

Victim Support Europe's Statement for International Women's Day

8 March 2023



No Woman Left Behind

On International Women's Day, Victim Support Europe stands in solidarity with all women who have fallen victim to crime – all manner of crime, but especially crime which targets or disproportionately affects women – no matter where it took place. **No woman should be forgotten, no woman should be ignored.**

In the EU each year, around 75 million people are victimised by crime; thus every one of us is at risk of facing trauma, injury, stress, financial loss and failed expectations.

A 2014 FRA report found that, **since the age of 15, one in three women in the EU will have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime;** that is to say, some 33% of all EU female citizens have experienced, are experiencing, or will experience violence – simply because they are women! Of the 75 million Europeans who become victims of crime every year, some **13 million women in the EU can be expected to experience physical violence and 3.7 million women, or 2% of EU female citizens aged 18-74, may experience sexual violence.** However, beyond the abuse perpetrated because of their gender, women also fall victim to other crimes – **theft and burglary, fraud, murder and other crimes which leave them in need of support, protection, and access to justice.**

Thousands of women never report crimes carried out against them; they may be too fearful, they may be intimidated, or they simply may not know where to go. When they do report a crime, women can face a variety of challenges and much anguish; women often face systemic, institutional victimisation such as victim blaming or the imposition of barriers which prevent them from accessing their rights to recognition, support, protection, and justice.

Change is needed now to empower, support and protect all women victims of crime!

Clearly not enough is being done. While International and European legislation, such as the 1985 UN Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, the Istanbul Convention and the 2012 EU Victims' Rights Directive, have made a difference, **Member States still fail to fully and effectively implement their obligations and the rights of all victims.**

The European Commission has taken an important first step with its proposed Directive on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. **We call on all Member States and the European Parliament to urgently adopt this proposal.**

However, **the European Commission is denying vital help for the women who are not protected by this Directive.** It has repeatedly delayed the publication of an amended Victims' Rights Directive and has given no indication as to when it will be published. Time is of the essence; every delay leaves another woman open to victimisation.

The EU must strengthen its entire legislative framework for all women victims, regardless of the motivation for, or type of crime. Only by synergising a strong Victims' Rights Directive, as the foundation, and the Directive on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and by providing women-specific solutions for women-only problems, can we make sure that no woman is left behind.

To strengthen our efforts to support women, a single, co-ordinated system must be created; not one that is fractured and disjointed, helping some women and ignoring others, but one that includes and protects all women. Along with a strong Victim' Rights Directive, we will make sure that no woman is forgotten, that there is no hierarchy of victims and that a **comprehensive national support framework with coordinated communication mechanisms and a safe justice system** are in operation in every EU Member State.

We therefore call upon the **European Commission to abide by its commitment to publish a revised Victims' Rights Directive** as soon as possible, and we call upon the European Institutions to **adopt strong legislation** to ensure that all women victims of crime can rely on robust frameworks and can enjoy their rights – as women and as victims.