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## Parliament approves first ever EU rules on combating violence against women

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- Actions to prevent rape and increase understanding of consent
  - Forced marriage and female genital mutilation considered crimes
  - Disclosing private information online without consent is prohibited, as is “cyber-flashing”
  - Specialised assistance for victims
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One in three women in the EU have experienced physical and/or sexual violence © Adobe Stock / Atlas

**The new rules aim to prevent gender-based violence and protect its victims, especially women and victims of domestic violence.**

Parliament adopted on Wednesday, with 522 in favour, 27 against, and 72 abstentions, the first ever EU rules on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The directive calls for stronger laws against cyberviolence, better assistance for victims, and steps to prevent rape.

The new rules prohibit female genital mutilation and forced marriage and outline particular guidelines for offenses committed online, such as the disclosure of private information and cyberflashing.

The new legislation will include a longer list of aggravating circumstances for offenses that carry more severe penalties, such as crimes against public figures, journalists, or human rights defenders. The list also includes the intention to punish victims based on their gender, sexual orientation, skin colour, religion, social origin, or political beliefs, and the desire to maintain or restore “honour.”

**Sexual and reproductive health services to be made available**

The safety and well-being of victims should be prioritised, including through access to sheltered accommodation. Healthcare should be made accessible, including sexual and reproductive health services. Member states authorities will have enhanced reporting and evidence gathering

obligations, and will have to raise public awareness of the fact that non-consensual sex is considered a criminal offence.

Due to Parliament's insistence, the Commission will report every five years on whether the rules should be revised.

### Quotes

The co-rapporteur from the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, [Frances Fitzgerald \(EPP, IE\)](#), said: "Today Parliament has taken the first steps to make Europe the first continent in the world to end violence against women. This is a wide-ranging piece of legislation that will prevent violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators, thereby ensuring a holistic approach to tackling these heinous crimes. There can be no equality without eradication of violence against women; we must ensure that there can be no impunity for those who commit such crimes."

The co-rapporteur from the Civil Liberties Committee, [Evin Incir \(S&D, SV\)](#), said: "This groundbreaking directive embodies our unwavering commitment to strengthening the rights of women and saving lives. As we march forward, let us remember this moment as a first historic step in strengthening women's rights and illuminating the path towards a future where every woman can live free from fear and oppression. This is a victory for justice and equality across the European Union."

### Next steps

The new rules will come into force twenty days after their publication in the EU Official Journal. Member states have three years to implement the provisions.

### Further information

[Adopted text \(24.04.2024\)](#)

[Text of the agreement](#)

[Watch the video-recording of the debate in plenary \(23.04.2024\)](#)

[Press Release: "First ever EU rules on combating violence against women: deal reached" \(06.02.2024\)](#)

[Video-recording of the press conference by lead MEPs following the provisional agreement \(06.02.2024\)](#)

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[Briefing by the EP Think Tank - "EU rules on combating violence against women and domestic violence" \(16.04.2024\)](#)

[European Parliament Research Service: Definitions of rape in the legislation of EU member states \(January 2024\)](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

[Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material \(violence against women\)](#)

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