

STATEMENT

Women's NGOs call on the Swedish Presidency to initiate a European strategy on all forms of male violence against women

On 9 November, the Swedish Presidency of the European Union will be holding a conference on strategies to combat men's violence against women in Stockholm. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) warmly welcomes this initiative which shows a strong political will to address male violence against women with a European perspective.

When including all forms of violence against women, 45% of all women in Europe have been subjected to and suffered from men's violence. One in 5 women in Europe has been subjected to domestic violence, that is, in her own home. More than one tenth of all women have suffered sexual violence as defined in its most narrow sense. However, the reporting and conviction rates of violence are still very low, reflecting the perpetuation of stereotypes and of cultural representations that male violence against women is a private matter or that women are to blame for it.

The EWL welcomes the Swedish Presidency's choice to address violence against women from a gender equality perspective, therefore bringing into light the social dimension of violent acts perpetrated by men against women and supported by social norms and stereotypes.

One of the main objectives of the conference lies in the opportunity for Member States to share experiences and working methods, together with EU institutions, but also with NGOs. The EWL regrets that many women's organisations having huge expertise in the area of violence against women won't be able to attend the event due to a lack of support from their national governments.

The EWL and its members remind the essential role of civil society as key actor and interlocutor, and call on the Swedish Presidency and the Member States to ensure a broad consultation of women's NGOs at all decision-making levels when designing policies and strategies aimed at combating male violence against women.

The EWL calls for the conference to be a concrete step forward in future EU cooperation to combat men's violence against women. The Swedish Presidency stated in its intention note that *'this conference will provide an occasion for Member States to discuss the future need for EU-level support in this area'*. Women's NGOs thus call on the various stakeholders involved in the conference to commit to a comprehensive EU strategy leading to a concrete Action Plan on all forms of male violence against women.

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.

The **EWL European Observatory on violence against women** brings together experts from 30 European countries with expert knowledge of violence against women. The work of the EWL European Observatory is facilitated and promoted by the European Policy Action Centre on Violence Against Women (EPACVAW), the operational branch of the European Women's Lobby dedicated to violence against women.