Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Resolution 2649 (2026)[1]

Promoting the Istanbul Convention and improving its implementation: building on lessons learnt

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Women continue to be disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, whether it is physical, sexual, psychological or economic, online and offline. Such violence constitutes a serious violation of human rights and a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, based on the idea of the inferiority of women and leading to exerting control and domination over them.

2. Violence against women and domestic violence occur in all territories and across all socio-economic groups and sectors in society. Their prevalence remains very high, while perpetrators often go unpunished, as reporting and conviction rates are low. European Union data from 2024 indicate that one in three women experiences physical and/or sexual violence, while just one in eight reports the incident to the police.

3. Women victims of violence continue to face stigmatisation, negative attitudes and victim blaming. Many of them need a long time to address feelings of shame and fear, which leads to non-reporting or reporting many years after the violence took place. There is also a lack of awareness among victims of their rights and how to access support services, as well as a lack of trust in the justice system.

4. Women in all their diversity are subjected to gender-based violence regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, migration status, disability, origin and any other characteristic. All measures to prevent and combat this violence and to protect victims should be designed and applied without discrimination on any ground and should adopt an intersectional approach, as not all women victims of violence have equal access to support services and justice.

5. Online violence against women is increasingly prevalent and harmful, and many forms are created and facilitated by the rapid development of technology, including artificial intelligence. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, adopted by the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) in 2021, and Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States of the Council of Europe on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, which provide valuable guidance for member States.

6. The Assembly actively supported the preparation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention") and its entry into force in August 2014. This landmark treaty sets the highest standards through a comprehensive approach, focusing on prevention of violence against women, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and integrated policies, always placing the rights of the victim at the centre of all actions.

7. The Assembly's Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence (the Network) and its successive general rapporteurs on violence against women have played a crucial role in promoting the Istanbul Convention. The Network also provides a forum for sharing experiences and practical tools to prevent and combat violence against women.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 22 April 2026 (14th sitting) (see Doc. 16372, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Zita Gurmai). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 22 April 2026 (14th sitting).

8. The Assembly has followed up on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Resolution 2289 (2019) "The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges" and Resolution 2479 (2023) "The Istanbul Convention: progress and challenges". It reiterates the recommendations made in those two texts.

9. The Assembly underlines the need to engage with men and boys to prevent and combat violence against women and calls for the implementation of its Resolution 2480 (2023) "The role and responsibility of men and boys in stopping gender-based violence against women and girls". This is critical, given the rising levels of sexual violence affecting and perpetrated by young people.

10. Nearly twelve years after it entered into force, with 38 ratifications by member States and the accession of the European Union in 2023, the Istanbul Convention has demonstrated its positive impact on the ground. The Assembly calls for renewed efforts, political will and adequate resources to counter the growing attacks on the convention, which are being carried out through organised disinformation.

11. The Assembly regrets the decision by Türkiye to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, thereby depriving women and girls of the high standards enshrined in the convention, in a context where civil society continues to report a high number of suspicious female deaths and femicides in the country.

12. The Assembly underlines the need to meet relevant targets under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including Target 5.2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls), Target 5.3 (eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation) and Target 16.3 (promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all).

13. In line with its decision to hold regular discussions on the Istanbul Convention, the Assembly renews its call for the universal ratification and full implementation of the convention, highlighting its positive impact and identifying issues where progress is needed to ensure the right of all women and girls to a life free from violence.

14. The Assembly calls on member and observer States of the Council of Europe and States whose parliament enjoys observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly:

14.1. with regard to supporting the Istanbul Convention and its implementation, to:

14.1.1. promote its ratification by Council of Europe member States that are not yet parties (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic, as well as a renewed ratification by Türkiye) and beyond;

14.1.2. counter disinformation campaigns and organised attacks using false narratives and misconceptions about the convention;

14.1.3. allocate sufficient funding for the implementation of integrated policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the convention, ensuring co-ordination among relevant bodies and stakeholders throughout their territory;

14.1.4. apply a gender perspective in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and in the evaluation of the impact of measures taken;

14.1.5. co-operate with, involve and support the work of civil society organisations defending women's rights and providing support and specialised services to women victims of violence;

14.1.6. take legal and policy measures to prevent and combat the forms of violence against women created and facilitated by technology companies, online platforms and internet intermediaries, including by artificial intelligence;

14.1.7. improve the collection and publication of data on violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age, type of violence, relationship of the victim to the perpetrator and geographical location, to evaluate progress and inform policy making;

14.2. with regard to awareness raising and other prevention measures, to:

14.2.1. invest in primary prevention to address the root causes of all forms of violence against women, including the digital dimension of such violence, through education and awareness raising on gender equality and non-stereotyped roles and through age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education;

14.2.2. take measures to raise awareness of vicarious violence, whereby children are instrumentalised with the aim of causing psychological trauma to women by harming, or even murdering, their children;

14.2.3. set up programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and sexual violence to help them adopt non-violent behaviours in order to prevent re-offending, in line with international best practices;

14.3. with regard to protecting and providing support to all women victims of violence, in all their diversity, to:

14.3.1. ensure the effective implementation of protection orders and their availability for all women victims of violence, irrespective of related legal proceedings;

14.3.2. take measures to address the needs of women victims of violence exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination, including women with disabilities; Roma and Traveller women; migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women; lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women; women with addictions; women in prostitution; older women; women in rural areas; and ensure their access to protection, support and redress;

14.3.3. address the different types of barriers to reporting violence against women and domestic violence in different settings, including those preventing women with disabilities from reporting violence and accessing support services;

14.3.4. establish rape crisis and sexual violence referral centres in sufficient numbers and with adequate geographical spread, to provide holistic support to women victims that includes medical attention, short- and long-term psychological support and legal counselling;

14.3.5. take measures to ensure that decisions on children's custody and visitation rights in cases of parental separation take into account the context of domestic violence, and that mediation, especially in civil procedures, is neither imposed nor perceived as obligatory;

14.3.6. ensure the safety of women victims of violence and their children through rigorous and repeated risk assessment and risk management procedures and measures, kept under regular review;

14.4. with regard to ensuring effective investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, to:

14.4.1. provide compulsory initial and in-service training for judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals involved in cases of violence against women, including to prevent secondary victimisation;

14.4.2. promote the use of online courses of the Council of Europe Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) on violence against women and domestic violence, including the new module on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, and support their integration into the training curricula of relevant justice professionals (law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, lawyers);

14.4.3. adopt legal definitions of sexual violence, including rape, based on the lack of freely given consent and following the "Only yes means yes" approach, and implement the actions called for in Resolution 2650 (2026) "Paving the way for a culture of consent";

14.4.4. address the minimisation of domestic violence claims in parental separation cases based on ill-founded concepts such as "parental alienation", which should not be legitimised or given legal recognition;

14.4.5. conduct research on the reasons for the low rates of prosecution and conviction in cases of violence against women and domestic violence.

15. The Assembly calls on all parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as on the parliaments of States that enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to:

15.1. actively promote the Istanbul Convention, including by raising awareness of the achievements and added value of the convention, with a view to dispelling misconceptions and disinformation based on false narratives;

15.2. organise parliamentary inquiries and hearings to give visibility to, and discuss, the findings and recommendations included in GREVIO's evaluation reports;

15.3. participate in the monitoring procedure assessing the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, in accordance with its Article 70;

15.4. carry out periodical assessments and reviews of national legislation and measures to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, propose legislative and policy changes to align them with the high standards of the Istanbul Convention and allocate appropriate budgets to ensure their adequate implementation on the ground;

15.5. promote and use the forthcoming HELP course to combat violence against women and domestic violence specifically adapted for, and addressed to, parliamentarians;

15.6. continue to participate in, and support, the work of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence.