingdom



Engender

1a Haddington Place
UK- Edinburgh EH7 4AE
Tel: +44 131 558 9596
Email: [info\(a\)engender.org.uk](mailto:info(a)engender.org.uk)
Website: <http://www.engender.org.uk/>

Slovenia



Association SOS Help-Line for Women and children-victims of violence

P. O. Box 2726, 1001 Ljubljana
Office Telephone: 00386 1 544 35 13, 00386 1 544 35 14
<http://www.drustvo-sos.si/>

Sweden



Swedish Women's Lobby

Sveriges Kvinno lobby
Norr tullsgatan 45, 1 van
S - 113 45 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 335247
Email: [info\(a\)sverigeskvinnolobby.se](mailto:info(a)sverigeskvinnolobby.se)
Website: <http://www.sverigeskvinnolobby.se>

Ukraine



La Strada Ukraine

P.O. Box 26
03113 Kyiv
tel: +38 044 205 36 95
fax: +38 044 205 37 36
info@la-strada.org.ua
website : www.la-strada.org.ua





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