

Violence against women in the EU

State of play

SUMMARY

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based discrimination. Rooted in inequalities between men and women, it takes many forms. Estimates about the scale of the problem are alarming. Such violence has a major impact on victims and imposes a significant cost burden on society.

The instruments put in place by the United Nations and Council of Europe, including the latter's 'Istanbul Convention', to which the EU plans to accede, are benchmarks in efforts to combat violence against women.

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's efforts have focused on strengthening EU policy in the area. Parliament has repeatedly called for a European Union strategy to counter violence against women, including a legally binding instrument.

Stakeholders have expressed a range of concerns, such as the impact of the economic crisis and the backlash against gender equality on funding for prevention and support for victims, and have highlighted the need for a comprehensive EU political framework on eliminating violence against women. They have also launched new initiatives of their own.

This is a further update of an [earlier briefing](#) by Anna Dimitrova-Stull, of February 2014. The [most recent previous edition](#) was from September 2019.



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Glossary

Violence against women: 'all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'.

Gender-based violence against women: 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'.

Domestic violence: 'all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim'.

Source: [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), Council of Europe, 2011.

The problem

Violence against women violates human rights and is a form of gender-based discrimination. It constitutes a major obstacle to gender equality. Despite increased attention, the problem still affects all levels of society and all Member States.

Causes and forms

Violence against women is rooted in social inequalities between men and women. Traditional and religious values are sometimes invoked to justify it. Factors including a lack of economic independence increase women's vulnerability.¹

Violence takes many forms, including psychological violence, harassment, physical and sexual violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, forced abortion and sterilisation, sexual harassment, and 'honour' crimes. Some specific groups, such as migrant or disabled women, or women living in institutions, are more likely to experience violence.²

Scale of the problem not fully known

The most comprehensive [survey](#) on violence against women at EU level – based on interviews with 42 000 women in all 28 EU Member States on their experiences of physical and sexual violence, sexual harassment and stalking over the past year and since the age of 15 – was published by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2014. The results paint a stark picture of the nature and extent of violence against women across the EU. The survey data show that one woman in three has experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. One in 10 women has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 15, and one in 20 has been raped. Just over one in five women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from either a current or previous partner, whilst 43 % of women have experienced some form of psychologically abusive and/or controlling behaviour when in a relationship.

At the most extreme end of the spectrum, Eurostat [data](#) on the number of reported incidents of intentional homicide, rape and sexual assault show that in many Member States³ over half of all female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner, relative or family member. According to a scientific study, there are approximately 3 500 domestic violence-related deaths in the EU every year. In other words, there are more than nine victims, as many as seven of them women, every day.⁴

However, reliable and comparable data on violence against women are still [lacking](#) at national and European level. Although the data obtained through the FRA survey give a first comparative overview of women's experiences of violence in the EU, due to the limitations of the sample, it cannot give an insight into the experiences of women who have experienced rarer forms of violence, and forms that specific groups in the population may fall victim to, such as [FGM](#)⁵ and ['honour' crimes](#). These can only be captured by highly developed crime survey research, which to date exists

in only a few Member States, such as the United Kingdom and Italy.⁶ The lack of a common definition of violence against women at European level, and differences in the way data are collected at national level, are another obstacle to collecting comparable data.⁷

Crucially, one of the key FRA survey findings, for all types of violence, is that the majority of women do not report their experiences to the authorities. Victims had reported their most serious incidents of partner violence to the police in only 14 % of cases, and the most serious incidents of non-partner violence in only 13 % of cases. Together with fear and shame, or lack of confidence in the authorities, [public attitudes](#) towards violence against women,

including [victim-blaming](#), may deter women from reporting. A 2016 [Eurostat](#) survey showed that more than one in five respondents (22 %) believe that women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape, and 27 % think that there are situations where sexual intercourse without consent is justified. This means that the full scale of violence against women is not reflected in official data.

Consequences

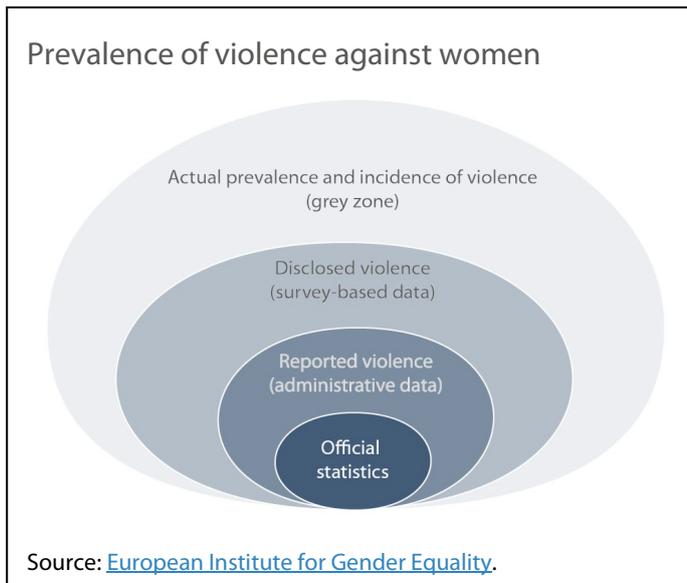
Violence has serious immediate and long-term consequences for the physical and mental health of the women who are victims, and can have consequences for children who witness it. The EU FRA survey revealed that the victims' emotional responses to victimisation had been fear, anger and shame. They suffered from a loss of self-confidence and were left feeling vulnerable and anxious. About half of the victims suffered injuries, some of them multiple. For example, 17 % of victims of sexual violence by a partner suffered two to three different types of physical injuries as a result of the most serious incident.

Besides the human suffering it causes and its impact on health, violence against women imposes a significant economic burden on society as a whole, in the form of healthcare costs, policing and legal costs, lost productivity and social costs. According to a scientific report, domestic violence alone costs the EU a total of €16 billion a year. The cost of preventing this violence in Europe amounts to tens of millions of euros every year.⁸ According to an EPRS study, the total annual cost of violence against women in the EU amounted to more than €228 billion in 2011.⁹

Issues in the spotlight

In October 2017, [revelations](#) about harassment by a prominent film industry executive, and the resulting [global sharing](#) on social media of women's personal experiences, raised public awareness of the scale and omnipresence of sexual harassment.

The FRA survey, which asked women about their experiences of 11 specific unwanted and offensive behaviours, had already shown that in Europe, every second woman (55 %) has experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15.¹⁰ In the workplace,¹¹ the findings show that 75 % of women in qualified professions or senior management jobs and 61 % of women employed in the service sector have been sexually harassed, whilst 32 % of all victims in the EU said the perpetrator was a boss, colleague or customer. Young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, including in [education](#), and to [cyber-harassment](#). One of the negative impacts is a [chilling effect](#) on young women engaging in debates and being politically active online.



Women who have a public role, including journalists and politicians, are particularly targeted by online and offline harassment. In 2018, a [survey](#) by the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union concluded that sexism, harassment and violence against women MPs and staff are widespread in parliaments across Europe.¹² Members of parliament (MPs) under the age of 40 were more likely to have experienced abuse in the media and on social networks, as well as sexual harassment, whilst female MPs taking a stance on gender equality and gender-based violence were also a particular target. Female parliamentary staff were more vulnerable to abuse than MPs. However, only 23.5 % of MPs and 6 % of female members of parliamentary staff who had been sexually harassed had reported the incident. The study points out that although some parliaments have complaints procedures in place, and some have improved them or launched internal investigations following the #MeToo movement, as yet the majority of parliaments have no mechanisms for women to speak out, nor effective sanctions in place.¹³ When compared with the Council of Europe [recommendations](#) for action towards harassment-free parliaments, the gap between the current situation across parliaments in Europe and the measures proposed by the Council of Europe seems wide. Parliaments need to have a zero-tolerance environment for sexist behaviour, sexual harassment and violence; appropriate complaints and investigations mechanisms, which are known and readily available to the potential victims; appropriate disciplinary sanctions for the perpetrators; training programmes; data collection and surveys.

In 2019, EPRS sent a questionnaire to the parliaments of countries belonging to the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) network and received replies from 20 EU Member States. Of these 20 countries, only nine have a procedure for dealing with cases of sexual harassment. Even fewer (seven) have training available on sexual harassment and, where training is available, it is mostly not mandatory, especially for members of parliament. For its part, the European Parliament has introduced a system for preventing and tackling sexual harassment as part of its broader anti-harassment procedure, including a [code of behaviour](#) for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), optional training for MEPs and staff, and separate complaints bodies, one for cases involving MEPs and the other for cases involving harassment between members of staff. The procedure for cases involving MEPs was updated in 2018. However, although the European Parliament has a comparatively more developed system for tackling sexual harassment than the majority of the national parliaments of EU Member States, there have been critiques and recommendations for improvement from [Parliament](#), the [European Ombudsman](#), and the [#MeTooEP](#) movement, calling for instance for independent oversight, mandatory training and changes to the composition of the complaints bodies.

Source: research towards a study (publication pending) on sexual harassment in parliaments in Europe

This raises the wider issue of how far greater awareness of sexual harassment is leading to concrete and lasting change. A 2019 [study](#) supported financially by the European Parliament reports that the increased public focus has led to more individuals filing harassment complaints in some countries. A 2018 European Parliament [study](#) on bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace, public spaces and political life found that the #MeToo campaign has gone beyond evidencing the magnitude and nature of the phenomenon and has ignited debate about the underlying causes and possible responses. Looking at the reaction in [nine](#) EU countries (Sweden, Finland, UK, Spain, Italy, Poland, France, Denmark and Greece), it concludes that it has led to the standards of what is considered acceptable being redrawn. The movement has also been credited with providing the momentum to push through new legislation in [France](#) outlawing street harassment ('[wolf-whistling](#)') and in [Sweden](#), clarifying what qualifies as consent and removing the requirement of evidence of force and/or resistance to establish rape. The UK government has announced [plans for legislation](#) that would stop employers from using confidentiality clauses to prevent victims of harassment from speaking out. However, both the studies and the EU's [Fundamental Rights Agency](#) caution that much remains to be done to arrive at a clear picture of sexual harassment across the EU, including capturing the voices of groups such as women with disabilities, Roma women and poor women, who have not been heard, to change attitudes, to bring about institutional change and to ensure that sexual harassment is addressed holistically, in connection with wider gender

inequalities, particularly in view of the current [backlash](#) against gender equality both globally and within the EU itself.

International context

United Nations

The [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (1979)¹⁴ and the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) (1993) are benchmark documents in the field. Although not binding, the declaration is the first international text that deals exclusively with violence against women.

Violence against women is one of the critical areas of concern identified in the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), which was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The platform lists the measures that states, and international and non-governmental organisations, should take to prevent and tackle this form of violence. The [Commission on the Status of Women](#) monitors and reviews progress with the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At its [60th session](#) in New York in March 2016, the commission strongly condemned all forms of violence against women and girls, and called for a number of [measures](#), including improvements to legislation and better implementation.

In 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women [assessed](#) the adequacy of the current international legal framework, concluding that the main challenge in addressing violence against women is the failure to fully incorporate and apply international norms. [General Recommendation No 35](#) on gender-based violence against women, adopted in July 2017, is intended to accelerate their implementation. This and the previous [General Recommendation No 19](#), which it updates, are landmark documents because they frame violence against women as a human rights issue and form of gender-based discrimination (No 19) and recognise the prohibition of gender-based violence as a norm, expanding the definition of violence to include violations of sexual and reproductive health rights (No 35). The Special Rapporteur's [2018 report](#) analysed online violence against women from a human rights perspective, whilst the [2019 report](#) looks at the issue of obstetric violence.

The UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) include a gender-equality goal, which incorporates targets aimed at ending violence and discrimination against women and girls, including a target on eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

International Labour Organization

In June 2019, the International Labour Organization adopted the [Violence and Harassment Convention](#), which applies to violence and harassment in the world of work, and obliges the signatory states to adopt an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in this context.

Council of Europe

In 2002, the Committee of Ministers adopted a [Recommendation on the protection of women against violence](#) in which it called on the member states to draw up action plans to prevent violence and protect victims.

The [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) ('[Istanbul Convention](#)') was opened for signature in May 2011 and entered into force in August 2014. Europe's first legally binding convention in the field, it creates a comprehensive framework for preventing violence, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators. As of November 2019, all EU Member States have [signed](#) the convention, and 21 (AT, BE, DE, CY, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI) have ratified it.

What is the EU doing?

The [Treaty on European Union](#) (TEU) affirms the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination (Article 2). The [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) guarantees people's right to dignity (Title I) and equality (Title III). It also includes specific provisions on people's right to physical and mental integrity, and bans any form of discrimination on the grounds of sex. Although it has no legal force, Declaration 19 on Article 8 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU) affirms the political commitment of Member States to combat all forms of domestic violence.

Political commitments

Combating gender-based violence is one of the [priorities](#) in the EU's [Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality](#) for 2016-2019.

One of the key areas for action is improving the availability, quality and reliability of data on gender-based violence through cooperation with Eurostat, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Fundamental Rights Agency. EIGE is engaged in a [project](#) to improve the collection and harmonisation of the data on violence against women collected by national police forces, justice systems, and health and social services across the EU. From 2017, it has been able to [include](#) violence against women within its [gender equality index](#), which measures progress across the EU.

Another priority is [EU accession](#) to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which could help to provide more equal protection for women across Europe against all forms of violence. In October 2015, the Commission issued a [roadmap](#) for EU accession, followed in March 2016 by two proposals for Council decisions, one on the [signature](#) and the other on the [conclusion](#) (ratification) of the Convention on behalf of the EU. The Convention was [signed](#) by the EU on 13 June 2017. The next step is the EU's formal accession to the Convention, for which the European Parliament will have to give consent.

On 25 November 2016, the European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourová, [launched](#) a year of focused action to combat violence against women by, inter alia, publishing a Eurobarometer on [gender-based violence](#), a study on [gender-based violence in sport](#) and a [joint statement](#) of six Commissioners summarising European Commission activities in the area. She also opened two calls for proposals worth [€6 million](#) for civil society organisations to submit proposals for projects that combat violence against women or support its victims. In addition, [€4 million](#) was made available to Member States to develop practical and targeted national awareness-raising and education activities aimed at combating violence against women. The [website](#) dedicated to the campaign contains stories of people and projects fighting violence against women, relevant events and a list of helplines in various European countries. International, national and civil society representatives [assessed](#) the outcome of the campaign and explored further steps at a conference in December 2018.

In the field of EU external action, the [EU guidelines on violence against women](#) adopted in 2008 affirm the EU's commitment to promote and protect the rights of women in third countries. The Union addresses the problem of violence against women in its specific dialogues on human rights and supports projects to combat violence against women by means of the [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#). In 2015, the European Commission and EEAS adopted a [gender action plan](#) for external relations for 2016-2020, which prioritises violence against women and girls. In 2017, the European Union and the United Nations launched the [Spotlight Initiative](#), with an initial investment of around €500 million, to support measures to eliminate violence against women and girls, in line with the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Outlook for the incoming Commission

President-elect of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, has stressed in her [political guidelines](#) that further action to combat violence against women will be one of her Commission's

major priorities. At her [hearing](#) and in her [written answers](#), Helena Dalli, the Commissioner-designate responsible for the equality portfolio has said that a key focus will be securing EU accession to the Istanbul Convention, so as to provide a common European framework for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. She also said that if progress stalls, other steps, such as strengthening existing EU legislation and adding violence against women to the list of crimes defined in the Treaties, would be considered to strengthen support for victims. Tackling violence against women and gender-based violence was announced as one of the key elements to be considered in a new EU Strategy on Gender Equality.

Legislative measures

The EU does not currently have a specific binding instrument designed to protect women from violence.¹⁵ However, legal instruments have been established in different areas in which women can be victims of violence, and in those areas where there is violence that has a cross-border element, because this is where the EU has the strongest competence for crime-related action. This means that unfortunately, the EU 'has not addressed comprehensively the wider manifestation of violence as women experience it'.¹⁶

These instruments concern, among other things, equal treatment and non-discrimination, which includes a ban on sexual harassment ([Directive 2006/54/EC](#), a recast of [Directive 2002/73/EC](#), concerning equal treatment as regards access to employment and working conditions, [Directive 2010/41/EU](#) on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity, and [Directive 2004/113/EC](#) on equal treatment in the access to and supply of goods and services¹⁷); trafficking in human beings ([Directive 2011/36/EU](#) on combating trafficking and [Directive 2004/81/EC](#) on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking); and protecting victims by strengthening the rights of victims whatever their nationality and wherever in the EU the crime takes place, including if the victims travel or move within the EU ([Directive 2012/29/EU](#) on the rights and protection of victims of crime, [Directive 2011/99/EU](#) on the European protection order in criminal matters, and [Regulation \(EU\) No 606/2013](#) on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters¹⁸).

Member States

Although there are similarities between national policies to combat violence against women, the Member States have adopted different approaches to the problem.

As far as legislation is concerned, domestic physical violence and sexual violence are the main types of violence punishable by law. Domestic psychological violence, forced marriage, sexual harassment and FGM are punishable in different ways depending on the country.¹⁹ In some cases, victims must submit a formal complaint before legal proceedings can begin.²⁰ The low prosecution and conviction rates for crimes of domestic violence and rape appear to be a problem common to a number of Member States. In order to address this problem, Spain and the United Kingdom have established [specialised courts](#) to deal with cases of violence against women.

Besides legislative provisions, in recent years the Member States have adopted policy strategies to combat violence against women, either in the form of national action plans (NAP) on all kinds of violence, or by means of action plans targeting specific forms of violence, or have incorporated measures into other action plans aimed for example at promoting gender equality and social inclusion.²¹ NGO [data](#) from 2017 show that 24 EU Member States had NAPs on combating gender based violence in place in 2016 or after.

Domestic violence and people trafficking are the most common areas addressed by the NAPs, although there is an increase in concern for sexual violence, especially sexual harassment and FGM. More and more emphasis is being placed in these plans on prevention measures (e.g. awareness campaigns, training for professionals working with victims, treatment programmes for perpetrators) and on support (shelters for women victims, telephone helplines). Meanwhile, reinsertion

programmes focused on the needs of women who have been victims of violence (access to affordable housing, employment, training and income support) are less common.²²

European Parliament

The European Parliament first sounded the alarm about the problem of violence against women in a [resolution](#) of 11 June 1986. Since then, it has played a particularly important role in the field, including through the work of its [Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#) (FEMM). In 2015, the Committee launched a [Working Group on Violence against Women](#) to create a forum for exchange of views and formulation of strategy on the issue.

During the eighth parliamentary term, Parliament asked the Commission to monitor the implementation of existing EU gender equality legislation more effectively and carried out its own assessments of the [Victims' Rights Directive](#), and the [European Protection Order](#) (EPO). These [found](#) that the directive has not been fully implemented across the EU, especially when it comes to access to support services, and that differences between judicial systems (for example, stalking is not a criminal offence in all EU countries) are obstructing the use of EPOs.

Since [2009](#), Parliament has also been urging the Commission to draw up a comprehensive proposal for a directive on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women to ensure that all women in the EU have the same level of protection from male violence. In its [resolution](#) of 25 February 2014, it also called on the Council to [add violence against women](#) to the areas of particularly serious crime listed in Article 83(1) [TFEU](#), and asked the Commission to launch the procedure for EU accession to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, as a complement to a future EU directive. It has continued to push for progress on these recommendations.²³

With respect to the Istanbul Convention, before receiving a formal request for its consent, Parliament has begun [considering](#) the matter of EU accession. In its [interim resolution](#) of 12 September 2017, it welcomed the signing of the Convention by the EU and urged the Council to speed up EU ratification. However, it also regretted that EU accession has been restricted to two areas (judicial cooperation in criminal matters and asylum and *non-refoulement*). In Parliament's view, this raises legal uncertainties about the scope of the EU's accession and concerns about its implementation. In its [resolution](#) of 4 April 2019, Parliament decided to ask the European Court of Justice for an [opinion](#) to resolve the legal uncertainty regarding the compatibility of the accession proposals and procedure with the Treaties, with a specific focus on the legal basis for the decisions and the split into two decisions. Parliament has also asked the Commission to be proactive in dispelling [misconceptions](#) about the Convention, in particular around the use of the terms 'gender' and 'gender-based violence', which are blocking some EU Member States from ratifying it. A [European Added Value Assessment](#) conducted for Parliament found that an EU directive would have far greater impact on national legal orders than EU accession to the Istanbul Convention, but taken together, the two instruments would 'guarantee a true European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice where violence against women becomes not only rhetorically but also legally outlawed'.

Beyond legislation, Parliament has [repeatedly called](#) for the establishment of a coherent system for collecting statistics on gender-based violence in Member States, the establishment of a European Observatory on Violence against Women and Girls, and the adoption of an EU-wide strategy and action plan to combat violence against women. Parliament has also put the spotlight on [emerging forms of gender-based violence](#) such as cyberstalking and online harassment and drawn attention to the need to combat specific forms of violence including [sexual harassment](#), [trafficking](#), [forced prostitution of women](#), and FGM,²⁴ and to the vulnerability of and issues facing particular groups such as [undocumented women migrants](#), [women asylum-seekers and refugees](#), [women and girls with disabilities](#) and [LBTI women and Roma women](#). In 2019, it flagged that a [backlash against women's rights and gender equality](#) is eroding the machinery and resources for combating violence against women at national level, and called for renewed commitment at national and EU level.

Outlook for Parliament's ninth legislative term

For the [hearing](#) of Commissioner-delegate Helena Dalli in October 2019, Parliament's Committees on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) [highlighted](#) EU accession to the Istanbul Convention, EU legislation on gender-based violence and proposals to tackle cyber violence as key issues. At its [hearing on violence against women in the Member States and best practices](#) in November 2019, the FEMM Committee announced that future work would include a legislative initiative report on combating violence against women and cyber-violence, an assessment of the implementation of the trafficking directive and a report on the impact of intimate partner violence and custody rights on women and children.

Stakeholders' views

In its 2012 [opinion on 'Eradicating domestic violence against women'](#), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) recommended national and European level measures to tackle domestic violence, and expressed concern that social policies in many Member States were being undermined by the economic crisis, leading to shelters for women victims of violence being shut down and prevention projects discontinued. The EESC also supported EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and the adoption of a European Directive to ensure its implementation. More recently, in 2019, the EESC has expressed particular [concern](#) over the growing trend of regression in women's rights, which also includes attacks on measures to tackle violence against women.

The [European Women's Lobby](#) (EWL) [has been calling](#) for a comprehensive EU strategy to end all forms of violence against women in Europe and for the EU to ratify the Istanbul Convention and adopt EU legislation to [end prostitution](#) and [sex trafficking](#) by criminalising the purchase of sex, by 2020. It is now 20 years since the EWL passed [a motion](#) affirming that 'prostitution and trafficking in women constitutes a fundamental violation of women's human rights'. More recently, in September 2019, at a [conference](#) organised by the Finnish presidency of the European Council, EWL reiterated its call for a comprehensive EU-wide action plan to prevent and combat violence against women, including a directive covering all forms of violence including sexual exploitation. On this occasion, EWL also reiterated that the accession to the Istanbul Convention must remain a priority. Another recent focus of EWL interest and action has been combating online violence against [politically engaged women](#), as well as adoption of the international standards to end violence against women in the [world of work](#). The EWL's [Observatory](#) on violence against women, with members from 32 European countries and seven international and European women's organisations, identifies issues and continuously monitors progress towards eliminating violence against women.

The [Women against Violence Europe](#) (WAVE) network maps support services such as helplines, women's centres and shelters available to women survivors in Europe. Its most recent [report](#), issued in April 2018, finds that 71 % of EU countries have at least one helpline for survivors (compared to 68 % in [2014](#)), but fewer meet the Istanbul Convention standards of being free and available round the clock, and only five Member States meet the minimum standards for bed spaces in women's shelters. WAVE has also expressed its view on violence targeting specific groups of women. For example, in February 2018, it published a position paper on intersectionality and the inclusive approach to dealing with gender-based violence and in October 2018, issued recommendations improving support and protection for older women. In September 2018 it also issued a handbook which takes account of the [strengths and skills](#) of women survivors of violence when creating support services. Another important area of action of the WAVE network has been its work on emphasising the importance of [women's specialist support services](#) and the work on protecting these services from gender neutral policy and practice through its [gender neutrality working group](#).

The [European Network of Migrant Women](#) (ENOMW) has [drawn attention](#) to an increase in the number of women victims of trafficking arriving in the European Union, and called for comprehensive support and rehabilitation programmes, together with better training for reception centre staff and measures to tackle demand.

In June 2018, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the signature of the Istanbul Convention by the EU, the European Coalition to End Violence against Women and Girls, a strategic alliance of more than 25 cross-European human rights and social justice civil society organisations, expressed [regret](#) at insufficient progress in the ratification progress.

FURTHER READING

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European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, [Violence against women and economic independence](#), 2017.

European Commission, [Attitudes towards violence against women in the EU](#), report prepared for the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2015.

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[Cyberviolence and hate speech online against women](#), European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2018.

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[Violence against women and the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention](#), European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2017.

[The issue of violence against women](#), European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2016.

[Sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality](#), European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2014.

ENDNOTES

¹ Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence: background note, Conference on 'Equality between women and men', European Commission, DG Justice, September 2011, p. 6; [The issue of violence against women in the EU](#), Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, March 2010, p. 11; A. Aizer, [The Gender Wage Gap and Domestic Violence](#), *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (September 2010), pp. 1847-1859.

² [Violence against women and the role of gender equality, social inclusion and health strategies: synthesis report](#), European Commission, 2010, pp. 81-85.

³ For this category, though, the data are not available for all Member States. See: Towards a Uniform Approach to Data Collection: EIGE's Femicide Definition, [Femicide Volume XI](#), ACUNS, 2018: 78-82. The [European Observatory on Femicide](#), published [findings on femicide in Europe](#) in 2018.

⁴ Figures for 2006. See: Estimated mortality related to domestic violence in Europe, summary of scientific report, Psytel, June 2010, p. 5. The scientific report and summary are available at: <http://www.psytel.eu/en/>.

⁵ EIGE is working on a methodology for assessing the number of girls at risk of FGM in the EU, and published its [third report](#) in November 2018, covering Belgium, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus and Malta.

⁶ J. Goodey, [Violence against women: placing evidence from a European Union-wide survey in a policy context](#), *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2017, Vol. 32(12): 1760-1791.

⁷ For an overview of national definitions, see: [Violence against women and the role of gender equality, social inclusion and health strategies: synthesis report](#), p. 37.

⁸ Figures for 2006. See: *Estimated cost of domestic violence in Europe, summary of scientific report*, Psytel, June 2009. The report shows that increasing the budget for prevention policies by €1 would generate overall savings of €87, including €30 in direct costs, pp. 3-4. The report and summary are available at: <http://www.psytel.eu/en/>. The issue of the cost of violence is also addressed in [Combating violence against women: stocktaking study on the measures and actions taken in Council of Europe member States](#), Council of Europe, 2006, pp. 8-12.

⁹ M. Nogaj, [Combating violence against women: European Added Value Assessment](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2013, p. 24.

- ¹⁰ The key findings are analysed in R. Latcheva, [Sexual Harassment in the European Union: A Pervasive but Still Hidden form of Gender-Based Violence](#), *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2017, Vol. 32(12): 1821-1852.
- ¹¹ See also the results of the [survey on sexual harassment in the workplace](#) conducted by Ifop for the Fondation Jean Jaurès and FEPS using a self-administered online questionnaire from 11 to 15 April 2019 among a sample of 5 026 women aged 18 years old and over and resident of Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- ¹² The joint survey conducted by the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union was based on responses from 123 women from 45 European countries, including 26 EU Member States. There were no respondents from Malta or Slovakia.
- ¹³ The only parliaments which provided information on whether or not they had internal policies against sexism, harassment and gender-based violence were: Austria (Lower House), Belgium (Senate), Finland, France, Georgia, Germany (Lower House), Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain (Senate), Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the European Parliament.
- ¹⁴ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in [General Recommendation No 19 \(1992\)](#), contributed to having violence against women recognised as a form of discrimination within the Convention's meaning.
- ¹⁵ Under the Daphne Programme the Commission financed a feasibility [study](#) to assess the possibilities and needs to standardise national legislation on violence against women, violence against children and sexual-orientation violence. It concluded that it would be difficult to find a suitable legal basis in EU law for a number of the proposed minimum standards, and that the EU should use the open method of coordination (OMC) to encourage greater convergence between Member States. See: pp. 188-190.
- ¹⁶ See J. Goodey, p. 1762 and [The Legal Protection of Women From Violence Normative Gaps in International Law](#), Rashida Manjoo, Jackie Jones, eds., Routledge, 2019: Chapter 5.
- ¹⁷ These directives prohibit both harassment on grounds of gender and sexual harassment, and consider them to be a form of gender-based discrimination.
- ¹⁸ The regulation, which has applied from 11 January 2015, is of importance for women [victims of domestic violence](#) who wish to make use of their right to free movement within the EU.
- ¹⁹ [Protecting women against violence: analytical study of the results of the third round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec \(2002\) 5 on the protection of women against violence](#), Council of Europe, 2010. The following [Analytical study of the results of the 4th round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec\(2002\)5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe member states](#), issued in 2014, showed continued disparity at national level. See also the more recent [EU and country factsheets on combating violence against women](#) published by EIGE.
- ²⁰ [Protecting women against violence: analytical study of the results of the third round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation Rec \(2002\) 5 on the protection of women against violence](#), Council of Europe, 2010, pp. 14-15.
- ²¹ [Violence against women - victim support: review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States](#), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2012, pp. 21-22; [Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019](#), pp. 40-46.
- ²² See the Council of Europe's studies on the monitoring of Recommendation (2002) 5, cited above.
- ²³ For example in its resolutions of [9 June 2015](#), [24 November 2016](#), [14 March 2017](#), [12 September 2017](#) and [11 September 2018](#).
- ²⁴ In its resolutions of [2009](#), [2012](#), and [2014](#), Parliament stated that hundreds of thousands of women in Europe are affected by FGM and called on the Commission and the Member States to take measures to eliminate the practice. The Commission organised a [public consultation](#) on the topic in May 2013. This consultation, as well as a [report](#) of the European Institute for Gender Equality, were used by the Commission in drawing up a series of actions, see: [Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation](#), COM(2013) 833 final of 25 November 2013.

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