



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE

WAVE Network and European Info Centre against Violence

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To:

Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia

Members of Parliament

Eiki Nestor, President of the Riigikogu

Enn Eesma, First Vice-President of the Riigikogu

Taavi Rõivas, Second Vice-President of the Riigikogu

Helmen Kütt, Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu

Members of Government

Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia

Jevgeni Ossinovski, Minister of Health and Labour of the Republic of Estonia

Andres Anvelt, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia

Urmas Reinsalu, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Estonia

Kaia Iva, Minister of Social Protection of the Republic of Estonia

Sven Mikser, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Vienna, 15 of December 2016

Dear Madam President,

Dear Members of the Parliament and the Government of the Republic of Estonia,

The WAVE Network is aware that The Republic of Estonia has an outstanding record of promoting and protecting women's human rights and has thus earned an excellent reputation in the international as well as the European arena. Compared with other European countries, Estonia has within a comparatively short period of time taken impressive steps forward in providing assistance to victims of violence against women. Your role in achieving this has been invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Estonia has built up a well-functioning women's shelters network where women threatened or affected by violence have round-the-clock access to uniform high-quality assistance and support across the country. Apart from offering emergency help and safe accommodation, women's shelters provide long-term professional advice and support to help survivors of violence start a new life free of abuse. The shelters' staff consists exclusively of trained personnel who have undergone specialized training and have a gendered understanding of violence against women.

For years, women experiencing violence in Estonia have had access to a single nationwide 24/7 free-of-charge helpline. The relevant frontline staff have received specialist training to provide women an effective, empathetic service and response. Estonia has, furthermore, set up sexual violence referral centres.

In recent years, the telephone helpline and support services for women have been funded by the government. With this, you have already complied with the basic requirements stipulated in the Convention of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in terms of victims' access to services facilitating their recovery from violence.

All this is laudable and serves as a good model for other countries to follow.

In 2014, Estonia has made a further step in combating violence against women, by signing the Convention of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul

Convention). The WAVE Network would like to encourage Estonia to further develop these steps, and to ratify and properly implement the Istanbul Convention.

Given the above, **WAVE is following with deepest concern the situation in Estonia where in the 2017 state budget allocations for women's shelters have been cut by 100 000 euros in comparison with the current year. This has led to a situation where women's shelters in nine counties with smaller populations are forced to close down altogether and shelters in two counties fail to provide adequate service, due to lack of funding.**

Each woman survivor of violence deserves good quality professional response no matter where she lives. The **WAVE Network calls upon you to do your utmost to allocate the missing funding in the state budget for women's shelters to guarantee their sustained operations preventing the collapse of the well-developed and well-functioning network of women's shelters and telephone hotline.** It is women's health and lives that are at stake. **We need each and every one of them.**

We trust that you will give these issues your utmost attention and priority and we would like to offer our support in the above-mentioned matters, in case it will be needed.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rösslhuber, Managing Director WAVE Network

