



Violence Against Women: The European Union establishes an EU-wide helpline number and calls to end violence against women worldwide

Brussels, 24 November 2022

Ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, the European Commission and High Representative/Vice President, Josep **Borrell** issued the following statement:

"Violence against women happens in every country. The facts are shocking - in the EU and across the world, one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence. One in five girls today are victims of child sexual abuse. Online violence is on the rise, with one in two young women experiencing gender-based cyber violence.

The EU condemns all forms of violence against women and girls. It is unacceptable in the 21st century that women and girls continue to be abused, harassed, raped, mutilated or forced into marriage.

In March this year, the European Commission proposed new EU rules to combat violence against women, including online. Today, the Commission is also announcing the establishment of a common EU helpline number for victims of violence against women – 116 016.

This year, we pay particular attention to violence against women in conflict areas. In Ukraine, Russian armed forces are committing acts of sexual violence, and the millions of women and children fleeing the Russian aggression into the EU and neighbouring countries require proper support and protection.

In Iran, women are abused, exploited, oppressed, harassed, jailed, fined and flogged for demanding freedom and equality. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have dismantled all protection mechanisms established over the past 20 years to protect women and girls from abuse, violence and forced marriages. Women face violence also in humanitarian crises from Myanmar to northern Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We remain steadfast in our ambition to end violence against women inside and outside the EU. The EU stands in solidarity with the women and girls, victims and survivors of violence. We will continue to support civil society, women's rights organisations and human rights defenders demanding accountability."

Background

Today, the European Commission is announcing the [EU-wide harmonised number for helplines for victims of violence against women](#) – **116 016**. Women who are victims of violence will be able to call the same number across the EU to get advice and support. So far, 15 Member States have committed to connecting their existing helpline for victims of violence against women to this number. The deadline for Member States to reserve the common EU number to connect to national helplines is end of April 2023.

The European Commission is committed to preventing and combating gender-based violence, as stated in the [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#). The [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) reaffirms the commitment to proposing new rules to put an end to gender-based violence against women, including work harassment on grounds of sex. The Commission provides funding for projects and organisations to tackle gender-based violence through the [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values](#) Programme.

On 8 March 2022, the European Commission adopted a [proposal for a directive to combat violence against women and domestic violence](#). The proposal aims to ensure that the most serious forms of violence against women are criminalised across the EU, such as rape, female genital mutilation and gender-based cyber violence, including cyber stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

On 11 May 2022, the Commission adopted a [proposal for a Regulation on preventing and combating](#)

[child sexual abuse](#). The new proposal will oblige providers to detect, report and remove child sexual abuse material on their services.

The Commission continues to work on the EU's accession to the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) - the Istanbul Convention.

In parallel, the Commission is working on the implementation of its first [EU Strategy on victims' rights \(2020-2025\)](#) including a possible revision in 2023.

The majority of victims of trafficking registered in the EU are women and girls. The EU's legal and policy framework is set out in the [Anti-trafficking Directive](#). In April 2021, the Commission presented the presented the [EU Strategy on combating trafficking in human beings \(2021-2025\)](#), which emphasises the protection of victims at all stages, taking into account, in particular, women and child victims, and trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Commission will continue to strengthen measures to combat trafficking in human beings and plans to propose a revision of the Anti-Trafficking Directive in December 2022.

Internationally, the [Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in External Relations 2020 – 2025](#) (GAP III) provides an ambitious external policy framework for achieving progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. The EU will continue its efforts to curb sexual and gender-based violence throughout the world, including in conflict and emergencies. For example, the global [Spotlight Initiative](#), with an initial EU investment of €500 million, aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The EU is furthermore an active member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, a global cross-stakeholder initiative with more than 100 members that aims to drive change and foster accountability from the humanitarian system to address gender-based violence from the earliest phases of a crisis.

The European Commission is participating as every year in the UN Women's [Orange the World](#) campaign. The photographs of the College members wearing orange scarfs will be available on [EBS as of Friday 25 November](#).

For More Information

[Ending gender-based violence](#)

Factsheet – [championing Gender Equality](#)

Website – [EU-wide number for helplines for victims of violence against women](#)

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