

Violence against women and girls before, during and after COVID-19: the shadow pandemic that must be addressed

A COUNCIL OF EUROPE WEBINAR ON THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

DATE AND TIME: 20 May 2020, from 10.00 to 11.45 (France: GMT + 2 hours)

Event will be hosted on Blue Jeans Platform in the form of Q&A.

Words of welcome

- ▶ **Michele Nicoletti**, Professor, University of Trento, Italy, former President of PACE and commissioned by the Council of Europe to co-ordinate a feasibility study on Council of Europe Academic Networks (CEAN)

Speakers:

International responses and considerations

- ▶ **Dubravka Šimonović**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences

Responses by state parties to the Istanbul Convention

- ▶ **Nina Nordström**, Chair of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention

Complying with the Istanbul Convention in times of a pandemic

- ▶ **Sara De Vido**, Associate Professor, University Ca' Foscari, Venice

Online and technology-facilitated violence against women during COVID-19

- ▶ **Adriane van der Wilk**, Expert on Online and Technology-facilitated VAW

Moderator:

- ▶ **Marceline Naudi**, GREVIO President, University of Malta, Department of Gender and Sexualities



■ What many have feared is now showing in data: the various types of lockdowns and social distancing introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19 around the world are putting women at increased risk of gender-based violence. While in some countries calls for help to the police and/or helplines for domestic violence have gone up significantly, women elsewhere appear to be refraining from seeking help. Where perpetrators of sexual, physical or psychological violence share the residence with their victims, the lockdowns are exacerbating the situation. Various forms of technology-facilitated violence (sextortion, non-consensual image/video sharing etc) seem on the rise. A more hidden issue is how containment measures are impacting on women who are or fear becoming homeless if they leave their abuser.

■ The Council of Europe **Istanbul Convention** and its standards for a holistic response to the prevention of violence against women, the protection and support for victims and the prosecution of perpetrators is more relevant than ever and continues to apply. The recent **declaration by the Committee of the Parties** to the Istanbul Convention clearly states its relevance, and its **independent monitoring body GREVIO** recalled the need to implement it at all times, including during the current pandemic.

■ As we begin to move out of a full lockdown but with many restrictions still in place, it is important to look at the institutional responses and ask what is working to prevent and combat violence against women. Are institutional responses meeting the rights and needs of victims as set out in the Istanbul Convention? What are the gaps and shortcomings that have been exposed as a result of the pandemic? What are the important issues that we need to prioritise in this transition phase and beyond to ensure women survivors and their needs are given the attention they deserve?

■ The discussions will address these pressing questions ranging from women's support and protection from offline and online violence inside or outside the home and will offer food-for-thought for the Istanbul Convention's full implementation as we seek to rein in the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter.