



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

PRESS RELEASE

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The lack of EU action on gender-violence is compounding the effect of the crisis on women, says European Women's Lobby ahead of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Almost every other woman in the EU will experience male violence during her lifetime: One in five will fall victim to domestic violence; one in ten will be raped or forced into sexual acts. Violence against women – although rarely discussed or addressed – is the most widespread human rights abuse within the EU, and in times of recession such as these, things only get worse. On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is, once again, calling for urgent action on behalf of the EU to ensure the fundamental rights of its peoples.

Speaking at a European Parliament Hearing on 23 November, Cécile Gréboval, Secretary General of the EWL, pointed out that 'Ending violence against women is not a luxury for times of growth; it is even more crucial in times of crisis as women are hit very hard.'

According to a 2010 study conducted by the EWL and Oxfam International, economic recession creates conditions associated with increased intimate relationship violence, a rise in prostitution and attacks on women in prostitution.ⁱ

'In addition to increased levels of violence, austerity measures affecting support services also leave women victims of violence even more vulnerable than usual', adds Ms. Gréboval, citing research from the UK demonstrating the negative effects of public budget cuts. Such cuts have led to reduced police, legal, health and other essential services for victims.ⁱⁱ In addition, financing for already over-stretched women's associations providing shelter and support for victims is being cut. In Hungary, for example, the number of places in shelters has been halved.

At the EU-level, the European Commission budget proposal post-2014 does not foresee the continuation of the DAPHNE programme that has funded projects addressing violence against women. The plan to merge DAPHNE with other funding programmes puts at grave risk the level and predictability of EU funding for combating violence against women. The EWL is calling on the European Parliament and member states to ensure the sustainability of this small but very successful programme during negotiations on the future EU budget 2014-2020.

As the situation across Europe deteriorates, women's associations are calling on the EU to live up to its commitments and to take stronger measures to combat gender-based violence. The EWL has a very strong and clear message for the European Commission in particular: 'While the European Parliament and Council of Ministers have made calls for a European Strategy and Action Plan on violence against



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women, the European Commission still hasn't made any move in this direction', says Ms. Gréboval. 'It is hard to believe that we are once again spending the International Day on Violence against Women recalling how gender equality is a founding and fundamental value of the EU, not a luxury for times of growth. Things are getting worse. The time to act is now.'

ⁱ European Women's Lobby & Oxfam International, 2010, 'An Invisible Crisis? Women's poverty and social exclusion in the European Union at a time of recession'. Available online at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article182&lang=en> [accessed 15.11.2011].

ⁱⁱ Centre for Human Rights in Practice, University of Warwick & Coventry Women's Voices, 2011, 'Unravelling Equality? A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Public Spending Cuts on Women in Coventry'. Available online at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/chrp/projectss/humanrightsimpactassessments/cwv/report/127948_cwv-chrp_report.pdf [accessed 15.11.2011] & Fawcett Society, 2011, 'A Life Raft for Women's Equality'. Available online at: [http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/A%20Life%20Raft%20for%20Women's%20Equality%20FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/A%20Life%20Raft%20for%20Women's%20Equality%20FINAL(1).pdf) [accessed 15.11.2011].