



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE

WAVE Network and European Info Centre against Violence

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WAVE's Statement on the EU draft-Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence

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On International Women's Day, the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network welcomes the announcement of a proposal for an EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which vows to protect women and children from gender-based and domestic violence, support and protect victims, ensure access to justice, and hold perpetrators accountable. The issuing of this draft-Directive aims to strengthen the EU commitment to address violence against women and sends a strong signal to all member states of the importance of taking collective action for the protection of women and children through an EU-specific legal instrument.

WAVE believes that this Directive is a step in the right direction and urges the EU Commission to continue working towards the full accession of the European Union to the *'Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – the Istanbul Convention'*. We expect the EU Directive to enshrine the crucial principles and provisions of the Istanbul Convention and to **assure the rights of black women, ethnicized and racialized women, LGBTQI+ women, women with dis/abilities, migrant and refugee women, and otherwise marginalized women.**

Actions taken within the EU to defend all women's and girls' human rights, especially their right to live a life free from fear and all forms of violence, can impact the global response to combating structural violence against women and girls. **The war in Ukraine emphasizes the responsibility of all governments to protect women and children from all forms of violence. War escalates the prevalence of already existing violence against women and children, which countries failed to prevent and tackle in times of peace, and adds further risks associated with fleeing war,** such as human trafficking and its different forms of modern slavery, the threat of sexual harassment, sexualized violence, wartime racism, and even death.

The EU plays a crucial international role in setting strong standards for protecting the human rights of all women and girls. The EU Directive should focus on preventing violence against women and domestic violence from happening in the first place, and where it is perpetrated, to guarantee victims' full access to justice by criminalizing all forms of violence against women and developing targeted measures to effectively prosecute perpetrators.

WAVE is a strong civil society network, composed of 160 members in 46 European countries. As such, we see the need to open the discussion on the content of this draft-Directive to the scrutiny and active contribution of civil society and grassroots organizations. We call on the EU Commission and the European Parliament to engage in a consultation process that brings this Directive closer to the reality and needs of the women and women's organizations, directly



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impacted by male violence against women and girls. **We firmly believe that a strong EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence can be created if the voices of both decision-makers and civil society are included in the final text.**

Our 28 years of experience as a feminist network have clearly demonstrated to us that **sustainable solutions to prevent and tackle male violence against women and girls only come about when the voices of women are included in those solutions.** Hence, WAVE calls on the recognition of Women's Specialist Support Services (WSS) as the experts they are. Our members, as first and secondary responders to violence, hold decades' worth of expertise and know-how to best advise on the adoption and implementation of adequate policies and programs to prevent and address violence against women at the national level. They also hold the trust of women and girls and are key community members, who must have a place in the monitoring and implementing mechanisms of this Directive.

The WAVE network of experts will actively contribute to the forthcoming discussions on the Directive and will advocate for the voices of all women, in particular black women, ethnicized and racialized women, LGBTQI+ women, women with dis/abilities, migrant and refugee women, and otherwise marginalized women; as well as women's organizations to be included in the final version of the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The WAVE Network