



Zero Tolerance on Domestic Violence: Towards a Comprehensive EU-Wide Strategy

“There are many forms of violence that women experience because they are women. These include domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes. It is estimated that in Europe, 20% to 25% of women have suffered physical violence at least once during their lives and there are estimates that up to half a million women living in Europe have been subjected to genital mutilation.”

- European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men
2010-2015, COM (2010) 491 final

The Silken
Berlaymont Hotel
Brussels

3rd March 2011



Centre for
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Studies



“An International Symposium for gathering knowledge, discussing the latest challenges and sharing best practices in tackling domestic violence and violence against women and girls”

"The disparities between different Member States show that there is considerable scope for an EU-level initiative to make an impact in countries where national governments, for whatever reason, have so far struggled to change popular attitudes and perceptions at the same speed as their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. While European society as a whole has matured over the last decade in terms of its rejection of violent behaviour towards women, it is clear that more education is needed, with 20% of people in the EU, for example, only considering sexual violence to be 'fairly serious', rather than the extremely serious crime which it is by law."

- *Special Eurobarometer 344, Domestic Violence against Women Survey, Published September 2010*

"We have for many years worked under different EU policies to combat various forms of violence against women and girls, most notably in the areas of trafficking in human beings, sexual abuse and exploitation of children, criminal justice, children's rights, gender equality, social policies and human rights in our external relations. We have also provided important financial support through the Daphne Programmes to the work by civil society, universities and local authorities in Member States to combat violence and support victims. I am convinced, however, that it is now time for the EU to step up our action and develop a clear and coherent policy response to tackle this huge problem in Europe. To maximise our impact, we will focus on concrete actions in areas where we have clear legal basis to act in the Lisbon Treaty. –That is why in our Gender Strategy the fight against violence is one of the five key priorities. Now we will concentrate on actions that can bring concrete results."

- *Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the Commission, responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, November 2010*

Abstract and Programme

Violence against women is defined by the EU as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or in private."

In the European Union, domestic violence against women remains an alarming phenomenon, and the most consistent and pervasive human rights violation across the region. According to the Council of Europe, one in four women experiences domestic violence at some point in her life, and between 6-10% of women suffer domestic violence in some form in any given year. Despite the progress that the EU has made in terms of raising public awareness and understanding, 78% of respondents in a recent *Eurobarometer* survey recognised that domestic violence remains a common problem.

Until now, the DAPHNE programme has represented the main instrument through which the EU has sought to combat the issue, and despite the progress made, it remains a problem in all member states. Recently, the European Commission Vice President, Jacques Barrot, defined domestic violence as a violation of a fundamental right in Europe – this sent a positive signal towards creating a new strategy and some promising developments are currently under discussion, such as a new European Observatory which would collect and share data on domestic violence and an EU-wide hotline to help victims.

Within the current EU regulatory framework, domestic violence does not exist as an independent issue but is linked to other policy areas such as public health, fundamental rights and gender equality. Because of its complexity, this pervasive issue requires a more cohesive EU-wide strategy to prevent violence and protect women. The creation of minimum standards for the tackling, preventing and punishing of domestic violence in Europe are the subject of a forthcoming EU feasibility study. In addition, other social policy areas such as the mental and physical health of victims and the contributing factors such as alcoholism, substance abuse and poverty should be effectively addressed and managed at EU level.

This timely International Symposium continues the debate on how to work towards an EU-wide strategy on domestic violence. It will provide a platform for the discussion of a better European regulatory framework aimed at strengthening the 3 P's – prevention, protection and prosecution.



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Thursday 3rd March 2011
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09:00 *Registration and Morning Refreshments*

10:00 **Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Ms. Madi Sharma, Group I - Employers - UK, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) (confirmed)

10:10 **Delegate Introductions**

10:20 **Session One:**
EU Measures to Tackle Domestic Violence

- Identification of Best Practices in Key Areas: Legislation, Policies, Programmes and Effective Mechanisms for Combating Domestic Violence
- The Role of the EU as a Regional Body

Speaker:

Ms. Ingrid Bellander Todino, Policy Coordinator – Violence against Women, DG Justice, European Commission (confirmed)

10:45 **First Round of Discussions**

11:05 *Morning Coffee Break*

11:20 **Session Two:**
Evaluating the Different Causes of Domestic Violence in Europe

- Bringing European Comparative Knowledge Together
- Some Lessons Learned from Recent Initiatives
- Towards a Comprehensive EU-Wide Framework on Domestic Violence
- Medium and Long-Term Consequences of Violence against Women

Speakers:

Mrs. Maria Rösslhuber, Director, The Austrian Women's Shelter Network (confirmed)

Mrs. Elizabeth Woodcraft, Barrister and Author, UK (confirmed)

12:10 **Second Round of Discussions**

12:40 *Networking Lunch*

13:40 **Session Three:**
Preventing Domestic Violence in Europe – Towards a Comprehensive EU-Wide Strategy



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- Potential Role of the EU and other International Organisations
- Existing Instruments at Local, National and Regional Levels
- Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Violence
- Multi-Sectoral Response Involving the Health Sector in Preventing DV
- Access to Information for Victims of Domestic Violence – The Role of Existing Informational Sources, Effective Raising Awareness Campaigns and Different Forms of Information

Speakers:

Dr. Dinesh Sethi MSc MD MRCP FFPH, Violence and Injury Prevention, WHO Regional Office for Europe (confirmed)

Senior Representative, The Council of Europe (tbc)

Mrs. Olga Gislén, Section Director, The National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women (NCK), Sweden (confirmed)

Ms. Annika Engström, Project Manager, NCK, Sweden (confirmed)

15:00 **Third Round of Discussions**

15:30 *Afternoon Coffee Break*

15:40 **Session Four:**

Early Intervention to Safeguard Victims of Domestic Violence

- Routes Out for Victims of Domestic Violence
- The Role of the EU and other Relevant Social, Health and Employment Services in Europe
- Targeting Children and Young Women – Changing Attitudes and Perceptions
- Standardisation of National Legislation on Gender Based Violence
- Vital Conditions for Developing Minimum Standards

Speakers:

Mrs. Fadela Novak-Irons, Policy Officer, UNHCR Bureau for Europe (confirmed)

Mr. Freddy Gazan, Advisor, Department of Criminal Services, Ministry of Justice, Belgium (tbc)

16:20 **Fourth Round of Discussions**

16:50 **Chair's Summary and Closing Remarks**

17:00 *Networking Reception and Refreshments*

17:30 **Symposium Close**