

Pandemic underlines why domestic violence requires urgent action



During the lockdown of the first COVID-19 wave, police, women's shelters and non-governmental organisations reported a surge in domestic violence, especially targeting women. The second wave and associated lockdown are likely to see similar patterns with women at increased risk of domestic violence.

Even as people emerge from lockdowns, challenges remain. Loss of earnings and jobs are likely to provoke further harassment and violence.

Economic dependency may lead some women to remain trapped in abusive relationships, unable to leave.

FRA's [EU-wide survey on violence against women](#) shows that nearly 1 in 3 women who find it difficult to make ends meet experienced intimate partner violence. This compares with almost 1 in 5 women who do not struggle to make ends meet.

Throughout the pandemic, many EU countries were quick to act. They established counselling support and sheltered victims in hotel rooms. At the same time, they launched awareness campaigns promoting hotline numbers.

While this was welcomed, it also highlighted inadequacies that remain.

The Council of Europe's landmark [Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) is already in its sixth year. The EU said it will accede to it and 21 EU Member States have signed it. The others should follow suit.

The Convention provides a clear roadmap on what the EU and its Member States need to do. It is a launchpad for further action to end this widespread human rights abuse.

The European Commission's proposal to add violence against women on the list of EU crimes adds further weight to the drive to end such violence.

It is now high time for governments to act. The police, justice and health sectors need to work together to prevent violence and support victims.

This requires adequate resources and relevant training. It requires urgent action if we are to bolster measures to end violence against women.