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### A Europe Free from Gender-Based Violence: From Commitment to Action

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#### SPEAKING POINTS

- Equality between men and women is enshrined in the EU Treaties since the 1950s – it is one of our core values. Gender-based violence should have no place in the European Union. It violates our fundamental rights of human dignity and integrity.
- Yet the Fundamental Rights Agency Survey shows that one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. This is unacceptable and it is crucial to stop violence against women.
- The Commission's work to combat violence against women is part of our wider Strategy for equality between women and men, as all aspects of gender equality are linked to one another. Progress made in one area will spill-over into other areas. Combating gender-based violence is one of the key priorities identified in the Strategy.
- The EU has adopted legal measures in the areas of civil and criminal justice that prevent gender-based violence and provide victim support. I will just single out:
  - The Directive on equal treatment, that includes sexual harassment;
  - The Directive on trafficking in human beings;
  - The Directive against the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography;
  - The European Protection Orders that ensure protection for victims who want to travel or move to a different Member State, and;
  - The Directive on the rights of victims of crime.
- We are now monitoring and guiding Member States in implementing these measures.

- We cannot combat violence with legal measures alone. Daily work on the ground is absolutely necessary. Therefore, we fund grassroots projects that make a real difference to the lives of women and girls in our Member States.
- All projects are transnational, but let me give you some examples of those in your countries<sup>1</sup>:
  - In Romania we are funding a coaching programme for victims of domestic violence that will help them get back on their feet.
  - In the Bulgaria and Romania we are funding a project that seeks to strengthen the role of the health care system to identify and support victims of violence.
  - In Poland and Hungary there is a project supported by the Commission that focuses on teens, their schools and their parents, in an effort to stop cyber violence (the FRA survey found that one in ten women has experienced sexual cyber-harassment; for women under 30 it's one in five).
  - In the Czech Republic a project targeted at migrant women who are victims of exploitation, trafficking and enslavement, supports those women who are working in hidden or closed environments, including households and hotel complexes
- The Commission also funds national awareness-raising campaigns under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. In Poland, for example, one of these projects designs and delivers workshops to senior staff in the police force, public prosecution, the court system and regional anti-violence and anti-discrimination offices in order to provide essential information on the rights of sexual violence victims.
- This is just one of the examples of how the European Commission is supporting national governments with a view to ending gender-based violence, and improving their response to it. Member States have a crucial role to play.
- 23 Member States have shown their commitment to ending gender-based violence by signing the Istanbul Convention. So far, 11 have ratified it. This Convention represents a valuable framework to effectively combat violence against women and domestic violence at national and European levels<sup>2</sup>. We are currently analyzing the legal, policy and practical implications of an EU accession to the Convention.
- Later today we will have the opportunity to hear from Joanna Goodey<sup>3</sup>, about the FRA's work in the area, but before that, I would like to already emphasize how crucially important it is to have reliable, comparable data. This helps policy makers to conceive effective measures to combat gender-based violence.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/files/summaries\\_selected\\_2013\\_ag\\_dap\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/files/summaries_selected_2013_ag_dap_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Please note that Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, both present here today, have neither signed nor ratified. The same goes for Norway, also present.

<sup>3</sup> Keynote 13h30: Ms Joanna Goodey, Head of Freedoms and Justice Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: *Results and lessons learned from the FRA violence against women survey*.

- To have an EU-wide survey on women's experiences of violence, for the first time ever, was a major achievement, which we should now build on.
- At the same time, Eurostat is working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on a joint data collection. This will include information on intentional homicide, rape and other sexual assault, and it will give us details of the victim's sex and relationship to the perpetrator for intentional homicide.
- The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has produced research on female genital mutilation, and next week it will present a common methodology and indicators to estimate the number of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in all Member States.
- In cooperation with Eurostat, EIGE will also contribute to the future collection of data on violence.
- This concludes my short overview of European policies to combat gender-based violence, and I look forward to the fruitful discussions to follow.