

## Policy Context

Violence against women is a violation of fundamental freedoms and rights, such as human dignity, integrity, right to liberty and security. The eradication of all forms of violence against women is one of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. The European Council acknowledged the EU's commitment towards the BPfA and expressed its intent to review its implementation regularly across the Member States. The *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011 offers the most recent and comprehensive international legal instrument to address violence against women.

The EU and its institutions are committed to protecting and promoting gender equality, which includes taking decisive actions to combat violence against women. In the *Women's Charter* (2010) the European Commission affirms its commitment to eradicate all forms of violence and to provide support for those affected by it. This commitment is reaffirmed in the *Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–2015*. The Action Plan of the Stockholm Programme for 2010–2014 seeks to enhance the protection of women victims of violence when exercising their right to free movement within the EU.

One of the key measures to support women survivors of violence is to provide specialised services and ensure the effective coordination of public support system. EIGE's report on 'Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the EU Member States: Violence against Women.

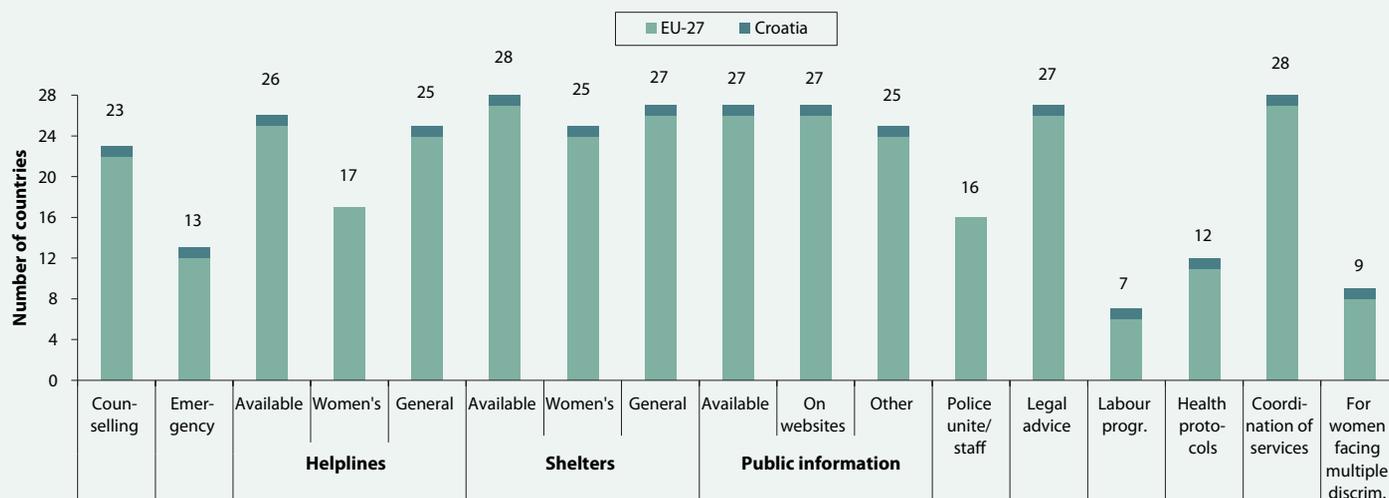
Victim Support' (2012) presents the current status of the general and specialised services available for women survivors of intimate partner violence in the 27 EU Member States and Croatia. The report provides analysis on the range, number, extent and actual use of the support options and presents recommendations for improving support services. The report also presents data gaps and provides recommendations to improve the objectivity, comparability and reliability of the data at the EU level in this area.

## Main Findings

The vast majority of the EU Member States have implemented national action plans to combat domestic violence, and have included in the penal codes the intimate partner violence and adopted protection orders. However, many challenges still remain. The majority of national action plans lack monitoring and evaluation; legal measures lack a gender-based definition of violence, and protection orders lack efficient implementation. While there has been significant progress in the criminalisation of DVAW, gaps in implementation still remain, with low numbers of prosecutions compared to the number of reported cases and sanctions rarely sufficient to act as a deterrent. There are no consistent standards or approaches to perpetrators' programmes and not all of the programmes align with the support services for victims. The training of professionals on DVAW is often not systematic, or included in their basic training. Furthermore, it is neither mandatory nor sufficiently funded.

The level of provision of support services varies substantially within the EU in relation to approach, capacity and quali-

The range of support services for women survivors of intimate partner violence, in EU-27 and Croatia, 2012



Source: data collected from the Member States and Croatia in March–April, 2012.

ty. In some countries, services to women survivors of DVAW are not gender specific, but are delivered as general services to victims of domestic violence. Women's shelters, legal advice services, women's helplines and counselling services are the most prevalent support services in the EU Member States and Croatia. They are mainly provided by women's NGOs.

However, the services are not always accessible (free of charge, geographically distributed, multi-lingual) or sustainable in the long-term. There are only 12 EU Member States that secure state funding for specialised services for victims by law. Funding has been threatened by the recent austerity measures placing such services under greater risk than at any other time in the last three decades.

### Types of support services for victims of domestic violence\*

- Counselling-centres
- Emergency services
- 24-hour hotlines
- Women crisis centres, including a number of shelters per population, number of requests for shelter, number of refusals, funding of centres
- Guide on the available support
- Special police units/task forces to support victims
- Legal advice for victims
- Official information on the internet regarding violence against women
- Support/Courses for victims to help re-enter the labour market
- Health protocols for the victims (collected anonymously) e.g. medical care and treatment
- Coordination of the public support system
- Special support services for vulnerable groups
- Any other support measures

\* More information on the Beijing indicators is available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/women-and-men-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures>

When collecting data about violence against women two big challenges were encountered: the lack of common definitions and also the lack of consensus on methodologies. The definitions are needed for all forms of violence against women, including gender-based violence, violence against women and domestic violence, and also for the different types of services. Data collection must cover all the services available in the country on a national and/or regional/local level. Where appropriate, data should be disaggregated by sex and age of victims, specify the type of violence and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. It is important to ensure that support services operate continuously to ensure availability of data over a multi-year time span. These measures would result in data collection that is both representative and comparable over time.

### Recommendations:

- to acknowledge the need for specialised gender-specific services to support the complex range of immediate and long-term needs of women survivors of violence and their children,
- to guarantee sustainable funding for specialised services, such as women's shelters, helplines and counselling services,
- to safeguard the independence and funding of specialised women's NGOs delivering support services for women victims of violence,
- to mandate systematic and continuous training of professionals on violence against women and to secure funding for it,
- to ensure that services are accessible to women facing multiple discrimination, including migrant, young, older, ethnic, LBT women and also women with disabilities,
- to monitor and evaluate regularly the coordination of public support system for victims of domestic violence,
- to develop national definitions and classifications to be used for surveys, research and administrative statistics; to ensure their consistent use at the national, regional, European and international levels and guarantee regular data collection.

## European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the European knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans and beyond by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable information on gender equality in Europe. European Institute for Gender Equality provides technical support to the Presidencies of the Council of the EU by monitoring progress in the selected critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Report on violence against women will be available at [www.eige.europa.eu](http://www.eige.europa.eu)

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