



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES



PRESS RELEASE

Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (MCWO)

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Time to act against rape: Use the Istanbul Convention!

The Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (MCWO) is organising a seminar which will take place on Tuesday morning 26th November 2013 at Europa House in St Paul's Street Valletta. The speakers invited for this seminar are:

The Honorable Minister Helena Dalli Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties,
The Honorable Minister Marie Louise Coleiro Preca Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity,
Dr Marceline Naudi MCWO Representative on the EWL Observatory on Violence against Women,
Dr Therese Commodini Cachia,
Hon Dr Deborah Schembri EU parliamentary network VAW,
Dr Roberta Lepre Commission Domestic Violence & Victim Support Malta,
Marisa Russo Domestic Violence Unit, Appogg, FSWS,
Dr Lara Dimitrijevic Women's Rights Foundation,
James Buhagiar Men against Violence,
Inspector Sylvana Briffa Malta Police
and chaired by Lorraine Spiteri, MCWO Chairperson.

This event is part of a broader series of public events under the common slogan "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!" that are taking place during the sixteen days of activism against violence against women between 25 November and 10 December in 33 countries all over Europe.

Why the focus on rape?

Rape continues to be one of the most devastating forms of gender-based violence, yet it is too often a taboo subject and thus remains shrouded in silence. Research at European level indicates that only between 2% and 10% of rapes are reported¹. A great majority of sex crimes against women are undisclosed² and sexual violence remains underestimated.

The "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!" events aim to place sexual violence and rape higher on the political agenda by initiating public debate around existing in adequate criminal legislation and services and the existence of myths and stereotypes that keeps preventing women to report and get justice.

¹ European Women's Lobby (2013): EWL Barometer on rape in the EU 2013. Brussels: Creative Commons.

² European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2013): Study to identify and map existing data and resources on sexual violence in the EU, Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union. The study was commissioned by EIGE and carried out by the European Women's Lobby in 2011.



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EWL Barometer on Rape in Europe in 2013

In 2013, the European Women's Lobby launched a barometer informing on how national legislations complies or fails to comply with human rights standards and what official data is kept on women victims of rape in every country. Covering 32 countries, the Barometer provides a snapshot of the situation across Europe and highlights areas where change is urgently needed.

Istanbul Convention, a tool for change

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) is a concrete tool for change to eradicate all forms of male violence against women, specifically rape.

"The Istanbul Convention is a fundamental text and a benchmark at the international level." (Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem of France, Government Spokesperson speaking at an exchange of views with the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, 27 June 2013).

The Convention is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women. The Convention leaves no doubt: there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye.

"The Istanbul Convention complements existing legal norms, and expands the international framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It represents a "gold standard" and indeed, if I may say, is primus inter pares among instruments specifically targeting the elimination of violence against women." Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women³

Regarding sexual violence and rape, the Istanbul Convention obliges the States to adapt criminal legislation and include a definition of rape based on the lack of consent as an element of crime and move away from the requirement of use of physical force.

An adequate implementation of the Istanbul Convention will serve to make a vast change towards more effective gender equality. However not all countries have signed the Convention, and from those who have signed only a few have ratified⁴. Malta signed the Convention on the **21 May 2012 but has not yet ratified**.

Thanks to the financial support of the Government of Finland to the Council of Europe, the EWL and the Council of Europe are joining forces in this project to promote the Istanbul Convention as a tool for change. Overall, the project will promote the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention all over Europe, tailoring messages to the context in the respective country.

"I ask all of you to go out to your governments, to go out to your national parliaments, to go out to your media and protest in your member states why our [European Union] member states have not ratified the first international legally-binding instrument to prevent and combat violence against women. What are they afraid of? Do our legal systems in the European Union work or do they not work?" (Vice-President of the European Commission Viviane Reding, Speech in the European Parliament, 4 Feb 2013)

³ Council of Europe side event: "Violence against Women – Our Concern, Our Response", A side event at the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women; New York, 4 March 2013.

⁴ So far, the Convention has been ratified by Albania, Portugal, Italy, Montenegro and Turkey, and signed by 27 member states. It will enter into force following 10 ratifications. Please regularly check the status of signatures and ratifications, as many countries are actively working towards ratification and rapid developments are expected especially during the months of November and December 2013: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/about_en.asp



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Wide mobilisation around Europe through this project will urgently demand justice and support for victims of rape as can be seen in the following <http://www.womenlobby.org/s-impliquer/campagnes-et-actions-du-lef/act-against-rape-use-the-istanbul-286/33-countries-involved/?lang=en>.

Facts and figures on rape

- Malta ranks lowest amongst EU countries for reporting rape <http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/2009/09/09/t7.html>
- According to the Malta National Statistics Office, there were 11 cases of reported rape in 2010 with 43 violent indecent assaults (Demographic Review 2010) while there were 17 persons who called at hospitals or clinics seeking treatment after having been raped according to information given by the Health Minister in 2010.
- Women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, motor accidents, war and malaria, according to World Bank data.(UN Secretary-General, 2008: Campaign to end violence against women).
- In the Czech Republic, one to two rapes per day are officially recorded – it is assumed that rape is reported in only 8% of the cases (and rape occurring in the context of family and partnership is reported only in 3% of cases).
- In Denmark, the Crime Prevention Council in Denmark makes statistics based on data from the rape centres and the police. They estimate that: 2000 rapes are committed in Denmark every year; 500 cases are reported to the police; in 300 cases the charges are brought and in 150 cases there is a conviction.
- In France, official surveys show 198,000 women between 18-59 years old are victims of actual rape or attempted rape (2005-2006 CVS by INSEE-OND). In this country, 205 women are RAPED every day, only 2% of perpetrators are condemned, only 1 victim out of 10 will report to the police, 74% of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows (www.contreleviol.fr).
- In the Netherlands, a recent study (2012) revealed 15% of the women aged between 25-70 and 8% of the women aged between 15-24 were raped at least once in their lives.

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For further information, please contact:

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Note to editors:

Relative Documents are uploaded on MCWO website www.mcwo.net

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU member states and three candidate countries, as well as to 20 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2,500 associations. womenslobby.org



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http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/default_en.asp

The Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (MCWO) represents the concerns, needs and interests of women from all walks of life through dialogue and networking at a national, European and international level. The purpose of the Confederation is to integrate and unify all national women's NGOs and individual members in order to represent Malta at the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in Brussels, of which it is a full member. The MCWO through its member organisations represents over 24,000 Maltese women and is a full member of the European Women's Lobby.