



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
LOBBY  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

# PRESS RELEASE

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## 30 years is about time to take violence against women seriously, says European Women's Lobby

On the occasion of the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the European Women's Lobby has launched a call for the European Union to take action to eliminate the most prevalent human rights abuse within its borders.

It is estimated that almost every other woman in Europe suffers gender-based violence at some point in her life, with one in five falling victim to domestic violence and one in ten to rape or forced sexual acts.

According to women's associations, the lack of EU-level data, action plan or legislation tackling male violence against women is symptomatic of a widespread trivialisation of the issue and denial of women's fundamental rights. 'The European Union is always so concerned about human rights abuses in other areas of the world, but huge numbers of women living in Europe are denied their most basic rights to physical security on a daily basis and there is no EU legislation addressing this phenomenon', says Rada Boric, Executive member of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) which represents more than 2500 women's organisations throughout the EU. 'In many EU countries, there is not even any official data on the prevalence of such violence, and impunity is widespread, leaving perpetrators free from prosecution and women victims without support and proper recognition by the judicial system.'

As the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women draws closer, activists are nevertheless hopeful that change is at hand. In March 2010, the Council of the EU requested the European Commission to collect comparable data on violence against women throughout the EU and draw up a comprehensive Strategy for preventing and combating all forms of such violence. In September, the European Parliament called for a European Year for combating Violence against Women.

'At a time when many shelters and other programmes for women victims of violence are being forced to close due to funding cuts, this political commitment by all of the EU member states, backed by the European Parliament, could not be more urgent', comments Myria Vassiliadou, EWL Secretary General. 'We look forward to having by this time next year a European Strategy and legislation on the table which will spell the beginning of the end for male violence against women in the EU. For the first time in 30 years, perhaps the 2011 anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women will be a time for celebration in Europe,' she concludes.

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For more information, interviews, background or visual materials, please contact Leanda Barrington-Leach, EWL Communications and Media Officer, T: (+32) 2 210 04 41, [barrington@womenlobby.org](mailto:barrington@womenlobby.org), and see [www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org).



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## Note to editors:

The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2500 associations.