



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

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

- **The EU Member States and the Council of the European Union to sign and conclude (ratify) the Istanbul Convention** in 2017, and within the broadest scope of EU competence as possible.
- **The European Parliament to adopt a strong resolution consenting to the EU conclusion to the Istanbul Convention.**
- **The European Commission to develop a comprehensive EU Strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women** that is coordinated and monitored by an EU coordinator body against VAWG.
- **The EU institutions to fully integrate the Istanbul Convention** into the EU legislation and policy framework, establishing a relevant and representative EU monitoring framework.
- **The EU Member States to ratify the Istanbul Convention without reservations** and to put in place the necessary legislative and policy changes to ensure its adequate implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including allocating sustainable and adequate funding to, and cooperating with civil society and women's rights organisations.

FACTS IN EUROPE

- **1 in 3 women** have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.
- **50 women** die every week from male domestic violence.
- **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 homeless women cite domestic violence as one of the causes of their homelessness.
- Violence against women can have life-long implications for the **physical and mental health** of women.
- 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.
- Between **50% and 60%** of women mental health service users have experienced domestic violence, and up to 20% will be experiencing current abuse.
- **28%** of older women had experienced some kind of violence and abuse at home in the 12 months prior to a survey.
- Women with disabilities are **2 to 5 times more likely** to be victims of violence than non-disabled women and are subjected to sterilisation and abortions against their will.
- Roma women are more likely to face **early marriages** and attacks on their physical integrity, such as forced sterilisation.
- **23%** of lesbian women had been at least once physically/sexually attacked or threatened with violence at home or elsewhere (street, on public transport, at your workplace, etc) in the last 5 years.
- Undocumented women and women with a dependent **migration** status (on a spouse or employer) are at a heightened risk of violence and exploitation. Because of the risk of being detained and deported- rather than assisted-, they face particular barriers in accessing support, protection and services.
- **85%** of young women in the UK experiences sexual harassment in public spaces. Women of colour receive a barrage of racism when they object to harassment.
- **60 to 100%** of victims of hate crime attacks on Muslims in Europe are women, especially women wearing headscarf, demonstrating a disproportionate effect on women as victims of such attacks.
- At least **500,000 women and girls** live with the lifelong consequences of female genital mutilation (FGM).
- Violence against women costs **€226 billion euros** each year, which represent almost 2 % of the annual EU budget.

THE RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION BY THE EU -WITHIN THE BROADEST SCOPE OF ITS COMPETENCE - WILL:

AT EU LEVEL

- Be a **major step** in the EU's action to combat all forms of violence against women
- Give the world a **robust message** about the EU's commitment to fight this pervasive form of women's rights violation.
- Promote **more effective preventive policies** to combat violence against women and the provision of gender sensitive protection services to its survivors.
- Promote **increased coordination policies** across EU institutions and provision of adequate resources and funding in a sustainable way.
- **Make the EU accountable** through the monitoring process in the areas of EU competence.
- **Improve data-collection** at EU and national level.
- Be an effective way to implement the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, to which the EU as well as 27 out of 28 Member States are a state party.

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- Serve the Member states to use the Convention as a **parameter to interpret EU legislation** with the same approach (as for example, the Victims' rights Directive or the European Protection Order).
- **Foster cooperation among member states** and give an impetus to the national ratification processes and in the **adequate and harmonised implementation** of the Convention's provisions.

 **Even when the EU concludes the Istanbul Convention, all the EU Member States -which have already not done so- will still need to ratify it. All the Member States will be responsible for implementing its provisions.**

The European Commission has proposed that the EU accedes to the Istanbul Convention within the scope of the following EU competences: anti-discrimination law, protection of victims of crime, sexual exploitation of women and children, certain areas pertaining to asylum and migration, as well as cross-border civil and criminal matters, and data protection.

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 different 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 a 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 the perpetrators.
- Recognises that women experience multiple forms of discrimination and requires the State parties to ensure that the implementation of the Istanbul Convention is made without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status or other.
- 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 by requiring states to make available autonomous residence permits to victims.

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.

LEARNING FROM SIMILAR PROCESSES:

The benefits of the EU ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities (UNCRPD)

- Increased awareness among decision makers at EU level on the rights of people 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 matters of EU competence: with the participation of the European Parliament, European Ombudsman, Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Disability Forum.
- The EU is obliged to report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to undergo periodic review of their implementation of the Convention. The EU underwent its first concrete and independent review by Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 which resulted in recommendations to the EU on how to improve its implementation of the UN CRPD.
- Gave further motivation for the EU to support de-institutionalisation 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.
- Gave impetus to the Netherlands and Finland to ratify the UNCRPD, the remaining member states to ratify the Optional protocol to the CRPD and to all Member States to implement it.