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Violence against women rife in eastern Europe, says OSCE study

The OSCE spoke face-to-face with over 15,000 women to gather data on the prevalence of sexual, physical and psychological violence in southeastern and eastern Europe. The results showed a "grim picture."

By Cristina Burack

DW.com (06.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2FcSch1> - he Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) published Wednesday the "grim" results of a large-scale survey on violence against women in eight different countries in eastern and southeastern Europe.

The representative report surveyed around 15,000 women aged 18-74 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine and Kosovo, asking them about their experiences of violence and abuse since the age of 15.

Key findings on violence

- Some 70 percent of women said they had experienced some form of violence since the age of 15, with 31 percent saying this had occurred within the last 12 months.
- Twenty-three percent of women responded that they had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, while 18 percent said they had experienced this from a non-partner.
- Family members were responsible for 31 percent of non-partner physical violence experienced by women.
- Psychological violence is the most common form of violence against women, with 60 percent of women reporting this from a partner.
- All women can experience violence, but women who are poorer, economically dependent or have children are more at risk.
- Women with a tertiary education tend to experience higher rates of violence, particularly from non-partners.

"Violence against women and girls is a persistent human rights violation," the organization said in its report, adding, "the OSCE recognizes violence against women and girls as both a threat to individuals and a broader security."

Norms and attitudes

The report, which was both quantitative and qualitative, also examined norms and attitudes towards women and violence in the surveyed countries.

"Beliefs in female subservience, spousal obedience and silence surrounding VAWG [violence against women and girls] continue to persist in the region," it said.

Nearly six in 10 women thought that violence against women was very or fairly common. However, the findings pointed out that many women do not report experiences of violence because they distrust authorities or do not feel informed about what to do.

The organization said the survey aimed to address a lack of sufficient data and compliment an EU-wide survey that had been undertaken in 2014.

Goals for the future

The secretary general of the OSCE, Thomas Greminger, described the report as "an important step towards eliminating violence against women."

"Ultimately, we need to use the results to achieve specific policy goals: reduced violence against women, improved services for survivors and greater security for women and girls overall," he added.

Greminger presented the results alongside the EU's gender advisor, Mara Marinaki.

The survey was undertaken in conjunction with various partners, including the European Commission, UN Women and Germany's permanent mission to the OSCE.

UN agencies call for action to bolster rights of Europe's stateless children

United Nations agencies are calling on States and regional organizations across Europe to take urgent action to ensure that thousands of currently stateless children are given the support and protection they deserve.

UN News (14.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2DZCHAh> - With more than 500,000 people in Europe estimated to be unrecognized as a citizen of any country, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) underscored that children without a nationality have limited access to basic rights and services, like education or healthcare, and can face life-long discrimination.

"Life is stacked against a stateless child right from the start", said UNHCR's Europe Bureau Director Pascale Moreau, adding that legal obstacles often mean their dreams are "dashed before they are adults, and their potential squandered".

As the overall number of asylum-seeking children in Europe has grown since 2010, so too has the number of children identified as stateless. In 2017 some 2,100 children were registered as such, representing a four-fold increase compared to seven years earlier.

Basic rights and services, including education and healthcare, are denied to children without a nationality. Lacking official documents, they are also at greater risk of violence, trafficking and life-long discrimination. Moreover, along with their families, they are often exposed to arrest and detention.

"Every child has the right to a name and a nationality," said UNICEF Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe, Afshan Khan.

He underscored that Governments have a responsibility to adopt safeguards that prevent a child from being born stateless and “to provide legal aid and support to ensure every stateless child realizes their right to citizenship.”

The UN agencies said children born stateless are at a particular disadvantage, explaining that they cannot inherit their parents’ nationality due to gender discrimination and gaps in nationality laws. Children born in Europe whose births are not registered are another vulnerable group that includes minority populations, like the Roma.

And children from countries with known stateless populations who enter Europe as refugees and asylum-seekers are particularly defenseless.

While birth registration rates are high in Europe, UNHCR and UNICEF are pushing for information campaigns that target families most at risk, to help identify and register them.

Achieving legal identity for all through birth registration, is one of the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

While UNICEF is working to ensure all children are registered at birth, UNHCR’s #IBelong Campaign aims to end Statelessness by 2024.

What solutions are there to help tackle statelessness?

- Properly identify and protect every stateless refugee or migrant child upon arrival in Europe.
- Simplify procedures for stateless children to acquire a nationality as soon as possible.
- Adopt or amend legislation to include safeguards that grant nationality to all children born in a country who would otherwise be stateless.