

**November 2021**

Gender-based violence is a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based discrimination. It is defined as an act of violence 'directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture'. Gender-based violence encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence, and can take various forms, such as domestic and intimate partner violence, harassment, stalking, rape, female genital mutilation and femicide. While forms of gender-based violence can be inflicted on both women and men, its victims are primarily women. An EU-wide survey indicates that 33 % of women have suffered physical and/or sexual violence since reaching the age of 15 years. The EU is tackling the problem in various ways, but has no binding instrument designed specifically to protect women from violence. Although there are similarities between national policies to combat violence against women, the Member States have adopted different approaches to the problem. Parliament has repeatedly called for a European Union strategy to counter violence against women, including a legally binding instrument.

Gender-based violence

Violence against women in the EU: State of play

Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, November 2021

The EU is tackling the problem of violence against women in various ways, but has no binding instrument designed specifically to protect women from violence. This briefing explains the scale of the problem, including in view of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. It provides an overview of the international context, of the political commitments at EU level, the activities of the European Parliament, the different approaches of Member States, and stakeholder views.

The Istanbul Convention: A tool to tackle violence against women and girls

'At a glance' note by Ulla Jurviste and Rosamund Shreeves, November 2021

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is the first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards specifically to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims of violence and punish perpetrators. EU accession to the Istanbul Convention is one of the priorities in the EU 2020-2025 gender equality strategy.

Adding gender-based violence to the list of serious crimes in Article 83(1) TFEU

'At a glance' note by Rosamund Shreeves, September 2021

Despite the extent of gender-based violence and the harm it causes, the European Union does not currently have a specific legal instrument to address it. A legislative-initiative resolution setting out proposals for strengthening the EU's response by identifying gender-based violence at EU level as an area of serious crime was adopted during the plenary session in September 2021.

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Gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU – European added value assessment

Study by Cecilia Navarra, Meenakshi Fernandes and Niombo Lomba, with María García Muñoz, June 2021

This European added value assessment (EAVA) supports the Parliament's legislative-initiative report on adding gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU. The assessment presents evidence supporting the classification of gender-based violence as a particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension, estimates the significant benefits that could be generated through EU action and identifies complementary EU action that could enhance the European added value of this policy option.

Combating gender based violence: Cyber-violence – European added value assessment

Study by Niombo Lomba, Cecilia Navarra and Meenakshi Fernandes, March 2021

With the rise of new technology and social media, gender-based cyber-violence is a constantly growing threat with impacts at individual, social and economic levels, on women and girls and on society generally. Action taken so far has been inadequate, and the cross-border nature of gender-based cyber-violence has yet to be properly addressed. This European added value assessment (EAVA), which complements the European Parliament's legislative-initiative report on 'Combating gender-based violence: Cyber-violence' finds that the costs to individuals and society are substantial and that a combination of legal and non-legal policy options would generate the greatest European added value.

Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

'At a glance' note by Rosamund Shreeves, February 2021

The European Union is committed to working collectively to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM), as part of broader efforts to combat all forms of violence against women and girls, and to supporting the efforts of its Member States in this field. The European Commission has undertaken to assess EU efforts to combat FGM every year, on or around 6 February – the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

Understanding EU action against human trafficking

Briefing by Sofija Voronova, May 2021

Gender plays an important part in human trafficking, as women and men are not trafficked in the same way or for the same purpose. Women and girls represent a disproportionately high number of victims, both globally and at EU level, especially in terms of sexual exploitation. This form of exploitation is still dominant in the EU, even though other forms are on the rise, such as exploitation for forced labour and for criminal activities. The pandemic has brought new challenges for victims, as well as amplifying the vulnerabilities of those most at risk.

European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

'At a glance' note by Sofija Voronova, November 2021

Child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are among the worst forms of violence against children, and constitute serious crimes that know no borders. The continuous increase in child sexual exploitation and abuse, not least due to the Covid-19 pandemic, underscores the importance of harmonised national legislation and international cooperation to prevent these offences, protect the victims and prosecute the perpetrators. The European Day contributes to raising awareness on the need for prevention and protection of children.

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