

# 'We all deserve protection' – Intersectional perspectives for inclusive protection against violence

What the Istanbul Convention and EU Directive 2024/1385 set out

Protection against violence is a human right for all people affected by gender-based violence. The Istanbul Convention (IC) obliges states – including Germany – to prevent violence and protect those affected regardless of their race, country of origin, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. But not everybody receives the same level of protection. Many face barriers, for example due to racism, poverty, queer- or transphobia, ableism, or other forms of exclusion.

Viewed through the lens of intersectionality, violence has many causes and doesn't affect everybody in the same way. If we recognise these differences and take them seriously, we can change structures together – to provide real protection against violence for everyone.

## IC articles with reference to intersectionality

Article 4(3)

### Equality and non-discrimination

Key message:

No one should receive less protection – regardless of their country of origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Meaning:

Women's shelters and counselling centres must be accessible and safe for everyone – including people affected by racism, disabled people, trans, intersex, and non-binary people.

Article 8

### Coordination and resources

Key message:

The state must ensure there is enough money, knowledge and co-operation to provide effective protection against violence.

Meaning:

Without stable funding, trained staff, and a good networking system, many people will remain unprotected. Intersectional approaches require long-term funding and institutional responsibility.

Article 12

### Dismantling gender stereotypes

Key message:

Society and the state should dismantle prejudices and role models that promote violence.

Meaning:

Educational and prevention work must impart discrimination-sensitive knowledge (e.g., on racism, ableism, queer- and transphobia) to address the root causes of violence.

Article 14

### Education and awareness raising

Key message:

People should be informed about violence and learn how to recognise and prevent it.

Meaning:

Educational work must be recognised as prevention work and make all forms of discrimination visible – including racism, sexism, ableism, and queerphobia. Teaching and public relations work needs intersectional perspectives.

Article 18

### Protection and support

Key message:

Those affected have a right to protection, counselling and support – regardless of income, country of origin, or residence status.

Meaning:

Services must be accessible, multilingual, discrimination-sensitive, and safe for everyone, so that people who suffer multiple discrimination can receive confidential and tailored support as well.

Article 23

### Emergency accommodation

Key message:

The state must provide sufficient safe accommodation.

Meaning:

Women's shelters must be easily reachable, accessible, and open to all those affected – regardless of disability, country of origin, or gender identity (more on this in the FHK Quality Recommendations for Women's Shelters). Professionals need competencies in discrimination-sensitive practice to ensure protection for everyone.

Article 59

### Right of residence

Key message:

People whose right of residence depends on their partner must be able to obtain protection and their own right of residence.

Meaning:

Experiences of violence must not lead to the loss of residence status. Safety must take priority.

Article 60

### Asylum

Key message:

Gender-based violence can be a reason for seeking asylum. Member States must provide specialised, accessible protection services and accommodation.

Meaning:

Asylum procedures must be gender-responsive, racism-sensitive, and trans-sensitive. Protection from violence must not be hindered by documents or bureaucracy.

## EU Directive 2024/1385 – Combating violence against women and domestic violence

Since May 2024, a new directive on (domestic) violence against women and their children has been in place in the European Union. It states: Violence affects people differently – for example, when racism, poverty, disability, queer- or transphobia intersect.

The directive recognises **intersectional discrimination** and demands that all Member States **provide support that takes it into account**. Together with the **Istanbul Convention**, the EU directive strengthens the aim of **protection against violence for everyone – without exception**.

The following articles are particularly relevant for intersectional protection against violence.

Recital 6

### Intersectional discrimination

Key message:

Violence can affect people more intensely if they face discrimination due to several factors at once, for example, due to racism, poverty, disability, religion, queer- or transphobia.

Meaning:

Women's shelters and counselling centres must recognise that people affected by violence may have very different life circumstances, and their experiences of discrimination can vary. Help must be tailored to these circumstances in order to be effective.

Recital 12

### Protection for all genders

Key message:

The directive protects everyone, regardless of gender. Trans, intersex, and non-binary people are also explicitly included.

Meaning:

Protection against violence must be inclusive. Women's shelters need concepts that guarantee safety and respect for all.

Recital 35

### Residence status and access to help

Key message:

People who do not have a secure residence status must still receive protection and support.

Meaning:

Violence must never lead to those affected also being afraid of deportation. Help is available to everyone – regardless of papers.

Recital 57–67

### Specialised support and protection centres

Key message:

Each Member State must provide sufficient safe and accessible shelters and specialised services.

Meaning:

Women's shelters must be designed in such a way that particularly vulnerable groups (migrants, Black women, disabled women, queer, trans, and intersex people and their children) can get access and receive suitable support. Safe spaces need accessible admissions, translation services, and professionals trained in discrimination-sensitive practice.

Recital 71

### Groups subject to multiple discrimination

Key message:

People who are affected by different forms of discrimination at once – such as Black women, disabled women, queer women or refugee women and their children – are particularly at risk.

Meaning:

These people need targeted support, safe access, and visibility in the help system.

Recital 72

### Disabled women

Key message:

Disabled women and girls are at a particularly high risk of experiencing violence. Many encounter barriers when they seek protection or counselling.

Meaning:

Protection and support services must be accessible and inclusive. For example, spaces must be barrier-free, information must be understandable, appropriate methods of communication must be used, and staff must be well trained. This ensures that disabled women and girls get the help they need.

Article 24

### Specialised support

Key message:

Member States must provide specialised support services for victims of gender-based violence. These include trauma counselling, medical assistance, legal support and help from specially-trained experts.

Meaning:

Those affected should receive help that is tailored to their particular situation. This means: Services must be accessible, confidential, and effective in dealing with different forms of discrimination and violence.

Article 33

### Targeted supported for people with special protection needs

Key message:

States must ensure that people affected by violence who have special protection needs, for example due to age, disability, a refugee or migration background, racist discrimination, or a queer identity, receive additional, targeted support.

Meaning:

Support must be adapted to people's actual life circumstances. Accessible communication, information in multiple languages, safe accommodation, confidential counselling, and specialised services must be provided. The goal is to ensure that people facing multiple disadvantages do not fall through the cracks.

For protection against violence to really work, change is required on many levels – in women's shelters and counselling centres, in politics, in structures, and in our understanding.

## Women's shelters and counselling centres

- + Create spaces where different life experiences are visible, safe and respected.
- + Ensure language support, accessibility, and participatory structures.
- + Critically examine working methods on a regular basis and improve them.

## Politics and administration

- + Anchor intersectional perspectives in violence protection laws and strategies.
- + Secure funding that is structural instead of project based.
- + Promote feminist research on intersectional discrimination.

## Professional community and service providers

- + Design guiding principles, quality standards, and training in a discrimination-sensitive way.
- + Include affected and marginalised professionals in decision-making.
- + Anchor intersectional approaches in training, supervision and organisational development.

## Society and the public

- + Do not individualise cases of violence, but instead recognise violence as a structural problem.
- + Actively oppose gender-discriminatory discourse, racism, and queerphobia.
- + Make solidarity visible – in everyday life, in the media, and in our personal environment.

## Protection against violence is our common responsibility.

Only when all sides work together can we create a support system that truly protects – for every person, in every situation.