



One Year since the Istanbul Convention's entry into force in the EU

To

Ms Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
Ms Ewa Kopacz, Vice-President of the European Parliament
Ms Katarina Barley, Vice-President of the European Parliament
Ms Pina Picierno, Vice-President of the European Parliament
Ms Sophie Wilmès, Vice-President of the European Parliament
Mr Nicolae Ștefănuță, Vice- President of the European Parliament
Ms Lina Gálvez, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
Mr Javier Zarzalejos, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
All Members of the European Parliament's Committees on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Combating Violence against Women in the EU

In May 2024, the EU adopted a historic directive aimed at combating violence against women and domestic violence. While this directive made significant strides in aligning with international standards, first of all the Istanbul Convention, a critical gap remains: **the exclusion of a consent-based definition of rape from EU law**. The European Parliament, initially a strong advocate for criminalising rape based on the absence of consent, ultimately agreed to omit this crucial aspect following difficult negotiations with the Council.

This omission represents a significant missed opportunity for **uniforming legal protection of women across the EU**. We, as civil society organisations, believe that gender-based violence knows no borders and that national laws must reflect this reality by **ensuring a uniform definition of rape based on consent**.

For a consent-based definition of rape in all EU Member States

October 1st 2024 marks one year since the Istanbul Convention entered into force at the EU level, legally binding the European Union itself to uphold its provisions.





Six EU countries have not ratified the Convention¹, meaning they are **not** individually **bound** by its commitments. All other EU Member States that have ratified the Convention are obligated to **align their national laws** with its provisions, including defining rape as sex without consent.

Data from across the EU² demonstrates the **variation in how rape is defined and prosecuted**. While some Member States have adopted a consent-based definition of rape ("*only yes means yes*"), others still require evidence of violence or threats. This **inconsistency** leaves many women **without adequate legal protection**, which further **normalises gender-based violence**.

Given this context, it is imperative that all EU countries, regardless of their current status with the Istanbul Convention, work towards **implementing a consent-based definition of rape**. This is essential for providing equal protection to women across Europe and fulfilling the commitments made by the EU to combat gender-based violence.

Ensure equal protection for all women in the EU now!

Rape is rape, regardless of how it is defined by national laws. Women across the EU deserve **equal protection** from this crime, no matter their country of origin or residence. The **exclusion of rape** from the list of EU-level crimes in the directive is a **significant mistake** that we urge EU institutions to correct.

The It's Not Over campaign gathers civil society organisations across Europe who call on the Members of the European Parliament, particularly in its Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committees, to not only **reopen the debate on a consent-based definition of rape** but also to **urge those EU countries that have yet to ratify the Istanbul Convention to do so as soon as possible**. It is vital that all Member States commit to the Convention's provisions to **provide uniform protection against gender-based violence**.

Citizens are mobilising across Europe to defend women's rights, and **we expect our elected representatives to take action**. The European Parliament has a unique responsibility to **advocate for justice and equal protection**, ensuring that no woman is left without legal recourse.

¹ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia

² European Women's Lobby's [Observatory Analysis of definitions of rape in the EU - The added value the EU Directive on VAW](#)





Yours sincerely,

The It's Not Over Campaign members and supporters

Please write here below the full name of your organisation:

1. Inter Alia, Greece
2. Creative Connections, Norway
3. Institute for Roma and Minorities Inclusion, Germany
4. Centar za kazalište potlačenih POKAZ, Croatia
5. A.R.T. Fusion, Romania
6. Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality & Diversity, Greece
7. Women's Rights Foundation, Malta
8. Action for Women, Greece
9. Association for sustainable development SFERA International, North Macedonia
10. Glocal Roots, Greece
11. ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth, Greece
12. Better Days, Greece
13. Moltivolti, Italy
14. Refugee Legal Support (RLS), Greece
15. Network for Children's Rights, Greece
16. Una Donna al Giorno, Italy
17. Solidarna Foundation, Croatia
18. Human rights and civic participation association Pariter, Croatia
19. CESI - Center for Education, Counselling and Research, Croatia
20. Centre for Civil Initiatives Poreč, Croatia
21. B.a.B.e. Be active. Be emancipated., Croatia
22. SolidarityNow, Greece
23. Casa Internazionale delle Donne di Roma, Italy
24. Independent Midwives Association, Romania
25. The Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality - SECS, Romania
26. FILIA Center, Romania
27. CPE - Center for Partnership and Equality, Romania
28. Feminism Romania Association, Romania
29. Vulgar Association, Bucharest, Romania
30. Feminist Autonomous Centre for research, Greece
31. Irida Women's Center, Greece
32. Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
33. Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (ASAM), Greece
34. Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender - A.L.E.G., Romania
35. Center for inclusive development SAY When Skopje, North Macedonia





36. The Good Lobby, Belgium
37. European Students' Union (ESU), Belgium
38. Association Transcena, Romania
39. Lighthouse Relief, Greece
40. Ženska pomoć sada, Croatia
41. Symbiosis-Council of Europe School of Political Studies in Greece
42. Open Space foundation, Bulgaria
43. LESSAN e.V BE THE CHANGEMAKER!, Germany
44. Centre for Gender Rights and Equality - DIOTIMA, Greece
45. Ifrah Foundation, Ireland
46. SOS Rijeka - Centre for Nonviolence and Human Rights, Croatia
47. Associação Portuguesa de Estudos sobre as Mulheres - APEM, Portugal
48. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), Cyprus
49. Associazione Casa delle Donne Lucha y Siesta, Italy
50. Peace Group Oaza Beli Manastir, Croatia
51. Prodiversa - Progreso y Diversidad, Spain
52. Aidos - Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo, Italy
53. Federatie van Somalische Associaties Nederland (FSAN), the Netherlands
54. Cross Culture International Foundation (CCIF) Malta
55. Upbeat Music House (UBMH) Malta
56. Centar za podršku i razvoj civilnog društva "DELFIN", Croatia
57. EmpowerVan, Greece
58. Creación Positiva, Spain
59. Pharos, the Netherlands
60. International Women* Space, Germany
61. Asociación de Mujeres Progresistas La Mitad del Cielo, Spain
62. Women's Group Karlovac "Step", Croatia
63. Lesbian Organisation Rijeka - LORI, Croatia
64. TERRE DES FEMMES, Germany

