

Update on the implementation of Latvia's commitments made at the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Latvia has been focusing on **the elimination of domestic violence**. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) has become a roadmap for Latvia highlighting the areas where changes and improvements should be made. Latvia signed the Istanbul Convention on 18th May 2016; it is foreseen that Latvia will ratify the Convention till 2018. Starting from 2015 the State funded social rehabilitation services for adult victims and perpetrators of violence are available. Also a variety of activities aimed at expert training and public awareness-raising on domestic violence have been implemented, including with the aim to encourage victims to report about the cases of violence.

Latvia has worked towards **women's economic empowerment**, including through improving the tax-benefit policy to achieve that it better addresses the income inequality. Latvia also has worked towards better balance between work and family life, in particular implementation of flexible child-care arrangements. Awareness raising measures are an ongoing effort and in the near future it is planned to address such issues as gender discrimination and the role of the existing legal instruments in ensuring equal rights.

Latvia also committed itself to **fight against human trafficking**, including to focus on strengthening the capacities of law enforcement agencies and combating sham marriages. During the last year law enforcement agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations have achieved considerable results as regards identifying of and providing assistance to Latvian nationals– minor girls and women involved in internal trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Latvia is the leading partner of international project HESTIA “Preventing human trafficking and sham marriages: A multidisciplinary solution”. Discussions at the national level and regional trainings for multidisciplinary groups of experts and practitioners as well as wide informative anti-trafficking activities have been implemented. It has led to a shared joint understanding of the phenomenon of exploitative sham marriages and to the improvement of national legislation.

The priorities of Latvia's **development cooperation** include strengthening of civil society, gender equality and developing of social protection systems in partner countries. For example, in 2016 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is financing a project implemented by the Latvian Women Resource Center “MARTA” with the goal to improve access to education and improve economic empowerment of girls and women in Central Asia (Kirgizstan and Tajikistan).

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