

# Still Striving for Change: The Fight Against Gender-Based Violence in HE

Another 25th of November has passed, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Gender Marginalized Communities. On this occasion, we hosted four of our member students' unions (ÖH, ANOSR, USI, fzs) to discuss their approaches towards combating GBV on [The Student Voice](#) podcast.

The inconsistent GBV policies, along with ineffective or insufficient measures, contributes to a significant gap in knowledge concerning policy implementation at both universities and the national level. To decrease this gap, our member unions have developed initiatives across Europe, taking proactive steps to address gender-based violence (GBV) in higher education through innovative reporting tools, advocacy efforts and the creation of safer spaces. In Austria, our member union, ÖH, developed a national online reporting tool. In Romania, ANOSR shared how they successfully advocated for changes at the governmental level. In Ireland, a collaborative effort involving the government and NGOs led to the creation of [SPEAK OUT](#), a reporting tool implemented across higher education institutions and, in Germany, fzs prioritized cultivating safer spaces at events that contributed to an increase of diverse voices. Student voices are integral to combating GBV, through learning from effective practices in various countries, identifying areas for improvement, or by actively advocating and lobbying for policies that promote equity and accountability. For this reason, a year ago we adopted our statement on [Gender based violence](#) (GBV), outlining policy recommendations as a guideline for HEIs, governments, and student unions to create safe, inclusive environments and eradicate GBV in academia.

Gender-based violence (GBV) and the lack of comprehensive national policies exists in various academic practices, such as underrepresentation of women in executive positions at universities and recruitment processes.<sup>1</sup> In the European

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<sup>1</sup>Licia Bosco Damous and Colette Guillopé, "Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education and Research: A European Perspective," *Pure and Applied Chemistry* 93, no. 8 (August 2021), last modified August 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694\\_Gender-based\\_violence\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_and\\_research\\_a\\_European\\_perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694_Gender-based_violence_in_higher_education_and_research_a_European_perspective).

Research Area, the topic of GBV is insufficiently studied and underdeveloped.<sup>2</sup> In Europe, nearly 2 out of 3 students have experienced at least one form of GBV and policy implementation is limited.<sup>3</sup> It is a global issue that disproportionately affects those of marginalized backgrounds. Up to 55% of women have been sexually harassed in the EU. In the age of technology, up to 1 in 10 women have been subject to GBV using new technologies.<sup>4</sup> During climate, health and humanitarian crises GBV rises and women with disabilities report a higher rate.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, ongoing updates and improvements to quality guidelines, along with increased funding for existing shelters, are essential, as women's shelters remain scarce in certain parts of Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, national governments should prioritize highlighting this issue by adopting comprehensive strategies, such as funding awareness campaigns, strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring the enforcement of existing laws, fostering partnerships with educational institutions and NGOs to create safer environments and ensuring that reporting to national authorities is safe, confidential and respected throughout the complaint process.

At ESU, we are committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment free from gender-based violence. For more details, please refer to our full [Gender-Based Violence](#) statement.

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<sup>2</sup>Licia Bosco Damous and Colette Guillopé, "Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education and Research: A European Perspective," *Pure and Applied Chemistry* 93, no. 8 (August 2021), last modified August 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694\\_Gender-based\\_violence\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_and\\_research\\_a\\_European\\_perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694_Gender-based_violence_in_higher_education_and_research_a_European_perspective).

<sup>3</sup>UniSAFE, "Results from the Largest European Survey on Gender-Based Violence in Academia," last modified November 7, 2022, <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/project-news/results-from-the-largest-european-survey-on-gender-based-violence-in-academia/>.

<sup>4</sup>Licia Bosco Damous and Colette Guillopé, "Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education and Research: A European Perspective," *Pure and Applied Chemistry* 93, no. 8 (August 2021), last modified August 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694\\_Gender-based\\_violence\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_and\\_research\\_a\\_European\\_perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353644694_Gender-based_violence_in_higher_education_and_research_a_European_perspective).

<sup>5</sup>UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women," accessed November 26, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women>.

<sup>6</sup>Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), "Germany-wide Women's Refuge Search," last modified February 1, 2023, <https://wave-network.org/germany-wide-womens-refuge-search/>.

