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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	13244/25
Subject:	Council Conclusions on Violence against women and domestic violence: prevention, early detection and intervention

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on the above subject approved by the EPSCO Council at its meeting held on 17 October 2025.¹

¹ Minor editorial corrections have been introduced into the text.

Council Conclusions on Violence against women and domestic violence: prevention, early detection and intervention

NOTING THAT

1. Gender equality and human rights are at the core of European values. Equality between women and men is a fundamental right and a founding value of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter').
2. Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that "in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women."
3. The Charter declares that "equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas" and that "everyone has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity."
4. Violence against women and domestic violence are rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men, including sexism. They are forms of gender-based violence inflicted primarily on women and girls by men. Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is a societal responsibility, as violence undermines gender equality and women and girls' right to equality in all areas of life and hinders their equal participation in society and the labour market, and can lead to serious health or safety consequences and even fatalities. Crisis situations and conflicts significantly increase the risk of gender-based violence. Societies free of violence against women and domestic violence will not only be healthier and safer but also more secure, prosperous and democratic.

5. Violence against women and domestic violence take many different forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic and technology-facilitated violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-related violence, and femicide. Patterns associated with violence against women and domestic violence also include coercive control.
6. Recital 6 of Directive 2024/1385/EU on combating violence against women and domestic violence recognizes that violence against women and domestic violence can be exacerbated when a person is subject to discrimination based on a combination of sex and any other ground or grounds of discrimination as referred to in Article 21 of the Charter. Moreover, certain victims may face a heightened risk of violence depending on their specific circumstances including those mentioned in Recital 71 of the Directive.
7. Eurostat, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) note in the EU Gender-Based Violence Survey 2024, that although the majority of women who have experienced violence have disclosed it to a person close to them, only 1 in 5 have contacted a healthcare or social service provider and just 1 in 8 have reported the incident to the police. This means that bystanders can have a central role to play by reacting when they become aware of or suspect violence against women or domestic violence, including by engaging or supporting the victim of violence. Anyone can find themselves in the position of a bystander who either knows or suspects that violence is occurring. Awareness-raising and education among the population as a whole is therefore essential in order to ensure that people know how to detect signs of violence, where to find help and how best to react or intervene.
8. Children who are exposed to or witness violence against women and domestic violence within their family or domestic unit, are themselves victims of violence, and are at risk of long-term physical and mental health problems, and their participation in society, including in education, can be hindered as a result. Furthermore, they are at a greater risk of being exposed to violent behaviour in their future relationships or of developing violent behaviour themselves.

9. Gender equality and the rejection of violence against women and domestic violence are inextricably linked. EIGE notes in its Gender Equality Index 2024 that “where gender equality is high, people are less likely to condone violence against women” which “illustrates that progress towards a gender-equal EU is key to eradicating violence against women.”
10. In March 2025, the European Commission expressed its long-term vision for achieving gender equality in its Roadmap for Women's Rights, setting out key principles and policy goals, including with regard to preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls.
11. Women and girls are disproportionately exposed to all forms of gender-based violence, including its most extreme and brutal manifestations such as femicide. Men and boys can also be victims of domestic violence, and can face gender-specific challenges in this regard, as gender stereotypes and harmful social norms can deter them from reaching out to a person close to them, from seeking treatment or help, or from reporting their situation.
12. According to the preamble to Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence “Member States should take measures to prevent the cultivation of harmful gender stereotypes in order to eradicate the idea of the inferiority of women or stereotyped roles of women and men. That could also include measures which aim to ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or honour is not perceived as a justification for, or does not give rise to a more lenient treatment of, offences of violence against women or domestic violence.”

13. Significant progress has been made both at the EU and national level in efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence, including the adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence and the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention. However, this unacceptable phenomenon remains prevalent and underreported. Further action is therefore required, especially measures to improve the prevention and early detection of violence as well as the risk of violence and measures to encourage interventions against it before it escalates.
14. Meanwhile, various strategic frameworks with relevance to gender equality are expiring, including the following Commission Communications: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, and EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2024), as well as the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 and the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025.
15. This set of conclusions builds on previous work and political commitments voiced by the Council of the European Union, the Commission and the European Parliament and relevant stakeholders in this area, including the documents listed in the Annex.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances TO:

16. Pay due regard to the importance of prevention, early detection and intervention when implementing Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. With this in mind, and in order to address the problem of underreporting, it is particularly important to develop and implement effective measures to encourage any person who knows about or suspects, in good faith, that acts of violence against women or domestic violence have occurred, or that acts of violence are to be expected, to report such acts to the competent authorities without fearing negative consequences.

17. Promote training for workers in relevant fields, including those working with minority and hard-to-reach communities or with people in vulnerable situations, as well as awareness-raising and education among the population as a whole, including bystanders, on access to information and advice concerning safe and effective ways of seeking help and providing support or otherwise intervening in cases of violence or a perceived risk of violence.
18. Promote cross-sectoral partnerships, training, coordination and cooperation between all relevant actors so as to enable, for example, healthcare workers, the police, the judicial authorities, educators, social services, crisis and women's shelters, child protection services, and civil society to detect risks and signs of the various forms of violence against women and domestic violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic, technology-facilitated and honour-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and femicide, as well as coercive control, as early as possible and to intervene early, including through referrals.
19. Take measures to promote the economic empowerment and financial independence of women, inter alia, by improving their integration into society and the labour market, bearing in mind that women's financial independence can improve their ability to leave or end a violent relationship or situation, thereby preventing the further escalation of violence.
20. Support the development of tools and training for healthcare workers, care workers and social workers in order to help them detect cases of violence against pregnant women and new parents, bearing in mind that violence may escalate around the time of pregnancy and birth, that pregnancy provides an opportunity for intervention due to the increased contact between victims, perpetrators, and health, social and care workers, and that the time around pregnancy and childbirth can therefore be an opportune moment to intervene and stop violent behaviour.

21. Take measures to protect and support children who live in an environment where violence against women or domestic violence or the risk of such violence is present, as well as children who have lost a parent to femicide or intimate partner violence, in order to reflect the fact that they are victims in their own right and with a view to reducing the risk that such children develop violent behaviour later in life or that they themselves become victims again.
22. Promote awareness, especially among children and young adults regarding gender equality, and regarding healthy relationships and a culture of consent, including consensual sexual relationships, as well as regarding the signs of violence against women and girls and domestic violence as well as its extent and consequences, both online and offline, and ensure that throughout their development they have access to help, guidance and support appropriate for their age.
23. Promote accessible programmes for treating perpetrators with, where appropriate, the involvement of their families, and including safeguards to prevent re-victimisation, in order to support the rehabilitation of perpetrators and stop their violent behaviour, and also in order to break the intergenerational cycle of violence.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their respective competences, and involving the European Institute for gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) where appropriate, TO:

24. Improve the collection, analysis, publication and use of data on violence against women and domestic violence and on the consequences of such violence on victims and society and ensure that this data is, as a minimum, disaggregated by sex and by the age group (child/adult) of the victim and of the perpetrator, and, where possible and relevant, covers the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator as well as the type of offence, so as to enable evidence-based and targeted measures while also taking into account the fact that violence against women and domestic violence can be exacerbated when a person is subject to discrimination based on a combination of sex and any other ground or grounds of discrimination as referred to in Article 21 of the Charter and that certain victims may face a heightened risk of violence depending on their specific circumstances, including those mentioned in Recital 71 of the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.
25. Recognising that children who witness violence are victims in their own right, undertake studies of violence against women or domestic violence witnessed by children, including on the extent of this phenomenon and its long-term impact on the children concerned, and raise awareness about the problem of witnessed violence.
26. Promote research, innovation, education and the exchange of best practice on combating all forms of violence against women and domestic violence through prevention, early detection and intervention.

27. Adopt and implement action plans for combating violence against women and domestic violence, including measures to promote prevention, early detection and intervention, and ensure that these plans are multidisciplinary, actionable and adequately funded, and that civil society, including women's organisations, are meaningfully consulted during the development of these plans.
28. Undertake awareness-raising across society as a whole, especially in educational establishments, on violence against women and domestic violence, including its extent and its consequences, paying particular attention to the role of bystanders and their capacity to intervene, and addressing both women and men.
29. Actively facilitate and promote the engagement of men and boys both as agents and beneficiaries of gender equality, including through measures to combat gender stereotypes and harmful social norms online and offline, and measures to involve men and boys in prevention, early detection and intervention, bearing in mind that children are exposed from an early age to widespread stereotypical, objectifying and sexualising representations of girls and women, both online and offline, which can perpetuate harmful gender roles and attitudes, and also trivialise gender-based violence, especially violence against women and girls. Promote measures to strengthen mental health for all, and combat gender stereotypes and negative social norms, including taboos, that discourage women and girls, but especially men and boys, from showing vulnerability, thus limiting their ability to seek support when they need it, including in situations where violence is directed against them or if they fear that they might be at risk of committing violence.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

30. Include measures to combat violence against women and domestic violence, both online and offline, including measures for prevention, early detection and intervention, as contained in these conclusions, when designing strategic documents in the future, such as a stand-alone high-level gender equality strategy for the period post-2025, that include both targeted measures and the systematic integration of a gender perspective into EU policies and activities.
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References

1. EU Legislation

Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence

2. Council

Council Conclusions on the Eradication of violence against women in the European Union (Doc. 6585/10)

Council Conclusions on Combating violence against women, and the provision of support services for victims of domestic violence (Doc. 17444/12)

Council Conclusions on Preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation (Doc. 9543/14)

Council Conclusions on the Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on gender equality (Doc. 8878/21)

Council Conclusions on Economic empowerment and financial independence of women as a pathway to substantive gender equality (Doc. 8957/24)

Council conclusions on strengthening women's and girls' mental health by promoting gender equality (Doc. 16366/24)

Council Conclusions on Advancing Gender Equality in the AI-Driven Digital Age: 6th horizontal review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions (Doc. 9984/25)

3. European Commission

A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. (Doc. 6678/20. Commission reference: COM (2020) 152 final)

Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025. (Doc. 13081/20. Commission reference: COM(2020) 698 final)

Roadmap for Women's Rights. (Doc. 6756/25. Commission reference: COM(2025) 97 final)

4. European Parliament

European Parliament resolution of 16 September 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU (2021/2035(INL))

5. Eurostat, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

EU gender-based violence survey (2024)

6. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Intimate partner violence and witness intervention: what are the deciding factors? (2020)

Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls (2022)

Gender Equality Index (2024)

https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-index-2024-tackling-violence-against-women-tackling-gender-inequalities?language_content_entity=en

7. United Nations

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

8. Council of Europe

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ("Istanbul Convention") (CETS No. 210)

9. Other

Effects of domestic violence on children

(Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024)

<https://womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/domestic-violence/effects-domestic-violence-children#references>
