



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

PRESS RELEASE

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EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers debate European Protection Order

On Friday 4 June, EU ministers for Justice and Home Affairs will meet to discuss a Spanish Presidency proposal for a European Protection Order (EPO). If political agreement is reached, EU-level judicial cooperation could be extended to mutual recognition of national protection orders by 2011.

The Spanish EU Presidency, in line with the work programme of the Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, has made combating violence against women a key priority of its time at the helm of the Union. In January, Prime Minister Zapatero delivered a proposal for a European Protection Order, together with an EU-wide telephone helpline and a European Observatory on violence against women, backed by 11 other member states.

As Spain's Presidency enters its last month, civil society organizations fear the current momentum to address violence against women at EU level will be lost unless all the EU member states commit to delivering concrete measures over the coming months.

The European Protection Order key to protect women victims of violence

The [European Women's Lobby](#) (EWL), the biggest umbrella organization of women's associations in the EU, is lobbying strongly for an agreement on 4 June to move ahead on the EPO. 'The European Protection Order is essential to protect victims of violence across the EU, including women victims of male violence, as well as to prevent discrimination and ensure freedom of movement between member states', says Brigitte Triems, President of the EWL.

Violence against women affects approximately 45% of all women across Europe. An estimated fifth of women in the EU suffer from domestic violence and more than one in ten women is a victim of sexual violence involving the use of force: in the UK, 80 000 women experience rape or attempted rape; in Ireland, one in five women is raped in marriage; in France, one woman is killed every three days by her partner. Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and of female genital mutilation are further examples of the violence women and girls need protection from throughout our countries.

'The right to protection from violence is the most basic of human rights, and it is the legal and moral duty of all governments to stand up for the physical safety of their peoples, within and beyond national borders', reads a letter the European Women's Lobby has sent to all the ministers for Justice and Home Affairs due to attend the Council meeting. 'The protection of recognised victims from the threat of *further* – and often life-threatening – violence is even more basic. The fact that this most fundamental of rights is not currently guaranteed within the European Union is deplorable.'



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For more information, interviews, background or visual materials, please contact Leanda Barrington-Leach, EWL Communications and Media Officer, T: (+32) 2 210 04 41, barrington@womenlobby.org, and see www.womenlobby.org.

Note to editors:

The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2500 associations.