



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*"The mechanism of violence is what destroys women, controls women, diminishes women and keeps women in their so called place."
Eve Ensler, founder of V-Day*



Violence against women is the most widespread violation of women's human rights in Europe. Its persistence and high prevalence demonstrate that our societies are still built on, vehicle and perpetuate patriarchal values and male domination.

Violence against women shapes women's place in society: their health, access to employment and education, integration into social and cultural activities, economic independence, participation in public and political life and decision-making, and relations with men. Besides being a cause of suffering and trauma which has devastating consequences for the mental, physical and sexual health of individual women, violence is a major barrier to the achievement of the goal to create a society based on the principles of participation and citizenship, and in direct contradiction with the EU Treaty goal of promoting equality between women and men.

We want a world free from violence and the fear of violence for all women and girls.

BEIJING '95 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



- Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.
- Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.



FACTS & FIGURES IN EUROPE

Back in 1999, the European Women's Lobby found out that 1 out of 5 women in Europe experience domestic violence. Today we see that the figures haven't changed. In March 2014, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency unveiled the outcomes of its survey on violence against women in Europe: one in three women aged 15 or over has experienced physical and/or sexual violence; one in five women has experienced stalking and every second woman has been confronted with one or more forms of sexual harassment; 5% of women aged 15 or over have been raped.

Violence against women and girls is also about: sexual harassment in the work place, prostitution and sexual exploitation, marital rape, incest, pornography, psychological abuse, female genital mutilation, cyber-violence and bullying, sexist advertising, etc.: all kinds of tools used by men to control women's lives, bodies and sexuality.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY ACTIONS

- **2013 EWL Barometer on rape:** produced with the expertise of the experts to the EWL Observatory on violence against women, it gives a concrete and documented European overview on the needs for change in legislation data collection systems and support services for women victims of sexual violence.
- **2013 EWL-Council of Europe joint project "Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention!"** during the 16 days of activism against violence against women: public events took place in 28 countries all over Europe, calling for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention by all EU member states.
- **One Billion Rising (2013 and 2014):** EWL flash mob in Brussels and all over Europe, calling on decision-makers to act to end violence and provide access to justice for all women.
- **EWL campaign "Together for a Europe free from prostitution":** raising awareness on prostitution as a form of violence against women at UN, EU and national levels, through events, advocacy actions and communication tools (like "18 myths on prostitution").

5 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & THE EUROPEAN UNION



The EU has no legally binding instrument providing a comprehensive framework to end and prevent violence against women and girls in all member states. EU member states tackle violence in widely differing ways, ranging from an absence of its recognition as a fundamental violation of women's human rights, to a broad policy framework based on a feminist analysis of gender power relations in our societies. Women and girls are therefore not equally protected in the EU, and the absence of harmonised European legislative and policy framework has important consequences on the ability of women to resist and survive male violence.

Over the last two years, the EU has adopted new tools which can be used by women to gain protection and support: the European Protection Order (guaranteeing women's protection when they travel in the EU) and the victims' rights directive (including a gender perspective). EU funding to support projects on ending violence against women has been integrated into the new Rights and Citizenship Programme.

The meetings of the EU civil society platform on trafficking in human beings also provide an opportunity for the EWL and

its members to bring their perspective on the intrinsic links between sex trafficking and prostitution. The two EU agencies dedicated to fundamental rights and gender equality worked on establishing and delivering data, a key milestone to get a better understanding of the scope of violence against women and girls in Europe (FRA survey, EIGE studies).

Over its last term (2009-2014), the European Parliament has actively pushed for an EU strategy to end all forms of violence against women. February 2014 saw the adoption of strong resolutions calling for: a European law to tackle violence against women and the ratification by the EU of the Istanbul Convention; the recognition of prostitution as an obstacle to equality between women and men and the adoption of the Nordic (abolitionist) model in the EU.

However, despite promises from the European Commission to come up with a Strategy to end violence against women in 2010, and despite statements of the Council to adopt such a strategy, ratify the Istanbul Convention and develop more policies and tools, the EU is not yet taking the necessary steps to protect all women and girls in Europe from violence.



GOOD PRACTICE

- The Swedish law criminalising the purchase of sex has proven to be successful in protecting women, reducing prostitution, changing mentalities and deterring traffickers. Norway (2008) and Iceland (2009) have adopted similar legal provisions.
- Spain provides a range set of measures and laws against violence against women. Their victim support system includes housing, healthcare and employment dimensions, in order to make it easier for women affected by violence to reintegrate themselves into society. The Spanish law also takes into account the situation of vulnerability faced by migrant women.

CHALLENGES

- Violence against women remains invisible and underestimated.
- Violence against women is de-politicised (considered as a private issue, or a personal choice) and therefore disappearing from political agendas.
- Violence against women is trivialised in our societies and fostered by the sexualisation and the pornification of the public sphere and the media, including social media.
- Perpetrators remain unpunished; women don't get access to justice.
- Protection of women should take into account the diversity of women's needs and identities, to make sure that not one single woman is left without protection, information and support, and gets access to justice and reparation. In particular, migrant women coming under family reunification laws should get access to justice and independent status.
- Women and girls are at greater risk of male violence in times of recession.
- Services to protect and support women and girls, such as hotlines, shelters, legal aid, rape crisis centres, women's organisations, are under threat because of a lack of political support or financial cuts.
- Preventing violence cannot be successful if governmental bodies don't act and exercise their obligation of due diligence: we need legislation that condemns all forms of violence against women.
- We need an urgent and radical change of mentalities to oppose violence against women and girls.



OUR DEMANDS **A Europe free from violence against women.**

- **Establish 2016 as the EU Year to End violence against women, with substantial resources to raise awareness and support actions at all levels.**
- **Adopt and implement a comprehensive EU Strategy to end all forms of violence against women in Europe, including prostitution, to end impunity, protect all women, prevent violence and raise awareness, provide quality services, and give women access to justice, based on data and partnership with women's organisations.**
- **Adopt EU legislation to end prostitution and sex trafficking through the criminalisation of the purchase of sex and of procuring, the development of exit programmes and education actions.**
- **The EU and its member states: ratify the Istanbul Convention.**

