



PROSPERA – WAVE PRESS RELEASE

Feminist Funds and Women Specialist Services launch a call to action to Members of the European Parliament to strengthen the proposed draft EU Directive on combating GBV against women & girls

PROSPERA Network of Women's Funds Europe (WFE) and the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network organised a flagship event on May 17 to address the role of civil society and ensure the feminist movement is heard and actively engaged in the proposed EU Directive on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Domestic Violence (DV) against women and girls. The event included senior-level participation from the European Commission and European Parliament providing the institutional perspective on the Directive and timeline for delivery.

Dr Sylwia Spurek MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality provided the opening keynote address, highlighting the importance of mobilising the practical expertise of feminist organisations in the future EU Directive. Her intervention focused on the need for EU Institutions to have a gender-sensitive and female-focused approach to the Directive. This would include building women's trust in law enforcement authorities and increasing the number of perpetrators brought to justice. She also stressed the importance of having a baseline of minimum standards of protection for victims in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Carla Pambianco, Legal Officer at the European Commission, kicked off Session 1 by presenting the proposed Directive. Ms Pambianco flagged the role and importance of civil society expertise in providing direct input to strengthen the Directive when discussions begin in the European Parliament. **Stephanie Futter-Orel**, Executive Manager at WAVE, stressed the need of taking a "*whole-of-society*" approach to holistically address GBV against women and girls. This would mean taking comprehensive measures towards addressing GBV as the structural form of societal violence it is. In addition, it would be crucial to have stronger collaboration between member states, state institutions and civil society organisations, to prevent, this form of violence from happening in the first place. In situations where this violence is committed it would be essential to guarantee victims' full access to justice by criminalising all forms of violence against women and developing targeted measures to effectively prosecute perpetrators. **Fiona Montagud O'Curry**, Director of Programmes at Calala Women's Fund stated that implementing feminist anti-discrimination and anti-violence messages through the education system, the media and cultural practices through the Directive is essential. She advocated for women's funds and feminist civil society to be fully involved in the planned multi-agency coordination and cooperation bodies that will implement the proposed EU Directive; and for Member States to actively support civil society by providing sufficient funding for training, capacity-building and exchanging promising practices for implementation at the national level. She also provided a compelling example of the negative impacts of gender-neutral data-gathering methodologies.

Session 2 focused, on the one hand, on specific chapters of the Directive and on the other, on suggestions for how it could be implemented by strongly engaging with civil society. **Susana Pavlou** from the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies referred to Chapter 4 on Victims Support. She highlighted the importance of Women's Specialist Services (WSS) being actively included in the Directive because they provide gender-specific and competent low-threshold services that aim to remove barriers rather than erect new ones and guarantee victim-led responses to women's safety. **Lisa Gauvin-Drillaud** co-founder of Stop-Fisha referred to the articles on computer crime in Chapter 2 and stated that cyber violence can no longer be considered second-class violence and that it is imperative to take better account of gender-based cyber violence and consider it in the same way



as physical violence. For her, it is crucial to offer everyone real education on consent, gender equality, healthy sexuality and consider its interactions with digital technology.

Next, the discussion moved into how could women's CSOs be further engaged in the prevention of GBV against women and girls in the Directive. **Irene Zeilinger** from Garance International proposed refocusing the core of the EU Directive on prevention instead of criminalization, and explained how a three-pronged approach to prevention in the GBV Directive could help reduce vulnerability before violence, ensure timely interventions to disrupt violence once it happens, and provide long-term support, preventing reoffending. **Carolyn Boyd-Tomasovic**, Managing Director of the Ecumenical Women's Initiative, stated the need to acknowledge the women's movement vital role in combating violence against women and girls, by providing appropriate logistic and financial support for women's funds and feminist civil society organisations at all levels, and enhancing intersectoral cooperation. This would mean creating flexible, core and longer-term funding that best supports organisations such as women's specialist services and women's funds, to respond to unanticipated opportunities and threats, build their organisational capacity, scale up their programming and create sustainable, structural change. Finally, she highlighted the importance of collecting granular data on the dynamics of GBV against women and girls and its intersections with other structural inequalities,

Two key outcomes were agreed upon:

- 1. Fostering coordination among Member States and EU Institutions with women's funds and feminist organisations, such as women's specialist services, as supportive partners at the EU and national level to ensure the gender-sensitive implementation of the Directive.**
- 2. The value of a pilot baseline assessment to identify promising practices and common policy objectives for women's funds and women's CSOs in the implementation of the EU Directive on GBV.**

Based on the aforementioned outcomes PROSPERA Network of Women's Funds Europe (WFE) and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) propose the creation of a permanent CSO consultative forum to support and advise the implementation of the EU Directive on GBV and DV against women and girls. Likewise, we recommend the European Commission develop such a pilot baseline, in cooperation with the EU Member States, to identify the most effective funding delivery mechanisms for grassroots engagement in the prevention of GBV against women and girls.

Achieving a sustainable, long-term strategy that builds a Europe free of GBV and DV against women and girls requires the active involvement of women's civil society organisations in the planned multi-agency cooperation between EU government bodies, and EU civil society networks. PROSPERA Network of Women's Funds Europe (WFE) and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network will continue to jointly collaborate on this important initiative and develop a series of expert dialogues to deepen the discussion on the agreed outcomes of this event and identify further practical solutions for strengthening feminist civil society engagement in the EU Directive.

For more information, reach out to:

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