

# Cities and regions to adopt a zero tolerance policy for violence against women and girls



*□ On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, local and regional leaders call for legislative measures and adequate resources to prevent and combat violence against women*

Wednesday 25 November is [the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#). On this occasion, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has reiterated its call to adopt legislative measures at EU level to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and girls. According to the United Nation database by September 2020, 48 countries had integrated prevention and response to violence against women and girls into their COVID-19 response plans, and 121 countries had adopted measures to strengthen services for women survivors of violence during the global crisis.

In her opening statement to the members of the CoR's SEDEC Commission, SEDEC Chair Anne Karjalainen (FI/PES) said: "Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations across the world. On this very special day, may I invite you all, in your role as local and regional politicians, to remain very vigilant, bearing in mind that violence against women remains largely unreported due to the impunity, silence, stigma and shame surrounding it. The only way forward is to adopt a zero tolerance policy for violence against women and girls."

One in 3 women and girls experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, daily 137 women are killed by a member of their family, 1 in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15 and 71% of all human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines have shown that all types of violence against women and girls have intensified. Anne Karjalainen underlines: "25 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, we see women's rights still coming under attack everywhere in the world, but also within the European Union, from sexual and reproductive rights to work-life balance and from the right to protest to economic and political empowerment. As European Committee of the Regions, we strongly condemn these violations of women's rights and we will work together with local and regional authorities to ensure that these rights are protected and strengthened everywhere in the EU."□

□ While COVID-19 and lockdown measures stop the spread of the coronavirus, they have intensified violence against women, especially domestic violence – in some countries, calls to helplines have increased five-fold. The [CoR's](#)

[Regional and Local Barometer 2020](#) – presented on 12 October – highlights a rise in the number of reported cases of domestic violence during the lockdown, though no comparable EU-wide data set is yet available. Some countries, such as Lithuania, observed 20% more domestic violence over a three-week lockdown period. In Spain, the emergency number for domestic violence received 18% more calls in the first two weeks of lockdown. Regional authorities in Spain shared an [action guide for women suffering gender violence while staying at home](#). The city of Amsterdam in coordination with the national government set up a system in which victims of domestic violence were able to reach out to their pharmacy by using the code words ‘mask 19’.

Concha Andreu (ES/PES), President of La Rioja Region and CoR rapporteur on the EU’s [Gender Equality Strategy](#), said: “This year’s International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is bleaker since we are confronted with aggravated cases of gender-based violence due to the lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Local and regional authorities urgently need to be endowed with adequate resources to effectively assist victims through appropriate support services. What is more, they must be involved in a structured way in the EU network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence that will be launched as part of the Gender Equality Strategy.”

“The [CoR opinion](#) on the Gender Equality Strategy invites the Commission to adopt legislative measures aimed at preventing and combating violence against women that are consistent and complementary to international and Member State legislation, and that address all forms of violence, including online violence and violence related to honour issues. It urges the European Commission to include all forms of violence against women and girls in the ‘Eurocrimes’ set out in Article 83 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,” added Andreu.

Background:

The United Nations General Assembly has designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Resolution 54/134). The premise of the day is to raise awareness of the fact that women around the world are subject to rape, domestic violence and other forms of violence. For 2014, the official Theme framed by the UN Secretary-General’s campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, is Orange your Neighbourhood. For 2018, the official theme is “Orange the World: #HearMeToo” and for 2019 it is “Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape”. This year’s theme for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is [“Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!”](#). Like in previous years, this year’s International Day will mark the launch of [16 days of activism](#) that will conclude on 10 December 2020, which is International Human Rights Day.

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