



2021 HUMAN DIMENSION SEMINAR

on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls

**16-17 November 2021
(Warsaw and Online)**

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Introductions and the aims of the Seminar

Violence against women is one of the most common violations of women's human rights. Originating from and resulting in gender inequality, violence against women has many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological as well as economic harm and suffering. In addition to domestic violence, women experience violence in the public sphere, preventing their meaningful participation at all levels and in all aspects of political and public life. Violence against women is ultimately linked to discrimination in the broader society and to women's opportunity to fully enjoy their human rights in all aspects of decision-making processes and positions. Women with impaired access to security and justice services are particularly at risk of violence, such as women with disabilities, women deprived of their liberty, women from minority backgrounds, such as Roma and Sinti women, migrant and refugee women or women living in conflict-affected contexts.

Worldwide one in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence.¹ The OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-being and Safety of Women (2019), covering seven countries in South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe, found that three in ten women say that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 at the hands of a partner or non-partner, and over two-thirds of women consider violence against women and girls is common in their communities.²

Preventing and combatting violence against women is a commitment OSCE participating States have pledged to undertake throughout the years.³ The Ministerial Council (MC) Decisions No.

¹ World Health Organization, Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>

² OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-being and Safety of Women, 2019, Foreword. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/VAWsurvey/publications>

³ See for example the following OSCE commitments: MC decision 14/04 on the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, (Section V, point 44, c); MC decisions No. 15/05, 7/14 and 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women; MC Decision No. 3/03 on the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (point 62, a); MC Decision No 4/13 on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children; MC Decision No 3/18 on the Safety of

15/05, 7/14 and 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women⁴ cover commitments in line with key international standards.

The 2021 Human Dimension Seminar aims to discuss the implementation of OSCE commitments on preventing and combatting violence against women, including effective prevention, protection and prosecution mechanisms, as well as the consequences of violence against women – affecting women’s participation in the civic and political space. The seminar will address among others, the topics of violence against women also in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic and its longer-term effects, sexual and gender-based violence and conflict, violence against women in political and public life, and violence against women living in situations of vulnerability, such as migrants, refugees and displaced persons, and persons at risk of displacement, due to their social, economic or other circumstance as well as experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. The Human Dimension Seminar will discuss the implementation of OSCE commitments, identify challenges and good practices, and make recommendations to participating States, OSCE executive structures, including its institutions, and other relevant actors.

Day 1

10:00 – 11:00

OPENING SESSION

Opening remarks

Introductory addresses

11:00 – 13:00

WORKING GROUP I

Violence against women: recent trends

The COVID-19 related lockdowns and restrictions showcased increased reporting of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, across the OSCE region, underscoring the lack of a gender perspective in policy making connected to emergency measures. Prevention efforts and service delivery have not met the needs of all women on equal ground. Women from disadvantaged backgrounds due to their social, economic and other circumstances have been more often negatively impacted. Migrant and minority women were affected by multiple forms of discrimination and hate incidents. Women have continued to speak up in public against sexual violence, harassment and abuse, with victims and survivors, including younger women, coming forward with the intention to end this human rights violation. Some participating States have taken new measures towards ending all forms of violence against women, committed offline and online, many times subsequent to relentless participation, campaigning and advocacy by women themselves.

The Working Group I will look at the status of implementation of OSCE commitments on preventing and combating violence against women (MC Decisions No. 14/04, 15/05, 7/14 and

Journalists; MC Decision No. 7/09 on Women’s Participation in Public and Political Life.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/456616>

4/18)⁵, including prevention, engaging men and boys, effective awareness raising, protection and prosecution mechanisms, as well as the consequences of violence against women – affecting women’s enjoyment of human rights and participation in the civic and political space while recovering from COVID-19.

Questions that could be addressed:

- What challenges have OSCE participating States experienced in preventing and combating violence against women especially while tackling the COVID-19 public health crisis and its longer-term effects? What can be done to overcome them?
- Which legal, policy and practical measures are effective in preventing and combating violence against women, including online violence and sexual and gender-based harassment? What could be done to strengthen legal and policy frameworks but also resources, data collection and accountability mechanisms on preventing violence against women in light of increasing reports of violence against women since the COVID-19 outbreak?
- How can the OSCE further support participating States in implementing commitments related to preventing and combating violence against women in light of the public health crisis and in future emergency planning efforts?

15:00 – 18:00

WORKING GROUP II

Violence against women in political and public life

Violence and abuse of women in political and public life affects all participating States. While the types of violence may vary, from death threats to sexual harassment or online bullying, it is experienced by women active or aspiring for politics, women running for elections and women human rights defenders across the OSCE region and at all levels. The States, including its democratic institutions, parliaments and political parties, as well as security sector actors and other public authorities, and their leaders, have a responsibility to prevent and combat this type of violence, which targets women not only for their political or social views, but for being women. As a result, such violence excludes women and deters future generations of women from greater citizen involvement, including in relation to public policies development and decision-making. The Working Group II will look at the status of implementation of relevant OSCE commitments (MC decisions 14/04, 4/18 and 7/09)⁶ and the forms, causes and consequences of violence against women in political and public life, recognising the challenge it poses to gender equality and inclusive decision-making processes, and how it undermines

⁵ OSCE MC decision 14/04 on the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, (Section V, point 44, c); MC decisions No. 15/05, 7/14 and 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women; MC Decision No. 3/03 on the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (point 62, a); MC Decision No 4/13 on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children.

⁶ OSCE MC decision 14/04 on the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, (Section V, point 44, c); MC decisions No. 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women; MC Decision No. 7/09 on Women’s Participation in Public and Political Life

democracy and represents a challenge to comprehensive security. The Working Group will aim also to identify good practices for preventing and addressing this human rights violation.

Questions that could be addressed:

- What are the challenges and good practices to prevent and address violence against women in political and public space in the OSCE region?
- What legislative and policy measures can the OSCE participating States prioritize in order to effectively prevent and address all forms of violence and harassment against women in public and political life, including online violence and sexual harassment?
- How can the OSCE executive structures, including its institutions, further support participating States, including through their national human rights institutions, in creating effective prevention, complaint and support mechanisms to combat violence and harassment against women and girls in the OSCE region?

Day 2

10:00 – 13:00

WORKING GROUP III

Violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups, in particular migrants, refugees and displaced persons, and persons at risk of displacement

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the estimated number of international migrants worldwide in 2020 was 272 million, and 47.9% of this population were women.⁷ The question of refugees and displaced persons remains one of the most serious humanitarian and human rights challenges worldwide and in the OSCE region. Women who are refugees or displaced are more likely to indicate that they have suffered physical or sexual violence compared to women overall.⁸ Gender specific protection challenges inevitably arise for ‘people on the move’, In the context of mixed migration flows, women crossing international borders and/or internal boundary lines are often the target of traffickers and smugglers and are frequently at risk of violence and sexual harassment. The majority of identified victims of trafficking in human beings are women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Violence often follows migrant women in detention centres, where they may be abused, and young girls often go missing.⁹ Women migrants may also face gender-based violence when seeking to integrate in a given location, especially when undocumented and at increased risk of exploitation.

The Working Group III will look at the status of implementation of relevant OSCE

⁷ IOM, the World Migration Report, 2020. Available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf

⁸ See the OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women - Violence against Women in Conflict Thematic Report, OSCE, 2020 covering seven OSCE participating States. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444157>

⁹ The European Network of Migrant Women, Gender-based dangers facing migrant and refugee women, November 2015. Available at: <http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GENDER-BASED-DANGERS-FACING-MIGRANT-AND-REFUGEE-WOMEN-4.pdf>

commitments (MC Decisions 15/05, 10/07 para. 7, 4/13, Helsinki 1992 and Vilnius 2011),¹⁰ which recognize that women belonging to vulnerable groups are particularly targeted and vulnerable to violence against women. OSCE commitments related to Roma and Sinti issues place particular emphasis on the need for states to ensure the security, well-being and health of Roma and Sinti women, youth and children (MC Decision No 4/13). In line with these commitments, coupled with general commitments regarding the protection of refugees and displaced persons, as well as stateless persons, to receive protection and assistance aimed at securing durable solutions (Helsinki 1992) and efforts "to protect migrants legally residing in host countries and persons belonging to national minorities, stateless persons and refugees from racism, xenophobia, discrimination and violent acts of intolerance and to elaborate or strengthen national strategies and programmes for the integration of regular migrants" (MC Decision No. 10/7, para. 7), this Working Group will examine ways forward in addressing sexual and gender-based violence in situations of displacement and migration.

Questions that could be addressed:

- What are the challenges and good practices to prevent and address violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups, in particular migrants, refugees and displaced persons, and persons at risk of displacement as well as Roma and Sinti women?
- What legislative and policy measures can the OSCE participating States prioritize in order to effectively prevent and address all forms of violence and harassment against women migrants, refugees and displaced persons?
- How can participating States strengthen efforts to improve data and actions to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of female migrants, refugees and displaced persons?

15:00 – 16:30

Closing plenary session

Reports from Rapporteurs

Comments from the floor

Closing remarks

18:00

Closing of the seminar

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¹⁰ MC decisions No. 15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women,