



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## MEMO

Strasbourg, 22 May 2013

### **EU-wide protection for victims of domestic violence to become law**

Victims of violence, in particular domestic violence, will soon be able to count on EU-wide protection, after the European Parliament voted with an overwhelming majority (602 votes in favour, 23 against, 63 abstentions) to endorse the European Commission's proposal for an EU-wide protection order. The new regulation will mean that citizens (in most cases women) who have suffered domestic violence can rely on a restraining order obtained in their home country wherever they are in the EU: the protection will travel with the citizens. In practice, the EU law will benefit women in particular: around one in five women in Europe have suffered physical violence at least once in their life, according to surveys.

*"An estimated 1 in 5 women in Europe suffer some kind of violence at least once in their lives. Sadly, the most common form of physical violence is inflicted by someone close to the woman, usually an intimate partner,"* said Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU's Justice Commissioner. *"Thanks to the European Protection order, victims of domestic violence can breathe a sigh of relief: they will be able to rely on a restraining order obtained in their home country wherever they are in the Union. The protection will travel with the citizens. This is a tangible example of how the EU is helping to reinforce the rights of victims all over Europe. I would like to thank rapporteurs Antonio López-Istúriz and Antonia Parvanova for their tireless work on this important dossier which paved the way for a swift adoption by the European Parliament."*

Today's vote in the European Parliament follows a political agreement between the European Parliament and Council of Ministers at a so-called trilogue meeting in February ([MEMO/13/119](#)). The draft Regulation will now pass to the Council for formal adoption, expected at the meeting of European Justice Ministers in June. The Commission proposed the Regulation on **mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters** as part of a package of measures to improve victims' rights (see [IP/11/585](#) and [MEMO/11/310](#)). The Victims Directive – which sets out minimum rights for crime victims wherever they are in the EU – is already in the European statute book ([IP/12/1200](#)). Both instruments will also complement the [European Protection Order](#) of 13 December 2011, which ensures free circulation of **criminal law protection measures** throughout Europe. Today's vote is a major step towards closing protection gaps for victims of domestic violence who want to exercise their right to free movement in the EU.

Next steps: Ministers in the Justice Council are expected to adopt the draft regulation at their meeting on 6-7 June. Once the Regulation is adopted and published in the EU's Official Journal (the EU's Statute Book), the focus will move to implementation and ensuring that Member States put in place both the Regulation and the Directive on victims' rights ([IP/12/1200](#)) so that victims of crime and victims of violence can benefit from protection in their everyday lives.

## Background

On 18 May 2011, the European Commission proposed a package of measures to ensure a minimum level of rights, support and protection for victims across the EU, no matter where they come from or live.

This included a proposal for a Regulation on mutual recognition of civil law protection measures. It will ensure that victims of violence (such as domestic violence) can still rely on restraint or protection orders issued against the perpetrator if they travel or move to another EU country and will complement the [European Protection Order](#), adopted on 13 December 2011 and dealing with criminal law protection orders.

The second proposal, for a Directive on victims' rights, was adopted on 4 October 2012 by the Council of Ministers ([IP/12/1066](#)), after the European Parliament endorsed it with an overwhelming majority on 12 September 2012 ([MEMO/12/659](#)). The directive sets out minimum rights for victims, wherever they are in the EU. It will ensure that:

- victims are treated with respect and police, prosecutors and judges are trained to properly deal with them;
- victims get information on their rights and their case in a way they understand;
- victim support exists in every Member State;
- victims can participate in proceedings if they want and are helped to attend the trial;
- vulnerable victims are identified – such as children, victims of rape, or those with disabilities – and are properly protected;
- victims are protected while police investigate the crime and during court proceedings.

Member States now have **three years to implement the provisions of the Directive** into their national laws.

Up to 15% of the EU population may fall victim of a crime somewhere in the EU every year. The risk of being a victim is just as great when travelling abroad as it is at home. With Europeans making around 1.25 billion trips as tourists within the EU every year, some will inevitably become victims of crime in another country.

Minimum rules for victims are part of the EU's broader objective to build a European area of justice, so that people can rely on the same level of basic rights and have confidence in the justice system wherever they are in the EU.

## For more information

European Commission – victims' rights

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/criminal/victims/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/criminal/victims/index_en.htm)

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:

<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

Follow the Vice-President on Twitter: [@VivianeRedingEU](#)