



Resolution 1697 (2009)¹

Final version

Migrant women: at particular risk from domestic violence

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that migrant women in Europe face twofold discrimination based both on their gender and their origin. In addition, in communities marked by a strong patriarchal culture, they may be exposed to an aggravated risk from domestic violence. Confronted with the language barrier and family pressure, they often end up isolated and unable to express their views and have only limited access to any facilities that exist to protect the victims of domestic violence. Migrant women may also have faced violence in their home country or in transit or in the host country. Irregular migrant women face a further problem in that they risk being sent back to their home country if they manifest themselves to the authorities.

2. In Europe, one woman in four or five has suffered physical violence at least once in her life. The Assembly reiterates that any form of violence against women, including domestic violence, is unacceptable and constitutes a grave violation of human rights. No cultural relativism may be invoked to justify practices that infringe the fundamental rights of migrant women and women of migrant origin.

3. During its Stop Domestic Violence against Women campaign (2006-2008), the Council of Europe highlighted the need to protect the victims of violence, prosecute the perpetrators of violence and prevent violence against women. The Assembly believes that member states must do everything in their power to ensure that all women living within their territory have access in law and in practice to the relevant victim protection and rehabilitation facilities.

4. The Assembly consequently invites the member states to:

4.1. adopt suitable strategies for combating domestic violence and ensuring the protection and rehabilitation of victims from migrant communities, in particular through:

4.1.1. the granting of individual legal status to migrant women who have joined their spouse through family reunion, if possible within one year of the date of arrival;

4.1.2. the gathering of statistics, broken down by gender and community, to provide a better insight into the nature and magnitude of the phenomenon and enable adequate strategies to be adopted;

4.1.3. the provision of suitable assistance, including psychological and rehabilitation assistance, and protection services, including an interpretation service for victims;

4.2. adopt dedicated action plans addressing the specific needs of migrant women who are victims of violence, including domestic violence and trafficking.

5. The Assembly also invites the member states to adopt active policies for the prevention of violence against women in migrant communities, in particular through:

5.1. the introduction of integrated and co-ordinated policies to build migrant women's capacities and promote equality between women and men;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 20 November 2009 (see [Doc. 11991](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Woldseth; and [Doc. 12054](#), opinion by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mrs Acketoft). See also [Recommendation 1891 \(2009\)](#).



- 5.2. increased support to the non-governmental organisations that protect, assist and mentor victims of domestic violence, with due regard to gender equality and to the furtherance of human rights;
- 5.3. the promotion of active policies for integrating migrants and combating racism and xenophobia;
- 5.4. men's involvement in the strategies to combat violence against women in migrant communities;
- 5.5. reinforced co-operation with migrant women's countries of origin, aimed at encouraging these states to:
 - 5.5.1. improve the status of women and reinforce their position in society;
 - 5.5.2. adopt policies to combat violence against women;
 - 5.5.3. ensure the effective use of legal mechanisms for combating and preventing violence against women;
 - 5.5.4. disseminate information on legislative advances in gender equality targeting their nationals, particularly women, who are resident in Council of Europe member states.