



Zagreb, 16 April 2018

## **Croatia Ratifies Ideological Istanbul Convention Against the Will of the People**

**Zagreb, Croatia** - On Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, the Croatian government ratified the “International Treaty of the Council of Europe for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Family Violence,” also known as **the Istanbul Convention (IC)**. The convention was ratified despite the strong opposition of the Croatian people.

The Istanbul Convention is the first international document that distinguishes gender as a “social construct” apart from biological sex (Article 4, paragraph 3 of IC) and which **assumes that gender and its social dimensions are two separate and unrelated realities**.

Croats were against ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Now that the Convention is ratified, the Croatian Government will have no authority to influence the “Independent Body Responsible for Monitoring the Implementation of Istanbul Convention,” also known as GREVIO, or the “Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.” **GREVIO is above the law and above the state constitution**. It is financed by state money, but the State has no supervision or influence on it. GREVIO monitors and influences government and educational politics. **GREVIO also determines which NGOs to support in supervising the implementation of the Istanbul Convention**. The Government has no influence on this.

Furthermore, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention **limits the role of parents in child rearing and education**, introduces scientifically bogus ideas about gender ideology into the education system, and **endangers freedom of religion** because of its intolerance towards religious communities.

At the same time, all the legitimate measures introduced by the Istanbul Convention that regard **policies against women and domestic violence have already been introduced into Croatian legislation through various laws**.

The discussion about the Istanbul Convention within Croatia’s largest party has revealed that the party is truly undemocratic. The Prime Minister **warned members of the party who opposed or publicly denounced ratification of the possible negative impact of these statements on their political positions and their status in the party**. For example, after the political party secretary stated that he was against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, he was asked to resign from his position.

More than [50,000 Croatians](#) gathered on the main square of Croatia's capital city Zagreb three weeks ago. They gathered to show their dissatisfaction with the possibility of ratifying the Istanbul Convention. Tens of thousands of people also gathered in Croatia's second largest city, Split, a day before the voting occurred. And more than [40,000](#) Croatians signed a CitizenGO petition seeking more effective enforcement of laws protecting women and children from violence, rather than ratifying the Istanbul Convention.

At the same time, the **media actively blocked opponents of ratification and portrayed** them as opponents of protecting children and women from violence. Some members of the media broadcasted the protest march against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which involved more than 50,000 people, and **misinformed the public** by claiming that only a couple thousand people joined the demonstration. In addition, they stated "that polls suggest that two-thirds of Croatians support the convention". In reality, the phone survey commissioned by the Government of the Republic of Croatia involved only 606 participants and showed that **only 31.9% of them supported the convention in full.**

The final result of this oppressing politics was that Croatia's Parliament voted for the Istanbul Convention. On Friday 30 parliamentarians voted against ratification and 110 voted for ratification.