R2 An end to violence against women and non-binary people. For a more feminist Eastern Europe.

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Resolution text

Across the whole Eastern Europe, women and non-binary people are faced with challenges on almost all levels: society, policy, culture, economics, health, and law. Gender-based violence is a systemic problem maintained by institutional inefficiency. The common enemy is patriarchy, and it is deeply rooted in our society.

A critical issue that continues to affect society is the serious violence faced by women and gender minorities. Across much of Eastern Europe, legislation aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women remains insufficient, while legal protections for non-binary individuals are almost entirely absent. Even in countries where relevant legislation is formally in place, authorities often fail to deliver timely and adequate protection to individuals facing violence. Institutional reactions often come only after multiple reports, escalations of violence, or deaths.[1].

In the end, institutional responses to violence are often insufficient and fall far short of delivering justice. The lack of preventive measures, uneven judicial practice, weak intersectional and inter-sectoral cooperation and chronic underestimation of the role of civil society organizations lead to the normalization of violence against women and non-binary people[2].

Institutional responses remain insufficient, and perpetrators of violence against women and non-binary individuals are rarely held accountable, even in jurisdictions where legal protections are formally established. A lack of specific legal definitions for intimate partner violence and psychological abuse in domestic law results in inconsistent prosecution[3].

Effective measures and transformative policies remain absent, and deterrence through both rehabilitation and punishment of perpetrators is insufficient. For example, HRA report states that in Montenegro from 2022 to 2025, “[i]ndictments were filed in every fifth case, half of the complaints were dismissed, while almost one-third of the cases remained unresolved”[4].

Physical violence is the most egregious and obvious manifestation of violence, yet far from the only one. Violence can take the form of mental abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, digital and cyber abuse, or verbal abuse.

Statistics on these topics are also not updated regularly, reflecting a lack of prioritization in monitoring and response. In reality, the true scale of this phenomenon is unknown, as many women and non-binary people never report the various forms of violence against them.

It must be recognized that the growing influence of autocratic governance, far-right ideologies, and ongoing wars has intensified structural violence against

women and gender minorities, which is frequently normalized within societies. The consequences of the war in Ukraine on women is much less talked about than other parts of the Russia's terror, and the world is especially silent on the amount of sexual violence women face[5]. Along with other wars and genocides that have been going on in the world (including, but not limited to, Gaza, Iran, and Sudan), we have to stand for all the female and non-binary victims who are suffering, often in silence.

According to EU data, 25 % of women in Latvia have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, indicating persistent gender-based violence[6]. Youth in Montenegro have a relatively high level of awareness about the existence and seriousness of violence against women, yet many remain unsure where to seek help. Bulgaria saw large protest waves in 2023 after a high-profile attack[7]. In Serbia, the Autonomous Women's Center reported 28,413 registered domestic-violence incidents in 2023[8]. European Institute for Gender Equality country profile notes tens of thousands of men reported to police for domestic violence in Poland in 2022, with far fewer resulting in sentencing[9]. In Croatia, 19 women were victims of femicide in 2025[10], and in Turkey that number is 456[11].

In Serbia in 2024, there were reports of Telegram group in which large number of sexually explicit, violent, degrading and illicit content of women was shared without consent[12].

It has also been noted that a large number of women in Eastern European region think that violence is "common/fairly common" (88% in Albania, 67% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 62% in Montenegro, 60% in North Macedonia and 85% in Serbia)[13].

Across Eastern Europe, shelters and crisis centres for victims of domestic violence are often provided through a combination of municipal services and non-governmental organizations. Shelter infrastructure remains insufficient to meet international standards. The Council of Europe recommends one family shelter place per 10,000 inhabitants, yet many countries in the region fall well below this level[14]. Shelters also tend to be concentrated in urban areas and are primarily operated by non-governmental organizations with limited and unstable funding[15]. As a result, victims, particularly those in rural regions, often face serious barriers when seeking safe accommodation and support. While assistance is available, shelters and crisis facilities also apply internal rules related to safety and capacity, which can affect immediate access in certain situations.

Access to safe and legal abortion remains uneven across Eastern Europe. While abortion is formally legal in many countries, practical barriers such as restrictive legislation, administrative obstacles, and widespread use of conscientious objection by medical professionals significantly limit access to reproductive healthcare. Poland currently has one of the most restrictive abortion regimes in Europe following the 2020 Constitutional Tribunal ruling[16], while in countries such as Hungary[17], Croatia, and Romania legal access is often undermined by institutional barriers and refusal of services[18].

Adolescents face particularly significant barriers in accessing reproductive healthcare. Approximately 21 million adolescents aged 15–19 become pregnant each year in developing regions, and complications from unsafe abortion remain a

major cause of maternal morbidity among young women[19]. In many Eastern European countries, minors seeking abortion services must obtain parental or guardian consent, and in some cases judicial authorization[20]. These requirements can delay or prevent access to timely care, particularly in situations where young people cannot safely involve their families.

Despite these hardships, there is enough proof and work institutionally, as well as in the field, to show that protection of women and gender minorities can be achieved, maintained, and improved.

The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) provides the most comprehensive international legal framework for prevention, protection, prosecution, and policy integration. Ratified in 39 countries[21], it has faced difficulties in recent years. Turkey, for example, officially withdrew from in 2021[22]. Poland announced an intention to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2020[23], and in Latvia protests occurred in 2025 amid parliamentary moves initiating withdrawal proceedings[24]. In both cases, the withdrawals were not officially enacted.

Ongoing public mobilization in Latvia, through large protests and petitions (60,000+ signatures), indicates strong civil society engagement. The country also adopted national plans to prevent and combat violence against women and intimate partner violence, and ratified new laws against sexual harassment (2024) and broader awareness campaigns[25].

In 2024, Croatia passed a law outlining femicide as a separate crime[26].

Transparency and reporting requirements (e.g., employer pay audits, sanctions for discriminatory wage policies) exist in some EU states and should be adopted. (EU pay transparency directive frameworks available through EU Commission gender strategy).

Across Eastern Europe, centers for help and victim support services actively provide assistance to victims of domestic abuse and organise advocacy. In Latvia, for example, support services are provided through municipal crisis centres and non-governmental organizations such as the MARTA Centre[27].

All of these examples show that our region has real potential for change. Many Eastern European activists and civil society organizations are already working to support survivors and challenge gender-based violence. To achieve lasting progress, these efforts must be strengthened through greater cooperation and unity across the region.

We urge politicians in Eastern Europe:

- develop policies that prioritise the protection and prevention of violence against women and non-binary people;
- strengthen implementation of existing laws and introduce clearer protection measures for victims, including effective restraining orders and coordinated institutional responses
- legislate clear definitions of all forms of violence (intimate partner, psychological, stalking, digital) aligned with EU and Council of Europe standards
- ensure adequate funding and accessibility of shelters and crisis centres, in line with the Council of Europe recommendation of at least one family shelter place per 10,000 inhabitants
- guarantee access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare, including safe and legal abortion services, and remove unnecessary administrative barriers that prevent timely access — particularly for young women and those in vulnerable situations
- improve national data collection and research on gender-based violence and victim support services
- strengthen education on equality, consent, and human rights
- provide stable financial support for civil society organisations working on prevention, advocacy, and victim support
- address hate crimes targeting women and gender minorities, recognising their link to gender-based violence.

Systemic change needs the support and inclusion of civil society and the general public.

CDN will contribute to this struggle and strive to:

- continue working on feminist topics through its projects, activities, and groups, such as the Feminist Action Team
- develop partnerships with NGOs which fight violence against women and support victims of violence
- spread the word about different resources and organisations that provide help to victims of different forms of violence against women and non-binary people
- apply for and develop projects to address the issue of violence against women
- advocate and campaign among our member organisations, as well as beyond the network
- educate members on the topic and about the ways how they can fight for better law and prevention in their countries
- spread the word about the issues of women and gender minorities in the Eastern European region
- continue advocating for peace and the stopping of violence, especially in the cases of organized attacks that harm women further, such as full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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Reason

The resolution was created and will be presented by the Feminist Action Team, with the full support of CDN Executive Committee.