

# No more victims: stop femicide in Europe

~~The Istanbul Convention condemns all forms of violence against women and calls for special measures and legislation to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence.<sup>[1]</sup> However, as femicide is not mentioned in the Convention, the European Greens are calling to amend the Istanbul Convention to include gender-related killings as the most brutal and extreme manifestation of violence against women and girls and elaborate urgent and adequate measures to stop femicide worldwide. Furthermore, the European Greens are calling upon European governments to combat femicide and take urgent actions on prevention, protection and reporting.~~

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (The Istanbul Convention) and the EU 2024 Gender Based Violence Directive condemn all forms of violence against women and call for special measures and legislation to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence. Even though the term femicide is not mentioned in the Convention, the European Greens emphasize that gender-related killings are covered under the criminalisation of physical violence (Article 50). We therefore call upon European governments to combat femicide as the most brutal and extreme manifestation of violence against women and girls and to take urgent actions on prevention, protection and reporting.

Further we propose to explore the adoption of an additional protocol to the Istanbul Convention specifically on enhancing fight against femicide. This approach would allow us to strengthen the Convention's framework without reopening or renegotiating its existing provisions. It also follows a long-established practice within the Council of Europe, where many core treaties have been supplemented by targeted protocols to address emerging issues.

Femicide is one of the most dramatic and poignant problems in our societies. Between 2012 and 2022, 14,000 intentional homicides of women took place in the European Union alone. In most cases, women and girls were murdered by (ex)-partners or family members.

The gruesome statistics show high incidences of femicide in our countries. In 2022, women were killed by (ex) partners or family members 120 times in Italy, 118 times in France and 113 times in Germany. The actual figures are probably higher since femicide cases are underreported as not all murder cases of women are recognised as such due to inconsistencies in femicide-related statistics.

Femicide was recognised for the first time at United Nations level in 2013 through the Declaration of Vienna. The declaration identifies a long list of different types of femicide such as killing of women and girls in the name of "honour", because of sexual orientation, as targets in armed conflicts, or due to accusation of witchcraft, to name a few. Femicide is driven by discrimination against women and girls, unequal power relations, stereotypes and harmful social norms. Numbers are rising worldwide. Women in the public eye, such as politicians, activists and journalists, are often targets of online and offline Violence. Also women from specific communities facing additional socio-political disadvantages more often,

including because of their age, race, association with a minority, disability, sexual orientation, disability or socio-economic status are at an even higher risk of gender-based violence.

Unfortunately, there is no standard definition of femicide agreed between member states of the Council of Europe. The lack of a uniform definition is an obstacle to measuring femicide, which therefore risks becoming invisible in general homicide data.

Femicide is predictable in most cases and could be prevented if early signs are detected and measures taken. Femicide is often preceded by other forms of ~~partner-violence~~ by a partner or former partner such as physical abuse, controlling behaviour, coercion, and stalking. ~~In our view, We urge~~ the Council of Europe Member States ~~should implement to implement~~ adequate measures against ~~potential- (potential)~~ perpetrators and provide safety measures for ~~victims.potential and actual victims as well as children and other family members or persons in their care.~~

Gender-based violence underscores the disparities faced by women, particularly in terms of their safety and psychological and physical integrity. These disparities are linked to ~~their condition the discrimination and violence that women suffer for being women and them being often considered~~ as “second-class citizens”. In order to prevent femicide, we must always keep in mind its root causes that stem from gender inequality. Progress to reach gender equality in Europe is slow. The European Union’s knowledge centre on Gender Equality (EIGE) estimates that at the current pace, gender equality – as per gender equality index – will not be reached before 2080!

Efforts to eradicate gender-based violence are too often undermined by disinformation and false narratives, including the deliberate distortion of the relationship between the Convention and tradition, culture, and religion. Fundamentalist, populist, and far-right actors frequently spread misleading claims that misrepresent the aims of the Istanbul Convention, creating confusion and fueling unfounded fears.

The European Greens are deeply concerned that the Convention’s core mission—to protect women and girls from violence—is being manipulated for political purposes. We strongly regret decisions influenced by such disinformation, including the Bulgarian Constitutional Court’s rejection of ratification in 2018, Türkiye’s withdrawal in 2021, and the recent vote in the Latvian Parliament to initiate withdrawal.

The European Greens stand in full solidarity with women and girls, ~~as potential victims affected by gender-based violence and killings, and we recognise the agency and resilience of all survivors. of femicide.~~ We urge European Commission and national Parliaments and institutions to adopt clear, inclusive definitions of femicide and all forms of gender-based violence, recognise trans, gender-nonconforming, intersex, disabled survivors and collateral victims, including children and ensure that justice systems and support services respect everyone’s rights, dignity, identity, and access needs. We will seek ~~to amend full implementation of~~ the Istanbul Convention ~~to include~~ and actively invite countries worldwide to join. ~~femicide as the most brutal and extreme manifestation of violence against women and develop urgent measures to halt the killing of women and girls.~~

The European Greens call upon the governments of the Council of Europe member states to develop action plans to stop femicide, which should include:

② a clear, inclusive and uniform minimum definition of femicide in the legislation

- 84 mechanisms for anonymous reporting of gender-based violence, in order to lower barriers to reporting  
85 and protect victims who fear retaliation
- 86 safety measures to create inclusive, safe, and accessible public spaces for women and girls on the  
87 streets through community-based prevention, urban planning, and in public places social infrastructure,  
88 without relying on police state measures.
- 89 ensure adequate and sustainable funding and resources for shelters and other support services of  
90 victims of gender-based violence, and organisations providing those services, including shelters,  
91 counselling centers, and specialised helplines, as well as for programs working with men and  
92 perpetrators to prevent re-offending and to address the root causes of violent behavior. The European  
93 Countries must promote rapid access to safe accommodation and housing for victims of gender-based  
94 violence and their families. Awareness of diversity and inclusion should also be promoted among  
95 organisations providing shelter and other services.
- 96 strengthening prevention, active engagement and participation of young people throughout the  
97 development and investment in quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs facing  
98 challenges such as rising of gender-based violence, hate speech and masculinists [misogynist] views  
99 among younger generations
- 100 special training programmes for police officers, prosecutors, judges, legal practitioners and health care  
101 providers/professions, including paramedics and emergency medical staff, to effectively identify,  
102 document and respond to cases of gender-based violence. European Countries should also promote and  
103 facilitate cooperation between relevant authorities and other providers of services for victims of  
104 gender-based violence to facilitate easy access to support services, judicial proceedings, and other  
105 relevant processes, and ensuring that these processes run smoothly. judges
- 106 developing early warning systems and provide safety and protection for  
107 potential victims
- 108 setting-up 24/7 community centers at an accessible distance that provides a safe-space for victims of  
109 sexual assault, where they can go to for support and filing complaints
- 110 the establishment or integration of violence intervention units into the healthcare system where  
111 professionals can conduct victim-sensitive examinations, document forensic evidence which can be  
112 used in court to convict perpetrators and refer victims to specialist services providing medical treatment  
113 as well as short- and long-term psychological counselling and support.
- 114 making sure that financially disadvantaged victims have the means, through state interventions, to  
115 leave an abusive household without running the risk of poverty
- 116 taking preventive measures in at-risk situations, including measures to prevent repeated or aggravated  
117 offences against potential perpetrators, such as wearing electronic  
118 monitoring devices and escalation analysis.
- 119 strengthening community-based prevention approaches by involving potential witnesses as well as  
120 social and neighborhood networks in early detection and prevention.
- 121 keeping accurate collection of disaggregated data, in accordance with the Convention and consistently  
122 reporting on femicide cases in the  
123 European countries (for instance by using the UN framework for measuring

femicide)

② dedicated support measures for children who have witnessed gender-based violence, recognising the long-term psychological impacts upon them

② establishing rehabilitation programs for those who commit sexual and sexist violence, such as social assistance and psychological support

② increasing efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls including coercive control in criminal law, an intersectional approach and full implementation of the EU Gender-Based Violence Directive ensuring femicide is included as a criminal offence in national law and is covered by the definition of violence against women.

② The European Greens urge all Council of Europe members, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia, to ratify the Istanbul Convention, as the other members of the Council of Europe have already done.

② The European Greens also urge those that have already ratified it with reservations to withdraw those reservations.

② The European Greens furthermore call upon the Council of Europe to request the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) to establish a concrete follow-up policy to ensure that feminicide is properly incorporated into the legislation of countries that have ratified the Convention, as well as to develop specific recommendations on data collection, prevention, and protection.

~~— strengthening prevention, active engagement and participation of young people (including men and boys) throughout the development and investment in quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs facing challenges such as rising of gender-based violence, hate speech and misogynist views among younger generations.~~

② The European Greens call on the EU and the Council of Europe to facilitate exchange of best practices between member states in prevention of gender-based violence and femicide, and in guaranteeing protection and support services for victims.

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[1] Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence