

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

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Resolution text

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

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

14 In the end, institutional responses to violence are often insufficient and fall
15 far short of delivering justice. The lack of preventive measures, uneven
16 judicial practice, weak intersectional and inter-sectoral cooperation and
17 chronic underestimation of the role of civil society organizations lead to the
18 normalization of violence against women and non-binary people².

19 Institutional responses remain insufficient, and perpetrators of violence
20 against women and non-binary individuals are rarely held accountable, even in
21 jurisdictions where legal protections are formally established. A lack of
22 specific legal definitions for intimate partner violence and psychological abuse
23 in domestic law results in inconsistent prosecution³.

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

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

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

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

38 women and gender minorities, which is frequently normalized within societies.
39 The consequences of the war in Ukraine on women is much less talked about than
40 other parts of the Russia's terror, and the world is especially silent on the
41 amount of sexual violence women face⁵. Along with other wars and genocides that
42 have been going on in the world (including, but not limited to, Gaza, Iran, and
43 Sudan), we have to stand for all the female and non-binary victims who are
44 suffering, often in silence.

45 According to EU data, 25 % of women in Latvia have experienced physical and/or
46 sexual violence in their lifetime, indicating persistent gender-based violence⁶.
47 Youth in Montenegro have a relatively high level of awareness about the
48 existence and seriousness of violence against women, yet many remain unsure
49 where to seek help. Bulgaria saw large protest waves in 2023 after a high-
50 profile attack⁷. In Serbia, the Autonomous Women's Center reported 28,413
51 registered domestic-violence incidents in 2023⁸. European Institute for Gender
52 Equality country profile notes tens of thousands of men reported to police for
53 domestic violence in Poland in 2022, with far fewer resulting in sentencing⁹. In
54 Croatia, 19 women were victims of femicide in 2025¹⁰, and in Turkey that number
55 is 456¹¹.

56 In Serbia in 2024, there were reports of Telegram group in which large number of
57 sexually explicit, violent, degrading and illicit content of women was shared
58 without consent¹².

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

62 Across Eastern Europe, shelters and crisis centres for victims of domestic
63 violence are often provided through a combination of municipal services and non-
64 governmental organizations. Shelter infrastructure remains insufficient to meet
65 international standards. The Council of Europe recommends one family shelter
66 place per 10,000 inhabitants, yet many countries in the region fall well below
67 this level¹⁴. Shelters also tend to be concentrated in urban areas and are
68 primarily operated by non-governmental organizations with limited and unstable
69 funding¹⁵. As a result, victims, particularly those in rural regions, often face
70 serious barriers when seeking safe accommodation and support. While assistance
71 is available, shelters and crisis facilities also apply internal rules related
72 to safety and capacity, which can affect immediate access in certain situations.

73 Access to safe and legal abortion remains uneven across Eastern Europe. While
74 abortion is formally legal in many countries, practical barriers such as
75 restrictive legislation, administrative obstacles, and widespread use of
76 conscientious objection by medical professionals significantly limit access to
77 reproductive healthcare. Poland currently has one of the most restrictive
78 abortion regimes in Europe following the 2020 Constitutional Tribunal ruling¹⁶,
79 while in countries such as Hungary¹⁷, Croatia, and Romania legal access is often
80 undermined by institutional barriers and refusal of services¹⁸.

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

84 major cause of maternal morbidity among young women¹⁹. In many Eastern European
85 countries, minors seeking abortion services must obtain parental or guardian
86 consent, and in some cases judicial authorization²⁰. These requirements can
87 delay or prevent access to timely care, particularly in situations where young
88 people cannot safely involve their families.

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

92 The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and
93 Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) provides the most
94 comprehensive international legal framework for prevention, protection,
95 prosecution, and policy integration. Ratified in 39 countries²¹, it has faced
96 difficulties in recent years. Turkey, for example, officially withdrew from in
97 2021²². Poland announced an intention to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention
98 in 2020²³, and in Latvia protests occurred in 2025 amid parliamentary moves
99 initiating withdrawal proceedings²⁴. In both cases, the withdrawals were not
100 officially enacted.

101 Ongoing public mobilization in Latvia, through large protests and petitions
102 (60,000+ signatures), indicates strong civil society engagement. The country
103 also adopted national plans to prevent and combat violence against women and
104 intimate partner violence, and ratified new laws against sexual harassment
105 (2024) and broader awareness campaigns²⁵.

106 In 2024, Croatia passed a law outlining femicide as a separate crime²⁶.

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

111 Across Eastern Europe, centers for help and victim support services actively
112 provide assistance to victims of domestic abuse and organise advocacy. In
113 Latvia, for example, support services are provided through municipal crisis
114 centres and non-governmental organizations such as the MARTA Centre²⁷.

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

120 We urge politicians in Eastern Europe:

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

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

145 CDN will contribute to this struggle and strive to:

- 146 • continue working on feminist topics through its projects, activities, and
147 groups, such as the Feminist Action Team
- 148 • develop partnerships with NGOs which fight violence against women and
149 support victims of violence
- 150 • spread the word about different resources and organisations that provide
151 help to victims of different forms of violence against women and non-
152 binary people
- 153 • apply for and develop projects to address the issue of violence against
154 women
- 155 • advocate and campaign among our member organisations, as well as beyond
156 the network
- 157 • educate members on the topic and about the ways how they can fight for
158 better law and prevention in their countries
- 159 • spread the word about the issues of women and gender minorities in the
160 Eastern European region
- 161 • continue advocating for peace and the stopping of violence, especially in
162 the cases of organized attacks that harm women further, such as full scale
163 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.