



## THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION: A VITAL OPPORTUNITY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

THE EUROPEAN COALITION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS CALLS ON: 

- **The Council of the European Union to ratify without delay** the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), **within the most effective scope of EU competence.**
- **EU Member States who have not yet done so to ratify** the Istanbul Convention without delay and without reservations, and to put in place the necessary legislative and policy framework to ensure its adequate implementation, including allocating sustainable and adequate funding, and cooperating with civil society and women's rights organisations.
- **EU Institutions to fully integrate the Istanbul Convention into the EU legislation and policy framework,** establishing an effective and representative EU monitoring framework.
- **The European Commission and EU Member States to develop a comprehensive EU Strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and girls,** and to address all the structural issues that fuel this violence.
- **The EU to appoint an EU coordinator on ending violence against women and girls, with a strong political mandate and responsibility** to: coordinate the EU Strategy and all the efforts of the relevant EU Institutions and agencies (EIGE, FRA, EUROJUST, EASO, EUROSTAT, etc.); and to facilitate the exchange of good practices for the implementation of the Convention at the national level.

### FACTS IN EUROPE

- Violence against women threatens the security of half of the population in the EU, **affecting over 250 million women and girls**, having life- long implications for their physical and mental health.
- **96% of EU citizens consider that violence against women is unacceptable.** 84% consider that it should be always punished by law.
- **1 in 3 women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.**
- **50 women die every week from male domestic violence.**
- **More than 1 in 2 women (55%)** have experienced sexual harassment and 20 % of women have experienced online harassment.
- **75 % of women in top management positions have experienced sexual harassment at work.**
- 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during **pregnancy.**
- **60% of homelessness women** cite domestic violence as one of the causes of their homelessness.
- **28% of older women** had experienced some kind of violence and abuse at home in the previous 12 months.
- **Women with disabilities are 2 to 5 times more likely** to be victims of violence than non-disabled women, including sexual and reproductive abuse, such as forced sterilisation.
- **At least 500,000 women and girls live with the lifelong consequences of female genital mutilation (FGM).**
- **Certain women face a greater risk of violence because of motives fuelled by sexism as well as racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination.** Furthermore, **intersecting forms of discrimination** limit access to justice and support and protection services.

### >>> TIMELINE >>>

The European Union signed the CoE Istanbul Convention on 13 June 2017, after the Council of the European Union agreed on two decisions limiting the scope of the signature to exclusive competence on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and asylum and non-refoulement. In September 2017, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on EU Accession to the Istanbul Convention with an overwhelming majority. The Resolution urges Member States to speed up the negotiations on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU and calls for a broad EU accession without any limitations. The resolution specifically calls for an EU Coordinator to lead the implementation of a holistic EU Strategy.

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION WILL HAVE A REAL IMPACT ON WOMEN'S LIVES IN EUROPE WHO DESERVE TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE! WE EXPECT A REAL COMMITMENT.**

## THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION: COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Is the first legally binding treaty in Europe that criminalises multiple forms of violence against women including physical and psychological violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment and rape, stalking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilization.
- Emphasises and recognises that violence against women is a human rights violation; a form of discrimination against women; and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men.
- Requires the public authorities of State parties to adopt a set of comprehensive and multidisciplinary measures in a proactive fashion to prevent violence, protect its victims/survivors and prosecute perpetrators, in line with the wide popular support for such measures among EU citizens, as demonstrated by the latest Eurobarometer.
- Requires the adoption of necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that women and girls victims of violence have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence, including health care and social services.
- Recognises that women experience multiple forms of discrimination and requires States parties to secure the implementation of the Istanbul Convention without discrimination on any ground.
- States that violence against women can never be justified in the name of culture, custom, religion, tradition nor so-called "honour".
- Recognises that women on spouse-dependent visas may be prevented from seeking help or leaving abusive relationships because of their status and requires measures to ensure their protection.


## THE RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION BY THE EU WILL IMPROVE WOMEN'S SAFETY AND HEALTH. THE EU RATIFICATION - WITHIN THE MOST EFFECTIVE SCOPE OF EU COMPETENCE - WILL HAVE THE FOLLOWING IMPACTS:

### AT EU LEVEL

- demonstrate the **EU's strong commitment to end violence against women and girls**, which is the most pervasive form of women's rights violation in Europe.
- significantly advance in promoting **women and girls'** safety in order to ensure that women and girls can live a life free from violence everywhere in the EU.
- contribute to the effective implementation of the EU's obligations to **guarantee women's human rights** under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- ensure the development of an **effective and robust Code of Conduct** which will promote increased efficiency, simple and fast cooperation among EU Institutions and Member States on matters related to violence against women and girls and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention
- significantly advance the development and implementation of a comprehensive EU strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and girls.
- increase and reinforce the European funding schemes to end violence against women and girls in the EU, which will increase impact at national level.
- ensure greater **EU accountability** through the monitoring process in the areas of EU competence.
- ensure and improve **data-collection** on violence against women at EU and national level.
- promote more **effective preventative policies** to combat violence against women and girls, including by addressing the specific needs of women in vulnerable situations and facing multiple intersecting forms of discrimination, and the provision of support, health and protection services to survivors of violence that are gender sensitive, comprehensive, inclusive, age specific and culturally sensitive.
- allow to make relevant progress in the implementation of the EU gender equality directives, since violence is considered as form of discrimination against women and girls in the EU.
- provide **guidance on the interpretation** of existing EU legislation addressing violence against women in light of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention (i.e. Victims Rights Directive, European Protection Order, European Investigation Order, EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, the Asylum Directives, etc).

### AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- foster cooperation among Member States, mutual learning, and increase financial resources.
- encourage national ratification processes and the adequate and harmonised implementation of the Convention's provisions, without reservations.
- support Member States in using the Convention as a parameter to interpret and apply EU legislation in a unified manner.
- increase protection, including care and support, for all women and girls wherever they go in the EU, if they decide to travel, study, work or reside abroad in another EU Member State.
- promote effective preventative policies to combat violence against women and girls, and eliminate the conditions that fuel it.
- address the conditions that protect perpetrators of violence against women and girls living in the EU and ensure penalties are imposed on the perpetrators of such violence, irrespective of nationality.

 **Even when the EU accedes to the Istanbul Convention, those EU Member States - which have not yet done it - will still need to ratify it. All Member States will be responsible for implementing its provisions and will be able to count on EU support.**

## LEARNING FROM SIMILAR PROCESSES: EXAMPLES OF THE BENEFITS OF THE EU RATIFICATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (UNCRPD)

- Increased awareness among decision makers at EU level on the rights of persons with disabilities, e.g. the creation of the CRPD network of MEPs in the European Parliament.
- The creation of the EU Monitoring framework that promotes, protects and monitors the implementation of the UNCRPD in areas of EU competence: with the participation of the European Parliament, European Ombudsman, Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Disability Forum.
- EU's participation in the periodic reviews by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and report on the implementation of the Convention. The EU underwent its first concrete and independent review in 2015 which resulted in recommendations to the EU on how to improve its implementation of the UN CRPD. A second report will have to be submitted by the EU in 2021.
- A dedicated Disability Strategy and dedicated meetings with key stakeholders on the implementation of the UN CRPD, such as the Work Forum and dedicated sessions on the Disability High Level Group and the yearly conference for the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- Gave further motivation for the EU to support de-institutionalisation of persons with disabilities in Member States through European funding.
- Development of more concrete work on disabilities e.g. the European Accessibility Act which aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services by removing barriers for persons with disabilities and will be an effective response to the recommendations issued to the EU under the latter's CRPD review process.
- The EC proposal of accession to the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to books for visually impaired persons.
- Spurred the adoption of the Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites which introduces mandatory web accessibility.
- Gave impetus to many member states to ratify the UNCRPD and to all Member States to have a common approach to implementing the CRPD.

