



Resolution on Combating Gender-based violence

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Equality and/or non-discrimination on the basis of gender is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 14 - Prohibition of Discrimination) and included in the common values on which the European Union (Treaty of European Union - Art. 2) is founded. However, it is far from being a reality in Europe. One of the most brutal manifestations of this lack of equality is gender-based violence, which is rooted in historically unequal patriarchal relations and societal structures (economic, political, legal etc.), that bring about structural gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity or gender expression, or which affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. Gender-based violence can take many forms: domestic and partner violence, rape and incest, human trafficking, female genital mutilations, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, but also unequal access to employment, economic violence, psychological violence and online violence. For many women and girls, gender-based violence is aggravated by legal, social and economic barriers to access to confidential sexual and reproductive health information and services. Gender-based violence affects all the spheres of society, being present at the institutional level, in public, on the street, in domestic settings and in the media. It is one of the most widespread forms of human rights abuse that continues to play a powerful role in shaping the lives of women, girls and gender minorities.

Every woman can be a victim of gender-based violence, regardless of their social status or background. 33% of women in the EU have endured physical and/or sexual violence since age 15¹, 43% have suffered psychological violence by a current or former partner², 55% have experienced sexual harassment³, and in 2016 intimate partners or family members intentionally killed more than one woman every day (i.e. committing femicide)⁴. Gender-based violence is also one of the most underreported crimes, because of impunity, stigma, silence and shame around it. As an illustration, in 2012 more than 85% of women in the EU didn't report to the police that they experienced physical and/or sexual violence⁵. This shows that there is still a long way to go before reaching a society free from gender-based violence and all countries in Europe have room for improvement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2020, there was a 60% increase in emergency calls made by women

¹ Source: EIGE's calculation, FRA, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2012

² Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2012

³ Source: Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2012

⁴ Eurostat (crim_hom_vrel) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) homicide statistics.

Note: Data related to the number of women victims of intentional homicide by family and relatives was not available for Italy, Malta, Slovakia, England and Wales. The data on Austria is the sum of the intentional homicides of women committed by an intimate partner and family member or relatives. No data available for Northern Ireland

⁵ Source: EIGE's calculation, FRA, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2014

addressing domestic violence by their intimate partner compared to the same time period the previous year according to WHO⁶. Additionally, the UN Women states that all types of violence against women and girls rose because of the COVID-19 pandemic and calls this phenomenon 'The Shadow Pandemic'⁷.

Young women and girls face even higher risks of gender-based violence because they face multiple discriminations, for being a woman and young as well as factors, especially if they have a disability, if they are homeless, if they belong to the LGBTQI+ community, to a religious or ethnic minority, or if they are migrants or refugees. As an example, the younger population is disproportionately affected by stalking, cyber harassment and cyberbullying. Gender-based violence affects not only women and girls, but also trans*, non-binary and gender non-conforming persons. These gender minorities face specific challenges and endure distinct forms of violence, therefore their experience should be embedded in any policy response to gender-based violence, without conflating their needs and demands with those of women and girls.

Systematic violence prevention work is an essential part of combating gender-based violence that includes different areas like education and working with men and boys. A crucial element for the prevention of gender-based violence is the provision of comprehensive relationship and sexuality education (RSE). RSE should be accessible to all young people within both formal and non-formal settings and should equip them with the information and life skills to make informed decisions and to realize their sexual and reproductive rights. RSE should also stimulate critical thinking about heteronormativity and traditional gender roles, which place women and gender minorities in a subordinated position and which validate the right of men to exercise control over them. Recognising this, the European Youth Forum condemns any legal framework which restricts access to or stigmatises RSE and has the effect of intimidating and silencing educators and activists, especially youth work which plays a very important role with regard to violence prevention in the non-formal education setting.

In the context of victim protection, which is an essential pillar in the prevention of gender-based violence, strengthening independent and financially stable shelters as well as counselling centres to enable space and protection for victims is crucial for combating gender-based violence. For all the above reasons, governments should include a priority focus on gender equality in their policy agendas, as only through combined efforts can we ensure that the patterns of oppression and

⁶ Source:
<https://unric.org/en/who-warns-of-surge-of-domestic-violence-as-covid-19-cases-decrease-in-europe/>

⁷ Source:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

humiliation are not repeated from generation to generation and that ultimately gender-based violence is eradicated from society. The topic of gender equality and gender-based violence should also be included in specific training for relevant professions like doctors and teachers as well as in the police and justice department, so that acts of violence do not remain unrecognised and are handled with expertise. Gender mainstreaming can be a first step in this process. These demands are in line with the 2nd Youth Goal of Equality of All Genders, and SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and are also aimed at making the 8th Youth Goal that is committed to Quality Education partially effective together with SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

Considering all of the above, the European Youth Forum commits to:

- Raise awareness about and increase the visibility of gender-based violence experienced by young people, and stress the necessity of using the right language to refer to gender-based violence to avoid downplaying of the issue.
- Promote the exchange of good practices, support the work of already existing structures as well as the development of new ones to tackle gender-based violence among Member Organisations of the Youth Forum, with a particular focus on the prevention, detection and reaction to sexual harassment.
- Urge European countries to mainstream gender equality in school administration and curricula and to include comprehensive relationship and sexuality education in all school levels, preferably in a peer-to-peer approach.
- Urge the European Union and national governments to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
- Urge European countries to advocate for embedding the topic of gender-based violence more strongly in the education and training of the police and justice department.
- Urge national legislators to recognise and criminalise femicide.