

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating violence
against women and domestic violence
(Istanbul Convention)**

**Practical guidelines on the role of the contact person
of the state party with respect to the monitoring work
carried out by GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties**

Introduction

This document has been prepared with the aim of providing you with practical guidelines concerning your role as contact person in the different stages of co-operation between GREVIO and your authorities as a party to the Istanbul Convention during the evaluation procedure.

The Istanbul Convention's monitoring mechanism is based on two pillars: GREVIO (the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) and the Committee of the Parties, as outlined in Article 66 and 67 of the Istanbul Convention (the convention).

GREVIO conducts independent evaluations of each party's implementation of the convention, assessing the level of compliance, identifying challenges, and highlighting good practices. Its evaluation reports enable parties to recognise areas requiring improvement. GREVIO is currently completing its baseline evaluation round and launched in 2021 its first thematic evaluation round. The thematic evaluation round is dedicated to the theme "Building trust by providing support, protection and justice", and assesses progress in relation to a select number of provisions of the convention across the four pillars of the convention.

The Committee of the Parties is the political body set up by the convention which adopts recommendations to guide parties in strengthening their efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, based on GREVIO's findings.

Prior to the drafting of GREVIO baseline and thematic evaluation reports, a GREVIO delegation carries out an evaluation visit to the state party concerned (Article 68 paragraph 9 of the convention). The aim of the evaluation visit is to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the party's implementation of the convention.

GREVIO's evaluation procedure is based on the principle of co-operation between GREVIO and the state party concerned. This co-operation takes place at various stages of the process.

The contact person facilitates such co-operation and co-operates with the Secretariat of the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Mechanism (the Secretariat) before, during and after the preparation of GREVIO's report and Committee of the Parties' recommendations and conclusions.

GREVIO Monitoring work

I. Preparation of the GREVIO evaluation visit:

GREVIO launches its evaluation procedure in respect of a state party by sending its questionnaire according to a provisional timetable available on the Istanbul Convention's website. The state party is required to draft a report on the basis of this questionnaire ("state report").

Two months prior to sending the questionnaire an advanced warning is sent to the contact person informing her/him of the launch of the evaluation procedure. Subsequently, the questionnaire is sent alongside an official letter signed by the Executive Secretary of the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Mechanism. The letter indicates a deadline of around 5 months for the submission of the state report and relevant legislation and policies. These documents should all be provided in English/French and in an editable format to facilitate the work of GREVIO.

Subsequently, the Secretariat will contact you to explore possible dates for the evaluation visit. Once the dates have been decided, an official letter will be sent to you indicating:

- the date of the visit;
- the composition of the GREVIO delegation (notably, two or more GREVIO members who act as Rapporteurs, one to three members of GREVIO's Secretariat and two or more interpreters provided by the Council of Europe);
- an indicative list of authorities/agencies/independent bodies with whom GREVIO would like to meet with;
- and an indicative programme of the visit.

1. Organisation of the evaluation visit

a) The programme

Once the dates for the visit are confirmed, you are encouraged to book a meeting room so that meetings can take place in a single venue each day. Where feasible, it would be appreciated if the venue is equipped with interpretation facilities, preferably with interpretation booths, to avoid the logistical challenges of transporting interpretation equipment.

Prior to the evaluation visit you will receive a draft programme outlining meetings with authorities/agencies/independent bodies which you will be responsible for organising and facilitating. You are kindly asked to ensure that the proposed programme includes all relevant authorities/agencies/independent bodies with competence in the area of violence against women. Should any gaps be identified, you are requested to propose additional authorities/agencies/independent bodies that may have been overlooked or omitted. You will also be responsible for organising and facilitating meetings with judges, as they are essential stakeholders in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO attaches significant importance to these meetings. However, if for reasons of independence you are unable to organise the meeting with judges, it is crucial that you designate an alternative contact person with whom the Secretariat can liaise to make the necessary arrangements.

In line with the draft programme, you will be responsible, in consultation with the Secretariat of the Monitoring Mechanism, for organising both an inter-ministerial opening meeting at the beginning of the evaluation visit and a closing meeting at the end of the visit. These meetings should involve the same authorities/agencies/independent bodies and include representatives from all relevant authorities/agencies/independent bodies, including heads of departments and operational staff, at the appropriate level. The inter-ministerial opening meeting will focus

on the coordination of policies on violence against women and measures between the relevant authorities/agencies/independent bodies, while the closing meeting will allow the GREVIO delegation to present its preliminary findings. Please note that the preliminary findings will be delivered orally, not in writing, and no formal exchange is expected after the presentation. These findings are preliminary and non-binding, reflecting the GREVIO delegation's initial impressions rather than final conclusions.

Kindly note that the evaluation programme is usually intense. The GREVIO delegation therefore strives to arrive in the meeting rooms around 10 minutes early so that its members and its interpreters can set up their workstations and the meetings can start on time. Your help is of course instrumental to ensure that meetings start on time and that sufficient time is allotted in the programme to travel to other meeting venues, should this be necessary.

You will also be responsible for informing the participants of the meetings of the purpose of GREVIO's visit, providing them with all relevant information, including an indicative list of questions, *which will be made available by the Secretariat shortly before the evaluation visit*. You are equally kindly asked to inform the participants of the *format* of the meetings. Notably, after a brief presentation of the GREVIO delegation and of the authorities/agencies/independent bodies that are present, the GREVIO members and the Secretariat representatives shall lead the meeting by asking specific questions, previously shared with the contact person. Given the limited time available, the representatives of authorities/agencies/independent bodies are kindly asked to abstain from making presentations/projecting power point presentation. They are equally asked to speak slowly so that interpreters can properly carry out their work.

The organisation of the meeting with civil society organisations and non-state stakeholders is entirely the responsibility of the Secretariat of the Monitoring Mechanism. In order to respect the confidentiality of these meetings, no details or information regarding them can be shared outside the GREVIO delegation.

Prior to the evaluation visit, you may also be asked to provide additional documents, such as legislation or policies that were not previously submitted but are deemed useful and necessary for the preparation of the visit. These documents should also be provided in English/French and in an editable format.

b) Logistical aspects

You may be requested to provide input to the delegation on logistical arrangements, for example, helping to identify suitable companies that provide rental car services with a driver, suggesting suitable places to have a quick lunch between meetings or viable hotel options.

II. During the evaluation visit:

In the course of the evaluation visit, you will be the GREVIO delegation's contact person for any questions or problems which might arise.

Should you choose to participate in the various meetings with the authorities/agencies/independent bodies, you will be asked to note down any additional requests for information and subsequently provide this information to the GREVIO delegation. Should any additional information on outstanding issues or specific points be promised to the delegation during the visit, you are kindly requested to transmit it to the Secretariat within the agreed timeframe following the visit.

All meetings, including those with parliamentarians, are strictly confidential, thus no press should be present nor should any information be shared with the media.

Please note that the Secretariat will subsequently publish a news item on its website to give visibility to the evaluation visit and the next steps in the monitoring process.

At the conclusion of the evaluation visit, you may, in co-ordination with the Secretariat, propose to hold a press conference. However, please note that no information regarding the outcome of the evaluation or any findings cannot be shared at this stage. Alternatively, you may agree with the Secretariat to schedule a press conference at a later date, for example, upon publication of the report.

III. Adoption of the draft report by GREVIO and confidential dialogue with the state party

Approximately 4 months after the evaluation visit, GREVIO will adopt its draft report on the state party during its plenary session. The draft report will then be sent to your authorities along with an official letter indicating a deadline of around two months for submitting comments. The aim of the confidential dialogue is to allow your authorities to provide, if they think it is necessary, comments on the draft report with a view to correcting any factual errors which the report may contain or to provide new important factual information.

You will be responsible for co-ordinating all the authorities/agencies/independent bodies' comments and for transmitting them to the Secretariat of the Monitoring Mechanism by the agreed deadline. Your comments will be examined by the GREVIO Rapporteurs and the Secretariat, who may amend the draft report before submitting it to the GREVIO plenary for final adoption.

After the adoption of the final report during its plenary session, the Secretariat will initiate the confidential dialogue with your authorities by sending the GREVIO report to you together with an official letter requesting the submission of any final comments. Your authorities must submit any comments they may have within the agreed one-month deadline. The GREVIO evaluation report will be published alongside any final comments received.

In view of Article 69 of the convention, which requires state parties to the Convention to submit GREVIO reports to their national parliaments, you are kindly requested to ensure that the GREVIO report is shared with your parliament.

Once the GREVIO report is adopted, in accordance with the established procedures under the Istanbul Convention (Article 68), it can no longer be amended.

The Secretariat will notify you of the exact date of the report's publication on its website. Your authorities are encouraged to organise a press conference in conjunction with the publication of the GREVIO evaluation report to further disseminate its findings and raise awareness. If you wish to hold a press conference to launch and disseminate the GREVIO report, please inform the Secretariat in advance.

Committee of the Parties' monitoring work

The Committee of the Parties is the political body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Comprised of representatives from the Convention's member states, the Committee elects the members of GREVIO and adopts recommendations based on GREVIO's findings set out in its baseline evaluation report. These recommendations prioritise areas requiring urgent or immediate action, reflecting GREVIO's priorities, and are fewer in number than GREVIO's overall findings. For recommendations issued in respect of GREVIO baseline evaluation reports, the recommendations are based on findings that "urge" the party to take action, as well as findings that "strongly encourage" the parties (but only limited to chapters 1 and II of the report/convention). For recommendations

issued in respect of GREVIO first thematic evaluation reports the recommendations are based on findings that “urge” as well as findings that “strongly encourage” the party to take action.

Following their adoption by the Committee of the Parties, the Secretariat will send the recommendations to the contact person with an official letter, specifying the requirement to report on the progress made after a three-year period. The recommendations shall also be published on the Istanbul Convention website. The contact person is thus requested to ensure that a report is sent to the Secretariat by the above-mentioned deadline. Upon expiry of the deadline, the Committee of the Parties will take note of the report submitted by the state party alongside information provided by NGOs, civil society, and human rights institutions.