



Resolution 2177 (2017)¹

Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly condemns unreservedly all forms of violence against women. It reiterates that this violence is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men and cannot be brought to an end unless there is a fundamental change of mindsets.
2. In its [Resolution 2093 \(2016\)](#) “Recent attacks against women: the need for honest reporting and a comprehensive response”, the Assembly acknowledged that violence in crowds represents another dimension of violence against women. In this connection, the Assembly notes with concern the magnitude of the phenomenon of sexual violence and harassment of women in public space. This phenomenon is universal and can affect all women, while the perpetrators of this violence come from all social categories and all cultures and are of all ages.
3. Although this violence takes place in public, sometimes in front of dozens of people, women often find themselves facing their attackers alone because witnesses fail to act. This widespread indifference only increases the victims’ feeling of insecurity and helplessness. Most do not dare to lodge a complaint for fear of not being understood or of the incident being trivialised. The Assembly deplores this tacit approval of sexual violence and harassment of women in public space, which contributes to perpetuating the attackers’ impunity.
4. The feeling of fear and insecurity in public space, particularly on public transport, has a psychological impact on victims and affects the daily lives of women. They end up adapting their behaviour, including by adopting avoidance strategies or even withdrawing from public space. Moreover, the layout of public space favours men, either because it gives priority to structures and facilities reserved for their use or because it is not safe enough for women.
5. The Assembly welcomes the various awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing and combating sexual violence and the harassment of women in public space. They play a key role in raising public awareness and could put an end to witnesses’ apathy towards this violence. The media also have an important responsibility to cover the facts objectively by focusing on the violence and its impact on the victims instead of on the behaviour of the women subjected to that violence or on the actual or presumed origins of their attackers. The media can also be effective means of publicising awareness-raising campaigns.
6. The Assembly is convinced that men have a positive role to play in preventing and combating sexual violence and the harassment of women in public space. As fathers, friends, decision makers, journalists, public officials and political and religious leaders, they can publicly condemn violence by other men, challenge the values and social norms that perpetuate discrimination and promote ideas that emphasise non-violence and gender equality.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 June 2017 (25th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14337](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Françoise Hetto-Gaasch; and [Doc. 14361](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Stefan Schennach). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 June 2017 (25th Sitting).



7. The Assembly is concerned that mounting xenophobia, racism and intolerance in Europe may cause deterioration in the already fragile security situation for women who are subject to violence in public spaces because of their origin, religion, disability and/or sexual orientation. In this context, it is vital that member States place particular importance on addressing the security needs of women who may be especially targeted by perpetrators of xenophobic, racist and intolerant acts.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States to:

8.1. sign and ratify without delay, if they have not yet done so, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention") and to ensure its full implementation, which presupposes the inclusion of sexual violence and harassment in public space in national criminal codes;

8.2. put an end to impunity by prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence and harassment in public space;

8.3. conduct inquiries into sexual violence and the harassment of women in public space in order to gain a better understanding of the magnitude of the phenomenon and initiate action that may help eliminate the taboos surrounding this issue;

8.4. launch and support awareness-raising campaigns on the need to prevent and combat sexual violence and harassment in public space, including campaigns that call on witnesses of violence to react and intervene, and campaigns that specifically target men;

8.5. include awareness-raising activities about the respect for human dignity and non-violent conflict resolution, and more specifically about gender equality, gender stereotypes and the role of women in our societies in general education curricula in order to address this issue from different angles, and develop targeted learning modules on, for example, the impact of sexual violence and harassment on victims, or on how to behave when confronted directly or indirectly with such attacks; special emphasis must be placed on programmes aimed at educating or re-educating parents to enhance their approach or understanding of what violence against women is and why it must be eradicated;

8.6. develop teaching methods and school activities that help address the causes of violence, which aim to avoid reproducing imbalanced power relationships and gender-based stereotypes, and provide opportunities for pupils to control any physical or psychological tension they may feel in a non-violent manner;

8.7. provide school teachers and staff with mandatory training, so that they can: a.) learn to detect potential victims of violence (children subjected to abuse, witnesses of parental discord, etc.); b.) better understand the different forms of violence (physical, psychological, verbal and behavioural, etc.); and c.) learn how to oppose them;

8.8. ensure the regular presence in schools of specialised counsellors, mediators and/or psychologists, who should be available for pupils, their parents and teachers, and should be trained to help those who have experienced violence, including victims, perpetrators and bystanders;

8.9. carry out preventive action in facilities accommodating refugees and asylum seekers, thus enabling discussions on equality values and the social codes prevailing in their new environment to take place;

8.10. launch a dialogue with the media on their responsibility for providing objective information on sexual violence and harassment in public space and encourage them to give prominence to awareness-raising campaigns and associations working to combat violence against women;

8.11. launch a dialogue with the providers of new media services or products, such as internet access or service providers, providers of mobile telecommunications media and sellers of videos and video games, to foster their commitment to the fight against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence through adequate self-regulatory measures and control and complaints mechanisms, and to encourage closer co-operation between new media providers and governments in combating and prohibiting the dissemination through the media of violent, gender-based content, including through timely and prompt exchange of information and reaction when sexually disturbing content is put online;

8.12. adopt and vigorously implement a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women in public space, by ensuring the visible presence in sufficient numbers of police officers who have been alerted to the problem and trained to help victims of violence at major events, and by regulating and controlling the consumption of drugs and alcohol at events with a high risk of disturbances and violence;

8.13. design so-called welcoming towns and cities by taking the gender dimension into account in urban planning and in public transport so as to ensure the security and well-being of everyone.

9. The Assembly urges parliamentarians, including those belonging to parliaments that have partner for democracy status, to condemn all forms of violence perpetrated against women, especially sexual violence and harassment in public space, and to support and actively contribute to efforts to raise awareness of the issue.