

## **Zonta and the Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe (CoE) is Europe's leading inter-governmental human rights organization working with its 47 member states to strengthen human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The CoE was founded in 1949. For 70 years it has changed the lives of millions of Europeans.

Zonta International is represented at the Council of Europe (CoE) since 1983 and is one of the 320 International NGOs enjoying participatory status at the Conference of INGOs, which constitutes civil society's pillar in the CoE.

As part of the Conference the ZI CoE Committee contributes to the work of the inter-governmental committees, to the elaboration process of treaties and policy lines and to action plans of the thematic committees by focusing on the aspects of gender mainstreaming being observed in all areas.

The ZI CoE Committee's priority is to train Zonta members around the world on Zonta's strong position at the CoE and to promote relevant instruments and treaties as tools for members, clubs and districts to advocate knowledgeably and effectively for the rights of women and girls.

Instruments like the Istanbul Convention (CoE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) and the Anti-Trafficking Convention (CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings), being accessible also by non-European countries, underline the global dimension and relevance of the CoE and make up concrete advocacy tools for the Zonta Says NO to Violence against Women-Campaign.

### **Instruments of the CoE:**

The CoE's work has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework in the fields of human rights and gender equality contributing to advancing women's rights and to bringing member states closer to facto equality.

The three unique and comprehensive Conventions (Istanbul Convention, Anti-Trafficking Convention and Lanzarote Convention) to combat violence against women and human trafficking and to protect children of sexual abuse are ground-breaking.

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding and most far reaching international treaty to tackle violence against women and domestic violence. It breaks new ground by requesting member states, who have signed and ratified the convention, to prevent violence against women, protect the victims and criminalize and prosecute the perpetrators.

The Convention is based on the understanding that violence against women is a gender-based violation of human rights and that it is rooted deeply in the inequality between men and women in society, perpetuated by stereotypes and traditional behavior.

The Convention is of great value for us in advocating for women's rights and in our efforts to end violence against women: It is a concrete and meaningful tool to underline our requests in women's politics for the national implementation of respective laws, provisions and measures according to the Convention's requirements

In March 2019 the Recommendation of Ministers on Preventing and Combating Sexism was launched. It is the first internationally agreed definition of sexism in all its form.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 on the other side aims to increase gender equality in all spheres of public and private life by implementing specific instruments and measures to achieve de facto gender equality in all CoE member states.

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