

**Eliminating violence against women in Europe: intersectoral approaches and actions**  
**Vienna, 25 – 26 November 2013**  
**Scope and purpose**  
**Draft 4 September 2013**

Gender - based violence against women remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time. It is defined as violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender, and it reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women. Women and girls are the main victims of gender based violence<sup>1</sup>. It affects society as a whole, it has major public health consequences and it constitutes an obstacle to women's active participation in society.

WHO estimates that 1 in 4 women in the WHO European Region will experience violence on the basis of gender at one point in their lives.<sup>2</sup> Violence against women is present in all European countries and it is clear that it cannot be solved by only one sector. Policies and actions should involve all relevant sectors: judicial, educational, health sectors, police, media, civil society organisations and statistics offices. Policies and actions must be supported by reliable data on victims and perpetrators and on information on the access to services and on responses from institutions. This data should be disaggregated by sex, age and victim-perpetrator relationship.

Committed to combating gender-based violence against women, the City of Vienna, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO Europe) have decided to organise a joint conference on 'Eliminating violence against women in Europe: approaches and actions' in Vienna, Austria on 25-26 November, 2013. This conference will gather 200 participants from all sectors from 53 European countries, in particular representatives from ministries of gender equality and social affairs and ministries of health. It will also gather representatives of the European Union institutions, regional agencies, civil society organisations, experts and other involved stakeholders.

The conference will facilitate the exchange of ideas, practices and experiences on data collection, policy actions, prevention strategies and the role the health sector with a view to improving intersectoral action towards the elimination of gender-based violence against women. It will be an opportunity to identify needs for further data collection and analysis to support evidence-based policies and prevention strategies. Finally, this conference is a step forward made by EIGE and WHO to ensure a better use of existing resources and avoid duplications, particularly, with a view to developing common definitions and indicators that can be used within the EU and beyond.

This initiative is a reflection of the commitments made in, among others, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as commitments of relevant UN summits and conferences in the area of gender equality, including the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. It further affirms and serves to implement commitments made in the European Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–15, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and the WHO European Policy Framework for Health and Well-being - Health 2020.

The Conference is hosted by the City of Vienna which has assumed a leading position to fight violence against women and boasts one of the tightest victim protection networks nationwide. Moreover, the Republic of Austria and its institutions acknowledge that violence against women is a public health concern and, therefore, it continuously provides protection measures such as the

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104) of 20 December 1993 defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

<sup>2</sup> WHO (2013) Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence

Federal Act on Protection Against Domestic Violence that entered in force in May 2007.

### **Main objectives of the conference**

The Conference will serve as an opportunity to:

- To share experiences among regional organisations and European countries in preventing and addressing violence against women as a gender equality and public health concern;
- To present new data and information gathered by EIGE, WHO and other partners and discuss the challenges and needs in data collection in the area of GBV;
- To discuss how intersectoral cooperation and policies can be based on good evidence and how to develop mechanisms that ensure the coordination and collaboration among all sectors involved;
- To consider and discuss new policies, frameworks and guidelines on the response to gender based violence against women by the health sector.

The report of the conference will include key recommendations that may be used to strengthen action to eliminating gender based violence against women in national and regional policies.

### **Venue**

The conference will take place in the City Hall of Vienna and will be held in English, German and Russian. Moderated plenary and parallel sessions will facilitate debates between speakers, panellists and participants.