



**MONITORING OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL
FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN BULGARIA**
SUMMARY OF REPORT 2019

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THE CONVENTION

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979 and has been in force in Bulgaria since 1982. By accepting the Convention, our country undertakes to include the principle of equality of men and women in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria or other relevant legislation; adopt appropriate legislative and other measures prohibiting any discrimination against women; to establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal footing with men and to ensure, with the help of the courts and other state authorities, the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination, etc.

In the course of Bulgaria's reporting under the Convention, the CEDAW requires of the State information about the measures taken and progress achieved in the following areas: violence against women, participation of women in the political and public life, employment, education, role of Roma women and others.

CEDAW IMPLEMENTATION IN BULGARIA 2019

According to the Ombudsman, all institutions and participants in the process of prevention and protection against domestic violence need to consider applying a holistic approach of work which will address this enormous issue in our society in its entirety.

In 2018, the Constitutional Court ruled on the incompatibility of the Istanbul Convention with the Bulgarian Constitution which hampers its ratification. This has prompted amendments to the national legislation aimed at overcoming the problems in the protection of women against domestic violence. The changes made in the Criminal Code and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act related to combating domestic violence are an important step but the efforts most certainly need to continue.

The Ombudsman highlights the need to adopt additional legislative amendments such as:

- Removal from the Criminal Code of the requirement to consider a crime to have been committed in the conditions of domestic violence only if it systemic;



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- Incriminating all forms of domestic violence, including sexual and economic violence;
- Incriminating all forms of psychological violence and refining the existing definition of harassment;
- Incriminating rape in marriage;
- Amending Article 10, para 1 of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act pursuant to which a protection application to the court is submitted within one month as of the act of domestic violence and extending this term;
- Ensuring better guarantees for access to justice and legal aid of women who are victims of domestic violence;
- Taking effective measures to obligate perpetrators of domestic violence to comply with the judicial ruling to take part in rehabilitation programs such as anger management training and others.

Other measures are also necessary such as:

- Ensuring integrated gathering of data and official statistics about the cases of domestic violence;
- Creating an effective coordination mechanism to ensure better cooperation among the institutions in cases of domestic violence;
- Targeted training of professionals working with victims of domestic violence – police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, healthcare specialists;
- Campaigns for zero tolerance to domestic violence to increase the public awareness in order to overcome the social stereotypes and empower women not to be silent victims.

THE OMBUDSMAN IN DEFENCE OF VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In November 2019, the Ombudsman issued a recommendation to all regional governors in the country to increase the number of crisis centres for women who are victims of domestic violence.

Another important topic which the CEDAW brings to the attention of the State is related to the observance of the rights of Roma women and their participation in the social and economic life. The Ombudsman notes several problem areas in relation to the protection of the rights of Roma women: low level of education and early school leaving, early marriage, poverty and unemployment, as well as a high level of domestic violence due to a significant number of stereotypes and prejudice.

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According to the Ombudsman, an integrated and decentralised approach is needed to resolve these problems successfully, especially with respect to Roma girls and women, which will have a sustainable impact on their lives and will contribute to their social inclusion, equal opportunities and access to universal rights.



On 25 November 2019, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, the Ombudsman organised a topical reception desk for women who are victims of violence. In addition to the experts from the institution, the initiative involved psychologists and lawyers from the P.U.L.S.E. Foundation who listen to and help victims of physical, psychological and verbal harassment.

The Ombudsman sent a recommendation to the Regional Governors throughout the country who have the right to set up crisis centres because there are only thirteen such centres in the country; in Sofia there is just one for eight people.

The proposals for amendments to the legislation were also presented by the Ombudsman to the UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.