



A MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE WAVE OFFICE

fempower

GOOD practices for the implementation
of the Istanbul Convention





Cover image: detail from the mural **Me Too** (Danube Canal, Vienna) by artist Linda Steiner

"My goal was to show the support between women and their struggle with violence or unwanted situations."

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Editorial: Good practices for implementing the Istanbul Convention

Andrada Filip¹

Data Manager and Analyst at the WAVE Office

Backlash against the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also called the Istanbul Convention (IC) – referring to the place where it was opened for signature in 2011, has been on the rise across Europe throughout this year. In spite of the fact that the IC has been recognized as the most comprehensive binding treaty for tackling the complex phenomenon of violence against women, its utility and purpose is being questioned by certain social, religious and political groups in European countries, such as Croatia, Slovakia, and Bulgaria.¹

According to the latest Global Study on Homicide released by the United Nations 87,000 women were killed in 2017. Out of these around 50,000 were killed by intimate partners or family members and approximately 30,000 were killed by intimate partners alone. This demonstrates that intimate partner/family-related violence continues to affect women disproportionately. Furthermore, findings from the survey on violence against women conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights show that 33% of women have experienced physical and /or sexual violence since the age of 15; this corresponds to 62 million women. Out of all women who have a partner, 22% have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15. One in three women has experienced psychologically abusive behaviour by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

With the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe finally introduced the first treaty specifically devoted to addressing these urgent issues. A key concept underlined by the Convention is that violence against women is committed against women because of their gender. It is a form of structural violence used to reinforce male power and control.

The topic of this year's issue of the Fempower magazine was chosen to highlight the need to implement provisions from the Istanbul Convention in ratifying States, so as to ensure that women and children survivors of violence have access to specialist services that will enable them to rebuild their lives. Furthermore, the point is also to share experiences between countries about good practices for implementing the Convention, such as legal amendments made within a country in order to harmonize national law with relevant provisions from the Convention. A total of ten articles have been included in this year's issue of Fempower, submitted by various authors from EU countries, and also from countries outside of the EU. Each of these articles offers a unique insight into specific improvements brought about by the implementation

of the IC in preventing and tackling violence against women, but also specific challenges and existing gaps encountered in the implementation process of the Convention.

Articles from Serbia, Albania and Romania inform about new laws addressing domestic violence being developed and implemented nationally after the ratification of the IC, emphasizing positive developments that have occurred since, such as provision of emergency barring or protection orders. Such orders can be issued immediately by police officers in order to ensure protection of women and children affected by domestic violence.

Another article from Slovakia gives an overview of the country's path towards achieving gender equality and the process for ratification of the IC, initiated around a decade ago. Additionally, increasing opposition to the IC, and the gender equality agenda promoted in society is also discussed, pointing out that the work of women's organisations to raise awareness in society about the purpose of the IC and its added value to prevent and combat violence in society remains vital.

An article from Finland describing the implementation process of the IC draws attention to the need for ensuring that adequate services are also provided for children who have witnessed domestic violence. Hence, the national support service system should also recognize children as one of the victims of domestic violence. Further legislative advancements that need to be made in Finland in line with the requirements of the IC include the criminalization of forced marriages and the inclusion of 'consent' as a key element in the definition of rape.

Last but not least, another article draws attention to the dangers posed by the recently elected government in Italy to advancements made in the fight against gender-based violence and achievement of women's rights in the country. The country is effectively lagging behind in its implementation process of the IC, while the government is reaffirming patriarchal roles that undermine women's trust in law enforcement authorities and the justice system.

We would like to express our gratitude to all contributing authors, hoping that the stories about the implementation of the IC in various countries, and the obstacles and achievements witnessed throughout the way, will inspire women's organisations to continue to fight for the effective implementation of this essential legal tool in the fight against gender-based violence.

¹ See editor's biography on page 31.

The new Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence in Serbia

Vanja Macanović and Tanja Ignjatović

Autonomous Women's Centre, Belgrade, Serbia

Serbia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, IC) at the end of 2013¹. Since then, women's NGOs have been putting greater pressure on decision makers to incorporate the minimum standards for preventing and combatting violence against women (VAW) into national legislation².

New Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence

Based on the analysis of the legislative solutions regarding emergency and protection measures in European countries, the Autonomous Women's Centre (AWC) presented its position arguing that this new law – the so-called special Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (LPDV) – should be added to existing laws and should answer to an emerging need to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV), as well as the need to enhance coordination and cooperation between key state actors.

An agreement has been reached on the incorporation of the definition of DV derived from article 3(1b) of the IC, providing that emergency barring orders should be issued based solely on risk assessment, indicating that there is a possibility for violence to break out, without the victim's consent. Due to a lack of trust in "ordinary" police officers, the authority for the issuance of emergency measures has been given only to specialised DV police officers, who will have eight hours at disposal to conduct all interviews, gather evidence and assess the risk before issuing emergency order(s), which call for the vacation of residence and the implementation of a restraining/no-contact order (art. 52 IC).

The Ministry of Justice suggested that new, emergency police orders should last for 48 hours, without the right to appeal. Within that time, prosecutors will have 24 hours to suggest prolongation of the order in court, and the court will have 24 hours to decide on the prolongation, in ex-parte proceedings, with the right to appeal. Once prolonged, the emergency order will last for an additional 30 days. It was decided that the breach of the emergency orders (the

police and prolonged ones) should send a message by prescribing a misdemeanour offence which is punishable by up to 60 days in prison, in short proceedings, without the possibility of giving a sentence that imposes a fine. AWC requested disciplinary sanctions for judges and prosecutors in cases of breach of the short deadlines, and the Ministry of Justice accepted this proposal during the parliamentary debate.

Mandatory coordinated community responses called "Group for Coordination and Cooperation", which are presided by the public prosecutor, have jurisdiction at the place of the victim's residence and not where violence had occurred. Compulsory members of the group are representatives from the police and social services, while other representatives of relevant services/NGOs and victims/survivors³ can also be invited to participate in the meetings. This coordinated community response differs from models existing in other European countries. The group is obliged to meet at least once every 15 days to discuss all newly-reported cases (not just incidents of DV and not just the high-risk ones), together with current and long-term cases. Group meetings are supposed to generate a concrete individual protection and support plan for each victim/survivor in every case of violence addressed or review existing individual protection and support plans for current or long-term cases discussed within the group.

Implementation of the Law

Analyses of available quantitative data have shown the initial positive effects of the implementation of the Law⁴. The total number of reported cases of DV has increased (the average is around 2,000 reports per month), as a result of changing the assessment criteria – from "serious" to "immediate danger from violence" or "violence of low intensity". Approximately 70 percent of reported DV cases have resulted in the issuance of police emergency orders. Prosecu-

1 Official Gazette - international contracts 12/13.

2 <http://www.potpisujem.org/eng/>

3 The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are used interchangeably in this article

4 Ignjatovic, T (2018). Sixth Independent Report on the implementation of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence for the period April - June 2018 and overview of main annual findings and conclusions. Belgrade: Autonomous Women's Centre. <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/en/independent-reports-on-law-on-prevention-of-dv/1233-sixth-independent-report-on-implementation-of-the-law-on-the-prevention-of-domestic-violence>

tors have requested the prolongation of police protection orders in almost 90 percent of cases. Courts have accepted the proposals for the prolongation of the emergency orders in more than 95 percent of cases. The number of breached emergency protection orders was— as expected— between 10 to 12 percent monthly, similar to the Austrian experience⁵. The number of repeated acts of DV by perpetrators that have already been issued emergency protection orders was also— as expected— between 10 and 15 percent every month⁶. One third of newly-reported incidents have resulted in criminal charges.

The Group for Coordination and Cooperation has managed to create individual protection and support plans in every other case of the reported DV. Unfortunately, there are certain groups that, after almost one year, have not had a single individual protection and support plan created, or the numbers of individual protection and support plans issued have been disproportionate to the number of cases addressed during group meetings. There is no prescribed consequence for such breaches of the legal norm enshrined in the LPDV.

The content of protection and support plans developed for individual cases remains unknown. No information is available regarding the number and the type of planned and implemented measures, the number of family members covered by these measures, and the number of different professionals in charge of the implementation of agreed protection and support measures. The effects and consequences of these measures adopted as part of the aforementioned individual protection and support plans also remain unknown. This is so, because there is no electronic database that would allow for data to be recorded and analysed for statistical purposes. Without these data, it cannot be concluded whether the law is achieving its purpose.

There are no quantitative data on the implementa-

tion of emergency orders for the protection of women from marginalised social groups – such as Roma women, women with mental or physical disabilities, and women from rural areas. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that there are still numerous limitations in ensuring protection for women affected by multiple forms of discrimination. Such discrimination is many a time based on prejudices on behalf of professionals having negative views towards the “culture and way of living” associated with women survivors of violence from marginalised social groups.

It cannot be established whether preventive protection measures for women also take into consideration their children, or any relatives that provide direct support, who can also be at risk from violence. These would constitute “attacks on the logistics”, as one police officer in Serbia had described it several years ago.

AWC is concerned because of the continuously low number of victims/survivors that participate in the development of their individual protection and support plans; this represents only three percent out of the total number of individual protection and support plans created. It can therefore be concluded that long-lasting protection and support is being developed without taking into consideration the views or opinions of victims/survivors. This is contrary to many recommendations that emphasise the importance of ensuring their participation in this process. AWC received information that in some cases women victims/survivors were contacted after group meetings had taken place— usually by social services— in order to inform them about what the individual protection and support plan entails. However, this does not represent the fulfilment of every victim/survivor’s right to inform state representatives about her needs and concerns, and to receive all relevant information about possible measures and agencies that could provide support. This does also not represent a fulfilment of their right to decide on further steps, after the phase in which preventive protection measures have been implemented ex officio, to ensure their safety. Even though the failure to involve victims/survivors in the development of individual protection and support plans could be a result of the group being overburdened and lacking appropriate resources, measures should be taken to overcome this situation.

→

5 Logar, R. (2005) *The Austrian Model of Intervention in Domestic Violence Case — Violence against women: Good practices in combating and eliminating violence against women*. UN Division for the Advancement of Women.

6 Tanja Ignjatović i Vanja Macanović (2018). *Izazovi u primeni novog Zakona o sprečavanju nasilja u porodici u Srbiji, Temida – Časopis o viktimizaciji, ljudskim pravima i rodu*, vol. 21(1), 41–66, <http://www.vds.rs/File/Temida1801.pdf>

The experience of specialist women's support services also shows that their representatives have rarely been invited to these group meetings. This indicates that there is a lack of trust on behalf of government institutions and other organisations towards specialist women's support services in Serbia. This is contrary to the recognition of the need to ensure their participation in this process for the benefit of the victim/survivor, and also fails to recognize the key role they play to provide vital support services for women victims/survivors of violence.

| Conclusion

It can be argued that the new LPDV in Serbia consists of good legislative solutions, and in certain aspects provides improvements with respect to other European models, in line with standards from the IC. However, qualitative data sadly show that the implementation of LPDV fails to meet its initial goals. There are at least two main reasons for that. First, there is an insufficient number of individual plans developed for the protection and support of victims/survivors. This could be caused by overburdening of the system, which is lacking the sufficient number of professionals engaged in the work of the group to ensure adequate coordination and cooperation. The second reason relates to a failure in respecting the rights and needs of victims/survivors, excluding them from decision-making processes after the issuance of emergency orders, which is contrary to victims' rights and existing legislative norms.

We are of the opinion that it is necessary to establish official operational mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the law not just at the State, but also at the local level – within the organisational unit. That would enable the identification of good practices and concrete problems faced by professionals and the groups, which could be subsequently addressed, instead of letting any mistakes and flaws repeat themselves endlessly. Periodic analyses of qualitative and quantitative data about the implementation of the law might provide the basis for additional alterations and amendments to any actions being undertaken, other existing sublegal documents and the law itself.

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'VIDAS LIBRES DE VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO': Awareness-raising among youth in the Canary Islands

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| Introduction

Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Arena y Laurisilva (hereinafter FAMAL), wishes to present the results obtained after the implementation of 'Vidas Libres de Violencia de Género'¹ (lives free from Gender-based Violence), an experimental project targeting the young population of the Canary Islands, a Spanish Autonomous Community. The headquarters of FAMAL are located on these islands, which represent its main sphere of action.

| Implications for being an outermost region

The Canary Archipelago is an outermost region of the European Union, given its characteristics derived from its geographical location, placing it far away from the continent. These characteristics lead to structural difficulties that impose certain limitations for the region, determining the socioeconomic development of the archipelago.²

Insularity implies problems of accessibility and isolation. Furthermore, the archipelago also faces the double insularity, as it encompasses 7 Islands, two of them representing the capital, a fact that causes significant differences between these two islands and the remaining ones. Insularity also implies dependency on a limited number of means of transportation, which increases their cost. This makes necessary a greater investment in public infrastructure located on the capital islands, since these are overpopulated (to be more precise, 546 inhabitants/km² versus 64 inhabitants/km² on the smaller islands). Because of the

current situation, access to resources is influenced by the island where people reside.

The Canary Islands also suffer from a strong exposure to immigration, especially in tourist areas. This situation is being exacerbated, as a high percentage of people work in the tourism sector throughout the year. This has created an environment in which a very mixed and diverse population is spreading across the archipelago. Moreover, population may be incredibly diverse – even within the same island.

| The Istanbul Convention and its implementation in the Canary Islands

The Istanbul Convention entered into force in Spain in 2014³. However, a full implementation has not been carried out so far, partly because of the reforms that need to be made in the normative framework that addresses gender-based violence (GBV)⁴. Nevertheless, the archipelago has a law that protects all the communities residing there.

FAMAL, as a participant in the elaboration of the CEDAW report in Spain⁵, has highlighted the gaps and challenges encountered across the islands, going beyond legal reforms.

Even though resources are provided, accommodation rates in women's shelters are overwhelmingly high, especially in the Capital Isles. The low capacity of women's shelters is alarming, with 146 beds available across the archipelago. This is the situation in a →

1 <https://arenaylaurisilva.org/proyectos/vidas-libres-de-violencia-de-genero/>

2 <http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/economia/asuntoseconomicosue/rup/>

3 <http://igualdade.xunta.gal/es/actualidad/el-convenio-de-estambul-sobre-violencia-contra-la-mujer-entrara-en-vigor-el-1-de-agosto>

4 <https://cedawsombraesp.wordpress.com/2018/07/31/informe-sombra-al-greio-convenio-de-estambul-encuentro-estatal-madrid-sabado-6-de-octubre-2018/>

5 <https://cedawsombraesp.wordpress.com/organizaciones-firmantes-informe-sombra/>



region where the ratio of victims of violence recorded in 2017 exceeds the national average, making it the region with the fourth highest ratio of victims of violence per 10,000 population, according to findings presented by the General Council of the Judiciary⁶. This figure however does not reflect the large number of women who do not report violence.

Complementary to services provided by the local administration, various organizations offer resources and services to victims of GBV. Their activities are financed through subsidies from the public administration. Despite these additional services, the response to this social problem remains insufficient, as the budget in the Canary Islands has been reduced since 2009 and has not increased in later years.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight some of the positive aspects of the implementation of the Convention. The Canary Institute of Equality publishes annual statistical reports about the situation of GBV on the islands⁷. Furthermore, a specialized service for victims of sexual violence has been created in 2018⁸, specific programmes on gender equality have been added to the Canarian educational curriculum, as well as numerous initiatives being undertaken to raise awareness on GBV among the population.

An example of these initiatives is 'Vidas Libres de Violencia de Género', a project elaborated by FAMAL and currently being implemented in the Canary Islands, with funding from the Autonomous Government.

| 'Vidas Libres de Violencia de Género'

The need for this project came up because of the increase in cases of GBV among adolescents in the archipelago. The approach taken by the project considers having a gender-based perspective to be the fundamental prevention factor for GBV.

The aim of this project is to contribute to the eradication of discrimination and GBV among people between 14 and 30 years of age residing on the Canary isles.

The project is centred on community awareness-raising through workshops, addressing topics such as self-esteem, equal opportunities between women and men, male chauvinism, myths of romantic love or social networks and relationships.

Moreover, the project promotes a training course for young people to become agents of change in their environment. Groups are taught how to take action in order to detect and prevent GBV and to offer information about existing specialized resources in the community.

A wide sample of people has been reached throughout the implementation of the project, yet the largest number of beneficiaries are concentrated in the smaller islands. The population targeted by this intervention was diverse: minors deprived of parental care, young offenders, disabled, people with behavioural disorders or people excluded from society. There have been differences in terms of which young people have been reached by project activities, which was not only conditioned by residing in any of the Canary Isles, but also depended on the areas where they live. In urban areas young people are more aware of GBV, but in rural areas there is more demand for awareness-raising due limited opportunities offered. Hence, there is a greater need

6 <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20180312/cifras-victimas-violencia-machista-denuncias-maximo-historico-2017/1694220.shtml>

7 http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/igualdad/informacion_servicios/esta_norma/estadisticas/

8 <http://www.diariodetenerife.info/el-cabildo-destina-este-ano-ocho-millones-de-euros-para-promover-182-acciones-de-igualdad/>



for interventions addressing GBV to be implemented in rural areas.

Limitations of the project were the result of difficulties in communication and accessing means of transportation, especially on the smaller islands. Such challenges required an extra effort for planning and organising activities, meaning that it was much harder to reach out to young people residing in more isolated areas.

Among the strengths identified, it is noteworthy to highlight the avenues for communication created between different groups of people, which have become part of a collective way of thinking and understanding of society. The methodology used throughout the implementation of the project facilitated the learning process, since workshops and training courses were focused on active participation and interaction. Most of the participants have expressed their desire to follow this line of reasoning and implement what they have learned into their day-to-day lives.

Conclusion

This project offered an opportunity to understand how Canarian youth perceive GBV. Current results, based on participants' evaluation, have been vastly positive. FAMAL looks forward to implementing other similar projects in different cities or countries as a means of fighting against GBV.



© Alicia López

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© Beatriz Hernández García

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© Jessica Rivero Morales

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Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Finland: What is working well and what still needs to be fixed?

An overview of NGOs' Shadow Report to GREVIO

Sari Laaksonen

Development Director of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, board member of WAVE

Finland signed the Istanbul Convention (IC) in 2011 and the ratification entered into force in 2015. The first country report to GREVIO was due in spring this year. Alongside Finland's official report submitted by the State, 13 NGOs formed a coalition to produce a parallel report¹. The report was coordinated by the two Finnish WAVE members: Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters together with Women's Line. In this article I will introduce some of the main points of the report, divided here into three core parts: structures for implementation, support measures and legislative problems.

| Structures of implementation

NGOs demanded separate financial and human resources to be allocated to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Funding for research is also required to carry out regular monitoring and data collection. Many measures presented in the Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention are separate as actions and general in format, and they do not include any cost estimates or information regarding budgets. Most of the Convention's provisions or their coordination have not been provided with separate financial and human resources; rather, the planned measures will get their funding from the budgets of the ministries in charge of each of these issues. NGOs pointed out that all provisions are necessary for securing the human rights of girls and women, and they should not have to compete for resources with other operations from administrative branches.

There is a major reform of governmental regional, health and social services underway in Finland. Combating domestic violence and violence against women must be taken into account when planning, implementing and allocating funding to this reform scheme. The regional coverage of preventive work and the services for victims and perpetrators must be secured in the reform. A main concern is that the reform of health and social services and the digitalisation of information services, among other things, may

complicate access to services for particularly vulnerable groups of women, such as elderly, disabled or immigrant women.

Furthermore, the role of NGOs as cooperation partners must be strengthened at the national level. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published the Action Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention for 2018–2021 (hereinafter referred to as the Action Plan) in December 2017. It reveals one of the most central problems encountered throughout the implementation so far: the 4-year plan focuses on the development of State authorities and their work but fails to notice the significant role that NGOs play in combating domestic violence in Finland. In the introduction of the Action Plan, it is stated that "Finland has a strong tradition of cooperation between public authorities and NGOs, and the latter are also involved in the implementation of several Articles". Nonetheless, NGOs remain absent later on when actual measures for implementing the Action Plan are listed.

Furthermore, the coordinating body consists solely of state authorities. The lack of NGO input in the Action Plan has received criticism, and consequently a division within the NGO representation has emerged inside the coordinating body. The goal of the new division is to outline and support NGOs' operations aimed, among other things, towards implementing the Istanbul Convention. The NGO division of the Committee for Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence is a good starting point for increasing cooperation, even though it is unclear on what grounds the members and supplementary members were chosen, since they were already designated on the invitation. NGOs still question the decision to not let them be part of the actual coordinating body itself, but only of its preparatory division. NGOs emphasize that the new division needs to have direct contact with the coordinating body and the division must be able to influence the actions and decisions made by the coordinating body.

NGOs also point out that in addition to the coordinating body, a coordination centre for combating

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/finland>

violence is required. The centre would monitor and evaluate the acts of preventing and addressing gender-based violence against women.

| Measures of support

As part of the upcoming governmental region, health and social services reform, employers need to ensure having appropriate training to be able to detect the characteristics of gender-based violence, carry out risk assessment, recognise the influence of violence on individuals, children and relatives or friends, and be aware of the structures sustaining violence. Resources and systematic, long-term training, where the expertise of NGOs is acknowledged and utilised, are needed. Guaranteeing cooperation among the various old and new actors through appropriate training (Article 15 of the IC) is crucial for strengthening victims' rights and ensuring access to services.

NGOs are pleased that the State has increased funding for victim shelter services. Two million Euros of additional funding have been allocated for strengthening the victim shelter network until 2019, and another 2 million Euros were allocated for the year 2018 alone. Nevertheless, service providers still carry the risk for encountering unexpected costs, and funding remains insufficient to cover the number of needed family places. According to the National Institute for Health and Welfare, many clients were referred to another shelter due to lack of space – a situation which was recorded 1,198 times in 2016 across Finland. The regional coverage of the shelter network has been improved, and the number of family places has grown from 123 to 185 in three years. That is still less than half of the recommended number of shelter spaces by the Istanbul Convention, according to which there should be 550 family places in victim shelters across Finland.

All coins have two sides. Out of the 27 shelters in Finland, 20 are run by NGOs. State funding and coordination cannot be allowed to build a gap between shelters, crisis work and daytime, long term services, since it would harm potential clients and their access resources. State funding can neither be allowed to limit the independence of NGOs providing shelter services.

In addition to shelters for victims of domestic violence, daytime services for victims of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence are mainly provided by NGOs. Funding for these services is currently project-based and allocated for a limited term. In December 2016, the state-wide round-the-clock Nollalinja helpline for was set up. The helpline is aimed at anyone who has experienced violence in a close relationship, and it represents a positive advancement. Nollalinja has successfully managed to reach out to Finnish citizens. It has not yet been able to reach out to immigrant women though.

The network of low-threshold support and services should be broadened to cover all forms of violence against women and girls, not only domestic or intimate partner violence. In May 2017, the Sexual Assault Support Centre was opened as part of the Women's Hospital in Helsinki, which was another positive advancement. It is encouraging to know that there are going to be more such support centres established across Finland. However, it is currently mandatory for potential clients to have experienced sexual violence within 30 days of seeking help. This imposes certain barriers for persons who have experienced sexual violence, as it might take them months or even years to come forward and seek for help. The current limitation affects especially the most vulnerable groups, influencing the assistance they seek and receive. Victims of rape and other acts of sexual violence should be offered support far beyond the 30-days threshold. There is currently a need for low-threshold support services also for non-acute forms of sexual violence.

NGOs want to point out that protection and support for child witnesses is inadequate as chances for getting specialised help are low and depending on where the child lives. Children as witnesses of violence should also be recognised in the service system as victims of violence. Violence is traumatising even when it is not physically targeted at the child. This aspect should be considered in the context of interventions and services, but also when reaching agreements about child custody and visiting rights. In addition, the child must also be heard when making such custody and visiting arrangements. Children must be systematically provided with support services of their own every time an authority finds out about violent situations in which a child was present.

Furthermore, collaboration between the police and perpetrators' programmes must be enhanced. Work done with perpetrators should be equally accessible throughout the whole country, which would promote the ending of violence and the safety of victims.

| Legislative problems

Throughout the implementation of the Convention, the need for national legislation to be adapted to its provisions must be considered. For example, this may require criminalizing forced marriages, reform the Trans Act, and include into legislation the lack of consent as one of the characteristics of a sexual crime. In Finland, only a small share of all rapes is reported, and only a small share of reported rapes are prosecuted. Moreover, rape sentences are considerably milder than for instance sentences given for financial crimes.

In the drafting of the legislative reform of the law on child custody, the requirement to take gender-based violence against women into account in the determination of custody rights has not been addressed. →

Violence is only mentioned in a part concerning the general purpose of custody, where it is said that the child must be protected from violence. Sections concerning determination of custody and visitation rights are mainly centred around the parents' duty to cooperate. The proposed legislation is flawed and does not comply with the obligations from the Istanbul Convention.

Finnish legislation contains provisions on restraining orders, which can be applied by both victims and authorities. As victims of gender-based violence are often prevented or unwilling to make use of their right to claim restraining orders, these orders should be applied more routinely ex officio. Since the beginning of 2016, it costs 250 euros to apply for a restraining order. NGOs are concerned that the request for a fee may place an unjustified financial burden on the victim, which is against the standards from the Istanbul Convention. This payment makes it particularly difficult for the most vulnerable victims to access support.

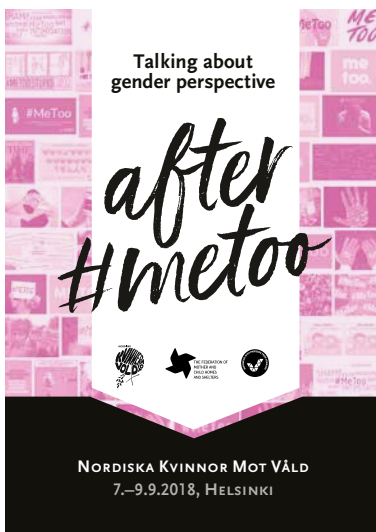
Article 59 of the Convention requires that "victims whose residence status depends on that of the spouse or partner as recognised by internal law, in the event of the dissolution of the marriage or the relationship, are granted in the event of particularly difficult circumstances, upon application, an autonomous residence permit irrespective of the duration of the marriage or the relationship". Even though

Finland has made the necessary amendments to the Aliens Act, these requirements are not usually applied in practice when handling applications. MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association receives annually between 20 to 30 requests for help from women who have received negative residence permit decisions regardless of extreme violence in their marriages or intimate relationships. NGOs recommend including the implementation of Article 59 in the Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention, for example by providing adequate training to staff working in immigration offices.



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Excerpt from the Declaration given at the Nordic Women against Violence Conference, 2018

We are deeply concerned about the backlash going on in Europe and appeal to decisionmakers and politicians representing our countries to not let this happen in silence but assertively stand for the unconditional implementation of human rights.

It is our duty to ensure that we take initiatives and make changes to strengthen equality and safety in our societies. This means promoting laws that acknowledge a gender perspective and the right to live a life free from violence – it is not yet clear even in Nordic countries that the difference between sex and rape is consent.

It means also that we must redefine and enlarge the gender role models we offer our children and youth. On one hand we need to discuss gender equality and role models in schools and at home, and on the other hand we need to work against the violent and oppressive gender roles we encounter every day and which ordinary people keep consuming.

During the conference we were able to talk about these themes, share information and experiences about how to prevent gender-based violence, how to help victims and how to also engage men in the cultural changes we need.

From Istanbul to a clash of civilisations. A story of a hijacked Convention in Slovakia

Katja Farkasova¹

Alliance of Women in Slovakia

In the beginning of the decade, everything seemed to go smoothly towards quick ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Slovakia. The Minister of Justice signed the Convention in Istanbul on the date of its opening for signature, being in fact among the first Member States of the Council of Europe to do so. Government experts in cooperation with NGOs elaborated a legal analysis and started to implement an entire array of complex legal amendments required by the Convention. Experts and NGOs expected a standard procedure – ‘business as usual’.

Slovakia has already had a decade-long history in the promotion of gender equality with the first gov-

¹ The author thanks Olga Pietruchova for her valuable inputs

ernmental Gender Equality Strategy adopted back in 2009, and additionally two more action plans to combat violence against women. Although the progress was anything but significant, no one ever doubted the agenda of gender equality as such. Today, looking back to those times, it seems that Slovak people are living in a totally different country.

From Harry Potter to gender ideology

Five years ago, a ‘clash of civilisation’ started in Slovakia triggered by the book of a controversial German author Gabriela Kuby, an orthodox Catholic. She received some publicity because of her fight against Harry Potter, which was allegedly an evil thing stealing the soul of our children. However, with the help →

It is an outrage that sharing information and experiences about how to prevent gender-based violence, how to help victims, and how to also engage men in the cultural changes we need is no longer possible everywhere in Europe. We have received bad news from several Eastern European countries – NGOs are having difficulties and are also facing threats. Violence against women is not any more considered a crime and a violation of human rights in some countries. Furthermore, universities have been sent draft decrees calling for the abolition of all master’s degree programs in Gender Studies. This backlash must be stopped!

The network of Nordic Women Against Violence appeals to all decisionmakers and politicians of our countries to not let this happen in silence but unite and assertively stand

for the unconditional implementation of human rights, and to demand the ratification and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention in all countries.

Helsinki, 7.-9.9.2018

Members of Nordic women against violence-network:

Denmark: LOKK – landsorganisation af kvindekrisecentre

Greenland: Krisecentret i Nuuk

Finland: Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters

Faroe Islands: Kvinnuhúsið – Krisecentret

Iceland: Stigamot – Education and Counselling Center for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Violence

Norway: Krisesentersekretariatet

Sweden: ROKS – Riksorganisationen för kvinnojourer och tjejjourer i Sverige och, UNIZON – Sveriges

kvinno- och tjejjourers riksförbund



Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters

of her book *The Global Sexual Revolution: The Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom* – translated in several languages around Central and Eastern Europe – she became a guru of the Slovak conservative movement. “Here in Slovakia, you have a first-hand experience of anti-fascist and anti-communist resistance; well, you will need that resistance again,”² stated Kuby comparing gender to fascism and communism.

Since her tour back in 2013, a massive opposition against gender equality started to grow around the country, orchestrated by the highest echelons of the Catholic Church. Soon after, the Istanbul Convention became the primary target and a symbol of the anti-gender movement mainly because of the definition of ‘gender’ included in its text.

A description of all the activities organised by the anti-gender movement would need at least an entire book; starting with a declaration against gender-sensitive education signed by 300 conservative psychologists and teachers followed by an open letter from a hundred organisations sent to the Minister of Justice to lobby against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention... and that was just the beginning. About 50,000 people attended in 2013 a ‘March for Life’ in Kosice to protest against abortion, same-sex marriage and ‘gender ideology’. On the first Advent Sunday, the Conference of Bishops issued a letter against a so-called ‘culture of death’ with an unusually critical language, i.e.: “The culprits of the death culture come with a new ‘gender ideology’... Activists of ‘gender equality’ are not giving up but are waiting for a suitable opportunity to (...) inject this pernicious ideology into school education. The culture of death threatens the nation’s existence.”³

The spread of the “gender ideology” hysteria was strongly reinforced by conspiracy theories disseminated by the media, which arose around the country within a couple of months spreading pro-Russian propaganda and fake news. The role of Putin’s regime became obvious during the International Forum Large Family and Future of Humanity, organised in Moscow in September 2014, with Gabriele Kuby

among the speakers⁴. The opposition against gender became a symbol for resistance against the liberal values of modern Europe.

| Pro-family, anti-gay

Despite the official separation of the State and the Church embedded in the Slovak Constitution, the Catholic Church remains a major societal force opposing human rights and the gender equality agenda. So far, policies aimed at the elimination of gender stereotypes were met with stiff resistance by the country’s conservative environment, which prefers to emphasise the biological differences between men and women and the resulting “natural” division of labour and gender roles.

With massive support from the Catholic Church, a conservative organisation called ‘Alliance for Family’ collected during the year 2014 in churches around the country around 400.000 signatures to initiate a referendum which would seek popular opinion on three issues. These concerned the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman, a question on preventing same-sex couples from adopting children, and whether or not parents should be allowed to decide if their children attend classes dealing with sexual behaviour and euthanasia. Slovakia’s Constitutional Court invalidated a fourth question aimed at banning any form of registered partnership for same-sex couples.

The year 2015 started in Slovakia with an unpleasant referendum campaign depicting same-sex couples as a threat to the traditional family. Almost one million people cast their ballots in the February 7th referendum. The turnout, however, failed to surpass the required 50-per cent quorum, as only about 21 per cent of eligible voters went to the polling stations. This referendum was, as several TV analysts had mentioned, a stand of support of tradition against more liberal ideas spreading from the Western parts of the European Union. Even though the referendum failed, the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman has been included in the Constitution.

| And an Orwellian story continues

A consortium of Christian Churches published in the beginning of 2018 a joint statement calling for the

2 <https://blog.postoj.sk/7427/gabriele-kuby-whats-next-after-fascism-and-communism-gender>

3 <https://www.kbs.sk/obsah/sekcia/h/dokumenty-a-vyhlasenia/p/pastierske-listy-konferencie-biskupov-slovenska/c/pastiersky-list-na-prvu-adventnu-nedelu-2013>

4 <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/from-russia-the-anti-family-poison-spread-and-now-from-russia-comes-the-ant>

government to withdraw support for the Convention, criticising it for spreading “gender ideology” and an anti-family agenda. The ruling coalition party SNS has subsequently announced that it will never agree to its ratification.

After a heated debate in February 2018, the then-Prime Minister Robert Fico made public his decision not to ratify the Convention. He stated that the Convention promotes “gender ideology” and that there were some discrepancies between the text of the Convention and Slovakia’s constitution, particularly the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Herewith, Fico joined the Bulgarian Prime-Minister who made a very similar statement just a month before. Still, Fico pledged to implement all the useful provisions of the Convention regarding domestic violence which were not yet enshrined in Slovak legislation. However, a week after this briefing, his government fell apart over the murder of a young investigative journalist.

Still, the activities of the opponents continue to further demand the withdrawal of the signature under the Convention. Some of these exceed the limits of thinkable measures. A tour around churches in Slovakia named ‘Stop the Evil from Istanbul’ is comparing the Convention to events from history when the Turks occupied our region. The general popular attitude in Slovakia showing opposition to Muslims and migrants is being exploited when referring to the Istanbul Convention; of course, withholding the basic information about its true content. Therefore, many people assume the document has something to do with the import of Islamic laws to Slovakia – pity, the Convention was not signed in Rome.

Videos uploaded on social media channels show the well-known priest Marian Kuffa preaching in front of people attending mass: he was circulating negative views about the Istanbul Convention in order to spread fear among people that this legal instrument will destroy the traditional structure of family and society⁵.

| Fighting against windmills

NGOs working to combat violence against women and their children are desperate but do not give up fighting against this pile of lies, reflecting partial interests of political parties and their antagonism vis a

vis the Istanbul Convention manipulation by religious people. Women activists use every invitation by the media to talk to the public; they joined the Whistles Against Violence international action on November 25 and some of them are leading campaigns supporting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. There have been numerous press conferences during the 16 days of Activism Against Violence Against Women to commemorate the day in support of the Istanbul Convention, which became the pars pro toto symbol for combating violence against women.

NGOs have been trying to raise public awareness and explain provisions of the Convention for several years, in an effort to educate people about its importance not only for women experiencing violence, but also their children, and society as a whole. However, it seems that every action to support the Istanbul Convention only causes more radical reactions from many groups in society.

| Happy end nowhere in sight

It would be nice to end the story with a hopeful statement that the situation might change with the new government in 2020. However, major opposition parties – except the liberals – are also declining support for the Convention. The Catholic Church’s crusade against gender equality is not going to end soon, and no one will take up the fight against the Church in Slovakia. Furthermore, looking at our southern and northern neighbours, there is not much hope left for the future of the Istanbul Convention in Slovakia.

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5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVu0Gwl3lal>

The RESPONSE Model: Strengthening the capacity of women's health settings to support survivors of gender-based violence

Kelly Blank

Grant Development & ABM Coordinator at the WAVE Office

Introduction

The Istanbul Convention is a comprehensive European Convention based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) that is committed against women because they are women. However, the Istanbul Convention is not always effectively implemented in the countries which have ratified it, thereby failing survivors of GBV as well as the organizations and services which support them. This article will explore why women survivors of GBV, particularly pregnant women, require effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention (IC) as part of holistic support. The article will then look into the ways in which European health settings fail to meet the needs of female survivors of GBV during pregnancy and will demonstrate how the RESPONSE Project has contributed to improved accessibility of women's health settings, in line with IC standards, particularly the following Articles:

- Article 11 – Data Collection and Research
- Article 14 – Education
- Article 15 – Training of professionals
- Article 18 – Multiagency cooperation
- Article 19 – Information
- Article 22 – Specialist support services
- Article 27 – Reporting

Gender-based violence as a public health issue

For many professionals working in the sector to prevent GBV and support survivors, the pervasiveness of GBV is understood as one of the most widespread violations of human rights, with a significant impact on physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive health. However, basic knowledge and understanding of the consequences of GBV is not as well understood by professionals working in the health sector, despite research indicating that healthcare providers are likely to be the first professional contact for

women survivors¹. Survivors of GBV are more likely to disclose abuse to healthcare providers², who also receive referrals for women survivors from other public authorities and organizations such as the police and women's shelters³.

Given this information, training of health professionals to identify and support women survivors of GBV is necessary for providing adequate health services. Article 15 of the Istanbul Convention clearly identifies the importance of training and sensitization of professionals to the causes and consequences of GBV and outlines how training raises awareness among professionals and how it contributes to the outlooks and conduct of professionals when handling cases of GBV. Attitude change and sensitivity of professionals in contact with survivors thereby also improves the nature and quality of support. Furthermore, increased gender equality leads to higher levels of disclosure about GBV, in part because of heightened awareness but also by improved structures available to support the reporting of incidents⁴. With increased awareness, survivors are more likely to feel confident in seeking support with the understanding that professionals are specially trained and sensitive to their experiences.

Health consequences related to GBV are numerous, particularly the harmful impact GBV can have on pregnant women. GBV may lead to issues including unintended pregnancies, induced abortions and sexually

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- 1 WHO, "Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines". Geneva, WHO; 2013.
 - 2 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). "Violence against women: An EU-wide survey". Brussels, FRA; 2014.
 - 3 UNFPA-WAVE, "Strengthening Health System Responses to Gender-based violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia" (2014), p. 87.
 - 4 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). "Violence against women: An EU-wide survey". Brussels, FRA; 2014. p. 25.

transmitted infections, including HIV⁵. Other risks of GBV during pregnancy can be miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term delivery and low birth weight⁶, and those who experience GBV have a three-times increased risk of gynecological problems⁷ and may repeatedly fail to get cervical smear tests which can detect the very serious conditions they are at an increased risk of experiencing (such as pelvic inflammatory disease and menstrual disorders)⁸. Despite these serious health impacts, the number of pregnant women spontaneously disclosing their experience of violence is low as their safety is often at stake and European health providers are generally not trained in how to screen, report and refer women survivors of GBV⁹. This lack of disclosure and reporting places women at even more risk, including greater risk of death by femicide¹⁰.

GBV is also a major indicator of risk to children. Research indicates that stress during pregnancy can lead to short- and long-term negative health consequences towards the baby, including towards cognitive development. In the UK, Department of Health figures indicate that nearly three quarters of children who are subject to a child protection plan live in households where domestic violence occurs¹¹. 75 % of domestic violence incidents are witnessed by children, and their responses to the trauma of witnessing GBV may vary, but have negative physical, emotional and behavioral effects including physical health complaints, development delay, anxiety, depression, and aggression¹².

Given this information, GBV against pregnant women is a clear public health issue and screening for it should be routine for women's health care professionals. A lack of education about GBV in the training of health professional students is therefore a dis-

service to not only survivors, but also to health care providers themselves. Lack of knowledge can lead to healthcare professionals missing the signs of patients with experiences of GBV, and therefore not asking them about it and so fail to gather a complete history before treating the presenting problem. Healthcare professionals are in a unique position to support this vulnerable population. It is essential that healthcare professionals receive training to better understand GBV, to better communicate with and ask their patients if they are experiencing GBV, understand how to respond appropriately and know what their local, onward referral route is for specialist support. A multi-agency approach is the most effective way to handle such situations, as no single service alone can respond to and support survivors in cases of GBV¹³.

Barriers in the health support sector to supporting GBV survivors

Training of healthcare professionals to identify women experiencing GBV, through for example clinical enquiry, is needed to effectively support survivors and to contribute to the effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention¹⁴. Clinical enquiry requires that healthcare professionals ask women about violence if they are presenting certain clinical conditions linked to GBV. This method is based on selective and careful clinical consideration, particularly when healthcare professionals are trained in how to respond and refer. Furthermore, having safe protocols and prompts within health settings allows healthcare professionals to overcome barriers in supporting survivors. Guidelines and protocols help to provide a safe and confidential environment for GBV disclosure, and require that, for instance, women are alone during disclosure rather than accompanied or in the presence of family members or children over two years old¹⁵. Prompts which are automatically built into the health systems' database work to ensure that doctors are constantly reminded about screening for GBV.

Training health professionals is a primary concern in the RESPONSE Project, to ensure that high quality standards are effectively carried out when supporting pregnant survivors of GBV. RESPONSE bridges the gap between supporting survivors of GBV in the health system and implementation of Istanbul Convention standards. Co-funded by the European Commission, RESPONSE aims to increase patient disclosure of GBV to women's health services, as well as to increase referrals to specialist services and safety →

5 Haddad L, Shotar A, Junger J, Alzyoud S, Bouhaidar CM, "Screening for domestic violence in Jordan: validation of an Arabic version of a domestic violence against women questionnaire". *International Journal of Women's Health* (2011), p. 79-86.

6 Halpern CT, Spriggs AL, Martin SL, Kupper LL, "Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence Victimization from Adolescence to Young Adulthood in a Nationally Representative Sample". *Journal of Adolescent Health*. (2009), p. 508-516.

7 Campbell J et al., "Intimate Partner Violence and Physical Health Consequences". *Arch Intern Med*. (2992m 162(10), p. 1157-1163.

8 Bewley S, Welch J, eds., "ABC of domestic and sexual violence". John Wiley & Sons. (2014), p. 69-72.

9 Feder GS, Hutson M, Ramsay J, Taket AR. "Expectations and experiences of women experiencing intimate partner violence when they encounter health care professionals: a meta-analysis of qualitative studies". *Arch Int Med*. (2006). p. 22-37.

10 <https://www.insideedition.com/inside-troubling-pattern-pregnant-women-being-killed-loved-ones-45999>
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4600/e826a6542debc-b5778eff169cbab9d4de64b.pdf>

11 Department of Health, *Women's Mental Health: into the Mainstream*. London, Department of Health. (2002), p. 16.

12 Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Mental Health and Growing Up*, 3rd edition: "Domestic Violence: Its effect on children". Royal College of Psychiatrists, (2004).

13 Jonhson Medina, Dulf Diana, Sidor Alexandra. "RESPONSE Training Manual for Reporting of Gender-based violence in women's health services"; Project RESPONSE. (2017), p. 5.

14 Garcia-Moreno C, Hegarty K, Flavia A, d'Oliveira L, Koziol-Maclain J, Colombini M, Feder G, "The health systems response to violence against women". *Lancet*. (2015). p. 1-13.

15 Jonhson Medina, Dulf Diana, Sidor Alexandra. "RESPONSE Training Manual for Reporting of Gender-based violence in women's health services"; Project RESPONSE. (2017), p. 11.

planning in five geographically diverse EU countries: Austria, France, Germany, Romania and Spain. In the beginning of the project in 2016, interviews with 45 participants (health professionals, social workers, and policy makers) took place in national settings to identify strengths, weaknesses and legal frameworks for provision of care in health settings. Interviews prior to RESPONSE trainings revealed that although many felt GBV was highly relevant to their work, they felt inadequately prepared to address GBV in their practice for the following reasons:

- Lack of knowledge and education on GBV, including how to recognize signs of abuse, and how to communicate with survivors
- Little to no management interest or support in the issue of GBV
- Absence of early identification, rapid response mechanisms and referral pathways
- Inconsistent or weak systematic data collection on GBV
- Absence of GBV education during academic studies/within curriculum
- No specific department or staff dedicated to addressing GBV
- No specific budget allocated for GBV prevention and intervention services inside the health setting
- Lack of time for medical care to adequately address the problem, let alone deal with subsequent GBV disclosure
- Lack of information about existing support services to refer survivors of GBV

Training the health sector: The RESPONSE Model

With the above challenges in mind, RESPONSE partners established multi-disciplinary maternity-based Victim Protection Groups (VPGs) in maternal health settings to improve the health sector response for pregnant survivors of GBV. The RESPONSE Training Manual (translated from English into French, German, Romanian and Spanish) was utilized to train approximately 150 health providers together with social workers within the health settings. The manual contains a range of case studies and role play exercises to support health professionals to practice communication and assessment of GBV patients. The trained social workers and health professionals gained the knowledge and skills to successfully compose the VPGs in each health setting and were provided with regular guidance and follow-up opportunities.

Ideally at a local level, identification and referral to specialized services for victims of GBV should be mandated and explicitly stated in the health setting's

policy and procedures. For instance, in Austria, VPGs within health settings are legally mandated by Austrian Federal Law and are mandatory for every hospital in the country. France also requires that there be a violence prevention advocate (i.e. a social worker trained on GBV) to be placed in all 639 emergency rooms throughout France. Such initiatives help mobilize health settings to establish a VPG, which RESPONSE regards as a good practice for multidisciplinary cooperation in maternal health services to reduce underreporting of GBV during routine pregnancy care. This unique model brings together, often for the first time in places where cooperation may not have previously existed, a team of trained health professionals (obstetrics, emergency room, midwives, social workers, etc.) who can be called upon to facilitate support for any potential survivors of GBV, i.e. referral to police services or a women's shelter. VPGs are ideal in that they sensitize different medical specialists on the issue of GBV and ensure early screening.

For effective referral, VPGs require cooperation with other local organizations and authorities outside of the health setting. Article 18 of the IC specifically highlights the importance of multi-agency cooperation in protecting and supporting victims of GBV. The RESPONSE model applies Article 18 by establishing a group of stakeholders consisting of three pillars: women's support services (often the lead organization), one public authority, and one women's health clinic which offers medical services to women. All stakeholders are trained on GBV and regularly cooperate to strengthen the referral and reporting of GBV survivors. The more cooperation and specialised training between the health sector, police, courts and women's organizations means a greater likelihood that women will not only become more aware of services available, but also feel more confident in the capacity of these services to meet their needs¹⁶. Furthermore, the RESPONSE model facilitates regular cooperation and information exchange between sectors, which develops mutual understanding, ensures accountability, and strengthens reliable resources. Through a shared philosophy of cooperation, the safety of survivors can become the priority of health and social care providers¹⁷.

For the purposes of demonstrating the impact of the project within health settings, RESPONSE established regular data collection between the partners and health services. Systematic data collection plays a key role in developing improved evidence-based policy making, as acknowledged in Article 11 of the IC. Data collection makes it possible to determine the effectiveness of policies and new protocols and can be

16 Johnson Medina, Dulf Diana, Sidor Alexandra. "RESPONSE Training Manual for Reporting of Gender-based violence in women's health services"; Project RESPONSE. (2017), p. 37.

17 Ibid., p. 38.

carried out by government bodies, healthcare services, and specialist support services. RESPONSE partner countries cooperated with two health settings: a control clinic and a training. Both health settings collected quantitative baseline data on the number of identification and referrals at the beginning of the project as well after four weeks of undergoing training (for the training clinic only).

Generally, there was an increase in identification and referrals within all participating health settings, however, analysis of the data provided by the control and training clinic in Germany reveals the greatest increase. Data demonstrates that before and four weeks after trainings, the control clinic (which did not participate in trainings and did not have appropriate tools or guidelines) reported no change in the number of patients identified as victims or in the number of referrals to specialist support services. Whereas within the training clinic, the RESPONSE model made a noticeable impact. Before the training, baseline information indicated that healthcare professionals had discussed violence with no GBV survivors. However, only four weeks after the training, healthcare professionals had discussed violence with 75 patients and identified three women as victims of GBV – demonstrating that the RESPONSE model played a critical role in the health setting in positively reforming the identification and referral process for GBV survivors.

| Conclusion

Around Europe, women's health services play a vital role in identifying and referring women victims of GBV. Evidence demonstrates the negative health consequences that GBV can have on pregnant women victims of violence and point to the positive role of healthcare professionals and specialist support services in a woman's journey to safety. Not only can healthcare professionals play a vital role in identifying violence, but they can utilize multiagency connections with the community via the RESPONSE model for helping victims to report to the police, secure forensic evidence, and access holistic support services such as counseling or emergency shelter¹⁸. Research indicates that 87 % of women would find it acceptable if health care professionals routinely asked about violence when patients exhibited injuries related to GBV¹⁹. Given this, the RESPONSE model provides a valuable mechanism for health professionals via training and multi-agency cooperation to overcome barriers in providing effective support for women survivors of GBV, increase disclosure and reporting, and contribute to the practical implementation of the Istanbul Convention within Europe. Furthermore, considering the vast social and legal differences throughout

the continent in terms of protecting women from GBV, the RESPONSE model provides a critical starting point for health professionals throughout Europe to strengthen their knowledge of GBV for improved medical practice in the future.

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18 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). "Violence against women: An EU-wide survey". Brussels, FRA; 2014. p. 69.

19 Ibid., p. 69.

Good practices for implementing the Istanbul Convention in Albania

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Albania was the second member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the Council of Europe Convention “On preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence” (or Istanbul Convention, afterwards referred to as IC) on February 4th, 2013.² This Convention and GREVIO’s report on Albania are as of recent being used as relevant tools for effectively addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence. For this purpose, non-profit organizations have also played an important role in some of the positive experiences identified in Albania for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, as well as the recommendations made by GREVIO³.

In this paper, we would like to highlight some of the good practices for implementing the Convention in Albania and the contribution of Albanian NGOs in this field.

To begin with, the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was amended in accordance with the standards set forth in the IC; therefore, improving the the procedure of issuing protection orders.⁴ For the first time, the law foresees the preliminary order for immediate protection (hereinafter preliminary order), issued by the police so as to offer a more effective and swift protection for victims. This preliminary order is expected to increase their safety, by urging the police to take action as soon as they are notified about any violent incidents within the family. According to Article 13/1 of the aforementioned law, in case the violence perpetrated presents a threat to life, health and freedom,

or in case the violence is perpetrated against children or in their presence, the State Police can immediately undertake preliminary measures for the protection of the victim(s) and put an end to the violent incident. Risk assessment and management are now a legal responsibility of the police and other institutions, part of the Referral Mechanism against domestic violence on the local level, in compliance with Article 51 of the IC. These other institutions include all members of the referral Mechanism: the police, courts, social services, health centres and other. The court decides on the assessment of the Preliminary Order within 48 hours. “This order is an integral part of a comprehensive system of protection.”⁵ It means that this order is followed by a safety plan for the victims, implemented by all responsible actors and by a monitoring system created at the local level. Thus, a gap in the protection of victims does not exist anymore and it is expected that measures against domestic violence will become more effective in the future.

How did the abovementioned legal changes come about? The implementation of the legislation against domestic violence faced many problems regarding the safety of victims. For instance, there were victims, who lost their lives during or after court proceedings. Risk assessment and management were not a legal responsibility of actors such as the police, social services from municipalities, and other; furthermore, all cases of domestic violence were treated similarly.

The draft law was an initiative of the Albanian Government supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and consultations were also held with civil society organizations, government and independent institutions such as the Magistrate School, Ombudsman Albania, etc. Therefore, the Network of Monitoring Gender Based Violence, made out of 45 NGOs (hereinafter “network”), was able to submit its comments and suggestions.

1 The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives is an Albanian NGO working to increase citizens’ access to the justice system, particularly when it comes to women who have suffered abuse.

2 The IC entered into force on August 1st, 2014.

3 GREVIO’s (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) ALBANIA; Published on 24th November 2017, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>

4 The Parliament of Albania, in July 2018, approved the amendments to the law no. 9669, dated 12/18/2006 “On protection measures against domestic violence”, for further details see: <http://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/ligj%20nr.%2047,%20dt.%2023.7.2018.pdf>

5 Logar R. & Niemi J., “Emergency Barring Orders in situations of domestic violence: article 52 of the Istanbul Convention”, A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, <https://rm.coe.int/convention-istanbul-article-52/168073e0e7>; Please see the checklist for implementing emergency barring orders, p.44

Secondly, one of the good practices developed in Albania was the direct implementation of the Istanbul Convention during court proceedings. For instance, lawyers from the Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives referred to the IC throughout all lawsuits submitted to the court, asking for immediate or regular protection orders. As a result, there are many court decisions making a direct reference to the IC, not only in the legal basis, but also in the reasoning part of the decision.⁶ As a result, the case law at first instance courts has greatly improved due to direct reference being made to the IC.⁷ This practice becomes obvious also in cases of divorce and the regulation of its consequences, when one of the causes for divorce was domestic violence. Thus, with reference to Article 31 of the IC (Custody, visitation rights and safety), the courts have ruled in favor of violent parents visiting their children only under the supervision of a psychologist or a social worker.⁸

Thirdly, the articles of the IC and the findings from GREVIO's report on Albania are used by Albanian NGOs as an advocacy tool and for making pressure for State accountability. They are used by the network in many public declarations regarding the failure of the Albanian State to protect victims of domestic and gender-based violence. One example was the public call of the network to address sexual violence against women, with reference to GREVIO's report on Albania⁹.

The IC is likely to continue to play an important role in addressing domestic and gender-based violence

in Albania in the future. Developments are likely to occur along the following lines: addressing gaps related to the implementation of legislation; ensuring improved coordination among responsible actors for addressing cases on domestic violence; and improving the monitoring system which monitors the implementation of protection orders aiming to secure victims' protection. The Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence is planning to draft a shadow report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the future.



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© Aurela Bozo

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6 Bozo A., Report, "Findings from the monitoring of the decisions of the judicial district courts of Shkodra, Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, Vlora, Korca, Dibra and Saranda, on the issuance of IPO/PO", Monitoring Period May 2017-February 2018; Tirana, 2018. p.24. It is available in https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjimore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Report-on-IPO_PO-AWEN-English.compressed.pdf

7 Referring to the practice of CLCI's attorneys, supporting victims of domestic violence with free legal aid.

8 Thus, in court decision no. 9967, dated 9.12.2016, the Judicial District Court of Tirana gave the father A.L. the right to meet his children E.L. and N.L. in the first and third Sunday of each month from 10 am to 12 am, in the presence of a psychologist or a social worker.

9 Cited, footnote no.3, p.46-47

Implementing the Istanbul Convention into Romanian legislation

Giulia Crisan

ANAIS Association

Romania signed the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)** in 2014 and ratified the Convention in 2016, which entered into force as of September 1st, 2016.

Through Law no.174/13.07.2018, the provisions of the Istanbul Convention were partially transposed. Provisions of art. 9 par. (1) lit. b) and c) and par. (3) lit a) and b) from the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA, were published in the Official Journal of the European Union, L series, issue 315, November 14th, 2012.

Through Law no.174/13.07.2018 the phrase „*family violence*” was changed to „*domestic violence*” in national legislation, in accordance with the text of the Convention.

Domestic violence was redefined as: “any intended action or inaction of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occurs within the family or domestic unit, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim”.

The next forms of violence were redefined: psychological abuse, physical violence, social violence and spiritual abuse, keeping the definitions for: verbal abuse, sexual violence and economic abuse.

Children witnessing violent acts have also been recognized as victims of domestic violence.

The most important legal amendment is the regulation of the temporary protection order, which did not exist in the legislation beforehand. The order can be issued immediately by a police officer.

The temporary protection order has a duration of 5 days (120 hours) and can entail the following measures:

a) temporary eviction of the perpetrator from the common residence, regardless if the property is owned by the perpetrator;

b) reinstating the victim and children into the shared house;

c) requesting the perpetrator to maintain a minimum distance from the victim, family members, or the residence, workplace or school of the protected person;

d) requesting the perpetrator to wear an electronic surveillance bracelet;

e) requesting the perpetrator to hand in any weapons he may possess to the police.

The temporary protection order is confirmed by the prosecutor. The prosecutor decides on the need to keep the measures in place within the next 48 hours, and:

- orders the reasoned ending of the measures;
- confirms the maintenance of the measures and submits the temporary protection order to the judge along with a request for the issuing of the protection order.

Public authorities have the obligation to ensure accommodation for perpetrators in residential centers. Public authorities also have the obligation to establish emergency centers, recovery centers and shelters for victims of domestic violence at the national level.

© Giulia Crisan



Giulia Crisan is a lawyer by profession and currently the Vice-President of ANAIS Association (a member of the WAVE Network). Giulia has been working as a consultant for ANAIS since 2012, focusing primarily on judicial matters concerning protection orders for victims of domestic violence. Giulia is a graduate of the Law Faculty, Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University – Bucharest. Giulia became a member of the Bucharest Bar in 2000 and has her own legal practice. Giulia can be contacted at: giulia.crisan@asociatia-anais.ro

Step Up! for the Istanbul Convention in Transdnistria, Moldova

Elena Leonteva

Coordinator of the Crisis Center for Women, part of the «Resonance» Centre

Nowadays millions of women and girls all over the world are subjected to violence and discrimination. More and more countries not only recognize the existence of these problems but realize that violence is not just a private family and societal issue, but the State's business.

Combating this anti-social phenomenon is partially the State's obligation, which is outlined in international documents pertaining to women's rights protection. Among these documents, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence takes an important place. It is frequently called the Istanbul Convention (IC), as it was adopted in 2011 in Istanbul.

Events organized within the frame of the WAVE Step Up! Campaign are focused on promoting the standards from the IC. Every year more and more new followers are joining these events. The Centre for Development and Support of Civil Initiatives «Resonance» has been working since 2005 in Transdnistria, Moldova, and is a member of the European network WAVE. The Centre's professionals participate in international conferences, organized by the WAVE in conjunction with colleagues from different countries.

Since 2017 «Resonance» Centre has been actively participating in the Step Up! Campaign. This is so, because its activities help attract the attention of citizens, political leaders, and mass media to the problem of domestic violence. This is helpful for conducting preventive work in this area and combatting this problem.

Generally speaking, people's attitude to domestic violence in the Transdnistrian region is ambiguous. Many people do not recognize it and are unaware of its harmful consequences. However, at least 100 women and their children apply annually to the Centre for women's support in crisis situations, which is part of the «Resonance» Centre. They apply for social, legal and psychological support, and request protection from physical violence.

According to data collected by the «Resonance» Centre in 2011, 22.3% of women who were married or lived in a civil partnership were subjected to physical violence; 35.7% from the general number of female

respondents were victims of physical violence perpetrated by men at least once in their lifetime; 60,2% of women had been subjected to psychological violence; 79,9% of all women who were subjected to domestic violence did not go to hospital; 75,4% did not report violence to the police; 81,5% of women did not talk to relatives and friends about incidents of violence. →



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One of the key activities conducted by «Resonance» Centre is women's rights protection and provision of direct support to women and children, as well as prevention of violence against women. Activities aimed at preventing and combating violence are important on both the left (post-conflict region named Transdnistria) and the right bank of the river Dniester in Moldova.

The «Resonance» Centre held big public events in the framework of the WAVE Step Up! Campaign in 2017 – the meme caricature competition on domestic violence problems as well as public actions held during the International Peace Day. Such events could be organized thanks to the efforts of 40 volunteers, participants from educational programmes, and the «Resonance» Centre's employees. Approximately 300 people joined these events.

The highlight of the actions undertaken during the International Peace Day was a symbolic dance – “One Billion Rising”. This symbolized women's aspiration to enjoy their rights and combat violence against women and children.

Employees from the «Resonance» Centre held 7 more activities in the frame of the WAVE Step Up! Campaign in 2018. They supported the launch and dissemination of the Youth Ambassador's call among young people: 6 applications for participation in this call were submitted.

The UN expert on human rights Thomas Hammarberg supported the Centre's participation in the events of the Step Up! Campaign. He visited the «Resonance» Centre's shelter for women and children survivors of violence and showed solidarity with the participants

of the campaign during his visit to Transdnistria on May, 30 2018.

The main goals of Step Up! Campaign participants working at the «Resonance» Centre are to prevent violence; protect victims from perpetrators' persecution; call upon all members in society to combat violence; achieve gender equality between women and men. These goals were also outlined in the Istanbul Convention and were identified as one of the main objectives of the WAVE Step Up! Campaign.

The center's professionals organized to hold the Peace Day event in September 2018. Similarly to last year's event, the slogan of the event this year was “from peace at home to peace on the Planet”, because “peace on the planet starts with peace within the family, where there is no place for any violent incidents”.

© Elena Leontieva



Elena Leontieva is 47 years old. She was born in the city of Bender, Transdnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. She currently resides there. Elena is a philologist by profession. She previously worked as a teacher, television editor, and literary editor. For the last three years she has been working as coordinator at the Resonance Centre. As part of her work she is interacting with State bodies, the police, and takes part in rendering direct assistance to women and children survivors of domestic violence. Elena can be contacted at: civici-tiatives@gmail.com

The lack of implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Italy

Chiara Paganelli

Intern at the WAVE Office

On September 10th, 2013, the Istanbul Convention was ratified by Italy and it entered into force almost one year later, on August 1st, 2014. By ratifying the Convention, Italy is obliged to prevent and eliminate violence against women (VAW), particularly by eradicating gender stereotypes which are deeply embedded in Italian culture. These are said to be the main cause behind the high rates of domestic violence and femicide, which have dramatically increased in the past couple of years. This issue was also highlighted by the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on VAW, Rashida Manjoo,¹ in her report about the situation of VAW in Italy from 2012, and was also reflected in the judgement passed by the European Court of Human Rights in 2017 concerning the case *Talpis v. Italy*.² The current legal framework is characterized by fragmentation, inadequate punishment of perpetrators, and lack of effective redress for women affected by violence.

| The new proposal from the government

Women's associations are voicing their concern these days with regard to the government's new proposal. League senator Pillon drafted a proposal which represents a step backwards of 50 years as far as women's rights are concerned, and particularly the rights of women survivors of violence. It aims at making the process of separation between a husband and wife more complicated, so that women will feel obliged to give up their freedoms and rights, unable to ask for help when trying to leave an abusive relationship. Pursuant to the proposal are the following items:

- › For those who want to separate or obtain a divorce, the first step is **mediation**, which is mandatory, regardless if the woman was subjected to domestic violence by her husband or intimate partner. This obligation, in violation of art. 48 of the Istanbul Convention, is an obstacle for a woman to freely decide about her own life and, most importantly, to escape from an abusive relationship. If she rejects the mediation, she cannot ask for separation or divorce.

The draft does not take into account cases of domestic violence, even though it is well known that, in the majority of the cases, when a woman decides to put an end to her relationship and file for divorce, pre-existing domestic violence can escalate and may even lead to femicide. Moreover, the costs for a separation or divorce will be higher and free legal aid not provided during the mediation process. In the end, a woman victim of violence will be forced to continue living with her violent partner "to save the family", as senator Pillon would say.

- › During the separation children will have to spend 12 days a month with each parent, even though this may be detrimental to their needs and against their will. Parents will be obliged to organize a "family plan" covering every aspect of their children's life, which will be adjusted as children grow up, increasing the chances for conflict to arise between parents, especially in a context of previous domestic violence.

This proposal increases the chance exponentially for an abusive man to perpetrate violence, not only physical but also psychological and economic, towards the woman, throughout the separation process. This may lead to a never-ending fight between the couple, thus increasing legal fees to the disadvantage of the more economically vulnerable spouse;

- › the **alimony check** will be removed, and both parents will have to provide for their children equally according to their financial capabilities. Subtly, to discourage separation, the programme takes into consideration equality between women and men only when it comes to separation and not during their relationship. The proposal does not take into account the fact that the female unemployment rate is very high in Italy and economic disparities will cause unequal treatment of children;

- › the proposal addresses the fight against "**parental alienation**", referring to instances in which one parent manipulates the child to reject the other parent. Such a measure could be exploited by men, especially when violence is reported, leaving children more vulnerable and deterring women from reporting the case. This idea is based on the notion of "parental alienation syndrome" (PAS), →

1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on VAW, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, Mission to Italy, 15.06.2012, A/HRC/20/16/ADD.2

2 Further information about the *Talpis vs. Italy* case is available here: <http://espchhelp.ru/blog/591-talpis-v-italy>

a theory developed by the psychiatrist Dr. Richard A. Gardner, which has been discredited by scientific associations. Indeed, PAS is not listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and there is no official position on whether the syndrome is real.³ Parental alienation is not a syndrome but “a stereotypical view of a woman punishing a man”. According to PAS, any mother who accuses her spouse of being abusive with her and her child, is lying more or less by definition. Gardner believed that 90 per cent of mothers are liars who “programmed” their children to repeat their lies to “alienate” them from their father, a shocking abrogation of parental responsibility for which a mother deserves to lose all custody rights in favour of her alleged abuser.

By following the aforementioned theory, Pillon’s bill foresees that foster care will be provided for any child who refuses to stay with one of the parents, without verifying the reasons for this rejection beforehand. The other parent will lose custody.

When it comes to **removal and protection orders** in cases of VAW, if a woman reports violence and asks for the removal of her partner from the house, she carries the risk of being accused to cause significant damage to her children and her family. Law enforcement authorities may suspect that her accusations are false, having no other purpose than to punish her partner. Consequently, she will be discouraged from reporting domestic violence to authorities.⁴

Similar to Gardner’s work, Pillon will create a generation of mothers and children abused psychologically and physically, forced to continue seeing their violent fathers and partners.

| VAW in practice

The Italian government is acting in a way that far from combatting VAW, reaffirms patriarchal norms and considers women to be solely devoted to maternity, without having any rights and freedoms.⁵ There is a worrying lack of knowledge among politicians and an unwillingness to understand the causes of VAW in Italy, which is considered to be a “women’s only business”. VAW is a serious problem in Italy; according to EURES⁶ data, in the first ten months of 2017, 114 women have been killed, which means that more than one woman is killed every three days. 3,000 women have been killed in Italy since 2000, and thou-

sands more have from suffered domestic abuse or stalking by men. Only 8.7 % of violent episodes were reported to the police.⁷

Overall, the aforementioned bill denies the problem of domestic violence and femicide. The provision of the compulsoriness of mediation in the case of an abusive relationship is in conflict with the Istanbul Convention, since it cannot be applied to a situation of domestic violence. Under such circumstances violence between the two spouses may escalate and culminate in femicide.

What the new government should be aware of is that VAW remains a widespread phenomenon in Italy, its underestimation and impunity for perpetrators of VAW offences, often leading to femicide. Even though there is proof of the fact that domestic violence persists, a large number of women have been murdered by their current or former partners, because no preventive measures were undertaken. Consequently, women give up on reporting intimate partner violence, because they believe they will not be taken seriously by authorities. This serious phenomenon manifested mainly in the domestic sphere remains largely invisible and underreported, as around 93 per cent of victims, mostly financially dependent on the perpetrators, do not report domestic violence to the police.

Italy has a legal framework seeking to combat VAW and femicide. However, the reality on the ground is completely different. Women continue to be killed by current or former intimate partners because the State failed to protect them. Women are encouraged to denounce their abusers, but often their complaints are not taken seriously, precautionary measures are not applied when the situation is dangerous, and, in the end, they are left to suffer alone. When a woman goes to the police to report violence, the police officer usually asks if she was not simply arguing with her husband. Law enforcement authorities rarely believe women; therefore, they stop reaching out for help.

When women ask for help and denounce domestic violence, they have to be listened and helped, hence authorities are obliged to intervene immediately without discretion. Giving women a voice is imperative in making them aware about the importance of reporting violence. If the criminal justice system does not react and treats their complaints seriously, victims will not find a reason to report the abuse they endured.

3 <https://www.thelily.com/italy-wants-to-enforce-perfect-co-parenting-with-new-divorce-laws-critics-say-women-will-lose/>

4 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/19/italian-womens-groups-fear-law-change-will-hurt-domestic-violence-victims?CMP=share_btn_fb

5 <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/le-avvocate-di-d-i-re-criticano-il-contratto-lega-m5s/>

6 The acronym stands for Institute on economic and social research

7 EURES, Rapporto “Caratteristiche, dinamiche e profili di rischio del femminicidio in Italia”. <http://www.quotidianosanita.it/allegati/allegato4803121.pdf>

| Conclusion

Italy still finds itself in a situation where gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in society and domestic violence continues to affect women. The implementation of national legislation and the functioning of the judicial system continue to be hampered by a strong patriarchal culture which is supported by the new government. This problem is not easy to solve, especially if the government is the main representative of a culture based on gender inequality. As a result, the government is not making any concrete efforts to empower women and to enable them to escape from violence. Violence is still perceived to be a woman's issue, in which only a few men take part.

If the aforementioned proposal will be approved, the freedoms and rights of millions of women, in particular of those who were victims of violence and remain completely financially dependent on their abusive partners, will be violated. Women's associations, lawyers and psychologists are protesting and writing petitions to prevent the approval of the proposal which will violate the rights and interests of women and children. The new government gives the impression that it is living in a totally different context, ignoring the gravity of male violence against women, unaware that more and more women need to escape from abusive relationships.

| Recommendations

In order to achieve gender equality and decrease the number of domestic violence cases and implement relevant provisions from the Istanbul Convention, Italy should make improvements to its educational and criminal justice system. When it comes to prevention, education is the single most important tool. The government should seek to introduce in schools a culture free from gender stereotypes and imposition of gender roles and ensure respect for gender equality, recognizing that VAW is a human rights violation. Schools and awareness-raising campaigns should ensure that teachers and professors will educate students in accordance with values of gender equality. In this context, awareness-raising activities represent an effective means to disseminate the idea that domestic violence is not a private matter, but an unacceptable violation of human rights. Women's associations are working hard to improve the situation and step in when the government fails to comply with its obligations. The media bears a particular responsibility in ensuring that women and men are represented in a non-stereotyped way and can contribute to ending VAW by disseminating awareness-raising campaigns that tackle gender stereotypes. In the context of the criminal justice system, the treatment of victims of domestic violence remains precarious. Hence, when abused women report violence to authorities, they receive insufficient assistance and support. Due to the length of criminal and civil legal proceedings re-

lated to domestic violence, women run the risk of being killed by their violent partners, while waiting for the trial to end. Legal proceedings related to cases dealing with violence against women should be given priority and be concluded as soon as possible by well-trained judges and other public authorities. Finally, escaping from an abusive relationship takes time and costs money, women being especially vulnerable if they have children. In this case, the government should offer financial aid to women, so as to protect their economic and social rights throughout their path away from violence and comply with the provisions from the Istanbul Convention.



© Chiara Paganelli

Chiara Paganelli studied Law at the University of Pisa and has a master's degree in Globalization and Law, specializing in International Human Rights Law from the University of Maastricht. She wrote her master's thesis on domestic violence and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Italy. As of recent, she finalized a traineeship at the Council of Europe focusing on social rights and social cohesion. Currently, she is writing articles for the WAVE Blog-Intern's Corner about women's rights and violence against women issues, such as the right to abortion, obstetric violence, rape trials, as well as the Inspirational Women Blog. She also wrote an article on violence against older women on the Blog of the Ageing Equal Campaign. Chiara can be contacted at: chiara.paganelli@hotmail.it

Combatting gender-based violence in Georgia: Young people learn how to manage conflict

Lali Shengelia

Editor in the Media Department of Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"



"My mother and father often shouted at each other. It was a common thing for me and I was almost used to it. But then, my father died suddenly and ever since my mother had to fulfil his role as well. I've never had a close relationship with my mother. We always shouted things to each other in order to make a point. Once, I offended her so much I had to call an ambulance"

This is a story of a 15-year-old girl which she shared at one of the meetings.

Violence starts from conflict, and conflict is a result of numerous emotions. Why are people emotional? How should we act if we have too many positive or negative emotions? If we know how to do this, then it becomes easier to communicate; therefore, the risk for family conflicts and violence to break out is reduced.

That is why Fund "Sukhumi" pays special attention to addressing conflict management and conducts meet-

ings with young people in schools from rural and urban areas in 9 municipalities of Western Georgia.

Girls and boys look forward to meeting an expert from Fund "Sukhumi" on conflict issues. They discuss relevant topics with the expert, including: emotion management, violence prevention, bullying, personal conflicts, gender stereotypes, the Istanbul Convention and its role to prevent violence, negotiations and mediation.

"I should not have screamed, I should not have been worried. I will act differently from now on. I will take your advice into account. I will go see a psychologist", – young people often say such things after the meetings, when they analyze their behaviour and realize they can manage emotions as well as avoid conflicts.

Conducting workshops is one of the most important activities part of the work of Fund "Sukhumi" and many participants to these workshops manage to solve conflicts thanks to what they have learned.



Below is the story of a young girl attending such a workshop:

Tiko Giorgadze lives in Terjola. She is 16 years old. She regularly attended the workshops and became more active during the discussions. She created a mediators' club in her school. The Club consists of ten members. They learned conflict and mediation-related issues and they always engaged actively, if any conflicts or violence erupted.

One schoolgirl ran away from home. Her parents found her at a friend's house and forced her to return. The girl did not communicate with anyone and did not study. The group of mediators quickly identified the reason for such a behavior. The girl's mother was going to move abroad for a job as their family had financial problems. Her father was physically abusive towards the mother. Therefore, the girl was very worried. She suffered a lot and did not want to stay at home. Young mediators held conversations with her family for about a month. They involved teachers and local government representatives.

As a result, the girl's father got a job in a construction company and her mother stayed at home. Their financial situation and family relationships improved.

The workshops conducted by Fund "Sukhumi" on conflict issues will be continued and more and more young people will be involved in violence prevention initiatives.

© Lali Shengelia



Lali Shengelia is from Abkhazia. She graduated from Sukhumi State University in 1980 and has worked in different publishing houses. She has been working in the women's non-governmental organization Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi" for 14 years. Lali is heading the organization's Media Department and is a member of the Creative Union of Georgian Journalists. Lali can be contacted at: womansukhumi@gmail.com



Linda Steiner next to her mural Demons (Yppenplatz, Vienna)

“With the overload of unrealistic body images in the media I think it's important that a natural and realistic body image is shown in public”

LINDA, artist, Austria

Can you tell us about the mural that is featured on the cover of this magazine?

I experienced painting a huge wall with two other female artist friends (Katherina Löffelmann and Mariella Lehner) at an old factory building in Linz and found it so enjoyable that we decided to paint another mural together in Vienna. I asked them if this time we could focus on a feminist topic, because street art is still a very male dominated art form and I wanted to make a statement. At the time, I was doing a lot of comics and found it a good medium for getting across emotions and portraying interactions. My goal was to show the support between women and their struggle with violence or unwanted situations. In the beginning I didn't think about the “me too” movement, but in the end it all just fit together. Later that year we painted together again at Hands Off the Wall, the first female street art festival in Vienna located at Yppenplatz. When you can fit most of the female street artists from the entire city on one wall you can see the issue is quite clear. There's still a long way to go for equality in the street art scene.

What kind of impact would you like your art to have?

My art doesn't always have a specific message. I mostly paint portraits and often portray myself or put my own body image on my imagined figures. With the overload of unrealistic body images in the media I think it's important that a natural and realistic body

image is shown in public so that people can get used to it; with all its hair and imperfections. That being said, it's not necessarily feminist art, but what naturally comes across through my portrayal of myself... which others could consider feminist for the same reason. I like the idea of making a statement in my public/street art, but it doesn't always have to be meaningful.

Is there anyone or anything in particular that you would say inspires your art?

When I was younger, I adored Frida Kahlo because she used art like therapy, and it helped me to deal with my own depression as well. I could put my art out there, while still having it for myself. Nowadays I think it's mostly me trying to reflect and deal with my own emotions and thoughts in my head.

© Christian Winkler



Linda Steiner is the creator of the design for the 2018 WAVE Step Up Campaign bag which was debuted at the Annual WAVE Conference in October of this year. Linda was born in East Tyrol in Southern Austria in 1993. Around two years ago she joined an art studio in Vienna where she found the exchange with other young artists

from all over the world to be extremely enriching to her work. She recently started painting murals, taking on projects in public spaces that primarily focus on feminist topics. You can find more artwork from Linda on her Instagram account: [@imadeyouandnowitakeyouback](https://www.instagram.com/imadeyouandnowitakeyouback)

The interview was conducted and translated from German by Elizabeth Spouse, Office Administrator and Project Assistant at the WAVE Office.



Information Centre for Cross-Border-Support

One important task of the WAVE Office and its Information Centre is to deal with cross-border requests from women in need. Each month, WAVE receives cross-border requests for support from women survivors of violence, from family members of survivors, from women's support services, or from different institutions. The requests are often received when women have not been able to find sufficient support in their countries, or when they find themselves in dangerous and high risk situations, are unaware of the support provided in their countries, or the situation is especially complex and involves cross-border assistance. In such cases, WAVE can refer survivors to appropriate services in their respective countries or may even provide support directly to survivors, whenever possible.

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fempower EDITOR (see page 3)

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Andrada Filip joined the WAVE office in September 2015. She did her BA in International Politics at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom, and her MA in Political Science at the University

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→ WAVE Members continued (140 as of 12/2018)

131	Kadriye Bakirci	Individual Member
132	Shazia Choudhry	Individual Member
133	Renate Egger	Individual Member
134	Beverley Gilbert	Individual Member
135	Karin Heisecke	Individual Member
136	Dr. Melanie McCarry	Individual Member
137	Dr. Marceline Naudi	Individual Member
138	Kathleen Rees	Individual Member
139	Greta Squire	Individual Member
140	Prof. Dr. Carol Hagemann-White	Honorary Member

WAVE Members (140 as of 12/2018)

1	Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN)	Albania	66	Križu un Konsultāciju Centrs Skalbes	Latvia
2	Center for Legal Civic Initiatives	Albania	67	Frauenhaus Liechtenstein	Liechtenstein
3	Counseling Line for Women and Girls	Albania	68	Vilnius Moterų namai – Intervention Centre	Lithuania
4	Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC)	Albania	69	Femmes en Détresse asbl	Luxembourg
5	Human Rights in Democracy Center (HRDC)	Albania	70	National Council for Gender Equality – NCGE	Macedonia
6	Women's Association Refleksione	Albania	71	National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Voice against Violence	Macedonia
7	Woman Forum Elbasan	Albania	72	Commission on Domestic Violence	Malta
8	Woman to Woman	Albania	73	Network Forum Malta	Malta
9	Sexual Assault Crisis Center	Armenia	74	Association against Violence 'Casa Marioarei'	Moldova
10	Women's Right Center	Armenia	75	Center for Support and Development of Civic Initiatives 'Resonance'	Moldova
11	Women's Support Center	Armenia	76	National Coalition 'Life without Violence'	Moldova
12	Austrian Women's Shelter Network – Information Centre against Violence AÖF	Austria	77	Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims 'Memoria'	Moldova
13	Domestic Abuse intervention Centre Vienna	Austria	78	Women's Law Centre	Moldova
14	Network of Austrian Counselling Centres for Women and Girls	Austria	79	SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic	Montenegro
15	Clean World Social Union	Azerbaijan	80	Federatie Opvang	Netherlands
16	International Public Association "Gender Perspectives"	Belarus	81	MOVISIE	Netherlands
17	Law Initiative – Commission on Women's Rights	Belarus	82	Stichting Zijweg	Netherlands
18	Collectif contre les Violences Familiales et l'Exclusion (CVFE)	Belgium	83	Secretariat of the Shelter Movement	Norway
19	Department of Health and Welfare, Violence Victims and Policy Coordination – Province of Antwerp	Belgium	84	Autonomy	Poland
20	Garance ASBL	Belgium	85	Centrum Praw Kobiet	Poland
21	Foundation United Women Banja Luka	Bosnia and Herzegovina	86	A.L.E.G Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender	Romania
22	Medica Zenica Information	Bosnia and Herzegovina	87	ANAIS Association	Romania
23	Alliance for Protection against Gender-Based Violence	Bulgaria	88	Artemis Counselling Centre against Sexual Abuse	Romania
24	Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation	Bulgaria	89	CPE – Center Partnership and Equality	Romania
25	Nadja Centre	Bulgaria	90	ANNA – National Center for Prevention of Violence	Russia
26	Autonomous Women's House Zagreb	Croatia	91	Crisis Centre Ekaterina	Russia
27	B.a.Be., Be active. Be emancipated	Croatia	92	Nizhny Novgorod Women Crisis Center	Russia
28	Centre for Women War Victims ROSA	Croatia	93	Association Fenomena / SOS Kraljevo	Serbia
29	Women's Room – Center for Sexual Rights	Croatia	94	Autonomous Women's Center (AWC)	Serbia
30	Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family	Cyprus	95	Alliance of Women in Slovakia	Slovakia
31	Association of Women to Support Living (KAYAD)	Cyprus	96	FENESTRA	Slovakia
32	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)	Cyprus	97	Association for Nonviolent Communication	Slovenia
33	proFem – Central European Consulting Centre	Czech Republic	98	Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children	Slovenia
34	ROSA – Centre for Battered and Lonely Women	Czech Republic	99	Asociación de Mujeres Valdés Siglo XXI	Spain
35	Kvinnuhusid	Denmark	100	Asociación Otro Tiempo	Spain
36	L.O.K.K – National Organisation of Women's Shelters in Denmark	Denmark	101	Centro de Asistencia a Víctimas de Agresiones Sexuales – CAVAS	Spain
37	Estonian Women's Shelters Union	Estonia	102	Directorate General for Gender-based Violence, Youth Affairs and Juvenile Crime	Spain
38	Tartu Child Support Center	Estonia	103	Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Arena y Laurisilva	Spain
39	Women's Shelter of Tartu	Estonia	104	Fundación para la Convivencia ASPACIA	Spain
40	Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters	Finland	105	Hèlia – Associació de suport a les dones que pateixen violència de gènere	Spain
41	Women's Line Finland	Finland	106	Oficina de gestión, preparación y supervisión de programas europeos. Fundación para la atención e incorporación social (FADAIS). Consejería para la igualdad y bienestar social	Spain
42	Federation National Solidarite Femmes FNSF	France	107	Plataforma Unitària contra les Violències de Gènere	Spain
43	Anti-Violence Network of Georgia	Georgia	108	ROKS – National Organisation for Women's and Girls' Shelters in Sweden	Sweden
44	Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"	Georgia	109	UNIZON	Sweden
45	Sakhli – Advice Center for Women	Georgia	110	Dachorganisation der Frauenhäuser der Schweiz und Liechtenstein	Switzerland
46	Women's Information Center (WIC)	Georgia	111	Terre des femmes	Switzerland
47	bff: Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe – frauen gegen gewalt e.V.	Germany	112	Violence que faire	Switzerland
48	BIG e.V. – Berliner Interventionsprojekt gegen häusliche Gewalt	Germany	113	Kadin Dayanisma Vakfi – The Foundation for Women's Solidarity	Turkey
49	Frauenhauskoordinierung e.V.	Germany	114	Mor Çati – Women Shelter's Foundation	Turkey
50	GESINE-Netzwerk Gesundheit.EN	Germany	115	International Women's Rights Center La Strada – Ukraine	Ukraine
51	KOFRA – Kommunikationszentrum für Frauen zur Arbeits- und Lebenssituation	Germany	116	Sumy Local Crisis Center (SLCC)	Ukraine
52	PAPATYA – Kriseneinrichtung für Junge Migrantinnen	Germany	117	Women's Information Consultative Center	Ukraine
53	ZIF – Zentrale Informationsstelle der autonomen Frauenhäuser des BRD	Germany	118	IMKAAN	UK
54	European Anti-Violence Network	Greece	119	Latin American Women's Aid	UK
55	Union of Women Associations of Heraklion Prefecture	Greece	120	Latin American Women's Rights Service	UK
56	NaNe – Women's Rights Association	Hungary	121	London Black Women's Project	UK
57	Stigamot – Counselling and Information Centre on Sexual Violence	Iceland	122	NIA Ending Violence	UK
58	Women's Shelter Organization in Iceland	Iceland	123	REFUGE	UK
59	Rape Crisis Network Ireland	Iceland	124	Scottish Women's Aid	UK
60	Safe Ireland	Ireland	125	Solace Women's Aid	UK
61	Sexual Violence Centre Cork	Ireland	126	Welsh Women's Aid	UK
62	Women's Aid Ireland	Ireland	127	Women's Aid Federation England	UK
63	Associazione Nazionale d.i.re Contro la Violenza	Italy	128	Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland	UK
64	Associazione Nazionale Volontarie Telefono Rosa-Onlus	Italy	129	WWA– Aberystwyth Women's Aid	UK
65	Women's Wellness Centre	Kosovo	130	Zero Tolerance	UK
				Individual and Honorary Members see inside cover	→