

# [Muslims in the EU: High levels of trust despite pervasive discrimination](#)

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## [JOINT COMMUNIQUE between the United Nations and European Union on the launch of the Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate violence against women and girls](#)

Today more than ever, when the world is facing countless challenges, we – the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) – want to strengthen and build on our strategic partnership. We believe in effective multilateralism, and a global order based on rules, agreed together and respected by all. We are firmly committed to promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development, and other shared values and principles.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with an unprecedented opportunity for progress, with its 17 Goals (SDGs) as an integrated set of common imperatives. This global framework is reinforced by the new European Consensus on Development. Building on this strategic partnership, today we stand together to reaffirm our resolute and unwavering commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

The promotion of gender equality, enjoyment of human rights by all as well as women's and girls' empowerment, are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Not only through the stand-alone SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peaceful societies, but also as a cross-cutting element central to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

Translating our firm commitment into concrete action, it is with great pride

and a shared sense of responsibility that we are launching today the Spotlight Initiative – focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) to make a real and lasting difference for millions of women and girls all over the world.

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VAWG is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries. This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs. Global and continuous engagement is therefore required in all countries and regions to overcome it.

To deliver on this urgent priority, the UN and the EU will bring together our comparative advantages by pooling capacities, resources, expertise and current efforts. We will engage in a renewed policy dialogue with partner countries and organisations around the world. A financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million – with the EU as the principal contributor at this stage – will support our targeted actions over the next few years. To scale up and broaden its reach, we invite other donors to join this initiative.

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The Spotlight Initiative aims at achieving transformational change at the regional level, concentrating our efforts in Asia, the Pacific region, Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa), Latin America and the Caribbean. Guided by evidence, we will focus strategically on the most prevalent forms of VAWG in different regions, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; specific forms of domestic and family violence; femicide; trafficking in human beings; and economic (labour) exploitation.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to “leave no-one behind”.

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We – the UN and the EU – will continue to work tirelessly around the world, and in all fora, to empower women and girls, defend their rights, strengthen their voice, and ensure their safety and full control over their own bodies and their own destinies, while motivating others, including governments and civil society organisations, to partner with us in this important endeavour.

The Spotlight Initiative provides a unique and unprecedented opportunity for all of our partners to help us collectively step up our efforts to combat VAWG, promote gender equality and build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all.

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## EU and UN team up to eliminate violence against women and girls

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative was launched by the EU High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica, together with the UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed.

Speaking at the launch, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated: “It is a harsh but true reality – 1 in 3 women will face violence throughout their lifetime. Violence against women and girls devastates lives, and causes pain across generations. “The Spotlight Initiative is truly historic,” he added. “This Fund is a pioneering investment in gender equality and women’s empowerment. When we shine a spotlight on the empowerment of the world’s women and girls, everyone’s future is brighter.”

EU High Representative Federica **Mogherini** noted: “The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality. We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential.”

Commissioner **Mimica** added: “Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which crosses all borders, generations, nationalities and communities. It deeply touches our hearts and our minds. And it is a serious barrier to any society’s full development potential. To make a real change, I invite all partners to join our Spotlight Initiative for a world in which all women and girls can truly shine!”

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, with the EU as its main contributor in the order of half a billion Euro, which is open to other donors.

Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence. Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to ‘leave no-one behind’. It will aim at galvanizing political commitments at

the highest level and at providing large-scale targeted support, as well as at building new partnerships. It will also raise awareness of the widespread, persistent and detrimental impact of violence against women and girls.

### **Background**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. Overall more than a billion lives today are touched by violence. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries.

Moreover, more than 700 million women worldwide were married as children before 18. Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—before the age of 15. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation in 30 countries.

This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Spotlight Initiative is an expression of the same political will that was demonstrated by the international community in adopting the SDGs, with standalone Goal 5 on Gender Equality and specific targets on ending violence against women and girls, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality across the entire SDG framework.

The New European Consensus on Development, the EU's new global approach to sustainable development for the years ahead, also underlines the commitment of the EU and all its Member States to gender equality.

For more information on the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, please visit: [www.un.org/spotlight-initiative](http://www.un.org/spotlight-initiative)

See also the [Q&A \(MEMO\)](#) and the [EU-UN Joint Communiqué](#).

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## **Questions and Answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls**

**What is the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls?**

The EU and the UN have launched a new partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. It galvanises political commitment at the

highest levels and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically [Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#). It will do so by building new multi-stakeholder partnerships and providing large-scale, targeted support, backed by an initial dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million.

The Initiative will focus on all forms of violence against women and girls that are prevalent and contribute to gender inequality. Its focus is on: domestic and family violence; sexual and gender-based violence; harmful practices; and trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation.

### **How many women and girls are victims of violence?**

Violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations: 35% of women worldwide are estimated to have experienced at some point in their lives either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner. In some countries, this figure goes up to 70%.

Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—were married before the age of 15.

About 70% of all human trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls.

At least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting in 30 countries.

Around 120 million girls worldwide (over 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends.

### **What are the consequences of violence against women and girls?**

The impact of violence ranges from immediate to long term physical, sexual and mental health consequences for women and girls, including death.

It also has tremendous personal, societal and economic costs all around the globe: from greater health care and legal expenses to productivity losses.

### **What are the root causes of violence against women and girls?**

Violence against women and girls is a complex issue that is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, as well as unequal power relations between men and women which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world.

Low economic and social status of women increases the risk of violence that women face. Increasing economic independence is important to help survivors leave abusive relationships.

Prevention work must lie at the core of addressing this challenge. But despite some promising practices, prevention interventions remain small-scale, fragmented and stand-alone activities, under-resourced and lacking impact evaluation.

### **Are there reliable data to show the prevalence of violence against women and girls?**

Understanding the extent, the nature, and the consequences of violence against women and girls is important to inform legislation, policies and programmes. To that end, the EU and UN Member States have made efforts to collect data and compile statistics related to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls, especially domestic and intimate partner violence.

The availability of prevalence data on violence against women and girls, however, remains uneven across and within countries. Quality, reliability and comparability of the data across and within countries remain a challenge.

### **What is needed to end and prevent violence against women and girls?**

A comprehensive approach is needed, involving a wide range of stakeholders. It must cover the development of laws and policies, prevention of violence before it happens and access to essential services for survivors, as well as include data collection and research.

Social mobilisation is also necessary to change social norms and behaviours, including men and boys, traditional and religious leaders, private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

Awareness-raising campaigns on the extent and impact of violence are an important component of prevention efforts. They need to be complemented with educational programmes and community mobilization to generate sustained results.

Increasing women's participation in political processes has shown to result in better legislative outcomes for women and a more responsive state.

Additionally, perhaps the greatest indicator of strong legislation on ending violence against women has been correlated with the existence of a strong women's civil society movement.

### **What is the UN doing to end and prevent violence against women and girls?**

UN entities continue to support the Member States of the UN to further advance the global legal and policy framework in addressing violence against women and girls.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which is managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System, provides support to innovative approaches to stem and prevent the pandemic of violence. Since its inception, the fund has provided grants to 426 initiatives in 136 countries, amounting to a total of USD 116 million.

The UN Secretary General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, which amongst its many activities initiated Orange Day, proclaims every 25th of the month as a day to raise awareness. It has garnered support for other high-profile initiatives from celebrities, including sports stars in Europe, to raise the profile of the issue.

### **What is the EU doing to end and prevent violence against women and girls?**

The EU's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 has set an ambitious target to mainstream gender actions across 85% of all new EU initiatives by 2020. Progress is undeniable:

92% of all new initiatives adopted in area of the EU's foreign policy and around 60% of all new initiatives adopted in the EU's International cooperation and development work have been marked as mainly or significantly aiming at promoting gender equality and/or women empowerment.

In 2016, the European Commission committed EUR 419 million for specific actions for gender equality and women's empowerment. Among the programmes, the EU funded a specific action targeting 16 Sub-Saharan countries focusing on female genital mutilation. The support (EUR 12 million to a joint programme led by UNFPA and UNICEF) aimed at engaging with civil society organization men and boys, traditional leaders etc., as to change the social norms which make the mutilation so largely practiced.

Data for 2017 have to be released but the EU is supporting different programmes to fight against violence against women and girls. In Zambia, for instance EUR 25 million have been allocated to a programme aiming at strengthening the institutional capacity of the national authorities to fight against sexual and gender based violence, to prevent it, to change the social norms and mind set which lead to discrimination and violence, and to improve access to comprehensive services for victims. In very recently, a large programme to fight against domestic violence has been adopted for the Pacific region (EUR 13 million)

Today, the EU has launched the Spotlight initiative together with the UN, showing with this its firm commitment against all forms of violence against women and girls.

### **What has the EU achieved?**

The EU is working together with UNFPA and UNICEF to fight Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage in 16 African countries. This is done through an innovative approach aimed at changing social norms and attitudes. The EU provided support to organise large-scale community discussion sessions based on human rights, collective decision-making in communities and extended social networks, and community and district-wide public declarations for the abandonment of FGM/C.

These activities are starting to bear fruits: with EU and support from other international organisations, **Senegal** is close to becoming the first country in the world to declare total abandonment of FGM/C. Between 2008 and 2011,

the number of villages declaring abandonment increased from 300 to 5,315, about 550 communities or a 16% increase per year. The project has led to comparable successes in **Egypt** and **Sudan**.

In **Pakistan** a project is being implemented to fight poverty through women's empowerment and community mobilisation, building social capital for better access to basic services and income generation. This is done by providing social guidance, technical and financial assistance to the rural poor in Sindh. This programme is expected to increase by 30% and diversify the incomes of over 700 000 targeted households, as well as to deliver access to public services, such as water, education and health for 70% of the targeted households.

The new EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, backed by a dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million, will enable multi-stakeholders to intensify action in mutually reinforcing core areas of strengthening legislation and policies, institutions, prevention, services and data at national level, advancing SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

### **What actions are partner countries taking to end violence against women and girls?**

There has been a growing momentum to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. Governments have adopted international and regional policy and legal agreements, such as the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

At least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, 125 have laws on sexual harassment and 52 have laws on marital rape.

The Spotlight Initiative will build on this progress to help eliminate violence against women and girls.

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## **EU increases humanitarian aid budget for education of children in emergencies**

The European Commission has announced today it will further increase the part of humanitarian funding dedicated to getting children into education in crisis zones around the world. In 2018, 8% of the EU's humanitarian budget will go to education in emergencies, which is far above the global average of less than 3%.

*"The EU is a global leader in supporting education in emergencies. Concretely this means giving children in some of the most difficult situations in the*



*world an opportunity for the future. As I have travelled to many crises zones, from refugee camps to areas devastated by natural disasters, it is always clear that education is much more than a human right or a basic need. It is safety, dignity and a shield against radicalisation. By supporting education we are making the biggest investment we can in the future of the most vulnerable. We are investing in peace.”* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** during [a High Level Education Event](#), organised in the margins of the UN General Assembly 2017 in New York.

The EU’s contribution in 2018 of over €86 million will support access to formal and non-formal education, including life skills and vocational training, recreational activities and psychosocial support for girls and boys in crisis areas around the world. Several EU projects will be focussed on girls; giving them access to education and helping them learn life and vocational skills. Children will also benefit from the provision of school materials and the creation of new learning spaces. Teachers and parents will also be supported and benefit from training.

Commissioner Stylianides has made education in emergencies a priority since the beginning of his mandate, continuing to increase the EU’s financial support to education projects for children affected by crises every year since he took office. EU support allocated to education in emergencies went from 1% of its humanitarian budget in 2015 to 6% in 2017 and will eventually go to 8% in 2018. This aid has reached 4 million children and teachers in 50 countries between 2012-2016.

The EU’s humanitarian aid will be channelled through non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies and International Organisations to reach the most vulnerable.

## **Background**

Today, some 75 million children living in crisis-affected countries and forced displacement lack access to quality education.

By the end of 2016, nearly 4 million boys and girls in 50 countries around the world have benefitted from these in Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen.

EU-funded educational activities are tailored to take into account the different needs of children based on their age, gender and other specific circumstances.

In March 2017, the EU launched its largest ever humanitarian programme for education in emergencies. This €34 million Conditional Cash Transfer

Programme will enable some 230, 000 refugee children to attend school in Turkey.

**For more information**

[Factsheet on Education in Emergencies](#)

[The European Commission's European civil protection and humanitarian aid](#)