
EU Parliament: directive on violence against women. Criminal definition of rape based on the absence of consent, stricter rules for the web

The European Parliament's Committees on Civil Liberties and Women's Rights approved changes to a proposed directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. "Building on the Commission's proposal for a criminal definition of rape based on the absence of consent, MEPs seek to add fear and intimidation to the list of factors that preclude free decision making", according to a statement from Brussels. "Consent must be assessed considering the specific circumstances", MEPs say. They also propose complementary criminal rules on sexual assault (i.e. any non-consensual sexual act that cannot be defined as rape) and call for EU legislation on intersex genital mutilation, forced sterilisation, forced marriage, and sexual harassment in work. MEPs call for the list of aggravating circumstances to be expanded to include: pregnancy, distress, being a victim of trafficking; particularly inhuman, degrading or humiliating acts; offences resulting in the death or suicide of dependants; crimes committed against a public figure, including journalists and human rights defenders; intent to preserve or restore "honour"; intent to punish victims for their sexual orientation or other attributes of their identity. The European Parliament's draft report on combating violence against women and preventing rape also deals with forms of online violence and harassment.

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