



*European Policy Action Centre on
Violence Against Women
(EPACVAW) aisbl*



Women's NGOs call on the Council of Europe to move towards a strong instrument on Violence against Women

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the European Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women (EPAC VAW) welcome the start of the Ad Hoc Committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO).

During the first meeting of the Committee (6-8 April), delegations of the 47 Council of Europe countries discussed the scope and content of the new Convention. As stated in the CAHVIO Synopsis of the meeting report¹, the EWL and EPAC VAW support that “*the convention should be a human rights instrument with an independent monitoring mechanism focusing on violence against women, including domestic violence, and that the core of the convention would thus cover a wide range of forms of violence typically experienced by women*”.

The persistence of all forms of violence against women demonstrates society has not been able to protect all citizens. In all European countries, violence against women has devastating long-term effects, not only on women but on their families and society. The home is the most dangerous place for women, many of them live with fear and the numbers of them being killed by their husband/partner or ex-partner are a shocking reality. Rape and sexual assault, exploitation in the sex industry, forced marriages and sexual harassment, are some of the forms of violence against women: they are directed against women **because** they are women and they **affect women disproportionately**.

EWL and EPAC VAW call on the Member states to agree on a comprehensive human rights treaty to combat violence against women. All forms of violence against women violate women's human rights and pose an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality.

The Committee is now taking an important step against violence against women to new levels of policies and impact. It is necessary to place the Convention in the framework of equality between women and men and in the framework of Human rights. Europe has to take this move forward.

*The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is the largest non-governmental women's organisations in the European Union, representing more than 2000 organisations in 30 European Countries. Working with its members at national and European levels, the EWL's main objective is to ensure equality for women and men and gender perspective in all EU policy areas. **EPAC VAW** is a branch of the EWL specifically working on violence against women. EPAC VAW supports and manages the EWL's Observatory on Violence against Women.*

¹ See Synopsis of main decisions :
http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/violence/documents_EN.asp?



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FACTS AND FIGURES

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. There are male victims, yes, but the truth is that this is a war against women because they are women.” (Trevor Phillips, Chair Equality and Human Rights Commission, 26/11/07). "Over 99 percent of rape is perpetrated by men, but it's a women's issue?" (Katz: Violence Against Women Is a Men's Issue, 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 (Statistic, Women Helpline Ireland, 2008). In Spain, 74,6% of women identified as abused are abused by their partner or ex-partner. In 2006, this represented 1.350.000 women.(Marco survey 2006, www.mtas.es/mujer).

Living with fear

75.3% of adult women in Lithuania do not feel safe from the risk of assault by men in every day life (Purvaneckienė: Violence against women: victim survey report, 1999). This fear deprives women of their ability to enjoy fundamental rights and violates their freedom to live their lives as they want.

Sexual harassment in the work place

Women suffer from violence at work and in educational settings. In Finland 22% of women reported having experienced sexual harassment in their job (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2005)). 33% of women employed by the Parliament state that they have experienced sexual harassment in their workplace. In half of the harassment cases, the perpetrator was a member of Parliament (Finnish Parliament, see European Industrial Relations Observatory Online).

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, Secretary General Council of Europe - 6th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men, 2006).

Trafficking and prostitution

In all European countries, up to 90% of women in prostitution are foreigners, many of them are trafficked. In the UK, 80.000+ women are in ‘on-street’ prostitution. The average age of becoming involved in prostitution is being just 12 years (Home Office, Paying the Price, 2004).