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Zagreb, 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2023

Government of the Republic of Croatia  
mr.sc. Andrej Plenković,  
President of the Government

Respected Mr. Plenković,

We, the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb – women against violence against women are writing to you today to urge you to vote in favour of a more progressive version of the proposal European Union Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. This Directive is a vital step forward in the fight against gender-based violence, and it would make a real difference in the lives of women across the EU. As you might be aware, this Directive is being negotiated in its trialogue phase between the Council, The European Parliament and the European Commission.

The Directive includes a number of important provisions, including the criminalisation of rape based on the absence of consent. This is a crucial step in ensuring that all women are protected from sexual violence, regardless of their relationship to the perpetrator.

The Directive also recognizes the key role of feminist civil society in the fight against gender-based violence. These organizations provide essential support to survivors, and they play a vital role in raising awareness of the issue and advocating for change.

Women-specialist services are essential for ensuring that survivors have access to the care and support they need. **However, the differences between the text proposed by the Council and the one proposed by the Parliament are significant, in particular, the removal of Article 5 on the definition of common EU standards on the criminalisation of rape is unacceptable.**

It is important to highlight that a Directive combating violence against women and domestic violence that does not include the crime of rape will not fulfil its goal. We need an EU Directive so that women can feel safe in every corner of Europe knowing that the crimes of violence against women and domestic violence will be taken extremely seriously, would have proper sanctions, proper punishment, and that these crimes will be interrupted and prevented. This includes ensuring the provision of specialist support for victims, meaning shelters, safe accommodation, forensic data, counselling, trauma care, and legal advice. This

continuum of specialised support services is needed to ensure the rights of victims of violence against women and domestic violence are effectively protected.

The Autonomous Women's House Zagreb believes that the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence is a landmark piece of legislation. It would send a clear message that gender-based violence will not be tolerated in the EU, and it would provide much-needed support to survivors.

Women in Croatia will be closely following the Government's takes on this Directive. We are sure that you understand the concerns about the Directive's text, and we expect the Government of the Republic of Croatia to vote for a version of the Directive that is closer to the proposal of the European Parliament. This vote will lead to crucial, long-awaited changes for women in the European Union.

Respectfully,

Neva Tölle

For the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb

 