

MEPs lambast Member States refusing to ratify Istanbul Convention

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News

The Convention, which entered into force in 2014, aims to combat violence against women.



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On Thursday, MEPs backed a non-legislative resolution in Strasbourg, calling on the Council to urgently conclude the EU ratification of the convention.

The resolution, which was adopted by 500 votes in favour and 91 against, urges the seven Member States that have signed but not yet ratified the Convention - Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and the UK - to do so “without delay.”

States that ratify the Convention - the first international instrument of its kind - must follow “comprehensive and legally-binding” standards to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims and punish perpetrators.

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According to a Fundamental Rights Agency survey, one in three women in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.

Some 55 percent of women have been confronted with one or more forms of sexual harassment, 11 percent have been subjected to cyber harassment, and one in twenty have been raped.

On Friday, Slovakia came under fierce attack from the Council of Europe after its parliament rejected ratification of the Convention. The Council's Secretary General branded the Slovak vote "a regrettable step backwards."

During this week's plenary, MEPs also urged the new Commission to include combating gender-based violence as a priority in the next "European Gender Strategy" and to submit a legal act tackling all forms of gender-based violence.

"The vote marks a very important step in encouraging the EU to ratify the Convention and pressuring those that haven't. However, we still need a directive that condemns all forms of gender violence" **Eugenia Rodríguez Palop MEP**

Parliament also supports earmarking €193.6m for "actions preventing and combating gender-based violence".

Spanish MEP Eugenia Rodríguez Palop told this website, "This resolution recognises that women suffer from gender-based violence visibly and on a widespread scale at both global and European levels."

"It also strongly condemns the attempts by some EU member states to revoke measures that had already been taken in implementing the Convention, as well as others that have not yet ratified it."

"The vote marks a very important step in encouraging the EU to ratify the Convention and pressuring those that haven't. However, we still need a directive that condemns all forms of gender violence - one that homogenises and brings such unlawful acts in line with other criminal offences."

"It is high time for the EU to ratify the Convention ... We need to say that we are on the side of women - demonstrating our belief that it is always the perpetrator that is to blame, and never the victim" **Sylwia Spurek MEP**

Polish Socialist member Sylwia Spurek, Parliament's co-rapporteur on the Convention, said, "It is high time for the EU to ratify the Convention. Women are most often the victims of domestic and sexual violence but do not receive sufficient help, their testimonies are contested, and perpetrators' actions are explained away."

"We need to say that we are on the side of women – demonstrating our belief that it is always the perpetrator that is to blame, and never the victim."

Swedish EPP deputy Arba Kokalari said, "The Convention aims to abolish violence against women. It is simply a human rights convention that ought to be implemented and ratified."

The parliamentary vote came just days after the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2019.

"The Convention aims to abolish violence against women. It is simply a human rights convention that ought to be implemented and ratified" **Arba Kokalari MEP**

Speaking in Parliament, President David Sassoli called for "coordinated action" to prevent violence against women and for all EU countries to ratify the Convention.

The Italian MEP said, "One woman in three suffers physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. These victims are not statistics. Any woman facing violence is one too many. We must break the silence and end impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes."

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the 47-nation Council of Europe (CoE), Marija Pejčinović Burić, condemned the decision by the Slovak Parliament to reject ratification of the Convention.

The Slovak Parliament also called on the country's government to block the EU's accession to the Convention.

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Pejčinović said, "European governments should do more to end violence against women, not less. The CoE and the EU have made sustained efforts to dispel misconceptions and misunderstandings about the convention and I call on all responsible politicians at the national level to do the same."

"The CoE stands ready to help the authorities to explain the Convention, including through expert analysis of the Convention's provisions in the light of domestic legislation and international commitments."

About the author

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