

Commission sets out path towards fair taxation of the Digital Economy

The European Commission launched today a new EU agenda to ensure that the digital economy is taxed in a fair and growth-friendly way. The current tax framework does not fit with modern realities. The tax rules in place today were designed for the traditional economy and cannot capture activities which are increasingly based on intangible assets and data. As a result, the effective tax rate of digital companies in the EU is estimated to be half that of traditional companies – and often much less. At the same time, patchwork unilateral measures by Member States to address the problem threaten to create new obstacles and loopholes in the Single Market. The [Communication](#) adopted by the Commission today sets out the challenges Member States currently face when it comes to acting on this pressing issue and outlines possible solutions to be explored. The aim is to ensure a coherent EU approach to taxing the digital economy that supports the Commission's key priorities of completing the Digital Single Market and ensuring the fair and effective taxation of all companies. Today's Communication paves the way for a legislative proposal on EU rules for the taxation of profits in the digital economy, as confirmed by President **Juncker** in the [2017 State of the Union](#). Those rules could be set out as early as spring 2018. Today's paper should also feed into international work in this area, notably in the G20 and the OECD. For more information, please consult the [press release](#) and [Q&A](#). *(For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel: +32 229 87183)*

Juncker Plan set to trigger €236.1 billion across the EU

The Investment Plan for Europe – the so-called Juncker Plan – is now expected to trigger €236.1 billion in investments. Following this month's meeting of the [European Investment Bank's](#) (EIB) Board of Directors, operations approved under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) now represent a total financing volume of €46.5 billion and are located in all 28 Member States. The EIB has approved 312 EFSI-backed operations, supported by €36.1 billion in EFSI financing. The European Investment Fund (EIF) has also approved 306 SME financing agreements, with total financing under the EFSI of €10.4 billion. Around 454,000 small and medium-sized businesses are expected to benefit from improved access to finance as a result of these EIF agreements. The European Commission and the EIB Group estimate that the EFSI has so far supported 300,000 jobs across the EU. By 2020 that figure should be 700,000. On 13 September, the European Parliament and Member States came to an [agreement in principle](#) on EFSI 2.0 – the extension and reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments. *(For more information about the EFSI 2.0 agreement, see our [EFSI 2.0 Q&A](#), and for more details on Investment Plan projects and results see the new and updated [website](#) or contact Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)*

EU – US Privacy Shield: Commissioner Jourová wraps up the meetings with US administration on the annual review

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová**, concluded the joint review meetings of the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield, with a phone call with US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. The aim of the two-day exercise in the US was to investigate how the US commitments are being met through exchanges on the underlying US legal framework in place and on the functioning of the oversight mechanisms. Both sides agreed that the Privacy Shield is key for the data exchanges in transatlantic relations and expressed mutual commitment to making the Privacy Shield a success. Commissioner **Jourová** said: *"The discussions over the past days were fruitful.*

I appreciate the commitment the US administration has showed to Transatlantic data transfers and to our concerns. The Privacy Shield can be a win-win for the EU and the US, if implemented correctly." The discussions with the US administration together with feedback from businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders will feed into the Commission's annual review report which will be published in the second half of October. A joint press statement by Commissioner Jourová and US Secretary of Commerce Ross is available [online](#).

(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

EU and China sign memorandum on water protection against pollution, wastage and climate change

Today, Commissioner for the Environment, Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, and Chinese Minister of Water Resources, Chen Lei, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Water Policy Dialogue between the EU and China. The signature which took place at the High Level Conference of the Water Platform in Turku, Finland, is a sign of political commitment to the co-operation on water policy, and will help implement the joint priorities between the EU and China in the water sector. Commissioner **Vella** said: *"Today's signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on establishing an EU-China Water Policy Dialogue is not just welcome, it is essential. We are demonstrating our commitment to jointly address common water challenges. Water is the source of life. Climate change, pollution, increasing demand and wastage have put pressures like never before. We are showing that a global problem needs global action."* The Dialogue between the EU and the Ministry of Water Resources will give political steer to the [Chinese Europe Water Platform](#) and cover a number of areas such as developing and enforcing legislation to protect water, integrated water resources management, dealing with water disasters, adaptation to climate change, and improving cooperation on international water issues. Today's signature with China comes less than a year after the [EU – India Memorandum of Understanding on water cooperation](#). More information [here](#). *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)*

Cohesion Policy invests in a gas pipeline in Poland

€79 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) will cover a part of the construction costs of the 130 km-long Zdzieszowice – Wrocław pipeline in South-West Poland. The new pipeline will reinforce the existing regional gas transmission system and increase its capacity. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"This Cohesion Policy project improving gas connectivity in Eastern Europe is a concrete example of EU solidarity. We*

invest in thousands of transport, digital and energy networks throughout Europe so our Union can grow faster and ever closer.” Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *“Well-connected energy infrastructure is essential to achieving the Energy Union. This EU support will help fill existing gaps in energy infrastructure, putting us on the path to a truly connected European energy market. This is necessary to strengthen the security of energy supply and a more efficient use of the energy resources.”* The Zdzieszowice – Wrocław pipeline is part of the North-South Corridor included in the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSO-G), Ten Year Network Development Plan (TYNDP) 2017, as an important part of the North-South gas interconnections in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It was defined as a [project of common interest](#) for trans-European energy infrastructure. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commission acts to prevent mis-selling of insurance products

The Commission has today adopted rules to protect consumers when they buy insurance products in the EU. New rules on product oversight and governance will for the first time oblige insurers to prioritise the interest of consumers when designing, developing and distributing all insurance products from 2018 onwards. In addition, new conduct of business rules will ensure that consumers benefit from a high level of protection when they invest their savings in insurance-based investment products, such as certain types of life-insurance policies. Sellers of insurance products will have to comply with new standards on preventing and managing conflicts of interest, and on accepting commissions and payments from third parties (so-called “inducements”). The rules also set out which information sellers must gather from their customers when providing advice and in which cases investment products might be sold with limited advice or without advice. The implementing rules adopted today, in the form of two delegated regulations, stem from the Insurance Distribution Directive (IDD). They will enter into force on 23 February 2018 along with the IDD, following scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council. They follow the adoption in August 2017 of an implementing technical standard (ITS) on the Insurance Product Information Document (IPID). More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: [+32 229 56194](#); Letizia Lupini – Tel: [+32 229 51958](#))

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Civica by Partners Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Civica Group Ltd (“Civica”) of the UK, by certain investment funds advised and/or managed by Partners Group AG or its affiliates of Switzerland. Civica is a provider of software and IT related services. Partners Group is a global private markets investment management company with portfolio companies active in various businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the overlaps between the activities of Civica and Partners Group’s portfolio companies, as well as their activities on related markets, are limited. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the

public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8616](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EU at UN General Assembly: standing in for a credible rules-based global order

The European Union on Wednesday at the 72nd UN General Assembly demonstrated a strong commitment to multilateralism and joint solutions for global challenges. President of the European Council Donald **Tusk**, [speaking on behalf of the EU at the General Assembly](#), underlined the EU's support for the United Nations. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** at a high-level ministerial event on the Role of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Economic Empowerment of Women stressed that violence against women is a challenge for every society and that fighting for the rights for women is the way forward. He as well as High Representative/Vice-President Federica [Mogherini](#) also spoke at the Bloomberg Global Business Forum which brought together the public and private sector. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini**, most notably, [chaired the E3/EU+3 and Iran Ministerial Meeting on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#). On top of a number of bilateral meetings, she also addressed a [high-level event on Libya under the auspices of the UN Secretary General](#), participated at a [trilateral EU-UN-African Union meeting](#) and delivered a [statement on behalf of the European Union at the ministerial meeting of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation \(CTBT\)](#), urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to make credible progress on its obligations to denuclearise. She also hosted an [informal session with Western Balkans leaders](#), where she was joined by Commissioner Johannes **Hahn**, who earlier in the day met with the Foreign Ministers of the region. Commissioners [Hahn](#) and Neven **Mimica** presented the European External Investment Plan as part of the EU's contribution to Global Goals at an event with UNDP, while Commissioner Christos **Stylianides** spoke at [humanitarian event on South Sudan](#). Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** [spoke at the event marking one year of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), at the [GCTF Ministerial Meetings](#) as well as at a [high level event Preventing Terrorist Use of the Internet](#), where he highlighted the EU action in this field. On the agenda on Thursday a meeting of the Libya Quartet and a high level event on Syria. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

Additional \$293.89 million in support to Iraq pledged at the [Ministerial event on Iraq](#)

A total of \$293.89 million additional support to Iraq was pledged on Wednesday at the Ministerial-level event on Iraq, co-chaired by the EU together with the Republic of Iraq, the US, UNOCHA and Germany. Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"The end of the Mosul military campaign has marked the beginning of a new phase of international support to Iraq. A new phase in which the need for humanitarian*

aid and protection continues, in order to save and protect the lives of all Iraqis affected by the conflict. In addition, it is now more important than ever to bolster complementarities between humanitarian aid, stabilisation, early recovery and development support: this is crucial to enable Iraqi families to also rebuild their lives. The additional funding announced today by the EU is for lifesaving humanitarian action to the most vulnerable Iraqis, including survivors of violence, children who have lost their parents and childhood to the war. The European Union will stand by them". Funding aims to provide lifesaving support to the affected populations in retaken areas and those affected by displacement, including in the aftermath of the Mosul military campaign. It will also provide physical rehabilitation and gender-based, psychosocial and mental health support to the survivors of violence during the conflict. More information on EU support to Iraq in our factsheet [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

EU and UN presented a new initiative worth €500 million to eliminate violence against women and girls

In order to help eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, the European Union and the United Nations have presented yesterday their new "Spotlight Initiative". At the official launch at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, High Representative/Vice President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality. We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential."* Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *"Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which crosses all borders, generations, nationalities and communities. It deeply touches our hearts and our minds. And it is a serious barrier to any society's full development potential. To make a real change, I invite all partners to join our Spotlight Initiative for a world in which all women and girls can truly shine!"* Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes and large-scale targeted actions will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation; trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence. Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean. Read also our [press release](#), [Q&A \(MEMO\)](#) and [Joint Communiqué](#), and watch the interventions of High Representative/Vice President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner **Mimica** [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Le Vice-Président Šefčovič et la Commissaire Bulc à Tallinn

Le Vice-Président pour l'Union de l'Energie Maroš **Šefčovič** et la Commissaire aux Transports Violeta **Bulc** sont à Tallinn pour une série de discussions sur la politique européenne d'infrastructure dans le domaine des transports. Le

dossier était à l'agenda du [Conseil informel Transport](#) organisé par la Présidence estonienne où le Vice-Président pour l'Union de l'Energie **Sefčovič** a mené une rencontre conjointe des Ministres de transport et d'énergie (écouter [sa déclaration](#) sur EbS). Il a souligné que la modernisation de l'infrastructure et la réduction des gaz à effet de serre dans le transport vont de pair et qu'il convient d'y faire face ensemble. Quant à La Commissaire Bulc, elle a eu un échange de vue avec les ministres européens sur les besoins de financement pour l'après 2020 afin de mettre en œuvre le [réseau transeuropéen de transport](#). Selon les estimations de la Commission, ceux-ci sont de l'ordre de 500 milliards d'euros pour le seul réseau "central" lors de la période 2021-2030. Par ailleurs, la Commissaire **Bulc** a profité de cette réunion pour attirer l'attention des ministres sur le deuxième Journée européenne sans mort sur les routes ([projet EDWARD](#)) qui se tient aujourd'hui à travers l'Europe. A partir de cet après-midi, le Vice-Président **Šefčovič** et la Commissaire **Bulc** participeront à la conférence "[Connecting Europe](#)" organisé conjointement avec la présidence estonienne. L'objectif est de réunir décideurs et parties prenantes afin de dresser un bilan des investissements d'infrastructure réalisés jusqu'à présent et d'identifier des actions et solutions de financement pour l'après 2020. La conférence est disponible en webstreaming à [cette adresse](#). *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43)*

Commissioner Gabriel in Athens to talk about cybersecurity and digital priorities for Europe

Today, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** is in Athens to deliver a speech on "Digital Policy Priorities for Europe" in front of members of standing Committees on European Affairs and on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice of the Hellenic Parliament. The Commissioner's meetings include Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Nikos Pappas, Greek Minister for Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, the first Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament Anastasios Kourakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, President of the party Nea Dimokratia. She will also visit the site of the project "Development of e-prescription system and provision of related support services" in the e-Government Center for Social Security Services in Athens. Following the [Commission's proposals to scale up European tools to enhance cybersecurity in the EU](#), Commissioner **Gabriel** will also visit the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) Athens office on which the EU Cybersecurity Agency will be based. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Julia Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)*

Urban Agenda for the EU: Commissioner Crețu meets mayors of capitals in Riga

Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** attends the annual Capital Mayors meeting in Riga, Latvia, today and Friday to discuss the implementation of the [Urban Agenda for the EU](#). *"I want capital cities to be strongly involved in the Urban Agenda for the EU", said the Commissioner ahead of the meeting, "they are on the forefront of most challenges faced by urban areas. In the current Cohesion policy framework, cities are given more autonomy to deal with the funds than ever; I'm also here to invite them to*

*actively participate in the discussion on the future Cohesion Policy after 2020.” During her visit to Latvia, Commissioner **Crețu** will also meet Dana Reizniece-Ozola, the Latvian Finance minister to discuss the future EU budget and Cohesion Policy. The Commission will report on the progress made under the Urban Agenda for the EU in October. The next Cities Forum on 27-28 November in Rotterdam will be another occasion to discuss the Urban Agenda further. (For further information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

Muslims in the EU: High levels of trust despite pervasive discrimination

Muslims in the EU: High levels of trust despite pervasive discrimination | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

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2. [Media](#) >
3. [Press releases](#) >
4. Muslims in the EU: High levels of trust despite pervasive discrimination

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JOINT COMMUNIQUE between the United Nations and European Union on the launch of the Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate violence against women and girls

Today more than ever, when the world is facing countless challenges, we – the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) – want to strengthen and build on our strategic partnership. We believe in effective multilateralism, and a global order based on rules, agreed together and respected by all. We are firmly committed to promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development, and other shared values and principles.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with an unprecedented opportunity for progress, with its 17 Goals (SDGs) as an integrated set of common imperatives. This global framework is reinforced by the new European Consensus on Development. Building on this strategic partnership, today we stand together to reaffirm our resolute and unwavering commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

The promotion of gender equality, enjoyment of human rights by all as well as women's and girls' empowerment, are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Not only through the stand-alone SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peaceful societies, but also as a cross-cutting element central to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

Translating our firm commitment into concrete action, it is with great pride and a shared sense of responsibility that we are launching today the Spotlight Initiative – focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) to make a real and lasting difference for millions of women and girls all over the world.

VAWG is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries. This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs. Global and continuous engagement is therefore required in all countries and regions to overcome it.

To deliver on this urgent priority, the UN and the EU will bring together our comparative advantages by pooling capacities, resources, expertise and current efforts. We will engage in a renewed policy dialogue with partner countries and organisations around the world. A financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million – with the EU as the principal contributor at this stage – will support our targeted actions over the next few years. To scale up and broaden its reach, we invite other donors to join this initiative.

The Spotlight Initiative aims at achieving transformational change at the regional level, concentrating our efforts in Asia, the Pacific region, Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa), Latin America and the Caribbean. Guided by evidence, we will focus strategically on the most prevalent forms of VAWG in different regions, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; specific forms of domestic and family violence; femicide; trafficking in human beings; and economic (labour) exploitation.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to “leave no-one behind”.

We – the UN and the EU – will continue to work tirelessly around the world, and in all fora, to empower women and girls, defend their rights, strengthen their voice, and ensure their safety and full control over their own bodies and their own destinies, while motivating others, including governments and civil society organisations, to partner with us in this important endeavour.

The Spotlight Initiative provides a unique and unprecedented opportunity for all of our partners to help us collectively step up our efforts to combat VAWG, promote gender equality and build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all.

[EU and UN team up to eliminate violence against women and girls](#)

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative was launched by the EU High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica, together with the UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed.

Speaking at the launch, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated: “It is a harsh but true reality – 1 in 3 women will face violence throughout their lifetime. Violence against women and girls devastates lives, and causes pain across generations. “The Spotlight Initiative is truly historic,” he added. “This Fund is a pioneering investment in gender equality and women’s empowerment. When we shine a spotlight on the empowerment of the world’s women and girls, everyone’s future is brighter.”

EU High Representative Federica **Mogherini** noted: “The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality. We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential.”

Commissioner **Mimica** added: “Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which crosses all borders, generations, nationalities and communities. It deeply touches our hearts and our minds. And it is a serious barrier to any society’s full development potential. To make a real change, I invite all partners to join our Spotlight Initiative for a world in which all women and girls can truly shine!”

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, with the EU as its main contributor in the order of half a billion

Euro, which is open to other donors.

Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence. Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to 'leave no-one behind'. It will aim at galvanizing political commitments at the highest level and at providing large-scale targeted support, as well as at building new partnerships. It will also raise awareness of the widespread, persistent and detrimental impact of violence against women and girls.

Background

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. Overall more than a billion lives today are touched by violence. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries.

Moreover, more than 700 million women worldwide were married as children before 18. Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—before the age of 15. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation in 30 countries.

This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Spotlight Initiative is an expression of the same political will that was demonstrated by the international community in adopting the SDGs, with standalone Goal 5 on Gender Equality and specific targets on ending violence against women and girls, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality across the entire SDG framework.

The New European Consensus on Development, the EU's new global approach to sustainable development for the years ahead, also underlines the commitment of the EU and all its Member States to gender equality.

For more information on the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, please visit: www.un.org/spotlight-initiative

See also the [Q&A \(MEMO\)](#) and the [EU-UN Joint Communiqué](#).

Questions and Answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls

What is the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls?

The EU and the UN have launched a new partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. It galvanises political commitment at the highest levels and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically [Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#). It will do so by building new multi-stakeholder partnerships and providing large-scale, targeted support, backed by an initial dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million.

The Initiative will focus on all forms of violence against women and girls that are prevalent and contribute to gender inequality. Its focus is on: domestic and family violence; sexual and gender-based violence; harmful practices; and trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation.

How many women and girls are victims of violence?

Violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations: 35% of women worldwide are estimated to have experienced at some point in their lives either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner. In some countries, this figure goes up to 70%.

Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—were married before the age of 15.

About 70% of all human trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls.

At least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting in 30 countries.

Around 120 million girls worldwide (over 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends.

What are the consequences of violence against women and girls?

The impact of violence ranges from immediate to long term physical, sexual and mental health consequences for women and girls, including death.

It also has tremendous personal, societal and economic costs all around the globe: from greater health care and legal expenses to productivity losses.

What are the root causes of violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls is a complex issue that is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, as well as unequal power relations between men and women which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world.

Low economic and social status of women increases the risk of violence that women face. Increasing economic independence is important to help survivors leave abusive relationships.

Prevention work must lie at the core of addressing this challenge. But despite some promising practices, prevention interventions remain small-scale, fragmented and stand-alone activities, under-resourced and lacking impact evaluation.

Are there reliable data to show the prevalence of violence against women and girls?

Understanding the extent, the nature, and the consequences of violence against women and girls is important to inform legislation, policies and programmes. To that end, the EU and UN Member States have made efforts to collect data and compile statistics related to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls, especially domestic and intimate partner violence.

The availability of prevalence data on violence against women and girls, however, remains uneven across and within countries. Quality, reliability and comparability of the data across and within countries remain a challenge.

What is needed to end and prevent violence against women and girls?

A comprehensive approach is needed, involving a wide range of stakeholders. It must cover the development of laws and policies, prevention of violence before it happens and access to essential services for survivors, as well as include data collection and research.

Social mobilisation is also necessary to change social norms and behaviours, including men and boys, traditional and religious leaders, private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

Awareness-raising campaigns on the extent and impact of violence are an important component of prevention efforts. They need to be complemented with educational programmes and community mobilization to generate sustained results.

Increasing women's participation in political processes has shown to result in better legislative outcomes for women and a more responsive state.

Additionally, perhaps the greatest indicator of strong legislation on ending violence against women has been correlated with the existence of a strong women's civil society movement.

What is the UN doing to end and prevent violence against women and girls?

UN entities continue to support the Member States of the UN to further advance the global legal and policy framework in addressing violence against women and girls.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which is managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System, provides support to innovative approaches to stem and prevent the pandemic of violence. Since its inception, the fund has provided grants to 426 initiatives in 136 countries, amounting to a total of USD 116 million.

The UN Secretary General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, which amongst its many activities initiated Orange Day, proclaims every 25th of the month as a day to raise awareness. It has garnered support for other high-profile initiatives from celebrities, including sports stars in Europe, to raise the profile of the issue.

What is the EU doing to end and prevent violence against women and girls?

The EU's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 has set an ambitious target to mainstream gender actions across 85% of all new EU initiatives by 2020. Progress is undeniable:

92% of all new initiatives adopted in area of the EU's foreign policy and around 60% of all new initiatives adopted in the EU's International cooperation and development work have been marked as mainly or significantly aiming at promoting gender equality and/or women empowerment.

In 2016, the European Commission committed EUR 419 million for specific actions for gender equality and women's empowerment. Among the programmes, the EU funded a specific action targeting 16 Sub-Saharan countries focusing on female genital mutilation. The support (EUR 12 million to a joint programme led by UNFPA and UNICEF) aimed at engaging with civil society organization men and boys, traditional leaders etc., as to change the social norms which make the mutilation so largely practiced.

Data for 2017 have to be released but the EU is supporting different programmes to fight against violence against women and girls. In Zambia, for instance EUR 25 million have been allocated to a programme aiming at strengthening the institutional capacity of the national authorities to fight against sexual and gender based violence, to prevent it, to change the social norms and mind set which lead to discrimination and violence, and to improve access to comprehensive services for victims. In very recently, a large programme to fight against domestic violence has been adopted for the Pacific region (EUR 13 million)

Today, the EU has launched the Spotlight initiative together with the UN, showing with this its firm commitment against all forms of violence against

women and girls.

What has the EU achieved?

The EU is working together with UNFPA and UNICEF to fight Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage in 16 African countries. This is done through an innovative approach aimed at changing social norms and attitudes. The EU provided support to organise large-scale community discussion sessions based on human rights, collective decision-making in communities and extended social networks, and community and district-wide public declarations for the abandonment of FGM/C.

These activities are starting to bear fruits: with EU and support from other international organisations, **Senegal** is close to becoming the first country in the world to declare total abandonment of FGM/C. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of villages declaring abandonment increased from 300 to 5,315, about 550 communities or a 16% increase per year. The project has led to comparable successes in **Egypt** and **Sudan**.

In **Pakistan** a project is being implemented to fight poverty through women's empowerment and community mobilisation, building social capital for better access to basic services and income generation. This is done by providing social guidance, technical and financial assistance to the rural poor in Sindh. This programme is expected to increase by 30% and diversify the incomes of over 700 000 targeted households, as well as to deliver access to public services, such as water, education and health for 70% of the targeted households.

The new EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, backed by a dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million, will enable multi-stakeholders to intensify action in mutually reinforcing core areas of strengthening legislation and policies, institutions, prevention, services and data at national level, advancing SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

What actions are partner countries taking to end violence against women and girls?

There has been a growing momentum to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. Governments have adopted international and regional policy and legal agreements, such as the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

At least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, 125 have laws on sexual harassment and 52 have laws on marital rape.

The Spotlight Initiative will build on this progress to help eliminate violence against women and girls.