

EU regulations

All EU Member States have endorsed the main human rights instruments, which oblige them to combat violence against women as a human rights violation, and as a specific gender-related form of violence linked to the discrimination of women. This implies an obligation on Member States to end impunity and prohibit all violence, to take measures to prevent it, to provide adequate protection to survivors, and to ensure redress.

The EU supports an increased protection of women through soft law (communications, recommendations etc.), providing guiding principles, exchange of best practices, and capacity building (for example through the Daphne Programme).

The Council of the EU

From 1998 onwards, the different Presidencies of the Council of the European Union have generated recommendations, proposed indicators, and developed other non-binding documents on violence against women. In December 2009, under the Swedish Presidency, the Council adopted the [Stockholm Programme](#) (2010-2014), which reinforces the commitment to better address violence against women and children, envisaging greater protection for women victims of violence, including legal protection, comprehensive legislation on victims' rights, and a focus on children's rights. Under the Spanish Presidency, the March 2010 [Council Conclusions on the Eradication of Violence Against Women in the European Union](#) set the agenda for further measures to effectively combat violence against women. The 2011 [Council Conclusions on the European Pact for Gender Equality for the period 2011–2020](#) reaffirm the EU's commitment to closing gender gaps in employment, education and social protection, promoting better work-life balance for women and men, and combating all forms of violence against women.

The European Parliament

While the EU does not have a common policy to deal with gender-based violence, the [European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2009 on the elimination of violence against women](#) provides a mandate to take action to end violence against women, an extreme expression of gender inequality.

The European Parliament has been a supportive actor in the struggle against gender-based violence by condemning the trafficking of women and female genital mutilation, and has adopted several resolutions on gender-based violence more generally. The European Parliament considers the collection of comparable statistical data and the exchange of good practices between Member States to be of high importance.

The European Commission

The European Commission explicitly addresses violence against women through various political instruments, mainly the [Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015](#), which follows the [Women's Charter](#) (2010) and the [Roadmap for Equality between women and men 2006-2010](#). In May 2011, the Commission proposed a new legislative package to ensure a minimum level of victim's rights, protection, support, and access to justice.

In line with the Women's Charter, which foresees putting into place a comprehensive and effective policy framework to combat gender-based violence, the European Commission proposals have resulted in important binding acts:

- [Regulation \(EU\) No 606/2013](#) of 12 June 2013 on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters;
- [Directive 2012/29/EU](#) of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime;
- [Directive 2011/99/EU](#) of 13 December 2011 on the European protection order;
- [Directive 2011/36/EU](#) of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, replacing the Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA (30). It establishes minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the area of trafficking in human beings, and also introduces common provisions, taking into account the gender perspective, to strengthen the prevention of this crime and the protection of the victims thereof (Article 1);
- [Directive 2010/41/EU](#) of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity;

- [Directive 2006/54/EC](#) of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast). This Directive defines harassment and sexual harassment as discriminations on the grounds of sex;
- [Directive 2004/113/EC](#) of 13 December 2004 on implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. This Directive provides a definition of sexual harassment.

These directives play a significant role in shaping the definitions of different types of violence against women and preventing violence against women in its different forms.

In addition, the 2008 [EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them](#) set out the European Union's operational objectives and intervention tools for its external action on combating violence against women and girls, including all forms of discrimination directed at them. The guidelines on violence against women also shaped further interventions such as the [Daphne Programme](#).

The Action Plan to implement the Stockholm Programme and the European Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 state that 'the Commission will adopt an EU-wide strategy on combating violence against women'.

To date, no definition, legislation or strategy on violence against women in all its forms has been adopted by the EU.

Database

[Legal definitions of different types of gender-based violence used in EU Member States](#)

