



Violence, education and unequal pay are the biggest challenges facing women in Europe judging from media reports today on the International Women´s day 8 March.

Malala Yousafzai, the 15-year-old Pakistani activist who survived a Taliban attack, encouraged all women to stand up for their rights in a video message released on the occasion of Women´s Day: “If we want to support every girl’s right to an education, if we want peace all over the world, we all have to fight. We all should be united. We should not wait for anyone else to come and speak up for us. We should do it by ourselves”, she said from the hospital in London, where she is recovering from her injuries, according to ANSA, the Italian news agency.

In Portugal *el Público* points out that women account for more than half of the Portuguese that complete a PHD but nevertheless Portuguese women earn on average 18% less than men and are underrepresented in senior administration positions according to *Diário Digital*.

Icelandic Prime Minister, Ms. Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir writes in *Fréttablaðið* that UN Women´s slogan “Enough is enough – discrimination and violence must end” can be applied to persistently unequal salaries. “Gender based violence and unequal pay are deep rooted and persistent problems . But let´s not forget what has already been accomplished.”

The Director of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, sees a light at the end of the tunnel, when she quotes the French philosopher Voltaire who said that “if a banker jumps out of a window follow him; there is money to be made”.

“If you look at those companies that really focus on women, at the moment, many of them are

banks. So it is bound to be financially and economically rewarding”, Lagarde told the BBC.

In Germany in an editorial the Berlin based daily Der Tagesspiegel writes that “ the same applies to women’s rights as to capitalism: there is still a lot of work to do, and the common denominator for all concerns remains the need for fairness.”

Many newspapers inevitably focus on violence against women. Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera quoted President Giorgio Napolitano, who reiterated the importance of fighting against violence and discrimination on women. The Italian President stresses the importance of overcoming the vision of women as a men’s property.

“Finland should not boast with being a flag-bearer of gender equality since domestic violence against women remains a problem to be tackled,” writes the country’s biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat: “ In addition, a new book reveals that women in politics face constant and similar problems during their careers including belittling, disapproval and discrimination.”

European media also focuses on women’s plight in other parts of the world:

Norwegian daily Dagsavisen points out that “the most important global campaigns for women’s rights today concern early deaths, violence and oppression, income and employment, and property and inheritance rights. Only 1% of the world’s women own land.”

In the United Kingdom, the Independent writes that although the day looks at positive achievements, it also acts as a reminder of the continued gender inequality around the world. “In a year that saw a horrific gang rape in Delhi shock the world, the UN has chosen a theme that simply states: “A promise is a promise: time for action to end violence against women.””

Meanwhile in Belgium De Standaard in Brussels writes: “More and more women are fleeing because in their country of origin, they are discriminated or threatened. In Belgium, one out of six refugees was recognized last year for 'gender-related motives' like forced marriage or genital mutilation. This is three times more than in 2007.”

La Libre Belgique focuses on child marriage and the fact that in South Sudan 48% of the 15-19 years old girls are married. "Early marriage violates the right of girls to marry only with the free consent".

Under the headline, Europeans put their faith in women, Nikos Konstandaras of Greece's Kathimerini writes that an overwhelming number of Europeans has understood the benefits of women's liberation and the effect that this would have around the world. "Women's liberation and total equality have to be the 21st century's main target. European citizens believe that the greatest problems faced by women compared to men are physical violence and exclusion from education. Both can be solved by education and aid programs. But wherever men insist on obstructing this, there is another solution, not mentioned in the poll: We could arm the women."