

The European campaign against violence is taking shape in different ways in the various organisations and Member States involved. But what matters is that it is ongoing and that the Commission's support has not been given in vain. Initiatives are still under way and they will go on for as long as it takes, as we are determined to eradicate this outrage.

This special issue is devoted entirely to the campaign. It aims to provide an overview of its diverse measures, viewpoints and events. We will carry on informing you about the numerous events organised in the Member States until the end of May.

Olga Profili
Head of Section, Information for Women



The European Women's Lobby (EWL) has recently issued its study 'Unveiling the hidden data on domestic violence in the EU'. It has also been coordinating the 'Violence-free cities' project and is pursuing its long-term lobby activities, in particular via an observatory which cooperates in elaborating the recommendations it makes to the institutions.

Colette de Troy is responsible within the EWL for the European Observatory on Violence against Women. Located in Brussels, the organisation represents some 3 000 associations. Interview.

Many operations have been undertaken recently on the theme of domestic violence against women. Do you think they will have a real impact?

We supported the European Parliament which was calling for a 'European year' against violence. The Council unfortunately rejected that proposal. However, agreement was reached on the launch of the action campaign against domestic violence against women. Officially launched last March, the campaign did indeed comprise a whole series of operations: a CD-ROM, posters, a brochure; but who has heard about these operations? We have attempted to spread the message of the campaign through activities in seven cities, but we are short of funds and that is not enough. We really want a whole year devoted to combating domestic violence with a far more substantial allocation of funds.

Your report on domestic violence in the EU is a first. In terms of awareness of the phenomenon, is Europe not lagging behind North America?

The first investigations in the United States date from the late 1970s. Then they were conducted in Canada. These investigations caused a stir for they revealed that the family was not the presumed haven of peace. Were they followed up by effective measures against violence? Those countries have their own special features, so it is hard to compare them with Europe, particularly since no European study has been carried out on domestic violence; it is a matter that falls to the Member States, not the Community. In Europe, only Finland has conducted a notable, in-depth study on the subject. France has announced a wide-ranging survey of some 7 000 women. Over and above the disparities which might be disclosed between these countries, the EWL hopes that Europe will encourage the Member States to take action against violence.

The European Commission's campaign included posters to raise awareness among the public at large. Do you think people are prepared to step in to defend a woman against her partner?

In the past, when we saw a child ill-treated by its mother or father in the street, we did not intervene. Today, no one would watch a child being ill-treated and not lift a finger. Similarly, the idea that a couple, one of whom is violent and the other the victim, have to sort things out between themselves is losing ground. A criminal offence is not a private matter. We have to break the silence and turn to associations with experience in dealing with such questions: they are fraught with difficulties.

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And what about the commitment of the Member States, are you optimistic about the future?

In the past few years, the resolve to tackle the problem of domestic violence has grown firmer, above all among NGOs. For example, it is worth mentioning that measures were indeed taken after the Beijing Confer-

ence, and we can now assess them. But the pendulum is also swinging the other way: some people want to put the very small percentage of battered men on the same footing as the far higher percentage of battered women (one woman in five is said to have suffered domestic violence at the hands of her companion during her life).

Seven cities against violence: the launch of an ideal

The 'Violence-free cities' campaign was launched by the European Women's Lobby as part of the European campaign against domestic violence against women (see p. 3). It was conducted with great effect from 25 November, the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women, throughout the following 16 days of action against violence. In Paris, the associations assembled for a press conference, bringing up the curtain on a survey among the city's MPs; the results will be presented on 8 March next, at the opening of an exhibition of 'silhouettes' of women who have paid for domestic violence with their lives. The women of Madrid organised a big demonstration and a press campaign, while in Amsterdam, it was above all young women who took part in the campaign by sending awareness-raising messages by fax and e-mail to both private individuals and political leaders.

The women of Dublin organised a vigil, placing before Parliament 50 pairs of shoes to remember the 50 women killed by their partners over the previous three years. In London, the public-service union, Unison, provided most of the funding for a nationwide campaign,

'A future without fear: stop domestic violence', including posters and a leaflet, and a series of local and regional events.

The women of Bremen also decided to target the public at large through a poster campaign organised by the authorities; a poster showed the Mayor of Bremen and Prime Minister of the *Bundesland* Bremen, Henning Scherf, and the caption read: 'Violence against women is not a private matter, it is a criminal act and will be prosecuted'.

Lastly, in Belgium, the town of Huy organised round tables, at the instigation of the mayor, Anne-Marie Lizin, an example which Brussels could well follow in the near future.

Details of all these events can be found on the EWL website, a source of ideas, contacts and arguments — material which could inspire similar initiatives in other towns at other times. All in all, momentum has been imparted and will probably not be lost for some time.

Unveiling the hidden violence

Set up by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in 1997, the European Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women endeavours to collect data and statistics, to provide information on this kind of violence and thus fight against it more successfully: no easy task, for over and above the limited statistics on crimes of domestic violence, it is hard to identify indicators on acts which fall mainly in the sphere of private life. Moreover, when legal proceedings are initiated, the police may register complaints and the courts may hand down judgments, but the subsequent records of offences are not adequately classified. This is one of the findings of the centre's final

report which came out last November 'Unveiling the hidden data on domestic violence in the European Union'. The centre tried to answer practical questions such as: 'How is domestic violence perceived and dealt with? What type of data is collected to inform the police, the courts and the policy-making bodies?' By reviewing the state of play in research in each of the Member States, the study has come up with surprising results, for example, '44.7 % of perpetrators of violence against their partner have a university degree' (Italian survey, endorsed by other Member States) and that violence does not necessarily involve alcohol or drug use.

OBSERVATORY

The centre set up an observatory on violence to help it in formulating recommendations to the European institutions and the Member States. It is composed of a group of national experts, field workers and researchers, who are also responsible for 'monitoring' how the Member States' undertakings are actually carried through.

Zero tolerance campaign

Domestic violence is to be found, and is even common, in all Member States of the European Union and all classes of society. Is it acceptable? In order to work towards adoption of a 'zero tolerance' attitude and help to change mentalities, the European Commission launched a campaign against domestic violence against women.

This European campaign is supported and supplemented by various operations in the Member States: making freephone numbers available to help victims, national awareness-raising campaigns and so on. The campaign aims to drive home the message that although domestic violence against women is indeed a phenomenon of our age and as such concerns not only victims and per-

petrators, but also anyone who witnesses such aggression: the police and the courts, the teaching profession whose task is to promote non-violence, and social workers and doctors who have to deal with the consequences of this violence.

A brochure entitled *Breaking the silence* explains the history of the fight against this scourge and provides European statistics. An issue of *Eurobarometer* (opinion survey) has also covered domestic violence and the related attitude of Europeans.

The European campaign is based on a number of concepts and messages addressed to men, women and civil society in general.

To male abusers:

- domestic violence is a crime;
- domestic violence will ruin your life as an abuser as much as the life of your victim;
- help is at hand if you want to put an end to your violent behaviour.

To women victims of violence:

- break the wall of silence surrounding domestic violence!
- don't tolerate violence!
- help is at hand, find out!

To all those who witness domestic violence:

- help women victims of violence break the silence;
- help them escape from victimisation.

Thanks to a call for proposals for measures to raise the general public's awareness about violence against women, the European Commission has made available to the approved projects and to interested organisations a CD-ROM containing the concepts of the campaign which can be used to reproduce posters, stickers and logos. The texts were all drafted in English, but the

translations into the other 10 EU languages can easily be used by a professional designer or printer or slightly modified providing that the meaning and spirit of the campaign are retained.

Contact in the Information for Women Section:
Fax (32-2) 29-93891

European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights

At its meeting on 14 December, the Committee on Women's Rights adopted conclusions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, calling for incorporation into the charter of a general anti-sex discrimination clause which could be invoked before the European Court of Justice by individual citizens/residents. These conclusions were adopted by 19 votes to 12, with one abstention.

It also discussed three communications: on employment and anti-discrimination measures (EQUAL initiative), sustainable urban development, and economic and social regeneration of cities and neighbourhoods

in crisis (URBAN), and strategies for modernising social protection.

All these topics are included in the committee's work programme for 2000, decided upon at its meeting on 24 and 25 November. In addition to pursuit of activities under way, the programme provides for a series of initiatives in the legal field (proposals for directives) and in other areas, such as research. The priority measures, defined in the light of long-term objectives (increased representation of women in decision-making, increased participation in conflict resolution, and so on) will take the form of initiative reports, public hearings and delegations.

WAVE, an NGO network against violence

Women against Violence in Europe (WAVE) is a network of non-governmental organisations which aims to combat violence against women and children in both public and private life. Special attention is given to migrants and refugees, who are often more at risk than other groups of women, but too frequently neglected by the institutions. WAVE receives support under the European's Daphne programme for its project con-

cerned with training and awareness-raising for professionals who have to deal with violence. The WAVE office in Vienna is responsible for coordinating all the work: collection and dissemination of information, international campaigns and activities, and publication of newsletters.

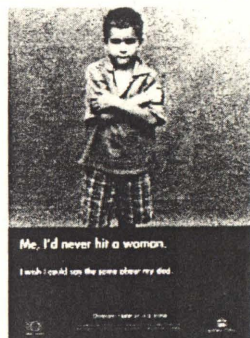
<http://www.wave-network.org>



**1 OUT OF 2 WOMEN
MURDERED EVERY YEAR IS
KILLED BY HER PARTNER**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IS A CRIME**

IF YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS
BEATING YOUR WIFE DON'T
SOLVE THEM.



Me? I'd never hit a woman.
I wish I could say the same about my dad.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
BREAK THE SILENCE!**

INFO

Spain: Bringing into effect the plan to eradicate violence

In February 1998, the regional government of Andalusia signed an agreement on 'Government' action plans on progress in eradicating violence against women'. The measures were designed to raise awareness in two target groups: the public in general and women who had experienced violence in particular. It was in that context that the Andalusian Women's Institute, responsible for coordinating the measures, organised a forum on violence on 11 and 12 November in Seville; it was attended by professionals from the sectors and social services concerned.

Contact:
Instituto de la Mujer
(34) 954 91 56 02

Greece: Advisory centre against violence

On 29 November, Ms Vasso Papandreou, Greek Minister for Internal Affairs, inaugurated in Piraeus an advisory centre focusing on violence against women. The centre will provide psychological and social assistance to women who have experienced violence and also legal advice and information on social services available.

Contacts:
(30-1) 523 52 50/523 53 18
(30-1) 411 20 91/412 91 01

Conferences

Lisbon: Closing conference of the European campaign against violence

The Portuguese Council Presidency is organising, in cooperation with the European Commission, on 4, 5 and 6 May next, the closing conference of the European campaign against violence against women. Its aim will be to assess the impact of the European campaign and map out the main thrust of action for the future. Examples of best practice will be presented and an overview of legislative measures in the area. The conference will assemble at least 62 European participants and some 100 experts from Portugal and the applicant countries.

Contact:
Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres
fax (351) 217 98 30 98

Nicosia: International conference

Cyprus is also gearing up to prevent domestic violence by organising a conference from 26 to 30 November 2000 in Nicosia; its purpose is to draw up an action plan for the 21st century. Anyone interested should contact Mary Pyrgos, project coordinator.

Address:
Pyrgos Congress, PO Box 25307
1308 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel. (357-2) 77 41 57; fax (357-2) 781 03 41
e-mail: pyrgos.com@cytanet.com.cy

Outlawing violence

How to outlaw violence? A meeting was organised in Paris on 6 December at the initiative of CNIDFF (National Information and Documentation Centre for Women and Families) where the French, Spanish and Italian participants attempted to answer this question. The CNIDFF distributed a questionnaire on violence and how it is perceived. The related survey will be used to adapt prevention practices in France and the results will be published in March 2000. CNIDFF also has a discussion forum on the web.

Forum on domestic violence
(<http://www.infofemmes.com>)

Jyväskylä: Need for government mobilisation

What would happen if, some morning, the newspapers reported that, in one year, a disease would affect a fifth of the EU population? 'The governments would react straight away, introducing effective programmes and allocating funds to combat the disease'. Ms Maj Britt Theorin, the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, held this rousing speech against violence at a seminar held on the subject on 9 November in Jyväskylä, Finland. Organised at the initiative of the Finnish Council Presidency, in cooperation with the European Commission, the seminar assembled numerous European experts and political leaders.

(<http://presidency.finland.fi/frame.asp>)

Council of Europe: Seminar in Bari

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held a seminar from 4 to 6 November in Bari in conjunction with the Italian Parliament. A number of sci-

entific findings were used as backing for the four topics covered at the seminar: domestic and sexual abuse, slavery and forced labour in the home, trafficking in women and prostitution, and rape in armed conflict. Recommendations on these subjects were submitted to the Member States.

Beijing + 5: Alternative national reports

The commitments made in Beijing in 1955 will be assessed at an international meeting to be held in June 2000 in New York. Women Action, a federation of non-governmental associations and organisations, has recently set up regional Internet sites, including a European site. Its aim is to take stock, country by country, of the progress achieved on the 12 critical areas which the countries defined in Beijing. With the agreement of the United Nations, Women Action is proposing that the NGOs should prepare alternatives to the official reports.

Address of European site
(<http://www.iav.nl/european-womenaction-2000>)

Publications

Breaking the silence

For centuries, domestic violence has been treated as a taboo subject. Today, however, thanks to the work of women's organisations, the issue is coming into the public domain. As part of the Commission's campaign against violence, messages addressed to a number of target groups have been devised, formulated and translated. A European history of the fight against this scourge and European statistics are also to be found in the brochure *Breaking the silence* recently published at the initiative of the European Commission's Information for Women Section. It can be obtained from the Representations of the Commission in the Member States.

Domestic violence against women: the opinion of the European public

This document gives an overview of the main results of the opinion survey carried out by the European Commission in all the Member States between March and May 1999.

These two documents are available on the website of the Information for Women Section (http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/women/violence/index3_fr.html)

or on request from the section
fax (32-2) 29-93891

