



PRESS RELEASE

Vienna, 25th May 2016

Women against Violence Europe (WAVE) launches the *Step up!* Campaign A campaign on the rights of women survivors of violence and their children to access support and protection

1 in 3 women in Europe experiences physical or sexual violence. Yet, the states to which women pay taxes fail to ensure satisfactory access to specialised support services. Only 15 out of 46 European countries provide a specialised helpline and Europe is lacking at least 47,000 women's shelter places. Support centres for rape and sexual assault are not available. Discrimination hinders most vulnerable women from accessing support! *"There is a serious under-investment in specialised support services in many countries in Europe and as a consequence women have nowhere to turn for adequate help. We call on EU authorities, national governments and other interested parties in society to STEP UP investments to stop violence against women!"* (Rosa Logar, WAVE President)

Today, the Women against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network and its members across Europe launch the European campaign *Step up!* In the next two years, the campaign will promote the rights of women survivors of violence and their children to access support and protection throughout Europe. Violence against women and girls remains the most widespread form of Human Rights violation as **1 in 3 women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15**, and it can be fatal - in 2012, an estimated 47% of all homicides of women were committed by a family member or an intimate partner.

The lack of adequate services and the wide-spread victim-blaming are responsible for the under-reporting of violence. Only a small fraction of women report their most recent serious violent incident. Most societies prohibit such violence - yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned so women have no alternatives and endure repeated violence. The costs of this repeated violence affect all of us. Support services are vital to enable women and their children to seek safety and empowerment for violence-free lives. **Therefore we urge the European society to step up investments in specialized services that work from a women's rights perspective and make a difference.**

Figures that speak about the lack of access to specialized services (WAVE Report 2015):

- Only 15 out of 46 European countries provide a helpline that runs 24/7 and is free of charge
- More than 47,000 women's shelter places are missing in Europe, particularly in new EU member states that have joined after 2004 and non-EU member states, according to Council of Europe standards
- Support centres for women and girls victims of rape and sexual assault are not available in most countries
- Access to specialised support services is hindered for many women, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), migrant and undocumented migrant, differently-abled, elderly and LGBT women

We call on the EU to adopt a comprehensive strategy and action plan to end violence against women and address the disparities in access to support across Europe.

The WAVE Network calls on key decision-makers on national and European levels to commit to the following improvements:

- 1) Prevention of violence against women and protection for victims recognized as pressing priorities;
- 2) Access to specialised support services for ALL women and their children;
- 3) More specialist support services in Europe (particularly women's helplines, shelters and centres);
- 4) Gender-sensitive approach to ensure quality of support services, which are best provided by independent women's organisations that place women's needs and rights at the heart of their work.

Because violence against women is a collective problem, which has a huge impact on women's economic freedom and potential, and ultimately enormous repercussions on the world's economy, the campaign calls on the business and philanthropy sector to

“Step up investments to support survivors!”

Partnering for change is essential, and we call on each and every one of you: Join in the *Step up!* Campaign and help us making it a success!

“Step up and stand together to end violence against women and their children!”

For more information or to support the *Step up!* Campaign, please contact the WAVE Office in Vienna: **Rosa Logar**, rosa.logar@interventionsstelle-wien.at – tel: 0043 664 311 94 58; or **Maria Rösslhuber**, Maria.roesslhuber@wave-network.org – tel: 0043 664 793 0789.

To find out more about the campaign, go to: www.wave-network.org

Show your support to the *Step up!* Campaign

- ✓ Add the WAVE Step up! TWIBBON to your profile picture - <http://twibbon.com/Support/step-up-campaign-2>
- ✓ Help us promote the Step Up! Launch Video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvcu2lZgpNE>
- ✓ Tell us how YOU intend to step up, using the #StepUpWAVE (#WAVENetwork)

To find out more about the *Step up!* campaign, go to: www.wave-network.org

Sources:

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