

Istanbul Convention

Factsheet

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), adopted in 2011, specifically addresses gender-based violence, including domestic violence. It outlines detailed commitments for member states to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute offenders.



Click [here](#) for an explanation video on the **Istanbul Convention**.

“(...) Recognising, with grave concern, that women and girls are often exposed to serious forms of violence such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour” and genital mutilation, which constitute a serious violation of the human rights of women and girls and a major obstacle to the achievement of equality between women and men (...).”

Preamble Istanbul Convention

The Istanbul Convention was ratified by the European Union on 28 June 2023 and entered into force on 1 October 2023. The total number of ratifications/accessions is 39 (Status: January 2024). Find an up-to-date overview of the [signatures and ratifications](#).



National frameworks, documents for their implementation, and entry points to address domestic violence can be found [here](#).

What does the convention require states to do?

The Istanbul Convention is a major step towards a comprehensive and harmonised response to ensuring a life free of violence for all women and girls across and beyond Europe.

Its obligations cover four areas of action, often called the four “Ps”. These are: preventing violence against women, protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators, as well as implementing related comprehensive and co-ordinated policies.

These four main objectives encompass various provisions, including legal and practical measures aimed to trigger concrete changes in national responses to violence against women and domestic violence.



Find more information on domestic violence in [Module 1](#).

Who is covered by the convention?

- The Istanbul Convention is based on a victim-centred approach.
- The protection and support provided under the Istanbul Convention must be available to any woman without discrimination, including with respect to her age, disability, marital status, association with a national minority, migrant or refugee status, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- The Istanbul Convention recognises that there are groups of women that are often at greater risk of experiencing violence. These include, for example, women with disabilities, women from national minorities, LGBTI (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) women, women from rural areas, migrant women, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women without a residence permit, girl children, older women, homeless women, women in prostitution and women using psycho-active substances.
- It is crucial to ensure that measures to end gender-based violence extend systematically to these groups of women, are accessible to them and tailored to their specific needs.
- States are also encouraged to apply the Istanbul Convention to other victims of domestic violence, such as men, children, and the elderly.

What does the convention criminalise?

The Istanbul Convention specifies several forms of gender-based violence against women that are to be criminalised (or, where applicable, otherwise sanctioned). These are: psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence (including rape), sexual harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation.

In addition, the Istanbul Convention sets out the obligation to ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” are not regarded as justification for any of the acts of violence covered by its scope.

The Istanbul Convention also **covers domestic violence**, including all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

The Istanbul Convention asks states to ensure the safety and support of victims of domestic violence perpetrated by family members, spouses or intimate partners, regardless of their marital or non-marital status.

The Istanbul Convention can, and must be applied irrespective of the legal definitions of “family” or “marriage” and recognition, or not, of same-sex relationships. These are matters for each state to decide since the legal recognition of same-sex unions or adoption by same-sex couple is outside the scope of the Istanbul Convention.

How is the implementation of the convention monitored?

Once a government has ratified the Istanbul Convention, it must take measures to implement its provisions aimed to prevent and combat violence against women. A monitoring mechanism is in place to assess how these provisions are put into practice and to provide guidance to national authorities. It consists of two bodies: **The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)** and **The Committee of the Parties**

Other frameworks

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)
- [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women \(DEVAW\)](#)
- [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)
- [1951 Refugee Convention](#)
- [UN-Resolutions](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)
- [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- [Convention on Cybercrime \(Budapest Convention\)](#)
- [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#)
- [Victims' Rights Directive](#)
- [European Parliament Resolution \(16/09/2021\)](#)

Helpful sources

They can be found [here](#).