



# Combating violence against women in the OSCE region

A reader on the situation in  
the region, good practices and  
the way forward

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Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe

## Disclaimer

The content in this publication was developed by Maaïke van Adrichem, Adviser on Gender Issues, and Kamal Anwar, Junior Professional Officer, from the OSCE Gender Section. It is based on the outcomes of a Conference on Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE region on 22 July 2016 and additional desk research.

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# Foreword

The continued prevalence of gender-based violence damages the lives of women across the globe every day. Taking many forms, from sexual to economic and psychological, it cuts across all geographical, cultural and class boundaries. It is a pernicious violation of human rights that threatens the security and safety of countless women. But its effects do not stop with the victim. They have lasting impacts on the people around her, on her community and on the wider society in which she lives.

As a threat to the security of individuals and societies, violence against women (VAW) is a priority area for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), forming part of its comprehensive approach to security that encompasses the politico-military dimension, the economic and environmental dimension and the human rights dimension. It recognizes that it is not just traditional security stemming from the security forces such as the police and the military that is important for peace and stability, but also the individual security of men and women, boys and girls. In fact, as the OSCE Heads of State or Government stated in the 2010 Astana Summit

Declaration, “the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security”.

The OSCE Gender Section therefore works closely with all OSCE executive structures, participating States and other international organizations, to end violence against women and bring security home.

It is only through close co-operation at both national and international level that we will be able to tackle the causes of VAW and ultimately win the fight to end all forms of gender-based violence.

I hope this publication will serve as a useful reference to participating States, OSCE executive structures and other interested actors, to continue to prioritize activities that combat and prevent gender-based violence in the region.

**Miroslava Beham**

OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

# About this publication

Violence against women (VAW) is not only a grave violation of human rights, it is a global epidemic that devastates the lives of millions of women and girls and hampers progress towards comprehensive security for all. Millions of women fear for their safety, are harassed or exploited. This not only affects their personal safety and security, but also prevents them from participating in society or from using their skills and knowledge to their full potential.

With the German Chairperson in Office, on 22 July 2016 the Gender Section of the OSCE organized a conference in Vienna, Austria to identify ways forward to combat gender-based violence in the OSCE region. The conference brought together policy makers, researchers, law enforcers and activists, who shared good practices and identified areas where increased action is needed.

This publication offers an overview of the main conference themes, highlights good practices and work done in the field by OSCE executive structures, and provides a set of recommendations and areas for action outlined by conference participants.

With this publication, the OSCE Gender Section aims to inform and inspire those who take decisions on policies, programmes and activities to end violence against women.

The 22 July conference and this publication were made possible through financial contributions from Germany, the Netherlands and Finland.



*AWARENESS RAISING MESSAGE DEVELOPED BY THE OSCE AS PART OF THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE*

# Part I:

## Facts and figures

Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic, with over one in three women across the world subject to violence at some point in their lifetime according to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics (WHO 2013). It is difficult to get reliable data on the exact prevalence rates and types of violence experienced by women and girls. The only regional statistics on gender-based violence are from the EU-wide survey on violence against women conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2014). A total of 43 countries in the OSCE region have conducted different types of surveys at some point of time on violence against women at the national level, often using different methodologies and indicators.

### Violence against women is a global epidemic

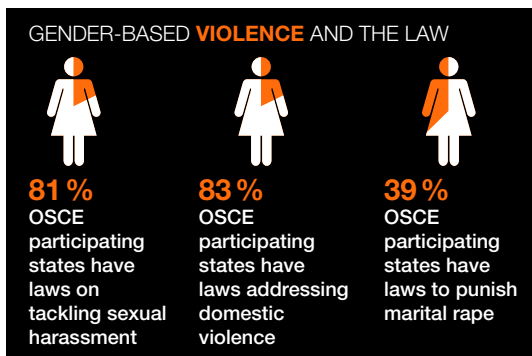
- » WHO data show that 35 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner and/or sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime; 30 per



cent of ever partnered women globally have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime and 7 per cent of women globally have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime (WHO 2013).

## Legal systems need to be adapted to provide judicial recourse and protection for survivors

- » Out of 57 of OSCE participating States<sup>1</sup>, 47 have passed laws on domestic violence, 46 have laws on sexual harassment and 22 States have laws on marital rape, a total of 29 OSCE participating States have no law on marital rape<sup>2</sup> (UN Women/UN Statistics Division 2015).



<sup>1</sup> The Holy See is not included in the UN Statistics Division Database.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the states listed in the database do have additional customary law or precedence substituting a specific marital rape law.

## Many survivors do not seek help

- » According to the FRA survey, 35 per cent of women in Europe have not talked about their most serious experience of sexual harassment with anyone. Only 4 per cent reported it to the police (FRA 2014). A Canadian study from 2014 showed that 70 per cent of spousal violence is not reported to the police.<sup>3</sup>
- » Only 11 per cent of women who experience sexual assault report it (OSCE, ODIHR and DCAF 2014).

ONLY **11%** OF WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE  
SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORT IT.



Source: "Integrating Gender into Internal Police Oversight"  
by ODIHR, OSCE Secretariat and DCAF, 2014

3 Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, 2014 (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2016001-eng.htm>).

## Refugee and migrant women and those from minority groups face a higher risk of violence

- » A field assessment of risks for refugee and migrant women and girls conducted in Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2016 identified instances of sexual and gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, transactional sex, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and physical assault in the country of origin and during the journey to Europe (UNFPA/ UNHCR/WRC 2016).
  
- » A survey done of Roma women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2011 reported that 43 per cent of Roma women had experienced physical violence and 76 per cent knew a woman who had.<sup>4</sup>

## Prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of gender-based violence are rare

- » As of September 2016, 32 individuals have been convicted for their responsibility for crimes of sexual violence by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In a number of landmark judgments,

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4 Rights for All, *Roma Women For Life Without Violence: Reponse of institutions to domestic violence*, 2011, [http://rightsforall.ba/publikacije-en/docs-en/Roma\\_Women\\_For\\_Life\\_Without\\_Violence-ENG.pdf](http://rightsforall.ba/publikacije-en/docs-en/Roma_Women_For_Life_Without_Violence-ENG.pdf).

the ICTY has paved the way for more robust judgments in gender crimes by enabling the prosecution of sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity and genocide.<sup>5</sup>

- » Three verdicts in BiH in 2015-2016 sentenced and ordered financial compensation for the victims of sexual violence. The verdicts marked a precedent for the entire Balkan region.

### Gender inequality lies at the root of gender-based violence

- » Women make up 21.8 per cent of parliamentarians in the OSCE-region (as of 1 September 2016). That is 1 per cent less than worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO RAISING AWARENESS AND ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.



**WOMEN**  
MAKE UP ONLY  
**22%**  
OF MEMBERS OF  
PARLIAMENT IN  
THE **OSCE** REGION

<sup>5</sup> United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia In Numbers, (<http://www.icty.org/en/in-focus/crimes-sexual-violence/in-numbers>).

- » A total of 51 out of 57 OSCE States can be found in the 2016 Gender Gap Index, which measured 144 nations in four key areas of economy, education, politics and health. The OSCE region is currently at 72.3 per cent in the goal of achieving 100 per cent gender parity (World Economic Forum 2016).

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AFFECTS OVER  
**12 MILLION** PEOPLE IN EUROPE.



NEARLY **70%** OF THE VICTIMS ARE FEMALE WITH  
MANY BEING UNDER 18 YEARS OLD.



Source: "Global report on Trafficking in persons", UNODC, 2014

## Country-level example: Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2013, the Agency for Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) conducted a study<sup>6</sup> on the prevalence of gender-based violence in the country. A total of 3,300 adult women were surveyed, with appropriate representative sub-samples for the Republika Srpska and the Federation BiH.

It showed that half of the women participating had experienced at least one form of violence since the age of 15. During the 12 months preceding the survey, 12 per cent of women in BiH had experienced some form of violence. The most frequent form of violence reported was psychological, with an overall prevalence of 42 per cent, followed by physical violence which was reported by 24.3 per cent of women. Six per cent of women reported experiencing sexual violence during their adult life. The perpetrators of violence against women are most often former or current partners.

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6 Agency of Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina in co-operation with the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska (RS) and the Gender Centre of the Federation BiH (FBiH) and supported by UNFPA and UN Women, *Prevalence and Characteristics of Violence Against Women in BiH* (2013)

Women who were victims of violence in the past year reported higher levels of mental health problems compared to those women who did not experience any violence, including feeling more depressed, anxious and fearful. A total of 11.4 per cent of women reported having had some form of physical injury.

The study report highlighted that many women in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not recognize violence when it is perpetrated against them. It also showed that although a large number of women reported different individual experiences of violence, only a small number of them have taken steps to get out of this situation or to seek help.

# Part II: Institutional framework supporting OSCE activities to combat VAW

**The OSCE's Ministerial Council (MC) is made up of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OSCE participating States and is the central decision-making and governing body of the Organization. Summit meetings at the level of Heads of State or Government are the highest decision-making body of the OSCE. The MC meets once a year to consider issues on the OSCE agenda and adopt relevant documents. Over the years, the MC has issued a number of decisions on gender which underpin the Organization's approach to gender-related matters, from equality issues to violence against women.**



## The three key MC Decisions on violence against women

The Decision that provides the main framework for the OSCE's work on gender and gender-based violence is the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which supports all participating States in achieving gender equality and pledges to 'assist participating States in developing programmes and activities aimed at the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence'.

The following year in 2005, the Organization approved a Decision that recognized violence against women as a threat to human security. It offered its support to participating States, calling on them to put the necessary legislation, checks, and policies in place to combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. Specifically, it urged States to provide full access to justice, medical and social assistance, confidential counselling and shelter. It called for States to act to criminalize gender-based violence, to increase the reporting of violence cases and step up efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate more data, supporting those NGOs working to gather better information.

Finally, it highlights the importance of prevention by urging participating States to take all necessary

steps to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls during and after armed conflict and emergencies, including bringing the perpetrators of crimes to justice, and taking special measures to address the needs of women and girls in the post-conflict environment.

Then in 2014, concerned about the slow pace of progress, the MC passed a second Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women.

Building on the 2005 Decision, it called for action on legal frameworks; prevention; protection; prosecution and partnerships. Once again it addressed the area of reliable data collection, and pressed States to speed up efforts to bring legislation into line with relevant international standards, noting for example the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (the 'Istanbul Convention').

The Decision encourages States to reach out to the public and to make concerted efforts to engage men and boys in particular to help prevent and ultimately eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. It also calls for the development of programmes to work with perpetrators of violence against women.

Lastly, it reiterates the need for improved protection of victims through access to information on available legal measures and support services, such as sexual violence crisis centres and shelters, along with appropriate and accessible healthcare.

## Other relevant Ministerial Council Decisions

### » MC.DEC/10/11 on Promoting Equality in the Economic Sphere:

“...call on States to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote women’s economic empowerment to overcome the global economic crisis.”

### » MC.DEC/04/13 on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children:

“Taking measures to ensure the security, well-being and health of Roma and Sinti women, youth and children, including by addressing domestic violence, early marriages and trafficking in human beings, including, where necessary, by providing access to rehabilitative support.”

- » MC.DEC/7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life:  
"Reaffirming ... 15/05 on preventing and combating violence against women."
  
- » MC.DEC/14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation:  
"Emphasizing the importance of women's full and equal participation in all phases of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding."
  
- » MC.DEC/3/11 on Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE's Capabilities in Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation:  
"Reaffirming the significant role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding."

# Part III:

## OSCE activities to combat VAW

OSCE executive structures and institutions work to support participating States and civil society to combat gender-based violence through a wide range of projects and initiatives, at the local, national, regional and global level. On the following pages, you will find a selection of examples of OSCE action against VAW.

### Ending violence means understanding violence: improving data and analysis

As violence against women is often underreported, it is difficult to get a reliable picture of exactly how widespread it is. This lack of information hampers efforts to develop the right measures to combat and ultimately end VAW. Developing legislation, support services for survivors and programmes to prevent gender-based violence should of course continue to be a priority area, even when no data is available. But such policies and measures would be made considerably more effective through better data collection,

making it a vital and powerful tool in supporting policy-making and services designed to prevent violence against women.

To tackle the lack of data and analysis available on gender-based violence in the OSCE region, the Organization is conducting an EU-funded survey in ten OSCE participating States, located in South East Europe, Eastern Europe and South Caucasus.

The OSCE survey on ‘the Well-being and Security of Women’ will build on the methodology of a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey on violence against women in the EU, launched in 2014. The OSCE’s survey will include a conflict dimension in order to examine the prevalence of violence against women in conflict-affected contexts and deepen the understanding of how violence against women is related to conflict.

The survey is based on the definitions used in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (‘Istanbul Convention’).

The ultimate goal of the project is to create evidence on different forms of violence against women to be used for improved policymaking

and planning by national actors, such as the security sector, executive and legislature and social services, as well as international stakeholders.

The survey is currently in the design and preparatory phase, with field work due to be carried out in 2017 and final results expected by the middle of 2018.

### **Some key findings from the FRA survey in 28 EU countries**

- » **Half of all women surveyed have experienced sexual harassment; as many as 21 per cent of those surveyed have experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months.**
- » **Forty-three per cent of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner.**
- » **One in three women has experienced sexual or physical violence by an adult before they were 15.**
- » **Twenty-two per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner.**

- » **Eighteen per cent of women have experienced some form of stalking – most often by a previous partner.**
- » **One in 20 women has been raped since the age of 15.**
- » **Two per cent of women experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months before the survey, which amounts to 3.7 million women in Europe.**
- » **Seven per cent of women experienced physical violence in the last 12 months, which amounts to 13 million women in Europe.**
- » **Only one in three (33 per cent) of victims of physical and/or sexual partner violence and one in four (26 per cent) victims of physical and/or sexual non-partner violence sought help by contacting the police, a doctor, a women's shelter or victim support. In two-thirds of cases the most serious incidents of partner violence were not reported.**
- » **Half of all women avoid certain situations for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted.**



## What is the Istanbul Convention?

- » **The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was adopted in Istanbul on 11 May 2011. It aims to prevent violence, protect victims and to end impunity for perpetrators.**
- » **The document represents a legally binding instrument which creates a comprehensive legal framework and approach in combating violence against women.**
- » **It defines and criminalizes various forms of violence against women, including: psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence; including rape and explicitly covering all engagement in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilization, sexual harassment and crimes committed in the name of so-called honour.**
- » **The Convention entered into force on 1 August 2014 after ten ratifications and continues to be open for signature and ratification for all countries, including those outside of the Council of Europe region. As of November 2016, 43 OSCE participating States have signed the Convention and 22 have ratified it.**

## The role of men and boys

Gender equality and combating gender-based violence are often misconceived as women's issues only. However, men and boys have a key role to play in ending violence against women and promoting gender equality. Though some men are perpetrators of violence, men are also negatively affected by gender stereotypes and the results of gender-based violence.

The OSCE has its own MenEngage Network, launched in 2012, as a result of growing recognition that gender equality cannot be achieved without engaging men and promoting positive role models for men and boys. The OSCE MenEngage Network seeks to raise awareness of the important influence men can have in ending gender-based violence and speaking out against all kinds of inequality.

**OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 encourages participating States to: 'take appropriate measures to increase the engagement and participation of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence'.**

## Combating online abuse of female journalists

For many women, the Internet has become a danger zone, with thousands of women subjected to threats, demeaning language, and literal and figurative attacks every single day. The gender component of this harassment is clear in the type of threats and language used, which includes threats of rape and graphic sexual violence, with the aim to silence women online.

Women who face this type of harassment have little recourse when it comes to reporting, receiving support or legal redress. At best, they are encouraged to ignore the abuse and turn off the computer, while at worst they are blamed for the abuse or for undermining others' free speech.

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) has gathered information from female journalists and bloggers in the OSCE region in order to shine a light on the magnitude of the problem and come up with solutions that will have a real impact on the lives of women. The RFoM continues to investigate and bring attention to online harassment against female journalists and bloggers and calls on participating States to recognize this issue as a

fundamental threat to freedom of expression and the rights of women.

### **Online violence against women: a growing trend**

- » **One in ten women has experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15 (FRA).**
- » **According to a survey on online harassment carried out by the Pew Research Center in the USA in 2014, women are more likely to be the victims of severe forms of harassment, such as stalking and sexual harassment, with young women most at risk. The survey showed that 26 per cent of women aged 18-24 had experienced stalking, compared to 7 per cent of men in the same age group, while 25 per cent of women in this age group had experienced sexual harassment, compared with 13 per cent of men.**

## Legislative support to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence

To assist the OSCE participating States in implementing OSCE commitments, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reviews upon request national legal frameworks, including those on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The legislative reviews assess compliance with international standards, often with the aim of harmonizing national legislation with the Istanbul Convention.

ODIHR has prepared comprehensive legal analyses of packages of legislation and supported legal reform efforts for several countries since 2009, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Tajikistan and Ukraine. The specific situation of victims of violence against women and domestic violence is addressed in all ODIHR legal reviews pertaining to criminal proceedings and criminal justice reform, to prevent secondary victimization of women and children.

ODIHR believes that legislative reform in this field will serve as a starting point for eliminating violence against women and achieving real and sustainable security for all individuals across the OSCE. Such a change can only happen if there is open and

inclusive debate with all relevant stakeholders – including women survivors and civil society organizations. Only open dialogue can increase all stakeholders' understanding of the various factors and challenges involved, enhance confidence in the adopted legislation and, ultimately, improve implementation.

## **How to request a legal review**

**Legal opinions can be requested with a letter addressed to ODIHR's Director, from a state authority or other public body, including the government (e.g., a minister, deputy minister or head of department), the parliament (e.g., a speaker, deputy speaker or head of committee), the judiciary (e.g., self-governing bodies) or national human rights institutions. ODIHR's assistance can also be requested by OSCE field operations. The legal reviews analyse draft or existing laws to assess their compliance with international human rights standards and OSCE commitments, give examples of good practices and provide concrete recommendations for improvement.**

***All ODIHR legal reviews are posted on ODIHR's free online legislative database [www.legislationonline.org](http://www.legislationonline.org).***

## OSCE activities in the field: prevention and support for survivors

The OSCE's 17 field operations conduct a wide range of activities to combat gender-based violence. The OSCE works with government and civil society to prevent gender-based violence and to improve legislation and services for survivors.<sup>7</sup>

### Prevention

The Centre in Bishkek has set up a project in the south of the country to improve gender equality and develop women's potential to act as agents for conflict prevention. The project draws in women through the Women Initiative Groups (WIG) in the South of Kyrgyzstan while also inviting participation from the police, officers of the national security body and the military. The project also reaches out to men, in particular imams and athletes, to engage them in discussions on gender-based violence, gender equality, human rights and the observance of laws.

Thanks to the project, 1,017 cases of violence were reported in 2015 by the WIG network; the Osh city branch of the Spiritual Board of

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7 For more information on the OSCE's activities in the field, refer to the Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality for 2015 and visit <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/107452>.

Kyrgyzstan's Muslims has agreed to speak out against unregistered marriages, especially those involving underage girls, and to propose legislative amendments to prevent further violations of the rights of girls and women. In addition, sports trainers were introduced into the basics of gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence.

The Office in Tajikistan in 2015 organized the 'Men Engage to Combat Violence against Women – White Wristband Commitment' campaign with the participation of 17 prominent men from political and public life in Tajikistan. The Office also organized events on gender equality and women's rights in five regions, reaching more than 6,000 people directly and 50,000 indirectly in 2015.

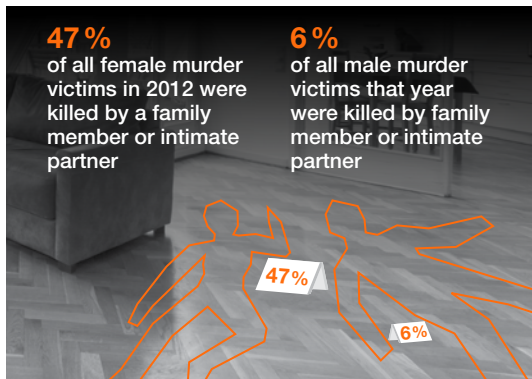
The Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supported a Gender Equality Week and co-ordinated with civil society organizations and national authorities to plan activities related to the 16 Days of Activism against GBV Campaign. The Mission also helped to organize a round-table event on the issues surrounding women with disabilities in Republika Srpska. The round-table was an important step in raising both public and institutional awareness about the particular challenges women with disabilities face. For example, they are more likely to suffer long-term domestic violence and more intense forms of sexual assault.



## 16 Days of Activism against GBV

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign is an annual international campaign that takes place every year from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day.

The campaign aims to raise awareness about violence against women and girls, and promote action to combat gender-based violence.



AWARENESS RAISING MESSAGE DEVELOPED BY THE OSCE AS PART OF THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## Support for survivors

OSCE executive structures have worked with governments to improve the services and structures needed to support survivors of gender-based violence, helping to strengthen their response mechanisms and boost their resources.

The Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) is working to ensure that guidelines of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Protection from Domestic Violence are followed and has organized training sessions for service providers from municipalities throughout Kosovo.

The Mission to Moldova is running a project that better equips staff at crisis centres and shelters with the necessary skills to assist survivors. The project is contributing to improved access for survivors of trafficking and domestic violence to a range of services, including psychological counselling, legal consultations, and legal representation.

The Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine contributed to police reform by supporting the development of courses on human trafficking and domestic violence. Since 2015, 11,800 police recruits have been trained on how to handle domestic violence incidents and deal more effectively with various forms of trafficking in human beings.

The Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina maintains a database on domestic violence referrals and cases in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also supports courses that train representatives from the police, safe houses, and social work centres on how to use the database.

The Mission in Serbia provides training on the special needs of female victims of violence and human trafficking for employees working in information services at public prosecution offices and provides software for keeping disaggregated statistics on victims of crimes, including gender-based violence and human trafficking.

The Centre in Ashgabat implemented a project to support victims of domestic violence in Turkmenistan. The Centre helps to operate the only hotline and shelter for victims of domestic violence in the country and works with government bodies to raise awareness about domestic violence and provide assistance to victims.

# Part IV:

## The Way Forward

The OSCE Gender Conference in July 2016, organized by the Gender Section together with the German Chairmanship-in-Office, produced a host of ideas and lively discussion on the subject of violence against women. Panel members and participants from the audience gave a wide range of examples of work currently be done at national, regional and international level to combat violence against women.

Many participants called for stronger commitments from the region, increased focus and greater resources to ensure progress. Many also argued for the need to address VAW as a barrier to achieving comprehensive security in the OSCE region.

*Below are the main recommendations provided by participants of the conference.<sup>8</sup> The full conference report is available on the OSCE website.*

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<sup>8</sup> These recommendations should neither be interpreted as official OSCE recommendations based on a consensus decision, nor as the official position of the OSCE Secretariat or the Chairmanship: it reflects opinions expressed individually by participants in the context of this conference.

## Institutional

- » Develop an **OSCE-wide Action Plan**: a comprehensive action plan would act as a roadmap on how to implement existing commitments to halt gender-based violence in the region. Such a plan should include action to strengthen co-operation with other international organizations, the development of training opportunities, and regular evaluation and monitoring of the plan. It should also address **practical strategies and approaches to prevent and combat gender-based violence in all stages of the conflict cycle**.
- » Increase efforts to encourage the ratification and implementation of the **Istanbul Convention**: synergies between the Convention and national frameworks as well as international frameworks like CEDAW have to be created.
- » Improve **data collection, research and documentation**: the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW is promoting the establishment of Femicide Watches at national level. A systematic collection and documentation of data is necessary, as this also allows analysis of victims' and perpetrators' profiles, to address root causes. In addition, surveys are an important tool to show a truer picture of the extent of violence against women, and the OSCE current multi-country survey project

on the prevalence of violence against women  
- with a special module on experiences in  
conflict - will provide comparable data for  
up to ten OSCE countries by mid-2018. It is  
intended to expand the survey to Central Asia  
and other participating States.

- » **National governments need to prioritize the issue** at the highest level to accurately reflect the deep impact of gender-based violence on national social, economic and political development and on security.
- » Prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) should be embedded across all **national systems** and countries need to share good examples of this.
- » **Invest Resources**, especially for capacity-building and training to support survivors as this requires very specific training and skill sets.
- » **Involve women's organizations**, including survivors, in the development and implementation of policies, projects and activities to combat violence against women. Also involve men.
- » All of those involved in combating violence against women should take account of **new and emerging forms of violence against women** (such as online violence) and recognize the importance of protecting specific

groups (such as women in politics and women from minority groups).

- » Develop new partnerships and approaches to **combat conflict-related sexual violence**, in particular in conflicts where the OSCE has a role. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and specific resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence are a key reference framework in this regard, not only in conflict, as it also relates to important issues such as disarmament.

### Capacity-building:

- » **Develop and carry out special programmes** to improve the knowledge of politicians, lawyers, service providers and the police, among other important stakeholders.
- » Include in general training programmes a focus on **groups which face particular protection concerns**, such as minority women, women in politics, women in detention, women migrants and refugees and women with disabilities.

### Prevention

- » Prevention must be **integrated across all sectors and all institutions**. At the same time, efforts should be stepped up to raise general awareness, as well as specific awareness-raising in areas such as the legal framework, for example through improving and systematizing data, research and documentation.

## Legal framework and the legal sector

- » Call on countries that still have not criminalized domestic violence and other forms of GBV to **amend their legal frameworks**, bringing them into line with international standards such as the Istanbul Convention.
- » **Develop jurisprudence** on violence against women.
- » Provide specialized training for prosecutors, lawyers and judges and address the gender gap in the legal sector by training female judges.

## Service provision

- » Address the **issue of stigmatization** of survivors.
- » Highlight the importance of **high-level standards and guidelines** for supporting survivors of GBV.
- » **Include all stakeholders** in improvement of service provision, including public defenders.

## Working with men and boys

- » **Men and boys should be included as allies** in the fight against VAW.
- » Strategies to combat violence against women need to be developed to include **working with perpetrators**.



# Useful links and resources

## OSCE publications and events:

- » Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2009) *Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region. A Compilation of Good Practices*: <http://www.osce.org/gender/37438>
- » OSCE Conference on VAW 22 July 2016: <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/249011>
- » OSCE Conference on Femicide 25 November 2016: <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/280326>
- » OSCE (2011) *Mending inequalities: Men and Gender Equality in the OSCE Region*: <http://www.osce.org/gender/80978>
- » OSCE, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) (2014) *Integrating Gender into Police Oversight*.

## Research, data and statistics:

- » Global Database on Violence Against Women: <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries>
- » European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2014) “*Violence against women: an EU-wide survey*”: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>

- » Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Statistical Archive – Women in National Parliaments*: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm#1>
- » World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2016, Gender Gap Index 2016*: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/>
- » United Nations Statistics Division, *World's Women 2015, Chapter 6, "Violence Against Women"*: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter6/chapter6.html>
- » World Health Organization (WHO), Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013) *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*.
- » Agency of Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina in co-operation with the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska (RS) and the Gender Centre of the Federation BiH (FBiH), *Prevalence and Characteristics of Violence Against Women in BiH (2013)*.
- » Pew Research Center (2014), *Online harassment survey report*: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/>

- » The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) (January 2016) *Initial Assessment Report: Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/EuropeMission\\_Protection\\_Risks\\_19\\_Jan\\_Final\\_0.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/EuropeMission_Protection_Risks_19_Jan_Final_0.pdf)

### Tools and guidelines:

- » ODIHR, Online legislative database: [www.legislationline.org](http://www.legislationline.org)
- » Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/documents-public/guidelines-integrating-gender-based-violence-interventions>
- » OSCE, *Creating mentor networks in the OSCE region. A practical Roadmap*: <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/107454>
- » OSCE/ODIHR, DCAF and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW), *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*: <http://www.osce.org/odihhr/70294>

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