



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

March 2025

EWL @CSW69

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) the annual multilateral, intergovernmental event held at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York took place on 10-21 March 2025.

As this year's focus was on the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), a strong Political Declaration was adopted prior to the meeting and therefore, contrary to other years, no Agreed Conclusions were negotiated during the CSW.

The Political Declaration, while acknowledging *that no country has fully achieved gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*, reaffirms commitment to the BPFA and other outcome documents that have been adopted over the past three decades. The Declaration welcomes the contribution of civil society to the implementation of the BPFA and pledges to *continue supporting with increased, flexible and sustainable resources, at the local, national, regional and global levels*.

At the end of the CSW, the multi annual programme for the period 2026-2029 was adopted and can be found [here](#). Next year (2026), CSW70 will focus on women's access to justice and review the Agreed Conclusions of the 65th session on women in decision-making in public life and the elimination of violence.

At the same time, revitalising the CSW is a major priority in order to strengthen its impact across the whole of the UN system (gender mainstreaming) and ensuring meaningful engagement of all in achieving gender equality and accelerating the implementation of the BPFA. The 71s session (2027) will review its methods of work in accordance with the Economic and Council resolution of 2022.

Ewl side event “Do not forget us” : Prostitution the forgotten women of Beijing?

In her opening remarks, EWL President Iliana Balabanova stated *we are here because prostitution is not work nor a choice*. Held on 12 March at the EU Mission to the UN, our joint event on prostitution received tremendous support in a packed room. Two survivors of prostitution gave powerful testimonies and a key message “**do not forget us.**”

The event was co-organised by EWL, Portuguese Women's Platform, la CLEF – French coordination of the EWL, European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) and CAP International.

“If we escape from our traffickers, we are no longer considered as victims of trafficking”, Blessing



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Blessing spoke about her devastating story of how a highly qualified woman (graduate in the tech sector) was promised a bright future in Europe. But, the promise soon became a nightmare, when she ended up in brothels in Spain and Italy: “[A] market where vulnerable women are sold and disposed to become sexual slaves.” The irony, she explained, is when you finally manage to escape the traffickers, you are no longer considered as a trafficked woman and can be deported and/or re-trafficked, as there are no support systems to accompany women who escape hell on earth – prostitution. Trafficking and prostitution cannot be dissociated.

“Society blames you for prostitution; my experience is not just a story to be further exploited”, Sage

Prostitution and trafficking cannot be dissociated, this message was echoed by Sage, stating that she was lucky to get support from a women's organisation in Sweden (her country of origin) but such services do not exist everywhere especially in rural areas. She voiced her concern regarding on the one hand, the urgency for survivors to come forward and, on the other hand, the risk of exploiting their real-life experiences through “sensationalism” from the media and others. She expressed her optimism as the opposition feels threatened which is a sign that we are making progress. Today, she is involved in raising the awareness of young boys (in schools) who want to know more about prostitution and the links with pornography. She believes that we need to engage more men in the conversation as they are at the source of the demand.

Walking on a tight-rope

The panel that ensued revealed the ‘tight rope’ on which we are walking regarding prostitution. In the EU, equality between women and men is enshrined in the treaties, yet 75% of women in prostitution are of migrant origin, evoking a form of ‘second-class citizenship’ for some women when all women should have equal rights.

The three main legal frameworks in the EU can also lead to (voluntary?) confusion:

- Prohibition in which women in prostitution and buyers are on the same level as victims and perpetrators;
- Regulatory framework – decriminalisation of both women in prostitution and pimps;
- Equality model, that sanctions buyers and proposes exist strategies for women in prostitution, including a residence permit, support services and an employment permit. But, not enough resources are provided in this model. However, the potential to invest confiscated funds from pimps could be further explored to be allocated to exist policies.

The **digital space**, for which there is no regulation, offers (new) spaces for pimps as they control communications and social outreach. The [CLEF](#) provides an outreach service to women who are prostituted through the digital space.

The national Rapporteur from Sweden spoke about the Campaign [“Don’t let the silence speak”](#), encouraging boys and men to speak up against friends and colleagues that talk about exploiting others sexually.

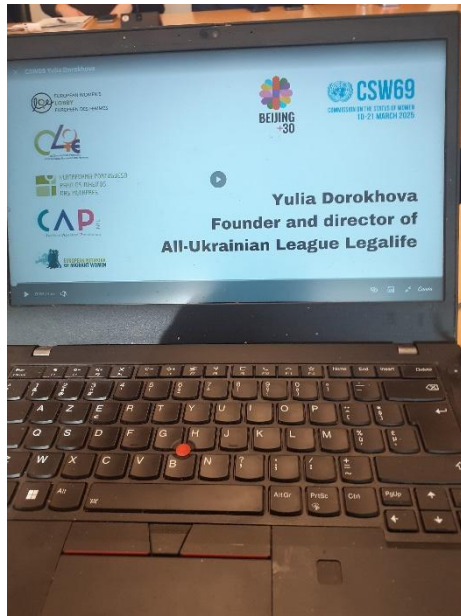
Established in 2012 by the European Women’s Lobby the [Brussels Call – Together for a Europe Free from Prostitution](#) is a coalition of more than 200 civil society organisations and (former) Members of the

European Parliament (EP). It underlines that prostitution is in contradiction with human dignity and contrary to the values of the European Union (EU) based on equality, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In 2023, the first ever [Resolution](#) was adopted by the EP on *the regulation of prostitution in the EU: its cross-border implications and impact on gender equality and women's rights*.

The Brussels Call coalition also provides support and contributions to UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Reem Alsalem, in particular, her [report](#) on Prostitution and violence against women and girls (2024).

Finally, we presented our ***Beijing +30 Commitments to survivors – Global Allies against the exploitative system of prostitution***, which contains six commitments to end prostitution.





BEIJING+30 COMMITMENT TO SURVIVORS

GLOBAL ALLIES AGAINST THE EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEM OF PROSTITUTION

We, undersigned organisations and decision-makers, commit/renew our commitment to a society free from prostitution. We recognise that prostitution is a form of violence particularly affecting women and girls worldwide and that buying human bodies is not acceptable nor should it be legal. This is why we agree on prioritising advocacy at our respective levels towards the following results for the next 30 years:

- 1** All states to decriminalise women in prostitution
- 2** All states to design and fund exit programmes tailored to women's needs
- 3** All states to provide immediate housing, healthcare and educational support to women in prostitution
- 4** All states to criminalise pimps, traffickers and third parties taking advantage of prostitution
- 5** All States to criminalise the purchase of sexual acts
- 6** All states to include prevention against prostitution and all forms of sexual exploitation in their national school curriculum

SIGN HERE

SIGN HERE

Sign the commitment to survivors for the next 30 years here

JOIN THE

BRUSSELS'CALL

Do you want to be more actively involved and join the Brussels'Call abolitionist coalition? Get in touch!

High Level Interactive Dialogue: Accelerating implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action – the role of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights and European Women's Lobby, 18 March 2025

The CSW is the most unique multilateral gathering in the world dedicated to women's rights and to achieving gender equality.

The role of civil society organisations as independent critical voices is vital for healthy, democratic societies.

However, we are witnessing a shrinking space for civil society. This is apparent in the weakening of institutional mechanisms along with, in some instances, the absence of such mechanisms, which impede upon the effective monitoring, follow-up, review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Therefore, we call on all States to (re)establish, strengthen and resource national mechanisms for gender equality, this includes sustainable funding for women's civil society organisations.

We call on the European Union (EU) to establish a stand-alone Council formation on Gender Equality. This would facilitate gender mainstreaming across all EU Council formations (from agriculture to finance) and,

in so doing enable monitoring of and accountability for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at European level. It would also facilitate follow-up to and accountability of the Agreed Conclusions that have been adopted in the three decades since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

We are also witnessing the shrinking space in the participation of civil society at the CSW. Yet, the Beijing Platform for Action recognises the indispensable role that civil society plays in accelerating change to achieve gender equality.

Over the years, access to negotiating rooms and other spaces has been curtailed. Accessibility, particularly for women with disabilities, is also compromised.

At the CSW, there is a perceived growing drift between governmental and non-governmental participants, to the extent that civil society questions whether we have become mere spectators.

Women's civil society brings real life voices and experiences to the negotiation tables, as well as good practices and agreed language.

Therefore, we call on all States to:

- Include women's civil society in their national delegations and that this becomes a requirement of the annual CSW gatherings.
- Carry out peer reviews on the implementation, follow-up and accountability of the Agreed Conclusions.
- Facilitate women's civil society organisations in providing shadow reports.

Finally, we fully endorse multilateralism and give our full support to UN Women as the Guardians of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We also support NGO CSW and call for the strengthening of the regional caucuses to enable meaningful participation of civil society at the CSW in the future.



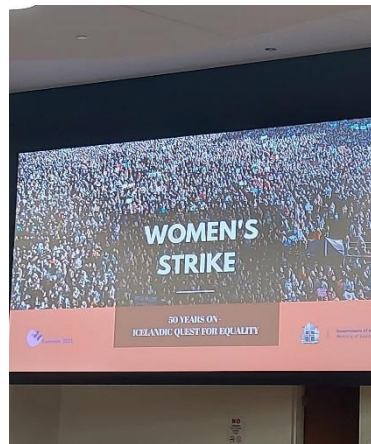
Diana Pinto, Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights, spoke at the **High Level Interactive Dialogue on Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent work**, 17 March 2025



The EWL also participated in many side events including:



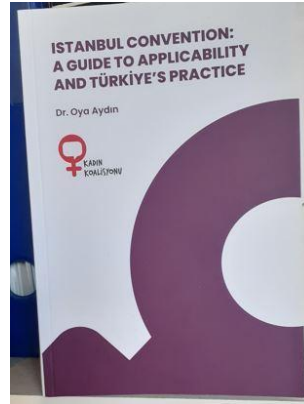
"Cyber Violence and Its Impact on Women's societal participation", with Women's Council of Denmark



Iceland: Women's Strike
50 years on Icelandic quest for Equality



Launch of the Women's Platform for Action International, WoPAI
With the Swedish Women's Lobby



Women's Coalition of Turkey: Pushback against Gender equality and its influence on gender based Violence



International Alliance of Women



Iceland: Women's Strike
50 years on Icelandic quest for Equality



Meeting with CSOs and the EU Commissioner Hadja Lahbib



Generation Equality Networking event - opportunity for stakeholder to celebrate progress, acknowledge persistent challenges and recommit to gender equality *Iliana Balabanova and Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Executive Director of the UN Women*



EWL was represented by President, Iliana Balabanova and Secretary General, Mary Collins

