**Safeguard women against partner violence**

Rights areas:

* [Sex, sexual orientation and gender](https://fra.europa.eu/en/taxonomy/term/981)

UN Women

Millions of women and girls in Europe suffer physical, sexual or psychological violence at the hands of their partner or family members. On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, FRA calls on the EU and its Member States to step up their commitment towards ending violence against women.

European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen already signalled her intent to the European Parliament: “I will propose to add violence against women on the list of EU crimes defined in the [EU] Treaty.”

Such a statement acknowledges the often-overlooked severity of partner violence.

It draws attention to how prosecutors and the police should not just view abuse as a single act in isolation.

They need to look at the bigger picture; victims often endure coercive control and live in constant fear for a long time.

Too often, judicial proceedings fail to take this into account when dealing with cases of partner violence. A fact [FRA research](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/justice-victim-crime-women) underlines, following interviews with victims and frontline workers.

FRA’s findings point to the need for the police to act swiftly to guard against this undercurrent of fear, and the very real risk of repeat offences and further victimisation.

In practice, this means immediate and robust protection measures, including emergency barring orders, whenever they learn that a woman is living under the threat of violence.

In turn, this substantially lessens the risk the partner will harm her again.

This also means training police officers so that they are more aware of partner violence and victims’ needs.

In addition, Member States should oblige perpetrators to attend training on how to avoid violence in relationships. They would also learn about the wider traumatic impact it has on partners.

Such training could help change behaviour and prevent further violence.

Measures to combat partner violence fall under the wider umbrella of the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The EU and its Member States have all signed the convention.

It provides a comprehensive legal framework to help tackle violence against women and girls.

It focuses on prevention, but also offers better protection for victims and ensures perpetrators are brought to justice.

To date, it applies to 21 Member States but still seven Member States and the EU have yet to ratify it.

There are already signs of the direction the Commission will take from president-elect Ursula von der Leyen. Again when speaking to the European Parliament her position was clear: “The European Union should join the Istanbul Convention.”

Remaining Member States should follow suit.

Only then Europe will send a clear and united signal that the EU does not tolerate violence against women and girls, and that justice will prevail for all those who have experienced violence from their partners or family members.