



Réunion sur l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes  
Meeting on gender quality  
Jeudi 28 janvier 2016 / Thursday 28 January 2016  
Strasbourg - Conseil de l'Europe



➤ Why is civil society participation in the monitoring procedure of the GREVIO critical?

- Human rights defenders and activists, as well as victims and survivors of human rights violations, should be at the centre of the development and promotion of international and regional human rights standards. These are the individuals and organisations that have the most up-to-date information and direct experience with the human rights violations taking place on the ground. The building of greater bridges for consultation and information provision between human rights defenders and the Council of Europe (CoE) monitoring, standard-setting, and political bodies is as such crucial.
- NGOs working directly in the field are in a unique position to provide CoE monitoring mechanisms with relevant statistical and analytical data collected over longer periods of times, which highlight relevant political trends and shortcomings in national legislation and practice.
- Sustained provision of information to the GREVIO and amplification of the voices of field-based NGOs will positively impact the work and the efficiency of the monitoring mechanism and will be instrumental in achieving effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

**According to the explanatory report...**

68. In many member States, the overwhelming majority of services for victims of domestic violence, and also services for victims of other various forms of violence against women, are run by non-governmental or civil society organisations. They have a long tradition of providing shelter, legal advice, medical and psychological counselling as well as of running hotlines and other essential services.

69. The purpose of [article 9] is to emphasise the important contribution these various organisations make to preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention. It therefore requires Parties to the Convention to recognise their work by, for example, tapping into their expertise and involving them as partners in multi-agency cooperation or in the implementation of comprehensive government policies which Article 7 calls for. Beyond such recognition, this article requires Parties to the Convention to actively encourage and support the work of these dedicated NGOs and civil society organisations. This means enabling them to carry out their work in the best possible way. Although Article 9 refers only to NGOs and civil society active in combating violence against women, this should not prevent Parties from going further and supporting the work that is carried out by NGOs and civil society focusing on domestic violence in its wider scope.

➤ What are the opportunities for NGOs participation?

- NGOs may provide the GREVIO with alternative reports (or “shadow reports”), answering all or parts of the questionnaires to the States;
- Once the State report answering the questionnaire has been published, NGOs can provide complementary information or data, highlighting when necessary missing or conflicting findings;
- NGOs may trigger the special inquiry procedure by sending reliable information indicating a situation where problems require immediate attention to prevent or limit the scale or number of serious violations of the Convention – **Article 68(13)(14)(15)**;
- NGOs may contribute critical information guiding the GREVIO in its preparation and identification of priorities ahead of onsite visits; they may also provide follow up regarding the actual measures taken by the State to comply with the GREVIO’s recommendations – **Rules 35, 40.1, 47.2 and 54 of the Rules of Procedure** of the GREVIO;
- NGOs, especially grassroots NGOs and service providers, may have the opportunity to meet with the GREVIO members during onsite visits – **Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure** of the GREVIO;
- Representatives of civil society may attend the meetings of the Committee of Parties, either as participants (INGO Conference) or observers – **Rule 2.2 and 2.3 of the Rules of Procedure** of the Committee of Parties;
- NGOs may send communications to the Committee of Parties through the Secretariat with relevant information at any given time – **Rule 10.1 of the Rules of Procedure** of the Committee of Parties;
- NGOs may further engage in dialogue with their national parliaments or with the CoE’s PACE, to provide their expertise and perspective on the GREVIO’s report or on the implementation of GREVIO’s recommendations.

**According to Article 68 (5):**

GREVIO may receive information on the implementation of the Convention from non-governmental organisations and civil society, as well as from national institutions for the protection of human rights.

## ➤ What are the challenges to effective NGO participation?

- Accurate data collection and reliable statistics have often proved to be a challenge in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, in part due to the lack of reporting by the victims in a system that does not provide the adequate protection for them, and the lack proper identification, investigation and prosecution of such cases.
- NGOs, especially grassroots NGOs and service providers, often lack the resources and capacity to engage in the monitoring process, in particular at the international level.
- A substantial gap exists between the human rights situation at the national level and the ongoing dialogue between governments and international organisations at the regional and international levels. In particular, many NGOs on the ground lack a clear understanding of the functioning of CoE institutions and procedures, and are almost never aware of the full scope of avenues available to them to contribute to the CoE's work in human rights. Subsequently, the lack of timely information and knowledge of grassroots NGOs significantly limits their capacity to engage with a mechanism such as the GREVIO.
- Past experiences have shown that in some State Parties, the consultation of civil society and its participation in the monitoring process was hindered by the interference of government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), aiming at diluting the impact of independent NGOs reporting of systemic problems and violations of the State's obligations.

## ➤ What can GREVIO and the Committee of Parties do?

- The GREVIO should ensure adopting a civil society friendly approach and maintain a sustained and open dialogue with INGOs and national civil society organisations;
- The GREVIO should proactively seek the input of civil society, and encourage NGOs to submit alternative reports to the evaluation questionnaires and/or in response to the States' reports – **Rule 35 of the GREVIO Rules of Procedure**;
- The GREVIO should ensure regular consultations with NGOs, including meetings with civil society representatives during onsite visits, and during the preparatory and follow-up stages of the evaluation – **Rules 39, 40 and 47 of the GREVIO Rules of Procedure**;
- The Committee of Parties should encourage the designation of several representatives of civil society organisations as participants and observers, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure;
- When electing the GREVIO members, the Committee of Parties should take into consideration the manner in which the candidates' selection process was conducted and reject when necessary the candidates whose selection does not meet adequate standards of transparency and independence; This may include adequate consultation of civil society;
- The Committee of Parties should ensure that due consideration is given to information and communications submitted by NGOs throughout the monitoring process - **Rule 10.1 of the Rules of Procedure** of the Committee of Parties;

### **According to the Rules of Procedure (Committee of Parties)**

**Rule 2.2 - Participants:** vi) the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe [may appoint representatives]

**Rule 2.3 - Observers:** c. The Committee may authorise representatives of civil society, in particular non-governmental organisations active in combating violence against women and domestic violence, to send representatives as observers to its meetings on an ad hoc basis.

## ➤ What can the States do?

### **According to the Rules of Procedure (Committee of Parties)**

**Rule 10** - Each State Party shall ensure that the national selection procedure leading to the nomination of candidates for GREVIO is transparent and open to competition in order to lead to the nomination of the most qualified candidates.

- States should ensure that independent experts are selected for the GREVIO through a transparent procedure and with consultation of the civil society;
- States should remove practical barriers to victims reporting acts of violence or discrimination and lodging complaints, including through adequate training of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary; it is essential to increase the trust in the justice system;

- Recognising the critical role of NGOs and service providers in protecting victims and survivors of violence against women and domestic violence, and also in preventing and combatting such forms of violence, States should facilitate their activities, especially by ensuring that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to civil society organisations;
- Supporting NGOs effective participation in the monitoring process similarly includes ensuring that part of the costs for NGO participation is also covered, so as to guarantee meaningful representation of civil society as interlocutors in relevant meetings and conferences, thus reinforcing the dialogue with other actors;

**According to the explanatory report...**

92. Many NGOs have a long tradition of carrying out successful awareness-raising activities – at local, regional or national level. [Article 13] encourages the co-operation with national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and NGOs, in particular women’s organisations, where appropriate, in order to reach out to the general public. [...] 114. The emphasis placed on co-operation among these actors stems from the conviction that the forms of violence covered by the Convention are best addressed in a concerted and co-ordinated manner by a number of agencies. Law enforcement agencies who are often the first to be in contact with victims when called to a crime scene need to be able to refer a victim to specialist support services, for example a shelter or a rape crisis centre often run by NGOs.

**According to the explanatory report...**

66. [Article 8] aims at ensuring the allocation of appropriate financial and human resources for both activities carried out by public authorities and those of relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations. Across Council of Europe member States, different practice exists when it comes to government funding for non-governmental organisations (hereinafter NGOs) involved in preventing and combating all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention. The obligation placed on Parties is therefore that of allocating financial and human resources for activities carried out by NGOs and civil society.

- States should seek effective cooperation with civil society organisations to support and ensure the effective and systematic collection of accurate data with regard to violations of the Convention, but also to guarantee effective investigation and prosecution of alleged acts of violation of the Convention; States should facilitate the involvement of NGOs in the provision of adequate assistance to victims and survivors of violence, including with regard to individual or collective complains;
- States should proactively consult and ensure a constructive and open dialogue with the civil society, in order to identify political, legal and practical solutions, through an inclusive and cooperative approach with experts from NGOs – **Articles 7, 9, 13, 18.2.**

**According to Article 9**

Parties shall recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental organisations and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organisations.

## ➤ What can civil society organisations do to optimise impact?

- To increase the impact of their alternative reports to GREVIO or communications to the Committee of Parties, NGOs should coordinate the submission of comprehensive alternative reports to avoid duplication and gaps;
- INGOs should relay information to national civil society organisations regarding the opportunities for participating in the monitoring process;
- INGOs should envisage providing assistance, and when necessary training, to national civil society organisations on the Istanbul Convention, the GREVIO and other related international standards and jurisprudence;
- Where possible, NGOs should consider setting up coalitions of national civil society organisations, or build up the capacity of existing ones, to allow a more inclusive approach and to voice the concerns and findings of grassroots NGOs, service providers (i.e. hotlines, shelters, legal aid, counselling and psychological assistance etc.), as well as victims and survivors; this would suggest a mapping exercise of initiatives and pre-existing networks or coalitions in each State Party;
- Through their engagement with the GREVIO, NGOs should highlight the particular dimension of intersectional discrimination, and raise awareness on the particular vulnerability of certain groups, such as migrant women, refugee women and women asylum-seekers, undocumented women, lesbians, bisexual women, transgender people, those affected by FGM and women suffering from disabilities.
- To optimise their impact, NGOs should consider other opportunities to submit their findings and relevant data to other CoE monitoring mechanisms with overlapping fields of focus (i.e. GRETA).
- NGOs should systematically raise awareness and promote GREVIO’s findings in their advocacy at the national level, including when engaging with national parliaments.

### Ratifications (20)

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Monaco,  
Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, San Marino,  
Serbia, Slovenia, Spain,  
Sweden, Turkey

### GREVIO members (10)

Feride Acar (Turkish) – President  
Rosa Logar (Austrian) – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President  
Marceline Naudi (Maltese) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President

Biljana Brankovic (Serbian), Françoise Brié (French),  
Helena Maria Carvallho Martins Leitao (Portuguese),  
Gemma Gallego (Spanish), Simona Lanzoni (Italian),  
Iris Luarasi (Albanian), Vesna Ratkovic (Montenegrin).

### Key dates

Entry into force .....01/08/2014

1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the  
Committee of Parties..... 04/05/2015

>>> Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of  
the Committee of Parties

1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the GREVIO..... 21-23/09/2015

>>> Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of  
GREVIO

Adoption of initial questionnaire for the  
baseline report..... 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2016



Advocacy Centre on Council of Europe Standards  
Strasbourg, France  
[www.accessrights.org](http://www.accessrights.org)

*ACCESS – the Advocacy Centre on Council of Europe Standards, is a non-governmental organisation based out of Strasbourg, committed to promoting and protecting human rights in Europe. Our mission is to facilitate the access of national civil society organisations to the Council of Europe (CoE), and ensure that human rights are effectively protected and implemented through the procedures of the CoE.*

*We aim to promote the work of the CoE and strengthen the efficiency of its monitoring bodies by developing the long-term capacity of national civil society organisations to strategically engage with the CoE mechanisms. This will be achieved by increasing the understanding of the mechanisms and venues that are available to NGOs to participate in and impact the work of the CoE. Our approach includes increasing awareness and carrying out trainings on CoE standards with national NGOs; assisting national NGO partners in report drafting and submissions; as well as facilitating the coordination of NGO human rights coalitions and networks on thematic issues.*