

Open Letter to the Council of Europe

Brussels 13th of April

Dear Secretary General,
Dear Representatives of the Council of Europe,

We, the undersigned participants and organizers of this event dedicated to advancing human rights and gender equality, write to reaffirm the critical importance of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

At a time where violence against women remains widespread and countries withdraw from the Convention, it is essential to renew commitment to this essential document as it still stands as the most comprehensive framework to address this issue. Its principles translate into real protection, accountability, and prevention. Upholding it is essential to maintaining Europe's commitment to human rights.

1. We call on the Council of Europe to continue its strong leadership in promoting and safeguarding the Istanbul Convention, in the face of increasing threats from growing political challenges and continued misinformation.
2. We urge all the EU's member states that have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention to do so without delay, and we call on the Council of Europe to actively support this process through political engagement, guidance, and legal expertise. Ratification of this crucial document is not merely symbolic but an essential step in ensuring equal protection of women's rights across Europe.
3. Finally, we call for the opening of constructive discussions with countries that withdrew from the Convention, particularly with Türkiye as its host country, such decisions represent a significant setback, and withdrawal cannot be the answer. Renewed engagement is essential to rebuild trust and advance the shared goal of protecting human dignity.

The fight against violence against women is central to Europe's human rights framework. We stand ready, as engaged citizens and stakeholders, to support these efforts and to contribute to a Europe where the rights, safety, and dignity of all individuals are fully protected.

Yours sincerely,

Signatories:

