COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

25.11.2026 **ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)**

English only

CCJ statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

According to a recent UN report, if we continue at the current rate of progress, we would achieve gender equality in 2197, approximately seven generations in the future.[1] On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the Advisory Council on Youth emphasises the concerning trends of violence against women and girls across Europe and calls for urgent action.

Gender-based violence can take many forms, ranging from physical and sexual to psychological and economic abuse, and in its most extreme form, femicide. Such acts are often part of a wider pattern of coercive control and intimidation and never a crime of passion.

Violence against women and girls remains endemic in every Council of Europe member state. Research published this year by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Institute for Gender Equality found that a third of women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime and half of women who suffer violence from their partner stay quiet.[2] Young women are particularly at risk, with 35% of young women under 30 having experienced gender-based violence. These are not mere statistics; they represent the real lives and experiences of women.

With the expansion of new digital technologies and AI, women face new forms of gender-based violence. Young women are disproportionately targeted by online abuse, including cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, doxing, misogynistic hate campaigns, and AI-generated deepfakes.[3] Digital and offline violence are interconnected, with technology being used as a tool to facilitate and intensify existing patterns of abuse. Technology-facilitated violence and online misogyny undermine women's freedom of expression and curtail their participation in public and democratic life, particularly journalists, activists, politicians and human rights defenders.[4]

Alarmingly, these trends are coupled with severe cuts to funding for both institutions and civil society organisations working on gender equality.[5] The impact of cuts funding at a national and international and shrinking civic spaces across Europe seriously restrict civil society's ability to support women who have experienced gender-based violence. Across Europe, austerity measures and short-term funding models

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[1] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/the-gender-snapshot-2026-en.pdf

[2] https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/eu-gender-based-violence-survey

[3] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/momentum-meaningful-change-addressing-tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence; https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/council-of-europe-unveils-roadmap-to-tackle-online-violence-against-women-and-girls-1

[4] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/new-global-report-reveals-growing-impact-online-violence-women-journalists

[5] https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/10/at-risk-and-underfunded-how-funding-cuts-are-threatening-efforts-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls

are leaving women's rights organisations and specialist services under growing financial and political pressure,[6] while the spread of restrictive "foreign agent"-style laws and the stigmatisation of NGOs are further shrinking civic space.[7] For survivors of gender-based violence, this means fewer shelters, helplines and specialist services, as organisations across Europe struggle with austerity-driven cuts and an increasingly hostile civic space.

Against this backdrop, the theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism is to ensure justice, protect survivors and end impunity, highlighting the importance of justice in the fight against gender-based violence. For many women across Europe, accessing justice remains the exception rather than the norm. When dealing with justice systems, women face stigma, delays, and a lack of support. For young women, these barriers are particularly heightened as they face the double discrimination of age and gender. This is only amplified for marginalised groups facing further intersectional discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Justice needs to centre on survivors and ensure they are heard, believed, and treated with dignity. Measures must be taken at all levels of society, including prevention, education to challenge gender stereotypes and zero tolerance towards gender-based violence. The meaningful engagement of young people, including young men and boys, is paramount.

We, the Advisory Council on Youth, call on Council of Europe member states to:

- Sign and ratify the Istanbul convention, for those have not done so;
- Sign and ratify the AI Convention Framework, for those who have not done so;
- Integrate the recommendations set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)2 on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- Ensure accountability of online platforms and technology companies in preventing and addressing technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- Commit to and support gender mainstreaming across all policy areas;
- Collaborate with, support and continue to fund civil society organisations working on gender equality, particularly those led by young women.

The Advisory Council on Youth reaffirms its commitment to continue working in partnership with youth civil society towards the eradication of violence against women and girls in Europe.

The statements of the Advisory Council are published for the purpose of informing the public about the activities of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. The statements reflect the opinions and positions of the Advisory Council and its members. The views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.

[6] https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/new-report-indicates-shrinking-space-for-women-s-rights-defenders
[7] https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2026/civic-space-update