



European Commission actions to combat **Violence Against Women**

January 2015

Violence against women is a brutal manifestation of gender inequality and a violation of human rights. One in three women (33 %) in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since she was 15 years old¹. An estimated 500,000 women and girls in the EU alone have suffered from female genital mutilation.

Violence against women includes cases of violence in close relationships, rape, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking for sexual exploitation as well as forced marriages, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour' crimes.

The European Commission is putting in place actions to eliminate violence against women.

Ensuring rights, support and protection of victims of violence

Women and girls who are victims of violence need appropriate support and protection, which is reinforced by effective and deterrent laws. The Commission has put such laws in place.

The rules establishing minimum rights for all victims, including women as victims of gender-based violence², ensure that:

- they are treated with respect by well-trained police, prosecutors and judges and get understandable information on their rights;
- they can get specialised support in all European Union countries;
- they can participate in proceedings and have certain rights (such as right to be heard, right to legal aid, right to interpretation and translation, right to review a decision not to prosecute etc.); and
- they are protected from secondary and repeat victimisation, from intimidation and from retaliation during police investigations and court proceedings (e.g. by limiting the number of interviews and medical examinations to a minimum, by ensuring special measures to avoid visual contact with the offender during court proceedings etc.).

Victims of violence have to be protected Europe-wide. This is safeguarded with **rules³** which ensure that restraining and protection orders issued in one EU country can be recognised across the EU. Thanks to this, **women who have suffered domestic violence are protected from the perpetrators if they travel or move anywhere in the EU.**

¹ <http://fra.europa.eu/fr/publication/2014/violence-femmes-enquete-ue-resultats-en-bref>

² Directive 2012/29/EU on common minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime

³ Directive 2011/99 on the European protection order and Regulation 606/2013 on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters

The EU has put in place **rules on trafficking in human beings**⁴, as well as **against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children**⁵, which provide a set of effective measures to prevent, support, protect the victims and punish perpetrators.

With the **Communication on eliminating female genital mutilation**, the European Commission is committed to:

- developing a better understanding of the practice;
- preventing female genital mutilation and providing victim support;
- supporting effective prosecution by Member States;
- protecting women at risk living in the European Union; addressing the problem through its external policies, in those parts of the world where this crime is perpetrated.

Getting more and better evidence on violence against women

Violence is still regrettably under-reported: only about a third of women who are physically or sexually abused by their partners contact the authorities. In addition, complaints are **not systematically recorded**, and **the collection of administrative data is not comparable between EU countries**.

The European Commission works together with EU countries and other EU bodies to get **more and better evidence**, which will strengthen our responses to violence against women.

Successful policies show the way

The European Commission organises regular **exchanges of best practices** so EU countries can learn from each other about **successful policies**, find ways to overcome common obstacles and improve their approaches. For example, exchanges on **awareness-raising campaigns**, using new technologies to better **support and protect victims**, and on putting in place **treatment programmes** for male perpetrators.

Supporting projects that make a difference on the ground

The European Commission funds numerous **awareness-raising campaigns** in EU countries and supports **grass-roots organisations, NGOs and networks** working to prevent violence against women.

The main funding programmes are called DAPHNE III and PROGRESS. As from 2014, provision of funds will continue with the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, supplemented by funds under the Justice Programme. Some examples of recent projects have been:

- In 2013, the Cypriot government received funding to **give training to professionals** that are in contact with victims (e.g. the police, law enforcement officials, social workers, journalists).
- Since 1990, the Commission supports the activities of the **European Women's Lobby (EWL)**, the largest network of women's organisations in the EU, which works to promote women's rights and gender equality, and combat all forms of male violence against women.
- Over the last 7 years, the European Commission supported **Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)**, a network of European women's NGOs working to combat violence against women and children, in particular focused on improving victim support.
- In 2011, a partnership of academia and specialised NGOs was funded to produce a **toolkit** available online (the REPLACE FGM project). It provides a practical guide on how to use behaviour change with targeted communities to end female genital mutilation. It is based on work undertaken with Somali and Sudanese communities residing in the Netherlands and the UK to achieve **lasting change in attitudes and behaviour**.

To find out more, including funding opportunities, visit our website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-violence>

⁴ Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims

⁵ Directive 2011/92/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography