

Declaration by Franziska Giffey Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

Since the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, ten years ago, we have been witnessing progress in protecting women. Many countries have set up specifically targeted national policies, improved their support and protection systems for women who experience violence, and established or reinforced national helplines, awareness-raising campaigns and training for police, judges and other professionals.

It is the holistic approach that makes the Istanbul Convention such an effective tool to protect women from all forms of violence, which includes governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, law enforcement, civil society, education and the media. It shows that protection against violence is more than policies and laws, but it also relies on dedicated and continuous action by relevant actors, including men. Furthermore, protecting women from violence goes hand in hand with addressing gender stereotypes and how our societies react to and combat violence against women.

Under the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, I am taking a stand today to call on all countries, including Council of Europe and EU Member States, and NGOs to keep up the important work of promoting women's rights and protecting women from violence. I call on the media as well as on the public to keep this essential issue high on the agenda, not only on this important anniversary but for the years to come. This Convention is open for accession by Council of Europe Member States and others.



Presidency of Germany
Council of Europe
November 2020 – May 2021
Présidence de l'Allemagne
Conseil de l'Europe

The past months have also shown the challenges the Istanbul Convention is still facing today, including misconstructions around the concept of gender and whether or not there are already enough national laws in place to protect women from violence. These discussions are misleading and risk distracting us from the central objective of the Convention: the protection of women against violence regardless of tradition, religion or cultural background. We need to ensure that everyone knows about the vast benefits of the Convention and realises that having an international human rights instrument in place which sets common standards across Europe and beyond is just as important as national laws – both are mutually reinforcing rather than excluding each other. I am committed to working together with all Member States of the Council of Europe and others who want to promote women's rights and ensure that no woman has to suffer any form of violence.

I call on all countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

11 May 2021

Franziska Giffey

Federal Minister for Family Affairs,
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Presidency of the Committee of
Ministers of the Council of Europe
from November 2020 to May 2021