



EP/Council deal on EU-wide protection for crime victims

Committees: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Crime victims who have been granted protection in one EU Member State will be able to get similar protection if they move to another, under a draft agreement on the European Protection Order struck by Parliament and Council representatives on Tuesday, after one and a half years of negotiations. This protection would cover, for instance, victims of gender violence, harassment, abduction, stalking or attempted murder. The deal is expected to be endorsed by EU justice ministers on Friday.

Measures to protect crime victims already exist in all EU Member States but at present they cease to apply if the victim moves to another country. When it takes effect, the European Protection Order (EPO) would enable anyone protected under criminal law in one EU state to apply for the same protection if they move to another EU country.

"The EPO directive is an important step towards the construction of a European area of justice, which will protect women who are threatened, by ensuring their physical, psychological and sexual integrity and their dignity as they move within Europe. Protection of victims and prevention of new crimes need to inspire European criminal law", said Civil Liberties Committee rapporteur Carmen Romero López (S&D, ES).

"Today is a great day for all those who have suffered violence. A woman who is victim of gender violence and has been granted protection measures against the offender in one Member State, will now have the chance to get the same protection in another EU country. This directive, which has come a long way, will soon be ready to do what it is supposed to do, namely to help victims feel safe across the EU. It is not just for victims of gender violence, but for all kinds of victims", added Women's Rights Committee rapporteur Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio (EPP, ES).

All crime victims to be covered

MEPs sought from the outset to make it clearer that the rules should cover all victims of crime, not just victims of gender violence. Most protection measures are granted to female victims of gender violence but an EPO could cover victims of either sex and other crimes too..

The rules would apply to victims or possible victims who need protection "against a criminal act of another person which may, in any way, endanger his life, physical, psychological and sexual integrity [...] as well as his dignity or personal liberty". Such acts would include harassment, abduction, stalking and "other forms of indirect coercion".

Keeping aggressors away

The proposal says that once a person is granted protection in one Member State under domestic criminal law, s/he may request a EPO to extend this protection to another EU country to which s/he decides to move. It will be up to the Member State of origin to issue the EPO and forward it to the other country.

An EPO may be issued only if the aggressor is banned by the initial country from places where the protected person resides or which s/he visits, or if restrictions are imposed on contact or approaches by the aggressor to the protected person.

Press release

This directive would only apply to protection measures taken in criminal matters. However, due to differences among Member States' legal systems, the country where the person moves may apply other kinds of measures (criminal, administrative or civil), provided they guarantee a similar level of protection.

Protection of victims' relatives

Thanks to MEPs, an EPO may also be requested to safeguard relatives of a beneficiary of a European Protection Order.

Next steps

The compromise text is expected to be endorsed by EU justice ministers on Friday 23 September. It will then be put to votes in the Civil Liberties Committee and Women's Rights Committee at the start of October and by the full Parliament shortly after.

Once the directive is adopted, Member States will have three years to transpose it into national law.

Wide protection for victims: new legislation to cover civil matters

The EPO in criminal matters will be complemented by separate legislation for civil matters. To that end, the Commission proposed in May a regulation on mutual recognition of protection afforded by civil law. The combination of the two instruments (the EPO directive and the regulation) should cover the broadest possible range of protection measures for victims issued in the Member States.

Contact :

Isabel Teixeira NADKARNI

BXL: (+32) 2 28 32198

STR: (+33) 3 881 76758

PORT: (+32) 498 98 33 36

EMAIL: libe-press@europarl.europa.eu

Natalia DASILVA

BXL: (+32) 2 28 44301

STR: (+33) 3 881 73661

PORT: (+32) 498 983 985

EMAIL: libe-press@europarl.europa.eu

Ayla Sultan ÇIÇEK

BXL: (+32) 2 28 41009

STR: (+33) 3 881 74005

PORT: (+32) 498 98 13 37

EMAIL: femm-press@europarl.europa.eu