

# Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

## Backlash against gender equality undermines legal efforts to end violence against women

Ending all forms of violence against women is a priority for the EU. In 2011, the adoption of the anti-trafficking directive by the European Parliament initiated binding legislation to protect victims and to prevent and prosecute trafficking. In 2012, minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, including violence against women, were established through the victims' rights directive. On a similar note, the European protection order directive further developed protection mechanisms for victims of crime in the EU.

In 2017, the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention provided a stepping stone to establishing legally binding standards and procedures for the elimination of all types of violence against women in the region. Although all 28 Member States have signed the convention, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom have yet to ratify it.

The European Commission reaffirmed its commitment to tackling violence against women in its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, calling on EU Member States to make further efforts in developing effective institutional responses to this enduring phenomenon. This includes, for example, raising awareness, improving data (availability, quality and reliability) and ensuring access to protection and support for survivors of gender-based violence (European Commission, 2015).



**Female victims of  
trafficking in  
human beings  
reached  
7 007  
in the EU (2016)**

In recent years, the EU has witnessed a general backlash against gender equality and women's rights (European Parliament, 2018a). The emergence of 'anti-gender' movements in several EU Member States has had numerous negative effects on institutional, legal and policy frameworks aimed at combating gender-based violence (European Parliament, 2018a). In addition, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in several EU Member States has faced strong opposition from political and religious groups. Similar resistance has hindered the process of EU ratification of the convention, undermining its full implementation.