

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on a possible EU awareness raising campaign on violence against women and girls (VAWG)¹

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a wide-spread and systematic violation of women's full enjoyment of their human rights and is a problem for the whole of society. It raises a barrier to any effort to build peace, sustainable development and gender equality. It is deeply rooted in the historically unequal power relations between women and men and persistent discrimination against women. It is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that takes place across a range of settings (e.g. home, institutions, workplaces, public places) and relationships (e.g. family members, friends, strangers).

The costs of violence against women are particularly high. The direct cost includes both the care and support of abused women and girls and their children and services dedicated to successfully bringing perpetrators to justice. The indirect costs are not only lost work hours and productivity, but also the cost of human suffering, loss of human dignity and erosion of the social fabric. Investing in combating violence against women and girls not only serves to reduce public expenditure while increasing productivity, but reduces human suffering and is to the benefit of society as a whole, building on the principles of equality, solidarity and respect for human rights and thus guaranteeing sustainable development and social cohesion.

The Commission adopted in 2010 its Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015) which includes ending gender-based violence as one of five policy priorities. The Strategy mentions a European-wide awareness-raising campaign on combating violence against women. In December 2010, the Advisory Committee gave an opinion on an EU strategy on violence against women and girls. This opinion also included some considerations on awareness-raising activities.

Recently this year, the European Commission organized an exchange of good practices on awareness-raising as regards violence against women. It enabled some important discussions between Member States (MS) and has promoted an exchange of knowledge within the field, which will allow to feed all the awareness-raising initiatives across the 27 MS.

CONTEXT

Awareness-raising is part of prevention, which seeks to change the conditions – the conducive contexts – in which VAWG takes place, in order to bring about its elimination. Prevention strategies must address the causes and effects of VAWG, for example the persistence of gender inequalities and the associated entitlement that many men still hold with respect to women and girls. Prevention strategies must also address all forms of violence against women and girls, raising awareness of their diversity. Empowering women

¹ The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States.

and girls and ensuring that their perspectives and voices are heard must be at the centre of such efforts. In addition, efforts will be effective when they are connected to the intersections with other inequalities such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age and disability. Awareness-raising involves making visible the level, forms and extent of violence.

We need to put violence against women and girls on every Member States' political agenda; continue to raise awareness on this violation of women's human rights and get a strong commitment from the EU and its MS to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls. The current times of economic and financial crisis provides an increased risk to conditions for women and girls that make a campaign even more timely. Austerity measures affect support services for women victims of violence and funding at national level for awareness-raising activities.

In the framework of the Council of Europe, a new set of legally-binding standards was adopted in its Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, or Istanbul Convention (CETS No.210). This Convention offers the tools EU member states and others need to arrive at harmonised standards in the prevention of VAWG, the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Different countries face different problems in tackling this issue and have implemented a wide range of practices to inform victims, perpetrators and the general public that violence against women and girls can take many forms and may not always be seen as violence by those concerned: to inform women about the national support structures for support and protection of victims, to highlight that many women spend a lot of time in an unsafe environment, and to find a common gendered understanding of violence against women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Added value of an EU level intervention

An EU-wide awareness-raising campaign comes from the assessment that the phenomenon is widespread in all EU Member States.

The campaign would be a major step to:

- raise the issue up national political agendas, through the co-ordination of messages across the EU in making the link between ending violence and achieving gender equality at European level
- demonstrate a global commitment amongst the 27 MS on the elimination of this form of violence
- show that Europe is a place where fundamental human rights are respected, linking violence against women and girls to other policies and fundamental values within the EU.
- promote equality between women and men.

An EU-wide awareness-raising campaign should:

- challenge norms that encourage or tolerate violence against women and girls
- promote everyone's rights to safety, freedom of movement, dignity, sexual autonomy, bodily integrity, non-discrimination, equality, education and equal participation in all spheres of decision-making, emphasizing Government's accountability.
- build on and contribute to the current knowledge base and recommended practices in preventing violence against women and girls.
- have clear objectives and measurable outcomes for monitoring the impact of all initiatives.

- be based on clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women and girls
- promote the implementation of relevant EU and international instruments combating violence against women and girls
- encourage the signature and ratification of other international instruments which aim towards combating violence against women, such as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
- highlight the barriers that some people might face due to age, disability, migration status, sexual orientation of gender identity, age, ethnic origin, economic status (especially in times of crisis), housing status, etc.

It could do this by:

- publicly denouncing violence against women and girls as a violation of women's full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and appealing for an active citizenship of all European citizens,
- encouraging opinion leaders to publicly acknowledge the gravity of violence against women and girls and condemn its perpetration,
- widely disseminating information on the issue of violence against women and girls, including information on existing structures and measures to support and protect victims, also directly to relevant Civil Society Organisations,
- using all available means, in particular the media and education, to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes and discriminatory cultural;
- supporting specific awareness-raising initiatives at national level aimed at men and boys in order to mobilize men and boys to take an active part in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and develop new types of masculinity, and including informing the possibility to use treatment programmes and support for perpetrators.

B. Added value of supporting communication activities at national level

Each Member State should have the opportunity to build on the European materials and messages and make necessary adaptations, according with their own national strategies to fight VAWG.

- To offer a remedy, like a telephone helpline, shelters, counselling opportunities, new legislation etc
- Campaigns supported by the European Commission could give concrete information at national level on where to find further support - where to turn to, who to call and what to do if you need help or reliable information (e.g. legal information).
- The European Commission should fund national authorities and NGOs dealing with this topic in order for them to carry some national activities as seminars, awareness-raising workshops, dissemination of specific materials that could contribute to boost a campaign's message and its dissemination.

C. Recommendations for a campaign

- **Target groups**

All society should be engaged in this issue as we aim at a Europe free from any form of violence against women and girls. Everyone has a role to play: victims, perpetrators, political leaders (heads of states, ministers, director-generals, etc.), professionals (security forces, justice, education, social workers, health, etc.), the media, members of the parliament, trade unions, regional and local authorities, civil society organizations or the business sector.

- **Main messages**

A campaign must be based on facts and knowledge and should address all forms of violence against women and girls. A campaign should convey the following messages:

- "Violence against women and girls is a violation of women's human rights, and is a cause and consequence of the structural inequality between women and men",
- "Violence against women and girls is a cost for the whole society"
- "Everyone is responsible for breaking the silence and filling a complaint: ending violence against women in the public sphere, at work and in the family or domestic unit".

A campaign should also inform on:

- the fact that combating violence against women calls for public-private partnerships and effective cooperation between all relevant agencies, NGOs and the private sector.
- all the different initiatives already taken and considered as good practices, both in urban and rural areas (within the DAPHNE Programme or the future Justice Programme).
- the Eurowarrant protection for women victims of gender-based violence, in the Directive 2011/99/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the European protection order.
- the benefits for victims of VAWG contained in the directives stemming from the victims' package, that has been introduced by the European Commission on May 18th, 2011
- To spread engagement instead of resignation as there is a wide variety of work concerning research and knowledge on what to do to prevent violence and to improve the situation for women subjected to violence and their children. This is an important message to the women subjected to violence, to practitioners, to decision-makers and also to the general public.

- **Organisation**

- To plan for a long period (3 to 5 years) as the deeper effects of awareness campaigns will only be visible afterwards.
- To measure success, as the more we evaluate, the better we can tailor future campaigns to make them as effective as possible. The EC should review the campaign every year, and then after 5 years, in order also to assess whether such campaign should be continued.

- **Funding**

- To ensure funding for awareness raising activities both at EU level, and to Member States and Civil Society Organisations dealing with the fight against VAWG at European and national level in order to ensure ownership and involvement by relevant stakeholders and the development of awareness raising interventions tailored to national contexts.

- **Dissemination strategies**

- To promote/encourage awareness-raising activities within school environment (e.g. school contest, exhibitions, etc.) since it's important to work on changing dominant gender stereotypes and mentalities.

- To raise awareness through training and easily-accessible information, as it is important to turn knowledge into action to improve the situation for women and girls subjected to violence and their children. Up-to-date research and evidence-based methods must be spread to practitioners who meet women and girls subjected to violence, their children or the perpetrators in their daily work. Modern information technology makes it possible to make research easily accessible at low costs.
- To spread the campaign's message all across the small villages and towns of all Member States.
- To use social media facilities in order to reach younger generations and the media.
- To use a joint public action. Action is required by governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and NGOs as well as civil society to stop VAWG.
- To build strategic partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, including national and international Civil Society Organisations, member states, national parliaments and parliamentarian networks, local and regional governments, relevant grassroots networks, other international organisations and professional organisations.
- To provide guidance for the setting up of campaign teams at national level.
- To promote the development of awareness raising material that can be used at international and national level, available in various EU languages and adapted to the main target groups.
- **Framework for the EU Campaign**
 - To provide a framework for action, in order to guarantee efficiency, monitoring, evaluation, follow-up, etc. The EC should appoint an EU Coordinator to end violence against women and girls, a task-force gathering focal-points and NGOs, and a Focal-point for this issue in each of the 27 Member States.
 - The establishment of an European Observatory on violence against women and girls building on existing institutional structures, to conduct studies and research, to conduct studies and researches, and create a set of indicators on this type of violence at European.
 - Ensure that the European Commission's work is linked with and does not duplicate the work of other European Agencies, in particular the FRA and the EIGE.

Annex: Good practices from Member States

Documents from the exchange of good practice analysing awareness-raising activities in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, FYROM, Serbia, Ireland, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Greece are available here:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/good-practices/review-seminars/violence_en.htm

Campaigns on violence against women and girls:

- Germany: Paper Bag Campaign: <http://www.slideshare.net/kheisecke/paperbag-campaignupdatejan09>
- WAGGGS: <http://saynotoviolence.org/join-say-no/stop-violence-speak-out-girls%E2%80%99-rights>
- UK: <http://www.object.org.uk/>
- <http://www.igualdade.gov.pt/>
- <http://www.sacatarjetaroja.es/>
- <http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Pages/RD1100007>
- <http://www.HINTER-DEUTSCHEN-WÄNDEN.de>

Campaigns on rape:

- France: <http://www.contreleviol.fr/> / Vidéo clip: <http://www.contreleviol.fr/clip-contre-le-viol>
- France: <http://pasdejusticepasdepaix.wordpress.com/>
- UK : <http://www.thisisnotaninvitationtorapeme.co.uk/>
- Sweden: <http://stoppavaldtakterna.nu/media.html>
- UK: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gEftWCG5Ow>
- UK: <http://www.dontcrosstheline.co.uk/>
- UK: <http://www.notever.co.uk/> - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaEmnizU6tw&feature=related>
- UK: <http://www.weareman.co.uk/> - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYhaodUPqSU>

Campaign on dating violence:

- Denmark: <http://www.ditforhold.dk/>
- Ireland: <http://www.2in2u.ie/>

Campaigns on marital rape:

- France: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85gh5c9JXoM&feature=youtu.be>

Campaigns on intimate-partnership violence:

- France: <http://www.violencesfaitesauxfemmes.com/>
- France: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xbttb_violence-conjugale-campagne-gouvern_news
- Romania : <http://www.cmssc.ro/video/03-Strada.mpg>
- Belgium: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwG8pX3RV6A&feature=player_embedded

Campaigns on prostitution;

- EWL video clip 'Not for sale': <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article1862&lang=en>

- Ewl video clip 'For a change of perspective':
<http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article1485&lang=en>
- EWL video clip 'Sport, Sex & Fun':
<http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?rubrique252&lang=en>
- Belgium: Stop Prostitution:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=sLP0sdY0G4A

Campaign on forced marriage:

- Belgium: <http://monmariagemappartient.be/>

Campaigns against trafficking in women:

- <http://realstars.eu/for-fair-sex/>
- Stop the traffic: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-a8dAHDQoo>

Campaigns on so-called 'honor' crimes:

- Sweden: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nqn1cnW_ZPM

Campaigns on street harassment:

- <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/>