

# Press release – COVID-19: Stopping the rise in domestic violence during Lockdown



Both globally and in some EU countries, it has been [reported](#) that cases of domestic violence rose by a third in the week after lockdown was put in place. Women in violent relationships are stuck at home and exposed to their abuser for longer periods of time. This makes it very difficult for them to call helplines, as the perpetrator is always around.

Reacting to this situation, [Evelyn Regner](#) (S&D, AT), Chair of the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, declared: "These days and the weeks ahead are especially dangerous for women. We are all facing major psychological challenges through isolation or quarantine, but women and sometimes children in unsafe homes are facing a particularly gruelling stress test. We, therefore, must now pay particular attention to this issue and expand our actions to stop violence against women."

## **"We won't leave Europe's women alone"**

"I urge all EU member states to tackle this problem with determination and to communicate actively where and how those affected can get help. This must also include simple ways to contact and to alert the police, such as text messages or online chats, and the use of code words with doctors or pharmacists. In addition, more places in violence protection facilities and women's shelters must be made available. Wherever possible, the EU must support member states' measures financially and by helping them to communicate about these measures", she added.

"The COVID-19 pandemic starkly highlights gender inequality in all its shapes and forms. As [OECD figures](#) show, 70% of the health care workforce are women, a large part of unpaid care work is done by women and the upcoming

economic crisis will hit women much harder. It is our job to sustainably strengthen the physical and mental health of women and their economic independence, beyond the COVID-19 crisis. We will certainly not leave Europe's women alone", she concluded.

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## Article – Covid-19: watch out for online scams and unfair practices



As more people are staying at home due to self-isolation and social distancing, online shopping is on the rise. While we try to protect ourselves and our families from the virus, some traders are taking advantage of that anxiety to sell fake cures or products that allegedly prevent infection at very high prices.

False claims can be about anything from masks and caps to drugs and hand sanitiser – erroneously labelled as the only cure for coronavirus or the only protection against the coronavirus – and sold at many times their actual worth. Traders also use other tricks, such as falsely claiming that the products are scarce to push consumers into buying.

## What to look out for

There are some giveaways that you can look out for. If you see any of the claims listed below, be on your guard:

- Explicit or implicit claims that a product can prevent or cure Covid-19
- The use of unofficial sources, such as self-declared doctors to back up claims
- The use of names or logo of government authorities, official experts or international institutions that have allegedly endorsed them, but with no hyperlinks or references to official documents
- Claims that the product is: “only available today”, “sells out fast”, etc.
- Sweeping claims such as: “lowest price on the market”, “only product that can cure Covid-19 infection” etc.
- Exorbitant prices due to the alleged healing powers of the products

If you come across unsupported or misleading claims on an online platform, use the platform operators’ reporting tool to inform them of that fact. Be aware that sometimes they can be innocently shared by a friend or family member who has been fooled and thinks they are helping you.

Always look at reliable sources for information about the coronavirus: national governments, health authorities or international organisations such as the [World Health Organization](#).

## What the EU is doing

To tackle the issue of online scams surrounding the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission and consumer protection authorities in the member states have launched a number of joint measures. On 20 March, [these authorities issued a common position on the most reported scams and unfair practices](#) to help online platforms better identify such illegal practices, take them down and prevent the reappearance of similar ones.

On 23 March, Didier Reynders, the commissioner responsible for justice and consumers, [wrote to various platforms, social media, search engines and market places](#) to ask for their their cooperation in taking down scams such as fake cures for the coronavirus from their platforms.

Certain practices are prohibited in the EU, thanks thanks to the [Unfair Commercial Practices Directive](#), including deceiving consumers about the benefits or results expected from a product, claiming it can cure an illness or saying that it is available for a limited time only. Any claim made by a trader that their product can cure an illness needs to be backed up by evidence. Platform operators active in the EU who become aware of illegal activity taking place on their websites are [obliged to intervene](#).

The European Parliament is also committed to protecting Europeans when they are online.

[Discover the European Parliament's work on roaming, net neutrality, innovation, e-commerce and geo-blocking.](#)

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## [Persistent Roma inequality increases COVID-19 risk, human rights heads say](#)



“Already before the pandemic, many Member States failed to bring about real noticeable change for Europe’s Roma communities,” says FRA Director Michael O’Flaherty pointing to [earlier research](#). “With the current EU Roma strategy ending this year, the EU and its Member States must act in future to end the longstanding Roma discrimination and marginalisation that this pandemic regrettably is bringing into sharp relief.”

To counter the rapid spread of COVID-19, governments urge people to maintain physical distances, self-quarantine and regularly wash their hands with soap and water.

However, washing is a challenge for 30% of Roma because they live in households with no tap water, as [FRA reports](#).

Up to 80% of Roma in some countries also live in cramped Roma neighbourhoods with overcrowded housing. This makes physical distancing, a key element of public health measures, close to impossible.

At the same time, quarantine and physical distancing measures are likely to push many Roma further into poverty. Many work in low paid jobs often without social security that depend on contact with other people or involve travel such as collecting scrap material.

“Besides the pandemic and all the health problems it creates, governments are likely to find themselves facing a serious economic and social crisis,” says ODIHR Director Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. “Roma are particularly at risk, as well as others who are already vulnerable or are now in danger of slipping into poverty because of the current situation. Governments therefore have an important and urgent responsibility to develop comprehensive and inclusive plans of support – and make sure they are implemented.”

Amid media reports that the pandemic is worsening [discrimination and anti-Gypsyism](#), ODIHR is systematically monitoring the effect of government emergency measures on Roma communities. This complements its work on assisting countries across the 57 countries of the OSCE region to [increase the inclusion of Roma communities](#) and combat racism and discrimination.

Buying medication, facemasks and other forms of protective equipment is also a major challenge: within the EU alone, where most Roma live, 80% are at risk of poverty. This compares with the EU poverty average of 17%.

Access to basic services, such as doctors or pharmacies, may also prove difficult because they are often scarce in Roma neighbourhoods. And in times of lockdown, visiting other areas may be discouraged.

FRA research identifies local engagement practices with [Roma communities that already exist](#). Health mediators can play a pivotal role in responding to this crisis. They are among the few who have trusted access to the most marginalised people. They build constructive dialogue with communities.

As participation and empowerment are key ingredients to sustainable inclusion, such examples should be replicated, and be integral to any future strategy. To move forward, poverty reduction is key. This includes eliminating segregated housing, better access to public utilities like electricity and water as well as more social housing.

The coronavirus pandemic underlines how persistent inequalities have left many Roma in an even more precarious situation than they usually face. Roma communities require urgent and immediate assistance so they can effectively protect themselves against the onslaught of the COVID-19 disease that is underway now, and its economic and social consequences.

International Roma Day, established in 1990, marks the date of the first international meeting of Roma representatives across Europe, on 8 April 1971 in Chelsfield in the United Kingdom.

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## **Press release following the video conference of 6 April between Presidents Michel, von der Leyen, Lagarde and Centeno**

Ahead of tomorrow's meeting of the members of the Eurogroup, President of the European Council Charles Michel convened and chaired a videoconference with the Presidents of the European Commission, the ECB and the Eurogroup this afternoon.

The presidents reviewed progress made in the EU's economic response to the COVID-19 crisis.

"There is a lot of room for solidarity within the existing instruments and institutions. We have to exploit these tools fully and remain open to doing more. A strong package is in the making. Our goal is clear: we will protect European citizens and businesses from the economic impact of the pandemic."

The Eurogroup will be following up on the leaders' mandate and is expected to present concrete proposals. As President of the Euro Summit, Michel is following these discussions closely. Intensive technical work has been carried out over the last ten days.

"The EU budget, the Single Market and unparalleled levels of investment, especially green and digital, are all part of the answer. On the "day after", the economic recovery in all Member States has to be as quick and strong as possible. The EU's response will help to lay the ground in that regard. We call on all members of the Eurogroup to look at all possible instruments in a resourceful and constructive way."

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## **Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures**

# against Syria

On 17 February 2020, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2020/212<sup>[1]</sup> implementing Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP.

The Council Decision adds eight natural persons and two entities to the list of natural and legal persons, entities or bodies subject to restrictive measures in Annex I to Decision 2013/255/CFSP.

The Candidate Countries Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania<sup>[2]</sup>, the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this decision.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Published on 17.02.2020 in the Official Journal of the European Union no L 43 I, p.6.

<sup>[2]</sup> Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.