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EVERY 10 MINUTES, A WOMAN IS KILLED BY HER PARTNER OR FAMILY MEMBER SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD, YET FEMICIDE IS NOT FULLY RECOGNISED AS A SEPARATE CRIME IN THE EU

THE EU RATIFIED THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION. BUT FEMICIDE REMAINS SILENT

What remains unnamed cannot be seen, counted or prevented.

[Brussels, 28 October 2026] The European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest umbrella of women's rights organisations in the European Union (EU), publishes its report on **femicide** today. The report contributes to GREVIO[1]'s baseline evaluation of the European Union's implementation of the Istanbul Convention[2], with a specific focus on femicide.

WOMEN ARE KILLED BECAUSE THEY ARE WOMEN YET LAWS STILL FAIL TO RECOGNISE FEMICIDE

Femicide is the most extreme and brutal manifestation of violence against women and girls, who are killed because they are women, by those who are meant to love them. Femicide is rooted in historically unequal power relations between women and men. Women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner murder, more often referred to as homicide, in which they represent 87 % of all victims and 60 % of victims in domestic murders, compared with 42% of all murder victims.[3] Gender-motivated killings tend to be recorded under general homicide or "domestic violence," which hides the reality of the motives and the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

There is an urgent need to recognise **femicide** on a common basis across the European Union. That is not the case today. Only five of the 27 member states (Cyprus, Malta, Croatia, Italy and Romania) treat femicide as a specific crime in their criminal law. Belgium defines it in law without criminalising it.

The European Union (EU) ratified the **Istanbul Convention in 2024, the most comprehensive legally binding instrument in Europe that addresses violence against women and domestic violence.** For the first time, the EU is bound, within its areas of competence, by international standards to prevent violence against women, protect survivors, prosecute perpetrators, and collect data.

Effective implementation saves women's lives. Ratification without the will to name femicide is not full implementation.

To implement the Convention, the main instrument of the EU is the adopted Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Directive harmonises certain criminal offences, including forms of cyberviolence, and sets measures to respond to the specific needs of victims and improve their access to justice and support. The EWL, however, regrets that the Directive does not include a definition of femicide among its criminal offences, as violence against women continues to be omitted as a Euro Crime. **Any implementation that fails to result in a measurable decrease in femicide is an implementation that fails the Convention's obligations.**

FIVE GAPS - ONE FAILURE

The report is built on evidence from EWL members in Belgium, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Spain. It identifies five systemic gaps where EU-level obligations do not translate into protection on the ground.

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[1] GREVIO, the independent expert body that monitors the Istanbul Convention, opened its first full evaluation of the EU after accession in 2024. It sent a detailed questionnaire and received a consolidated report from the EU. GREVIO visited EU institutions, bodies and agencies in June 2026 and will publish its baseline evaluation report in 2027. In addition, in 2026, GREVIO will also develop General Recommendation No. 2 on gender-related killing of women (femicide).

[2] Council of Europe (2011), Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

[3] EIGE (2025), Improving the collection of national administrative data on femicide in the EU

1. **Data Gap**: The absence of a harmonised EU-wide legal definition of femicide and binding standards for disaggregated data collection renders gender-motivated killings statistically invisible. Femicide is shrouded in general homicide or domestic-violence figures, so no one can measure its scale, spot risk patterns or test whether prevention works.
2. **Risk Assessment Gap:** EU law asks for an "individual assessment" but no standard lethality protocol covering coercive control, separation and former partners, stalking, firearms and past abuse. Assessments stay superficial, inconsistent, and unlinked to protection, so high-risk cases go undetected
3. **Protection Gap: "The paper shield" effect:** National protection orders and the European Protection Order exist in law but fail in practice: no mandatory enforcement, real-time breach alerts, systematic monitoring, inter-agency information-sharing, or link to risk assessment.
4. **Cross-border & information sharing failure:** Orders issued in one Member State are not always recognised in another, so protection can vanish when a woman flees, and perpetrators exploit borders through "legal stalking".
5. **Financial & Resource Gap:** EU funding instruments are short-term, project-based and administratively burdensome, resulting in underfunding for specialist women-led feminist organisations and small grassroots services.

WHAT THE EWL CALLS FOR

The European Women's Lobby calls on the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and the Member States to close these gaps. It calls for a binding EU-wide legal definition of **femicide** and for all Member States to collect and transmit annual disaggregated data on femicide, with common indicators set by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Eurostat. It calls for binding femicide-specific risk assessment indicators, linked to protection measures. It calls for binding standards for the enforcement of protection orders, including real-time alerts, systematic monitoring and automatic cross-border recognition of the European Protection Order. It calls for continuous training for police, prosecutors, judges and frontline staff, built with women's specialist organisations. It calls for multi-annual core funding for specialist women's services for femicide prevention, replacing short-term project-based support.

The Istanbul Convention saves lives. We cannot afford to overlook femicide as a real life-or-death threat. Femicide must be named for what it is: men's ultimate control over women's lives. We call on all political actors to take their responsibility: make femicide a crime of the past by recognising it and, above all, preventing it.

FULL REPORT

EWL Shadow Report to GREVIO's baseline evaluation of the European Union's implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Focus: systemic failure to prevent femicide.
Link to the full report: EWL Shadow Report

For further information

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