

# Better together: Robust upward convergence in employment and socioeconomic conditions strengthens the future of Europe



**Strong upward convergence in employment and socioeconomic conditions has emerged between EU Member States over the past 20 years despite the negative effects of the economic crisis, according to new research from Eurofound. 'Upward convergence in employment and socioeconomic factors' provides an in-depth look at the issue of upward convergence – a trend whereby Member States' performance improves, while the gaps between Member States diminish. These trends paint an increasingly positive picture of progress in the European Union at this critical juncture.**

Sometimes regarded as a niche or technical domain, convergence is an area of intrinsic public interest as it underpins the fundamental EU objective of improving the lives of citizens and reducing inequality in Europe. Achieving upward convergence is of critical importance to the European Union at this time as increasing disparities among Member States potentially threaten cohesion by counteracting citizens' expectations that EU membership tangibly improve working and living conditions. Eurofound's new report is based on 21 indicators related closely to the Social Scoreboard of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Two different dynamics of upward convergence can be identified: one is the steady and robust trends over the entire period considered, in terms of improvement in levels and reduction of disparities among Member States (for indicators such as education and gender gaps, as well as the activity rate). The other is the cyclical trends exhibiting a considerable degree of correlation with the business cycle, both in terms of averages and variability (for indicators such as labour market participation and exclusion, as well as poverty).

For those indicators showing upward convergence in good times (with improvements and lower dispersion) and downward divergence in bad times (with deterioration in levels and higher dispersion), non-euro zone countries converge more quickly than their euro zone counterparts. These are the areas in which Member States should become more resilient in order to avoid future asymmetric shocks.

The report also notes the importance of regional aspects of convergence, in addition to differences between Member States. It found that disparities in socioeconomic and labour market indicators are generally greater among EU regions than between countries, which see a more pronounced convergence process.

The report analyses two proposals to facilitate social and economic convergence: the European unemployment insurance (EUI) scheme, and the European minimum wage (EMW). It projects that an EUI scheme would promote both macroeconomic risk reduction and convergence in socioeconomic conditions for the unemployed. However, there are potential pitfalls and difficulties in implementation that would need to be tackled. The EMW could potentially support greater convergence in disposable incomes and reduce the number of working poor but risks negatively impacting youth and low-skilled employment, as well as impact the autonomy of national and social partners in wage determination.

Eurofound's research is part of the continuous monitoring of upward convergence required to reduce economic and social inequality between Member States. Taking into account the challenges that Europe currently faces, effective policy measures are required to strengthen Member States' resilience and avoid asymmetric propagation of further macro-economic shocks.

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## [Commission experts support the development of 13 Bulgarian research and innovation centres](#)

Commission experts from the [Joint Research Centre](#) will provide support and guidance to 13 Bulgarian research and innovation centres to help them bring their innovative ideas to the market, facilitate the transfer and dissemination of knowledge and strengthen both their ties with businesses and their participation in European and international cooperation projects.

The experts will also help the 13 centres improve their legal, managerial and operational frameworks, deal with state aid issues and identify financing opportunities including through EU funds.

Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy, Enlargement Negotiations and Regional Policy, Johannes **Hahn** said: *"The development of these 13 EU-funded centres and the support provided by the Commission will improve the performance of Bulgaria's innovation system. This will help local researchers turn their work into projects with high value added, for the economy and for the people, and offers them the potential to promote their innovative approach at a global scale."*

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, said: *"Bringing together local authorities, academia, business and civil society is key to identify the best ways for EU funds to boost local economies and foster development. This evidence-based, inclusive approach to policy-making has an excellent track record in enabling Europe's regions to focus on their strengths and*

*priorities.”*

The 13 centres include four “centres of excellence” i.e. fundamental research institutions and nine “centres of competence”, focused on applied research activities with potential for industrial uptake. It concerns sectors such as mechatronics, digital technologies, creative and gaming industries and biotechnology and other areas in line with the priorities of Bulgaria’s [smart specialisation strategy](#), its industrial and innovation strategy based on local competitive strengths.

This support project will be carried out until June 2020, with an additional budget of €250,000 from the European Regional Development Fund, in addition to the €170 million, earmarked for research and innovation under from [the 2014-2020 Bulgarian ‘Science and Education for Smart Growth’ EU funds programme](#). The results of the initiative will contribute to the design of the new [Cohesion Policy programmes for 2021-2027 period](#) and to Bulgaria’s efforts to modernise its research and innovation ecosystem.

## **Background**

The Commission, through the Joint Research Centre, has previously helped improve the operational capacity of the [Sofia Tech Park](#), a science and technology park in Bulgaria, also co-financed by the EU budget.

The Commission is assisting Member States and regions in designing and implementing their [smart specialisation strategies](#) and through the [smart specialisation platform](#). In addition, in 2017 the Commission launched [an initiative](#) supporting 12 Member States and regions in industrial transition. Commission experts sat down with national and regional authorities to help them diagnose what was holding back job creation and growth and embrace the innovation needed to hold their own in a globalised economy.

The project [EU4TECH “Capacity building in Technology transfer for the Western Balkans”](#) funded through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance is helping 15 local universities develop capacity for innovation and technology transfer.

**For More information**

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# **[Press release – Hearings of the Commissioners-designate](#)**

## **Structure of the hearings**

The detailed schedule of the hearings can be found [here](#).

Each hearing lasts three hours. The Commissioner-designate will make a 15-minute introductory statement, which will be followed by questions from MEPs. There will be 25 questions altogether: one minute per question, followed by a three-minute answer from the Commissioner-designate and a possible follow-up question from the MEP.

If the portfolio of a Commissioner-designate falls entirely within the remit of one parliamentary committee, only that committee will be involved in the hearing (committee responsible). Hearings may, however, involve more than one parliamentary committee. In that case, he/she shall be heard jointly by those committees (joint committees) or by associated committees with overlapping competences.

### **Evaluation of the hearings**

The Chair and group representatives (coordinators) of the committees concerned will meet straight after the hearings (or the next morning if the hearings take place in the evening) to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner-designate in question.

Within 24 hours of completing the evaluation, coordinators will send a confidential letter of recommendation to the Conference of Committee Chairs, stating whether a candidate is qualified both to be Member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the assigned duties.

Committee coordinators may reach consensus to recommend a Commissioner-designate for approval by plenary. If opinions diverge, the backing of coordinators representing at least two-thirds of the committee membership is necessary.

If coordinators cannot reach a two-thirds majority, they shall first request additional information through further written questions. If they are still dissatisfied, they shall resume the hearing (up to 1.5 hours and subject to the approval of the Conference of Presidents) to clarify outstanding issues.

Then, coordinators will either approve the Commissioner-designate by at least a two-thirds majority or if they fail to do so, the chair will convene a committee meeting and hold a secret vote on the candidate's suitability, requiring only a simple majority to be recommended for approval.

### **Outcome and closing of all hearings**

On 15 October, the Conference of Committee Chairs will assess the outcome of all hearings and forward its conclusions to the Conference of Presidents. The latter will conduct the final evaluation and declare the hearings closed on 17 October, after having analysed the evaluation letters from the committees in charge and the recommendation of the Conference of Committee Chairs. The Conference of Presidents also authorises the publication of the letters of evaluation, which are then published at the same time.

### **Plenary vote on 23 October**

After the hearings have been concluded, the Commission President-elect Ursula

von der Leyen will present the full College of Commissioners and its programme in plenary.

Her statement will be followed by a debate, and any political group or at least one-twentieth of Members of Parliament (low threshold) may table a motion for a resolution.

The full Commission needs the consent of Parliament (by a majority of the votes cast).

The vote (by roll call) is set to take place on 23 October. Once elected by Parliament, the Commission is formally appointed by the European Council, acting by a qualified majority.

### **Audiovisual services and webstreaming**

All hearings are public and can be followed live. You can watch them on EP Live [here](#).

Parliament's Multimedia Centre will provide HD quality videos, high-resolution photos and audio material (grouped by hearing in "media packages")

HD quality videos can be downloaded within 30 minutes of the start of the hearings (live replays) and a selection of high-quality photos will be available for download.

A new media work area (*passerelle Karamanlis*) is available with connectivity for live broadcasting through your own means. All requests for a spot must be addressed to [avplanning@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:avplanning@europarl.europa.eu)

There will be an area for camera crews and photographers at the back of each room where a live broadcast signal will be available.

### **Meeting rooms and listening rooms**

The last row in the rooms where the hearings will take place will be reserved for the media. However, seats cannot be reserved individually in advance and will be attributed inside the room on a first-come, first-served basis. Journalists are strongly advised to arrive in good time, as places cannot be guaranteed once the hearing has begun. Those wishing to leave the room before the end of the hearing are also invited to do so quietly via the rear exit.

Two listening rooms will be made available to follow the hearings live on big screens, should there be insufficient space in the room itself. Those are: JAN 4Q1 and JAN 6Q2.

### **Accreditation and access**

No special accreditation is necessary during the hearings. Journalists holding an inter-institutional badge or annual badge delivered by the Parliament can enter Parliament's premises as they always do.

The entrance to the JAN building, in which the hearings will take place, will

be open until 22.00. Parliament's main entrance on Rue Wiertz will be open 24/7, as will the parking. The cafeteria in the JAN building will also be open until 22.30 for refreshments.

For direct access to the hearings, you are advised to use the JAN entrance. Alternatively, Parliament's entrance for press/visitors in the PHS building will be open throughout the week with a dedicated channel for representatives of the media.

Those who do not have a badge need to request short-term accreditation through Parliament's [registration website](#), and collect their badges at the press accreditation office PHS-1C029 in Brussels (Paul-Henri Spaak building, Rue Wiertz, press entrance).

Opening hours of the accreditation office during the hearings period:

Monday 30 September – Thursday 3 October 08:30 – 19:30

Friday 4 October 08.30 – 13.00

Monday 7 October: 08.30 -17.45

Tuesday 8 October: 08.30 -19.30

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## [Questions and Answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls](#)



**Spotlight Initiative**  
To eliminate violence against women and girls

*Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:*



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

In September 2017, the EU and the UN launched an ambitious joint partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide. It aims at mobilising commitment of political leaders and contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically [Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#) and Goal 16 on inclusive and peaceful societies. It does so by building new multi-stakeholder partnerships and providing large-scale, targeted support, backed by an initial dedicated financial envelope from the EU of €500 million.

The Initiative aims at ending on all forms of violence against women and girls, targeting those that are most prevalent and contribute to gender inequality across the world.

The Spotlight Initiative will deploy targeted, large-scale investments in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, aimed at achieving significant improvements in the lives of women and girls.

### **Which countries are covered by the Spotlight Initiative around the world and which forms of violence?**

In **Africa**, Spotlight aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful practices. The programme worth €250 million is under implementation across Liberia, Malawi, Mali Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. It will also include a regional component to scale up existing initiatives on fighting female genital mutilation and child marriage and joint activities with the Africa Union.

In **Asia**, the Spotlight Initiative is focussing on ending female trafficking and labour exploitation. The “Safe and Fair” programme, worth €25 million and implemented through the International Labour Organization and UN Women, aims at ensuring that labour migration is safe and fair for all women in the ASEAN region. It focusses on countries of origin – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam – and countries of destination – Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Further, €32 million are devoted to projects addressing gender-based violence in “forgotten crises”. The initiative is now rolling out and includes activities in Yemen, Iraq and Palestine, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Sudan, Mali and Chad; Ghana, Liberia and Mali.

In **Latin America**, the €50 million initiative focuses on ending femicide, with targeted programmes in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, and on empowering regional networks.

The **Pacific** regional Spotlight programme was launched last March with a budget of €50 million and focuses on ending domestic violence in the region.

This will be followed by actions to tackle family violence in the **Caribbean region**, supported by an envelope of €50 million; the countries selected are Haiti, Jamaica, Grenada, Belize, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing today on the Pacific region and on domestic violence?**

The Family Health and Safety Studies (FHSS) conducted by UNFPA across 11 Pacific countries show the high rates of violence against women and girls in the region: e.g. 68% of women in Kiribati, and 64% of women in Fiji and Solomon Islands experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime. In Timor-Leste, a 2016 Asia Foundation prevalence study found that 59% of women experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime [\[1\]](#). In Solomon Islands, 37% of women report that they have been sexually abused before age 15. The most common

perpetrators were: boyfriend (36%), stranger (24%), family member (20%) and male friend of family (16%). Many incidents of sexual violence involve young girls and children living with extended family, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, e.g. children from outer islands sent to live in urban centres to complete secondary education.

The objective therefore is to intervene to prevent violence against women and girls addressing the root causes of gender inequality and of violence: with activities like advocacy for policy and legislative reform where needed, and law enforcement. Prevention through formal and informal education, community based dialogue and initiatives; involving men, especially traditional leaders and faith-based organisations; access to quality services (health, social services, police and justice) for the victims; training and capacity building targeting teachers, lawyers, social workers, police forces, civil servants; media campaign to change perception.

The programme can count on an envelope of €50 million.

### **Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing on Africa and why FGM and child marriage?**

FGM and child marriage have reached epidemic levels in Africa. Female genital mutilation has been documented in 30 countries, mainly in Africa. Based on rigorous evaluation of criteria the following countries were selected under the Spotlight Initiative: Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

### **Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing on femicide in Latin America?**

Femicide has reached epidemic levels in Latin America. The region is home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world, where 12 women assassinated every day.

The Spotlight Initiative in Latin America will focus on eliminating femicide in five countries: Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. These countries were selected on the basis of agreed criteria including the level of femicide prevalence in the country and secondary criteria, which assessed the government's commitment to the issue, in addition to an enabling environment including for civil society, national and partner capacities.

In 2016, there were 254 femicides in Argentina, 349 in El Salvador, 211 in Guatemala, 466 in Honduras and 2,813 in Mexico.

Femicide is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the region. Ninety-eight per cent of femicides in the region go unprosecuted.

### **What is FGM?**

Female genital mutilation consists of the (partial or complete) removal of the external female genitalia, and the infliction of other injuries to the female genitalia for no medical reasons. The EU contributes to eliminating FGM/C globally.



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### **About child marriage.**

Some 700 million girls and women alive today were married as children, and a further 280 million girls alive today will be married by age 18 if this issues is not tackled with urgency. This is one of the reasons forced child marriage was included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under goal number 5 on gender equality, on which the EU is a fierce defender and supporter together with many international partners.

### **What is femicide?**

Femicide is when a woman or girl falls victim to an attack and is killed merely because of her gender. It is rooted in gender inequality social, cultural or religious norms and attitudes within traditional societies.

### **What is the European Union doing concretely against gender-based violence in developing countries?**

The EU is strongly committed to gender equality, the empowerment of women of all ages and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls around the world. The European Consensus on Development identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical cross-cutting issue in EU development cooperation. The Agenda 2030 has put gender equality and women's empowerment firmly at the centre of the SDGs, 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. The EU's work is guided by the key objectives stipulated in the EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the new European Consensus on Development and the EU Gender Action Plan II.

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. Significant progress has been made:

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.

The actions supported by the EU around the world, include indicatively:

- Support to the UNFPA/UNICEF joint programme on ending female genital mutilation in 16 Sub-Saharan countries, aimed at engaging with civil society organizations, men and boys, traditional leaders etc., as to change the social norms, which make the mutilation so largely practiced.

(€12 million)

- In Zambia, 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. (€25 million)
- The EU has recently announced a €5 million financial support to the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Nadia Murad and Dr Denis Mukwege for concrete projects in favour of women who are victims of sexual violence. **5 projects aiming at fighting against sexual and gender-based violence** in the most remote areas and in forgotten crisis were contracted in December 2018 in the frame of the GPGC global call for proposals (**€32 million** in total). The projects' activities will take place in Bangladesh; Iraq, Palestine and Yemen; Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Sudan.
- In the Pacific, a regional programme to combat domestic violence (€13 million).
- In Latin America, two regional flagship programmes on women's empowerment and ending violence against women and girls is underway, and considered key for the inclusive and sustainable development of the region. (Under the Eurosocial+ and AI Invest 5.0 programmes (2016-2021, €32 million)
- In Uruguay, a programme establishing early warning systems for risk of gender violence and strengthening the role of female police officers.
- In Argentina, programmes have focused on establishing tools to prevent gender-based offenses.
- In Chile, programmes to reinforce and monitor the training plan for public agents to change the perceptions of violence against women and girls as intra-family violence, which is widespread and tolerated.
- In Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, a programme to support the elaboration of a permanent regional plan to combat gender violence by the Council of Ministers and the Democratic Security Commission of the Central American Integration System to combat gender violence.
- In Peru, a programme to create and implement the National Observatory and Regional Observatories of Violence against Women.

### **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 UNiTE campaign 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.

### **Is €500 million enough to end violence against the world's women and girls?**

No. The EU's initial investment of €500 million – the largest single commitment to eliminate violence against women ever – will serve as seed money to fund innovative and transformative programmes. Other donors and actors will need to join and support the Spotlight cause to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5. The EU, together with UN, is doing an extensive outreach for other potential donors to join and contribute additional funds, to allow widening the number of countries and regions to be included in the initiative.

### **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 around the world. Thirty-five percent 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%.

More than 700 million women alive today were married as children, in various parts of the world. 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 (FGM) 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.

### **Are there legal and policy frameworks 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.

### **What is different about the programmes under Spotlight?**

Studies have shown that well-designed and comprehensive programmes that reach the most marginalised women and girls can be effective in eliminating violence. Each Spotlight Initiative country programme is purposefully designed to address legislative and policy gaps, strengthen institutions, promote gender-equitable attitudes, provide quality services for survivors and reparations for victims of violence and their families, produce disaggregated data and empower women's movements, while leaving no one behind.

### **For more information**

[Press release – EU-UN Spotlight Initiative: at the forefront of ending violence against women and girls](#)

[Press release – Spotlight Initiative – EU and UN fight against domestic violence in the Pacific region](#)

[Press release – European Union and United Nations join forces to end femicide in Latin America under the Spotlight Initiative](#)

[EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#)

[Questions and Answers about Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting \(FGM/C\)](#)

<sup>[1]</sup> The Asia Foundation, 2016:

<http://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/nabilan-main-report-screen-2016-06-01.pdf>

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## [\*\*EU-UN Spotlight Initiative: at the forefront of ending violence against women and girls\*\*](#)

Today in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the European Union and the United Nations are hosting a high level event on the [EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#) – inviting all countries, leaders, civil society representatives and local ambassadors to join the movement and take action to end violence against women and girls.

Ahead of the event, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *“Violence against women is violence against the entire society – so the entire society must react to end it. The European Union is already by far the first investor in gender equality around the world, and together with our partners, we will continue to fight for women’s human rights.”*

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *“Over the last two years Spotlight has become a genuine movement. Thanks to the many survivors, activists, advocates, government and community leaders who have joined the initiative we are pushing ahead to end gender-based violence in all its forms. And to make sure that every woman and every girl, everywhere, is safe and free to realise her full potential.”*

Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed said: *“The Spotlight Initiative in partnership with national governments will also be introducing new country programmes for Afghanistan, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu in 2020. With our expanded global footprint, we can scale-up our collective efforts on violence prevention, protection and the provision of high-quality services, alongside broader efforts to ensure women’s economic empowerment and participation in all aspects of society.”*

Two years after its launch, the Spotlight Initiative’s activities are spanning the entire globe – thanks to the EU’s and UN’s engagement, and the

support of partner governments and civil society at all levels. 13 countries have already started implementing Spotlight programmes, and around 2/3 of the European Union's initial seed funding of €500 million have already been allocated.

In **Africa**, Spotlight aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful practices. The programme worth €250 million is under implementation across Liberia, Malawi, Mali Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. It will also include a regional component to scale up existing initiatives on fighting female genital mutilation and child marriage and joint activities with the Africa Union.

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## **Background**

Violence against women and girls still takes place every day, whether at home, at work, at school, in the street, or online. As many as 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

The European Union and the United Nations launched the Spotlight Initiative, a multi-year partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in September 2017.

The EU has offered initial seed funding of €500 million inviting other donors and partners to join the Initiative to broaden its reach and scope.

Public participation, ambitious political action that are built on evidence-based policies, as well as increased resources and knowledge generation are all vital to the Initiative.

## **For More Information**

[EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#)

[Questions and Answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls](#)

[Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy](#)

[New European Consensus on Development – 'Our world, our dignity, our future'](#)

[EU Gender Action Plan II \(2016 -2020\)](#)