

Combating the pandemic within the COVID-19 pandemic: violence against women and girls

Joint webinar of the Secretariat's Programme for Gender Issues and Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit, with support of the Albanian OSCE Chair

Time and date: Wednesday 17th June, 13:00 – 14:30 (Vienna time)

In the past months, the pandemic has affected societies and individuals around the world in almost every aspect of life. The pandemic affects women and men differently and it has become clear that it increases the risk of violence against women and girls. While gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is not a new topic, the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing patterns. Emerging data and media reports show that since the outbreak of the pandemic, violence against women and girls, and in particular domestic violence, has increased. In some countries, the number of reported domestic violence cases has doubled.¹ It is likely that other forms of violence, such as cyber harassment and other violence perpetuated through the use of technology, are also intensified, though little data is available on this.

Domestic violence is a form of violence against women and girls that includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence. It is the most common form of violence against women and girls. Specific groups of women are at particular risk of being exposed to violence, including domestic violence, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, including elderly women, women with disabilities as well as women who are displaced, refugees, and living in conflict-affected areas.

Due to movement restrictions and other lockdown measures to stop the spread of the pandemic, women and girls might be isolated from the people and services that they could receive support from. Health and support services for victims may be more difficult to reach, as their capacities are stretched and much needed resources diverted elsewhere. From a security and justice sector perspective, the current situation provides unprecedented challenges to ensure appropriate police protection, ability to decree emergency barring orders and access to justice for survivors of violence.

¹ COVID-19 and violence against women – what the health sector/system can do, 26 March 2020, <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf>

International organizations and non-governmental organizations have urged governments to take action and make the prevention and response to violence against women an integral part of their national COVID-19 response.² The OSCE recognizes violence against women as a human rights violation and a threat to security. The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC 14/04) and other relevant commitments, including the latest decision 4/18, adopted in 2018 in Milan, recognize the importance of preventing and combating violence against women and this topic is as a priority for the Albanian 2020 OSCE Chair.

Aim of the webinar

The Secretariat's Programme for Gender Issues and Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit with support of the Albanian OSCE Chair are organizing this webinar as an informal platform to exchange knowledge and views between experts, OSCE delegations and OSCE staff.

The overall objectives are:

- To share emerging good practices and effective measures introduced in OSCE pS to respond to increased levels of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular from a law enforcement and access to justice perspective.
- To identify potential actions which OSCE participating States could take in the post-COVID phase to prevent violence against women and girls and improve the support to survivors of violence against women and girls.

The guiding questions for speakers and participants to reflect on, include:

- How to adapt protection and services for survivors (including shelters, legal assistance, emergency barring orders, medical care) in light of the pandemic measures?
- How has the role of police changed as first responders to violence against women and girl and what adaptations are needed to provide protection?
- What measures can be taken to mitigate the impact of this pandemic on women's and girl's access to justice and support?

² <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/449515>, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052>

Agenda

Moderator:

Ambassador Neil Bush, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

Introductory remarks:

Alena Kupchyna, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats

Speakers:

- **Iris Luarasi**, Director of the Albanian National Counseling Line for Women and Girls, Counseling line for Men and Boys and First Vice-President of GREVIO at the Council of Europe
- **Saša Gavrić**, Senior Democratic Governance Officer, OSCE Mission to Skopje
- Representative of international organization (TBC)
- Law enforcement professional from pS (TBC)

Q&A and open discussion

Participants who wish to take the floor are kindly requested to get in touch with the Gender Section (GenderSection-AT@osce.org). It will also be possible to request the floor during the meeting, using the chat function.

Wrap-up:

Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE

Audience:

The webinar is open to members of delegations of OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, as well as gender focal points and other interested staff from OSCE executive structures. Participation is also possible for other international organizations and partner organizations of the OSCE.

There will be a maximum number of participants due to restrictions of the online events tool.

Registration and technical modalities:

Participants are kindly requested to register online until **15 June 2020 17:00 (Vienna time)** via <https://events.osce.org/gender-webinar/registration>. If you are not registered, it will not be possible to join the meeting.

If you login for the first time with the OSCE online events tool, you need to create an account with a password. If you logged in before for any other OSCE event, you can use your existing account and provide your name and password.

After registration, participants will receive an invitation with a link to the Zoom meeting. It will not be necessary to set up an account with Zoom to join the meeting, participants will simply need to click on the link.

We kindly request all participants to make sure they log in at least **ten minutes** before the meeting starts, so we can start on time. All participants should **mute microphone** and **disable their camera** when joining the meeting.

Please note that due to a limitation on the total number of participants in a virtual meeting, OSCE delegations are requested to **not have more than three** participants logged into the meeting at the same time.

Questions

Please contact the Gender Section in case of any questions or comments (GenderSection-AT@osce.org).