



**WHAT IS THE
ISTANBUL CONVENTION?
WHO IS IT FOR?
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**



Find out about the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

#SayNoStopVAW

WHAT THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION SAYS:

■ The state has a responsibility to **prevent all forms of violence** against women, protect those who experience it and prosecute perpetrators.

■ The state must **promote equality between women and men** and prevent violence against women by encouraging mutual respect or non-violent conflict resolution and questioning gender stereotypes – including through teaching materials in schools.

■ The state must **investigate** allegations of violence and **prosecute** perpetrators.

■ The state must **protect and support** those who experience violence, for example by removing perpetrators from the house to make sure the person affected stays safe and by offering sufficient and accessible shelters.

■ The state must ensure that victims can **claim compensation** from the offender and must award adequate compensation itself if it cannot be covered from other sources.

■ The state must ensure a **coordinated approach** among all relevant agencies, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to support those who experience violence and protect them from further violence.

■ Those who experience violence should have **information** and access to **support services**, such as 24/7 telephone helplines, rape crisis centres, counselling and shelters.

■ **Civil society plays an important role** in providing essential services to those who experience violence, raising awareness and helping to change attitudes to create a culture of zero tolerance.

■ **Police and justice system professionals should be trained** on victims' rights and how to prevent further harm, so that they are able to respond to calls for assistance and manage dangerous situations.

WHAT THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION DOES NOT SAY:

■ There is **no threat to the concept of family**. The Convention does not regulate family life or structures and states do not have to change the traditional understanding of families.

■ **Traditions and values are not under threat**. The Convention only states that traditions, culture or religion cannot be used as a justification for acts of violence against women.

■ **The word “gender” does not replace the terms “women” and “men”**, nor does the Convention promote any “gender ideology”. The word “gender” is used in the Convention to emphasise that women are more likely to experience violence because they are women.

■ **Recognition of same-sex marriages is not in the Convention**. The Convention does not affect national civil law rules on marriage in any way.

■ **A “third gender” is not introduced by the Convention**, nor is there an obligation to recognise it. States are only required to protect victims' rights without discrimination on any grounds, including sex, race, religion, language, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

■ **A specific education model is not imposed** for teaching gender equality and fighting stereotypes. States are free to take into account different possibilities when choosing the most appropriate teaching material and approach.

■ **Men who experience violence are not excluded**. The provisions on domestic violence can be applied also to men and boys.

■ Existing **migration and asylum policies are not put in question** by the Convention. It does recognise that migrant women and women asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and asks states to take into account the specific needs of these women.

The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention is a human rights treaty to **prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence**. It has been signed by all EU Member States.

Fact #1:

Violence against women and domestic violence are **human rights violations** and are endemic across Europe. National responses vary greatly. Harmonised legal standards help to ensure that those who experience this violence benefit from the same level of protection and support everywhere.

Fact #2:

There can be no real **equality between men and women** if women experience violence on a large scale and states turn a blind eye. Member States are obliged to implement already existing EU law to protect and support victims of crime, which is strengthened by the Istanbul Convention.

Fact #3:

The European Commission and the Council of Europe share the same goal of ending violence against women and domestic violence. To achieve this objective, the **European Union has signed the Istanbul Convention** alongside its Member States, which are all among the Council of Europe's 47 members.

Find out more:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home>