



European
Institute for
Gender
Equality



The European Protection Order

Overview for victim support services



An EU Agency

What is the European Protection Order?

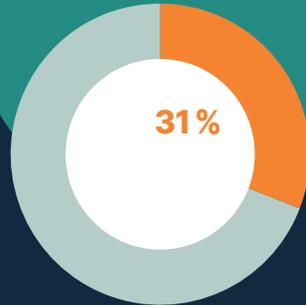
The [European Protection Order](#) (EPO) is a legal instrument that helps ensure that victims of gender-based and other forms of violence who are protected by national protection measures in one EU Member State remain protected if they decide to travel or move to another Member State. The EPO is designed to protect a person against a criminal act that may endanger their life, dignity, personal liberty or physical, psychological or sexual integrity.

The EPO works in tandem with other mechanisms of mutual recognition of protection measures, [Regulation \(EU\) No 606/2013](#), enabling a direct recognition of protection orders issued as a civil law measure between Member States.

Why does the EPO matter?

- The cross-border recognition of protection measures apply to any victim of crime but, in practice the EPO is used mostly to protect women in cases of intimate partner or domestic violence, harassment, stalking or sexual assault.
- Across the European Union one in three women (30,7%) have experienced physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence over their lifetime, by any perpetrator.
- Approximately **75 million people across the EU fall victim to crime each year.**
- Victims **may lose essential protection measures when relocating** and may be **particularly vulnerable** as they do so, without social or legal support.
- The EPO provides **continuity in protection** and can prevent future harm.

One in three women across the EU have experienced physical or sexual violence across their lifetime.



Source: FRA, EIGE, Eurostat (2024), EU gender-based violence survey.

The recent adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 alongside the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU are likely to increase the number of the EPOs requested, issued, and executed.

How the European Protection Order works

ROLE OF JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

PROTECTED PERSON

who benefits from a **national protection order** in an EU Member State decides to **travel or move** to another EU Member State.



Requests an EPO



An EPO can **only** be issued at the request of the protected person (the victim).

ISSUING AUTHORITY

Authority in original Member State **assesses the application and transmits** the EPO request using the specific form.



EXECUTING AUTHORITY



Executing authority in the new Member State recognises the EPO **without delay** and informs the issuing Member State, the person in need of protection, and the person who the order is against. The executing authority addresses breaches of the EPO and notifies the issuing Member State.

ROLE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

- Inform victim that an EPO is applicable as soon as they intend to relocate and that children at risk require an individual EPO.
- Assist in preparing and applying for an EPO.
- Provide support throughout the process.



- Help the victim in preparing the application.
- Keep the victim informed about the progress of their application.



- Help the victim understand their rights under the new protection order.
- Provide information on available support services in the receiving country.
- Work with the victim to develop a safety plan and assist them if the EPO is breached.

A critical gap in protection: low awareness and implementation

A 2024–2025 [joint report](#) by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) gathered feedback from the judiciary and victim support services across the EU on their knowledge and awareness of the EPO. From victims support services, the report drew the following conclusions.

- Awareness of the EPO was very low. Only 1 in 8 respondents stated that they were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ familiar with the EPO.
- Most respondents had not received training on the EPO. They were also not aware of the national contact points or who to consult with regard to the EPO and lacked communication channels with the judiciary.

Consequently, **few had provided victims of violence with information on the EPO**. This is a serious gap in cross-border protection for women fleeing intimate partner and domestic violence and can leave victims at risk of further harm.

Resources to consult for further information

- The [European Judicial Network](#) is a network of national contact points facilitating judicial cooperation in criminal matters between the EU Member States, with a particular focus on combating forms of serious crime.

The network has a [library of resources on the EPO](#), including information on the relevant authorities in charge of issuing and executing EPOs.

- [Eurojust](#) stimulates and improves the coordination of investigations and prosecutions, as well as cooperation among the judicial authorities in the Member States. Eurojust supports the Member States’ authorities including through the exchange of information and the facilitation of the implementation of judicial cooperation instruments.
- [EIGE](#) is the EU’s knowledge centre for gender equality, including gender-based violence research. It collects relevant data on [gender-based violence](#) in national and EU contexts.

How support services can help victims request a European Protection Order



Know the process. Get information and training on how a victim can apply for and use an EPO.



Support victims. Provide clear guidance and support to victims who want to apply for an EPO, including help with legal aid and applying for protection.



Raise awareness. Encourage national authorities to grant protection to victims – especially those moving to another Member State.



Spread the word. Share information about the right to an EPO with victims of violence against women, support services and NGOs – through events, online content and printed materials. Awareness can save lives.



Work together. Partner with relevant stakeholders at the national level and liaise with partner support services in the executing country to ensure a consistent and effective use of the EPO.

For more recommendations and detailed information, see the [joint report](#) by Eurojust and EIGE.

Full report



Brief overview
for judicial
practitioners



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