

Statement by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Violence against women is a violation of human rights, and as such continues to act as a significant barrier to full gender equality. Gender-based violence is fundamentally rooted in gender inequality and impacts on the future of women and of men in Europe.

The problem of violence against women within the European Union can be more effectively addressed through collaborative efforts that seek to highlight and combat the issue through the lens of human rights and gender equality. Given the continued absence of comparable EU-wide data on violence against women, it is clear that there is a pressing need for the collection of evidence about the extent and nature of the problem, and its impact on women's physical and psychological well-being across different areas of everyday life – ranging from employment through to housing and healthcare. Robust data is essential to inform policy development and action on the ground to more effectively address gender-based violence within a framework for promoting gender equality.

The collection of comparable and reliable data is one of the main gaps and challenges in the area of combating violence against women. Therefore the development of the Resource and Documentation Centre at EIGE is expected to strengthen the work with gender equality.

In recognition of the continued lack of comprehensive and comparable data on the scale and nature of violence against women across the EU, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality, is embarking on survey research to collect data on violence against women. The FRA will utilise its experience of having conducted large-scale surveys, together with its in-house expertise in the field of violence against women and in consultation with a range of experts including the EIGE, in the development of a survey instrument on violence against women. After a preparatory test-phase in 2011, the FRA will launch the survey to explore women's experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence during their lifetime.

The cooperation arrangement between EIGE and FRA will make it possible to pool resources and share valuable expertise and data in the pursuit of this goal.

At a meeting held at the FRA on 12th November, with, amongst others, representatives from the EIGE and the European Parliament, the FRA set out to examine the policy and practical uses to which the survey results can potentially be put. The results of this meeting, together with other meetings held with a range of experts in connection with the survey, should ensure that the findings can be of use to a range of different stakeholders in the EU who are working to address this fundamental rights abuse.

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