

Regulatory and legal framework

Addressing violence against women is a declared goal of the EU institutions and all EU Member States.

Initiatives towards the eradication of gender-based violence have gathered momentum in an international and an EU context over the past 50 years. As regards the European Union institutions, getting violence against women on the EU's agenda took a long time because the issue was considered to be outside the remit of the EU Commission and there was no explicit legal basis in the EU for intervening in the issue of violence against women. This means that EU commitment to combating gender-based violence is relatively recent in comparison to other international bodies.

The European Union's competence for the harmonisation of criminal law has been extended by the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, offering a new opportunity to develop instruments to combat violence against women.

The diverse efforts and regulations at international and EU level are summarised in the following pages.

EU Directives

The EU has passed a number of Directives that legally oblige Member States to take certain actions in response to violence against women. These are: [Directive 2012/29/EU](#) establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime; [Directive 2011/99/EU](#) on the European protection order; and [Directive 2010/41/EU](#) on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity. These directives build upon earlier directives, which played a significant role in shaping the definitions of different types of violence against women and preventing violence against women in its different forms.

Database

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