



**25th of November:
UN International Day for the
Elimination of Gender Violence
against women and girls**

<http://efpa.eu/news/un-day-for-the-elimination-of-gender-violence-against-women-and-girls>

ECPA (European Association of Community Psychologists) and EFPA Community Psychology standing committee, join the UN in celebrating the 25th of November as a worldwide International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/events/2020/11/event-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women>) and propose all EFPA members and affiliated associations to join them.

Psychological consequences of gender violence are sometimes more serious than its physical effects. The experience of continuing abuse erodes women's self-esteem and increases the risk of a variety of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, self-harm, cutting, alcohol and drug abuse, and other forms of distress, and reduced confidence in parenting skills (i.e., lack of emotional support for their children and responding adequately to their needs).

Psychologists **are active in psychological assessment**, risk evaluation and support of women and girls who have been victimized by gender violence and work also with children who witness domestic violence, and the orphans of femicide (Carnevale et al., 2020).

With a focus on preventive interventions, psychologists actively participate in **programmes to prevent violence** in schools promoting gender equality education in behaviour and socio-emotional education; preventive interventions are offered also in the community, targeting sport clubs and youth organizations. They also work with young offenders and bullies, considering that some of the offenders themselves might have also been victimized.

Psychologists also support volunteer work and organizations against violence, **providing consultation, training and supporting** the organization of self-help and advocacy groups and coordinated community response. They provide research based evidence for the advancement of support services and community initiatives that can contribute to the survivor's empowerment and recovery (Albanesi et al., under review, Shorey, et al. 2014).

Psychology Professionals play major roles in **emergency units, crisis intervention houses and other support services in many European countries**, and have a central role in judicial procedures, including juvenile courts, criminal and civil courts for their expertise in legal psychology, especially required in procedural and regulatory requirements against perpetrators of violence involving families, including children and youth. Finally, psychologists play a role in juvenile and adult prisons, with their diagnostic and therapeutic-reparative function towards detained offenders.

EFPA points out the importance of giving health professionals, both in hospital settings and in general practice, the **skills and training to increase their awareness**

and understanding of the forms and dynamics of domestic violence and gender violence, and to develop procedures for handling such cases in the most effective way (Di Napoli et al., 2019; Procentese et al., 2020).

Appropriate tools for violence screening and intervention are still lacking in most health facilities, especially in emergency departments where the largest number of women victims of violence by intimate partners are observed, but where medical observations are limited to assessing only physical damages (Glass et al., 2001; Sprague et al., 2016).

Psychologists could have more prominent roles in the emergency departments (ED) where women come with severe injuries. Here the link between injuries and domestic violence is rarely recognised (Matoori, Khurana, Balcom et al., 2020).

Recent reviews (Sprague et al., 2018; Ogbe et al., 2020) suggest that training programmes, and the use of shared procedures and **protocols** between different stakeholders (e.g. police forces, justice authorities, health and social services, support services etc.) **relating to identifying and managing assault cases, and injury screening** have significant effects on the identification of abused women and on a correct response to their needs. The psychological report in cases of domestic violence is useful for identifying and predicting domestic violence and its effects on health.

European psychologists mark this UN international day in all professional circumstances; association, training, clinical and social service, welfare, educational and prevention projects and interventions.

Psychologists have a role in supporting social, education and health personnel who take care of victims of violence in recognition of their competences in working for the constitution of safe and

respectful environments where women can freely express themselves.

Psychologists have appropriate tools to plan, implement and evaluate interventions and programs to support women's empowerment and to educate younger generations to more respectful gender relations.

Beside working to support women's resilience during pandemic times, psychologists keep warning the institutions of the increased risks that the pandemic entails on women (e.g., stress related to work life balance, job insecurity) and on victims of domestic violence (violence escalation, reduced support), as part of their professional and civic responsibility.

EFPA collaborated to the definition of keywords to prevent risk of home cohabitation in pandemic time (see: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-> and EFPA magazine)

EFPA signed the statement of the World's psychological associations unite against home-based violence during COVID-19: <https://www.apa.org/international/global-insights/home-based-violence>.

ECPA collected information on the effects of domestic violence in the forced cohabitation of Covid 19 isolation measures and is willing to share them, promoting reflection and shared praxis <http://www.ecpa-online.com/webinar-gender-violence-community-psychology/>

As psychologists we need to be aware of the increasing risk of domestic violence in pandemic forced cohabitation and to propose measures that sustain community efforts to fight intimate domestic violence. A strong sense of community is celebrating the community's capacity for collective help to individuals. A sense of being a resource for victims of domestic violence.

Associations contact information

EFPA – European Federation of Psychologists' Associations

www.efpa.eu

ECPA – European Community Psychology association

<http://www.ecpa-online.com/>



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Other useful resources:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/brief-prevention-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-covid-19>

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/risk-assessment-risk-management>