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NEWS REPORT

Country:	Ireland
Title:	The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ('the Istanbul Convention')
Date:	8 December 2015
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	Violence against women
Ground of discrimination:	Sex
Source:	Legislation
Field:	Other
Applicable law:	General Scheme of Domestic Violence Bill; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015; Criminal Law (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008; Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997; Children's Act 2001.

Content

Policy Development: Ireland signed the Istanbul Convention on 5 November 2015. The Minister for Justice and Equality has said that this is a step towards full ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The Government has set out the outstanding actions and these actions form part of the actions in the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2020 which is currently being finalised and will be submitted to the Government for approval following consultation with the voluntary and community sector in the near future. The actions to be taken include:

- Education and training for the police force, court services, probation service staff and health and children agency staff, and law students;
- The general scheme of the Domestic Violence Bill was published in July 2015;
- Review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme for victims of domestic violence;
- The enactment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015;
- The development of a Risk Assessment Matrix for all victims of domestic violence and sexual crimes;
- A National Helpline Service to respond to issues of domestic and sexual violence;
- The Criminal Law (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008 shall be amended to include reference to the Istanbul Convention;
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is committed to providing information to victims of violence on access to complaint mechanisms such as the European Court of Human Rights;

- The General Scheme of the Domestic Violence Bill (which was published in July 2015 and referred to the *Oireachtas* (parliamentary) Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality for pre- legislative scrutiny);
- Extend access to barring orders;
- Legislate for extra territoriality where an offence is committed by an Irish national or a person who is habitually resident in Ireland over offences in the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997, sexual offences and the new offence of forced marriage;
- Annual report on the monitoring of the application of the Convention;
- Provide support to child witnesses of domestic and sexual violence;
- Examine the potential for the removal of the common law defence of reasonable chastisement which may be availed of in proceedings under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and under section 246 of the Children's Act 2001.

Key points of analysis: This report is to advise that Ireland has just signed the Convention and to alert readers to the Government's Action Plan to fully ratify the provisions of the Convention. As can be seen there is a considerable volume of legislative amendments to be enacted. There is a strict timetable for the next two years.

Internet link sources:

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR15000568>, accessed 8 December 2015.
http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Istanbul_Convention_Action_Plan, accessed 8 December 2015.