

**NON.  
NO.  
NEIN.**

Say No!  
Stop  
**violence**  
against  
women

**Violence against women** is rooted in women's unequal status in society, and that status reflects the unbalanced distribution of social, political, and economic power among women and men in society. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time and a form of discrimination that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women (1). Violence against women undermines women's dignity and integrity and imposes serious harms on families, communities and societies. In the EU, estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women (or 61 million out of 185 million) have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, since the age of 15 (2).

The full extent of violence against women is difficult to estimate, as it continues to be under-reported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality. In Latvia, just over 60 % of the population tend to trust the police (3), significantly lower than in the EU overall (over 70 %).

In EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2015 it was found that where people tend to have more trust in justice institutions, levels of disclosed violence are higher (4). It is estimated that in Latvia, 39 % of women have experienced violence, which is 6 % higher than in the EU overall (5).

The European Institute for Gender Equality has estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence against women in Latvia could amount to EUR 442 million per year. This figure was calculated according to the methodology used in EIGE's 2014 study (6), which Member States can replicate, as done by Estonia in 2016 (7).



## What are the facts?

- From 2012—2015, at least 15 women in Latvia were murdered by partners. Annually, approximately 60 women are seriously injured in partner violence incidents<sup>(8)</sup>.
- Out of all detected cases of violence against women, around 40 % took place within the family<sup>(9)</sup>.
- In 2013, there were 47 cases of reported rape against women in Latvia<sup>(10)</sup>. In 2015, there were 24 cases of reported rape and 11 cases of other kinds of sexual violence against women<sup>(11)</sup>.
- The 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey results showed that in Latvia, 39 % of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, and 31 % of people in Latvia said they knew a woman within their circle of friends and family who has been a victim of domestic violence<sup>(12)</sup>.

When trust in police is low, victims are less likely to report violence.



## Is violence against women a crime in Latvia?

Although there is no specific law on violence against women or domestic violence in Latvia, many forms of violence against women are covered by general provisions of the criminal code including physical violence, sexual assault, and rape. Any kind of violence against a partner or a relative is an aggravating circumstance. Female genital mutilation is covered by general criminal offences and is punishable even if it is committed outside the country<sup>(13)</sup>.

## What is being done to eliminate violence against women in Latvia?

The first state programme on the Prevention of Domestic Violence 2008—2011 was introduced in 2008. Its objectives included investigating the prevalence of domestic violence in Latvia, raising awareness of domestic violence among the public, and the promotion of coordination among relevant institutions<sup>(14)</sup>.

In January 2014, the National Strategy for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014—2020 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Its aim is to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, protect and assist victims of human trafficking with full respect for their human rights, and to promote cross-sectoral cooperation to achieve this goal. This national strategy is the third government policy planning document to prevent human trafficking<sup>(15)</sup>.

## Good practices show the way

In 2015, state funded social rehabilitation services for adult victims of domestic violence as well as perpetrators were introduced for the first time. The services for victims include social rehabilitation courses, and professional advice provided by psychologists and lawyers. For perpetrators, the state provides individual consultations and group sessions aiming to reduce violent behaviour<sup>(16)</sup>.

The rehabilitation services for perpetrators are based on a successful pilot project that took place in 2011—2013, organised by the Ministry of Welfare in collaboration with five local governments. All municipalities evaluated the pilot project as very valuable<sup>(17)</sup>.

## How are women and girls protected?

In March 2014, the new regulation on protection from domestic violence came into force, aimed at reducing domestic violence and protecting (potential) victims. Under this regulation the police are authorised to remove a violent person from the home and restrict them from returning, as well as to prevent perpetrators from approaching the (potential) victim for a period of eight days<sup>(18)</sup>.

In cases when there is no immediate danger, a victim may apply to court to receive a protection order. The court is obliged to examine the case and to grant a protection order within one day.

Latvia signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) in May 2016, but has not yet ratified it. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.



**There are 23 family crisis centres/women's shelters with a total of 1 084 beds for women and children.**

### What help is available in Latvia?

The national crisis helpline 'Krīzes tārunis' (67222922/27722292) is run by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Skalbes, and operates 24/7 free of charge<sup>(19)</sup>.

The national toll-free helpline for victims of violence (116006) is available from 07:00—22:00 hours.

The national helpline for victims of trafficking, 'Uzticības tārunis cilvēku tirdzniecības mazināšanai' (28612120) operates 24/7 and is free of charge. It is run by the NGO 'Patvērums "Drošā māja"' ('Shelter "Safe Home"').

There are 23 family crisis centres/women's shelters with a total of 1 084 beds for women and children. Shelters exist in most regions of the country, and some provide 24 hour access<sup>(20)</sup>. There are approximately 20 women's centres in Latvia run by NGOs and municipalities, located in the major cities<sup>(21)</sup>.



**'Krīzes tārunis' (67222922/27722292) and a toll-free helpline for victims of violence (116006)**

## Endnotes

- (<sup>1</sup>) Council of Europe (2011). *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and its explanatory report*. Council of Europe Treaty Series No 10. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210>.
- (<sup>2</sup>) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). *Violence Against Women: An EU Wide Survey, Main Results*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- (<sup>3</sup>) European Commission (2016). *Eurobarometer*. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/18/groupKy/88>.
- (<sup>4</sup>) European Institute for Gender Equality (2013). *Gender Equality Index Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender-Equality-Index-Report.pdf>.
- (<sup>5</sup>) Ibid. The level of disclosed violence in the EU overall is 33 %.
- (<sup>6</sup>) European Institute for Gender Equality (2014). *Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- (<sup>7</sup>) *Cost of Domestic Violence in Estonia*. Available at: [https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/Sotsiaal/Norra/vagivalla\\_hind.pdf](https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/Sotsiaal/Norra/vagivalla_hind.pdf)
- (<sup>8</sup>) Ministry of Welfare (2015). *Informatīvais ziņojums par vardarbības pret sievietēm un vardarbības ģimenē gadījumiem, to izplatību un dinamiku 2014.gadā*, (Informative report on violence against women and domestic violence, its prevalence and dynamics in 2014).
- (<sup>9</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>10</sup>) Joint Eurostat-UNODC data, 2013.
- (<sup>11</sup>) State Police data, 2016.
- (<sup>12</sup>) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). *Violence Against Women: An EU Wide Survey, Main Results*, Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg.
- (<sup>13</sup>) Amendments to the law 'On the Procedures for the Coming into Force and Application of the Criminal Law' are pending to criminalise FGM specifically.
- (<sup>14</sup>) <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/methods-and-tools/latvia/national-programme-against-domestic-violence-2008-2011-report-results-programme>
- (<sup>15</sup>) [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_the\\_prevention\\_of\\_trafficking\\_inhuman\\_beings\\_2014-2020\\_summary\\_en\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/national_strategy_for_the_prevention_of_trafficking_inhuman_beings_2014-2020_summary_en_1.pdf)
- (<sup>16</sup>) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510008/IPOL\\_IDA\(2015\)510008\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510008/IPOL_IDA(2015)510008_EN.pdf)
- (<sup>17</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>18</sup>) Available at: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=265314>
- (<sup>19</sup>) WAVE (2015). *WAVE report on the role of specialist women's support services in Europe*. Latvia Country Information. Available at: [http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE_Report_2015.pdf)
- (<sup>20</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>21</sup>) Ibid.

## European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.



European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE  
Gedimino pr. 16 LT-01103  
Vilnius, LITHUANIA  
Tel. +370 52157444  
Email: [eige.sec@eige.europa.eu](mailto:eige.sec@eige.europa.eu)

## Contact details

<http://eige.europa.eu>   
<http://www.twitter.com/eurogender>   
<http://www.facebook.com/eige.europa.eu>   
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<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu> 



Publications Office

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PDF	MH-01-16-747-EN-N	978-92-9493-488-8	10.2839/828921