

EU signs Council of Europe convention to stop violence against women

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Strasbourg 13.06.2017 – Global support for the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (“[Istanbul Convention](#)”) significantly increased today with the official signature by the European Union.

Ambassador Joseph Filletti, Permanent Representative of Malta to the Council of Europe, on behalf of the Presidency-in-office of the Council of the EU, and Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality signed the convention on behalf of the European Union, in the presence of Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland.

The signing sends a strong political signal from all 28 EU member states to subscribe to the Convention. It shows the recognition, by the EU, of the importance of the Istanbul Convention as establishing the global norms in this field and thus reinforces its international standing.

So far, 23 countries have [ratified](#) the Convention, including 14 EU members (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). The other 14 EU member states have all signed the Convention.

The EU signing – the first step towards EU accession to the Istanbul Convention – follows the EU Council's [adoption of two decisions for the signature](#): one related to articles of the convention dealing with asylum, refugees and *refoulement* and another on articles dealing with co-operation in criminal matters.

The EU has exclusive competence to accept the obligations set out in the Istanbul Convention with respect to its own institutions and public administration.

The Istanbul Convention – so named because it was open for signature in Istanbul in 2011 – is the most comprehensive international treaty to combat violence against women and domestic violence. The convention recognises violence against women as a human rights violation. Its specific measures prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators.

Violence against women is a brutal form of discrimination, which happens in every society and EU country. According to recent data:

- One in three women in the EU has been a victim of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15;
- One in 20 women have been raped;
- One half (55%) of women have experienced sexual harassment;
- One in three women has experienced psychological abusive behaviour by a partner;
- One in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an adult during childhood.

The Council of Europe stands ready to support the process of preparing EU accession, as modalities will need to be negotiated. One such modality would be the EU's capacity to nominate a candidate for election to the convention's independent expert body – the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ([GREVIO](#)) – which monitors implementation of the convention.

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