

PRESS RELEASE

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Issuing Organisations: the European Women's Lobby and its European Policy Action Centre on Violence Against Women

Women's NGOs demand European action to end male violence against women

On the International Day on the eradication of violence against women, women's NGOs call for a strong Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on combating male violence against women. On 1-3 December, delegates from the 47 CoE countries will meet in Strasbourg to discuss the first draft of a new CoE convention aiming at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) warmly welcomes this text, that proves a strong political will to address and eradicate male violence against women at European level, and will closely monitor the development of the Convention.

In Europe, 45% of all women have been subjected to and suffered from different forms of men's violence. One in 5 women has been subjected to domestic violence, in her own home. More than one tenth of all women have suffered sexual violence as defined in its most narrow sense. When combined with discrimination based on race, age, sexual orientation, or religion (amongst others), figures get even higher.

EWL President Brigitte Triems declares: "The EWL welcomes the Council of Europe's decision to focus on male violence against women, therefore bringing into light the social dimension of violent acts perpetrated by men against women and supported by social norms and stereotypes." She adds: "We think it is crucial that the convention ensures that violence against women is defined from a gender analysis of the structural inequalities women face in our societies and which allow for the tolerance of male violence against women and men's control over women's bodies and sexuality."

Therefore, the EWL and its 2500 member associations call on this CoE meeting to be the momentum for a common commitment to support and reinforce the draft convention. "The convention should include all forms of male violence against women, as all forms of men's violence against women violate women's human rights and pose an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality", declares Brigitte Triems. "The EWL, as the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the EU, will closely follow and monitor the activities of the CoE and work with its members and other European and international NGOs to ensure that the current draft convention retains its high standards and indeed is strengthened so as to become an essential legally-binding international instrument on the defense and the promotion of women's human rights."

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Note to editors:

The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2500 associations.

The **EWL European Observatory on violence against women** brings together experts from 30 European countries with expertise knowledge of violence against women. The work of the EWL European Observatory is facilitated and promoted by the European Policy Action Centre on Violence Against Women (EPACVAW), the operational branch of the European Women's Lobby dedicated to violence against women.

Facts and figures on male violence against women:

Violence is a gendered problem

- 'In the UK, two women die each week at the hands of a partner or an ex-partner. 80,000 women experience rape or attempted rape' (*Trevor Phillips, 2007*).
- 'Over 99 percent of rape is perpetrated by men' (*Katz, 2008*).

The home: the most dangerous place

- Most cases of violence against women happen in their homes, by their partners. In Ireland, 1 in 5 women is raped in marriage (*Women Helpline Ireland, 2008*).
- In France, one woman is killed every three days by her partner or ex-partner (*Mission Égalité des Femmes et des Hommes, 2009*).

Sexual harassment in the work place

- Women experience sexual harassment throughout their lives. Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in the European Union reported some form of sexual harassment in the workplace (*United Nations Factsheet, 2006*).

The costs of violence

- The Council of Europe estimates that the total annual cost of violence against women in Council of Europe member states could be as high as 34 billion euros, amounting to 555 euros per capita per annum (*T. Davis, 2006*).

Violence against migrant women

- Migrant women are at particular risk of domestic violence and because they are confronted with a language barrier, family pressure and often isolation, they face additional difficulties in escaping violence (*Council of Europe Report, 2009*).

Rape

- In France, 48,000 rapes occur each year, which means that one woman is raped every 11 minutes (*Le Monde, 2009*).
- Reporting rates of rapes per 100,000 vary considerably across Europe, from a low of less than 3 reports per 100,000 in Greece to just over 40 per 100,000 in Sweden (*CWASU, 2009*).

Prostitution and Trafficking

- The UN recently released a study which estimated that about 250,000 people are trafficked in Europe each year. The same study found that 79% of trafficking in human beings is for sexual exploitation and more than 80% of these victims are female (*UNODC, 2009*).
- More than half of UK women in prostitution have been raped and/or seriously sexually assaulted at the hands of pimps and punters (*UK Home Office 2004*).

Violence against Women in Conflict

- During the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s it is estimated that upward of 20,000 Bosniak, Croat and Serb women were raped, often gang raped, and sometimes sexually enslaved and forcibly impregnated in so-called 'rape camps', by armies and paramilitary groups (*Council of Europe, 2009*).

Female Genital Mutilation

- Every year up to 500,000 girls and women living in the European Union are affected or threatened by female genital mutilation (*AWEPA, 2009*).