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The university system in the battle against domestic violence

Cultural, educational and scientific battles...

- *Gender based violence can be also fought thanks to “cultural” battles and the increasing of educational/ research/ advocacy policies.*
- *Therefore, my contribution aims at stressing the role of the university system in the fight against gender-based violence thanks to the development of ad hoc educational/ research policies and the institution of cross-border academic networks.*

Key-points

1. *The role of the university system in implementing the Istanbul Convention*
2. *The aim of the academic network UNIRE*
3. *The background of the project UNIRE*
4. *Tasks of UNIRE*
5. *Objectives and activities*
6. *Towards an integrated and holistic approach in European universities*

1. The role of the university system in implementing the Istanbul Convention

Until recent years the role that the university system can play in the battle against gender-based violence was undermined

Yet the Istanbul Convention indicates in several parts the crucial role that the university system can play.

For instance:

- Art. 11: Data collection and research
- Art. 12: Prevention
- Art. 13: Sensitization
- Art. 14: Education
- Art. 15: Training

Fulfilling the gaps

- These articles denote the necessity to link education, research and third mission in a cross-border perspective in order to fight against any form of gender-based violence and discrimination.
- The ***Project UNIRE (which means UNiversità In REte contro la Violenza) – An Academic Network against gender violence*** aims at fulfilling these tasks.

2. The aim of the academic network UNIRE

- The university system is called to play a pivotal educational, scientific, cultural and social role for the elimination of harmful prejudices, discriminating traditions and stereotyped models in gender relations, which prevent equal respect between women and men, the functioning of human capabilities and the establishment of fair societies.
- The **constitution of a synergic network of universities** can contribute to promote significant cultural initiatives, capable of social change, making effective European/ international conventions, national legislations, regional action plans and local policies.
- **The Network is aimed at promoting and developing teaching, training, research, third mission activities, advocacy/ awareness campaigns in an international perspective.**

3. The background of the project UNIRE

- The idea for the constitution of an academic network and the proposal of the project UNIRE came from:
 - Prof. Michele Nicoletti, former President of the Assembly of the European Council and MP President of the Italian Parliamentary Delegation at the Assembly of the Council of Europe.
 - The Scientific Committee of the "Award for the best Master and Ph.D. thesis" (2015 and 2017) concerning the application of the Istanbul Convention, in collaboration with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry for Education, University, Research, the Conference of the Rectors of Italian Universities and the Council of Europe.

4. Tasks of UNIRE

- The project about the constitution of an academic network has been financed by the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers Department of Equal Opportunities for 18 months (1st May 2018 – 31st October 2019).
- It is based at based at the University of Milano-Bicocca in Milan.
- The network is composed at the moment by 10 Italian universities/ research centres (Università di Milano-Bicocca, Milano, Padova, Foggia, Calabria, Cattolica, Trento, Trieste, Osservatorio Interuniversitario sugli Studi di Genere, Fondazione IRCSS). Each member has to develop specific programs, research and activities.
- Yet the aim is at inviting **all 96 Italian universities** to become active members of the consortium.

5. Objectives and activities

- *Objectives:*

- I. Strengthening existing activities.

- II. Developing new educational initiatives.

- III. Supporting scientific analyses.

- IV. Increasing the collaboration with different stakeholders at the local level (institutions, experts, anti-violence centres, professionals, associations).

- V. Developing international collaboration, with super-national institutions and European Universities/ research centres.

Objectives and activities

- *Activities:*

I. Information. Gathering information on research and training activities carried out in the various universities. II. Collecting information on ongoing research activities; III. Enhancing best practices at the local level; IV. Supporting dissemination / awareness raising events, in collaboration with media and communication experts.

II. *Formation.* *Ad hoc* programs addressed to students in university graduate, masters and doctoral courses. II. Multidisciplinary training courses for professionals employed in both the public and private sector. III. Life-long learning courses for those who already work in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence.

III. *Research.* Encouraging researchers interested in the analysis of the phenomenon as well as in the elaboration of prevention strategies through thesis, seminars and publications.

IV. *Third mission.* Increasing initiatives with local authorities, civil society associations and anti-violence centres.

V. *International collaboration.* Cooperation with European institutions (starting from the Council of Europe), international universities and research centres.

The Units of the Network

- *University of Milan-Bicocca*: Education and training against gender-based violence "(Prof. Marina Calloni)
- *University of Milan*: National and supra-national legislation and jurisprudence on the prevention and fight against gender-based violence (Prof. Marilisa D'Amico)
- *Catholic University of the Sacred Heart*: Third mission (Prof. Paola Di Blasio)
- *University of Calabria*: Tools to combat gender stereotypes (Prof. Giuliana Mocchi)
- *University of Foggia*: Activities of sensitization and intercultural education (Prof. Isabella Loiodice)

The Units of the Network

- *University of Padua*: "No one has to feel excluded" workshop: strategies for the prevention of gender-based violence (Prof. Alessandra Pietrobon)
- *University of Trento*: Cultural aspects of gender violence (Prof. Giovanna Covi)
- *University of Trieste*: Training of teachers and initiatives in schools (Prof. Patrizia Romito))
- *Interuniversity Observatory on Gender, Equality and Opportunity Studies*: Best practices: research, analysis, considerations and proposals (Prof. Francesca Brezzi)
- *IRCCS Ca 'Granda Foundation - Milan Polyclinic*: Professional training for psycho-social-health professionals (Dr. Alessandra Kustermann)
- *Contacts with the Council of Europe*: Prof. Michele Nicoletti

6. Towards an integrated and holistic approach in European universities

- On the basis of experiences developed in the past years (for example by the departmental research centre *EDV Italy Project* and other centres of Italian universities):
 - it's our conviction that a holistic approach is necessary for combatting intra-familial violence and in general gender-based discrimination, as the Istanbul Convention stresses.
- An integrated and mainstream methodology is thus needed in all university activities.

Establishing national and European academic networks

- The academic network UNIRE is only a first national example about possible ways to struggle for non-violent inter-personal relationships, starting from the cultural, educational and scientific domain.
- Therefore, any European university should experiment its own way to fight against violence, sharing experiences and programs in a both national, European and international perspective.
- **A cross-border European academic network, supported by the Council of Europe**, should thus refer to different national experiences but on the basis of shared principles and aims.
- We are thus keen to share our experiences with universities interested in establishing a national-based academic network.
- The application of the norms contained in the Istanbul Convention can help us in fulfilling these tasks.

Combatting any form of violation of human rights

- We can reach equality combatting discrimination and any form of violation only when human capabilities can be freely developed and expressed.
- If we want that to happen, we have to collaborate all together for social justice.
- Education and the university system are on the frontline for the change of unfair conditions, combatting domestic violence and avoiding any form of discrimination, if we want to establish fair democratic societies in the respect of fundamental rights and human dignity.

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