



Protecting Women against Violence – Best Practices from all over Europe



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



Dear colleagues and readers,



Protecting women from violence remains high on the political agenda – all over Europe and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is one of the results of the Informal Meeting of the EU Gender Equality Ministers on 20 November 2020. We believe that violence against women and girls can only be eliminated if we work together, share our experiences with regard to specific approaches and explore where we need to further strengthen our efforts.

I am delighted with the diverse range of best practice measures that were presented at the Informal Meeting. Sharing the brilliant ideas of different EU and EFTA member states to support women and girls in situations of violence is an important contribution to our national efforts to implement the most effective policies. Learning from each other's experiences can help us in reaching our goal: ensuring that women who experience violence receive the support they need.

I am especially grateful for our shared agreement amongst the EU member states to implement a single Europe-wide phone number for women and girls affected by violence: one number – identical in all EU member states – on which the national helplines can be reached. We want every woman and every girl in the EU to know: Help is just one phone call away.

This brochure includes the best practice exchanges on measures to protect women from violence, the shared agreement on the helpline number as well as pictures and graphic recordings from our event.

With kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Franziska Giffey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Franziska Giffey
Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

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01

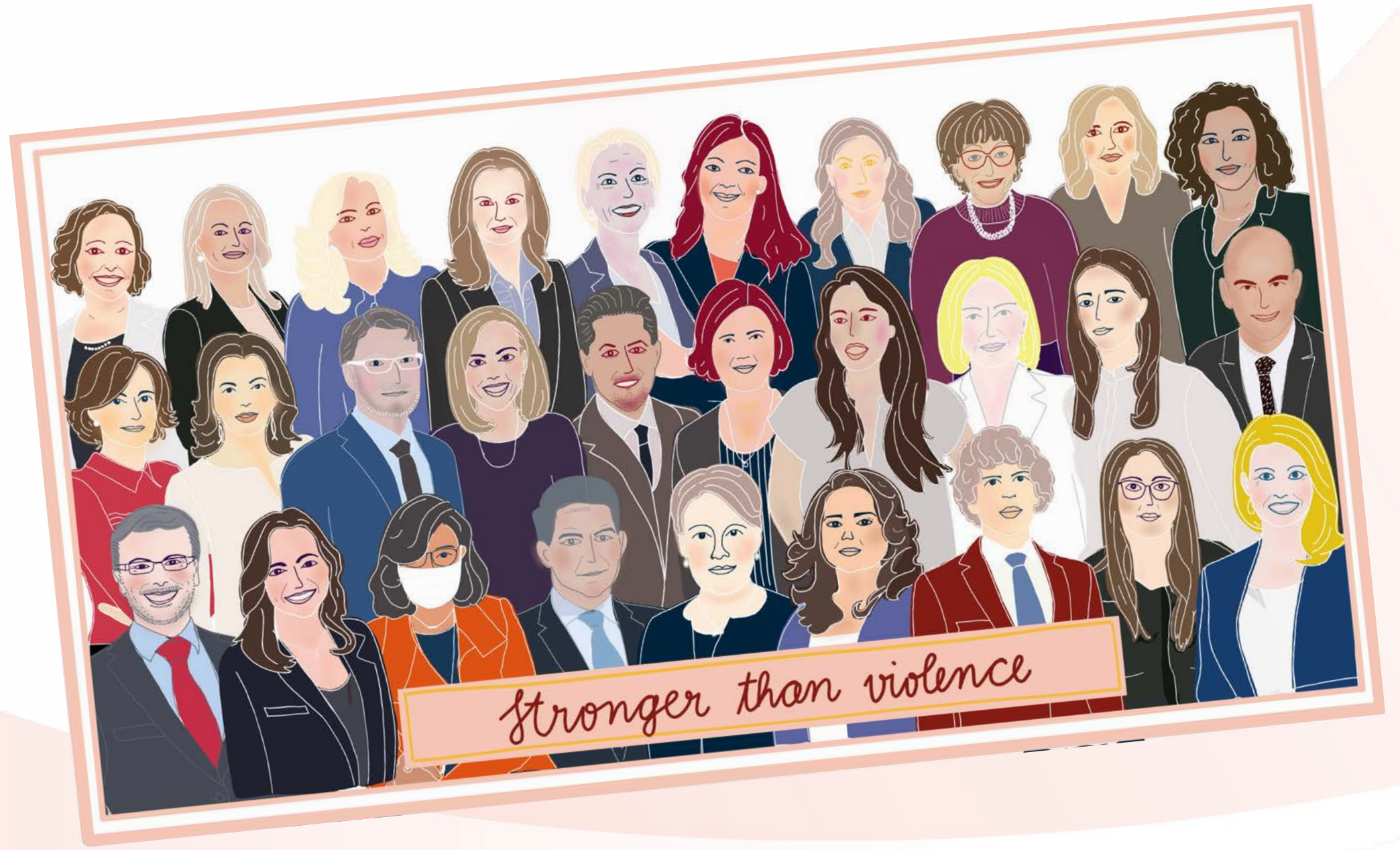
Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers

On 20 November 2020 the German Presidency of the Council of the EU hosted an Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers. All 27 Member States of the EU, the EFTA states Norway and Switzerland and the European Commission attended the virtual meeting. It was the first informal ministerial exchange in the field of gender equality since the Austrian Presidency in 2018.

The central issue of the meeting was the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) in Europe. A clear majority of the EU Gender Equality Ministers agreed to establish a Europe-wide single telephone number under which the national violence against women helplines can be reached. The participants thus sent a strong signal to all victims of gender-based violence in Europe: Help is just one phone call away!

Furthermore, the Member States presented their national best practice measures on gender-based violence. The broad variety of contributions is presented in this booklet.

Altogether the message of the meeting was clear: Together we are stronger than violence – all across Europe!



Stronger than violence

BEST PRACTICE EXCHANGE: Protecting women from violence in Europe

- LEGISLATION 
- STUDIES & DATA 
- HELPLINES 



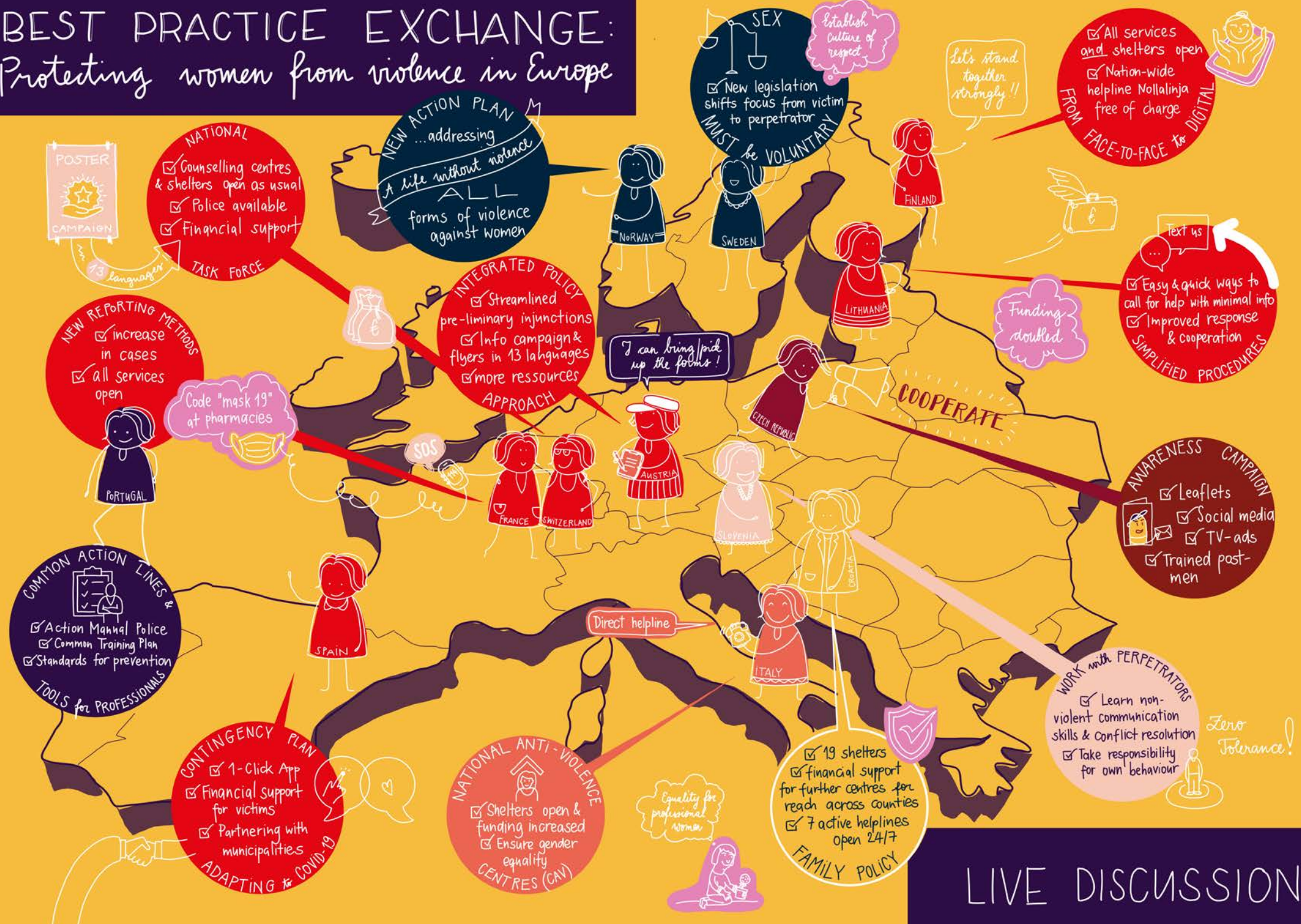
- SHELTERS 
- COUNSELLING 
- AWARENESS 

- WORK WITH PERPETRATORS 
- COVID-19 RESPONSE 
- WORK WITH PROFESSIONALS 



OVERVIEW of MEASURES

BEST PRACTICE EXCHANGE: Protecting women from violence in Europe





Impressions from the studio in Berlin

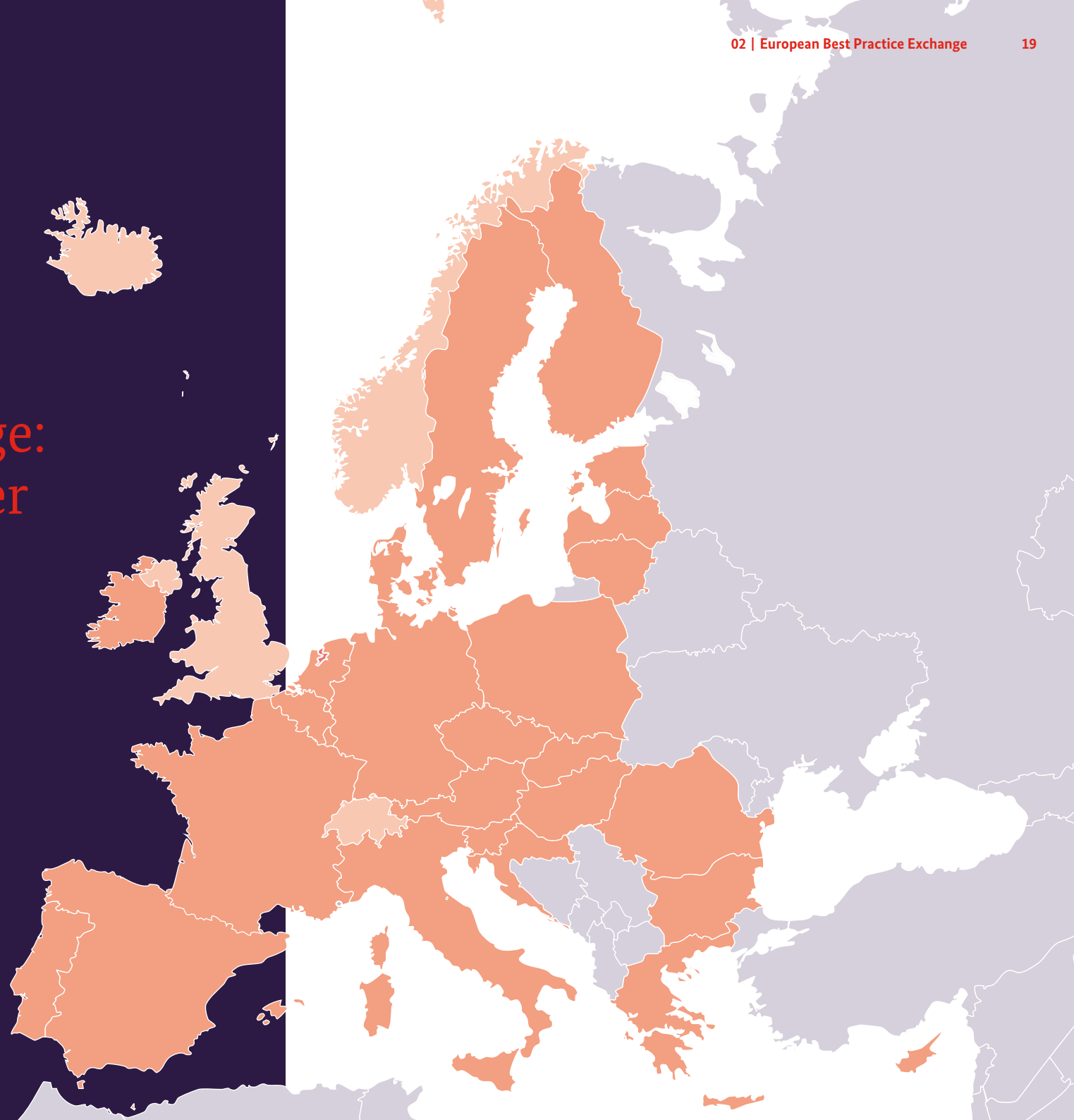


German Minister for Gender Equality Franziska Giffey opens the video conference.



02

A European Best Practice Exchange:
Standing together
against violence
towards women



While COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown measures have highlighted the need for functioning support systems for women affected by violence, the measures presented at the virtual Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers on 20 November 2020 showed that taking quick and effective political action ensures that women have access to support services in times of crisis.

Finland, Greece, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Estonia, France, Lithuania and Slovakia have all presented the best practice measures that they implemented during the pandemic. Switzerland, for example, has set up the Task Force “Domestic Violence and COVID-19”, which is meeting on a weekly basis to ensure that all support structures are operating effectively and that the public is informed about the current situation.



Systems that protect women from violence, not only during this pandemic, include women’s shelters, specialist counselling support services, helplines, awareness campaigns, legislation, data collection, work with professionals from all sectors and work with perpetrators. The posters that were presented at the Ministerial highlight excellent examples from all of these areas.

The first point of contact for women who experience violence is often not a specialist domestic abuse service but instead professionals who meet them in their everyday lives, such as social workers, doctors and nurses, the police, the judiciary or other statutory services. This is why a whole government approach that brings together different professionals is so effective.

In this brochure, Portugal, Romania, Latvia and Iceland present best practices on how to implement cross sector work with professionals. For example, the Portuguese government launched four new guides on comprehensive government tools for professionals in June 2020. These were the result of a year’s intensive, unprecedented work bringing together professionals from all sectors, ranging from police forces and magistrates to equality bodies, education, health and social security professionals.

The main expertise on violence against women lies within specialist counselling services, women’s shelters and helplines. Best practice measures on specialist women’s services and women’s shelters are presented in this brochure by Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Belgium, Poland, Cyprus and Denmark. Italy’s local network for supporting women victims of violence was strengthened through targeted financial support for anti-violence centres (CAV) and shelters. A series of measures were put in place, which included the introduction of simplified procedures to access financial resources.

Helplines that support women affected by violence, their friends and family and professionals are presented by Malta, Germany and Luxembourg. As part of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, Germany created a statutory basis in 2013 for the nationwide helpline “Violence Against Women”. The helpline can be reached on the number 08000 116 016 and offers low-threshold support and advice to women who experience violence.

The Netherlands and the Czech Republic highlight awareness-raising campaigns in this brochure. It is extremely important to inform the public about violence against women and highlight available support offers, so that women who experience violence do not face stereotypes and misinformation when they confide in friends and family.

The campaign “Act4Respect” introduced in the Netherlands focuses on young people between the ages of 15 and 30 and aims to prevent gender, gender identity or personality becoming a cause or legitimisation for violence.

Norway’s new Action Plan against Domestic Violence, Sweden’s new legislation on sexual consent and Slovenia’s training in social skills for men who perpetrate violence against women round up this collection of best practice measures that are implemented in the EU to protect women from violence.

This overview of best practice measures taken by EU Member States shows: Europe stands strong in its fight against all forms of violence against women. Our strength lies in the diversity of measures and our ability to learn from each other, which ensures high standards of support all across Europe.

Europe stands strong

in its fight against all forms of violence against women.

Our strength lies in **the diversity of measures** and our ability to **learn from each other**, which ensures **high standards of support** all across Europe.

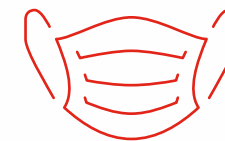




Initiative to Protect Women and Girls from Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic

To mitigate the potential risk of a rise in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, we used an integrated policy approach implementing the following measures:

1. Resources of the 24-hour women helpline, including its online counselling service, were increased, women's shelters were available at all times, counselling services were offered online and in person. Funding for counselling centres was increased.
2. Processes were streamlined to make applications for preliminary injunctions easier (police officers bring and pick up forms). There is close cooperation between health authorities, victim protection institutions and the police in case of (suspected) infections either of victims in shelters or of perpetrators barred from home.
3. An information campaign (online, social media, print, TV) was launched to raise awareness of the protection and support services which continued to be available. As supermarkets remained open, information flyers on local victim protection centres as well as on the helpline were distributed in supermarkets across Austria and were made available online in 13 additional languages.



The initiative targeted the wider public in order to reach every woman and girl, aiming to empower them to seek support when needed. Furthermore, it aimed at addressing potential perpetrators and encouraging them to find other coping mechanisms.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... at the very beginning of the lockdown, awareness was raised that all support mechanisms and protection services remain open so that every woman knows help and support is always available.



Sexual Assault Care Centres

3.7 million women in the EU have experienced sexual violence in the course of the last 12 months, with migrants and LGBTQI persons being at even higher risk of sexual assault.

The Sexual Assault Care Centres offer a comprehensive psychological, forensic and medical care for victims of sexual violence. Started as a pilot project in 2017 in all three Belgian regions, the centers respond to the need of more specialised, holistic and more-patient centered care. Based on a close cooperation between a hospital, police and public prosecutor office, they allow victims to access medical, psychological and forensic care at one place and at once.

After the successful pilot phase, Belgium decided to set up by 2024 a network of 10 Sexual Assault Care Centres and one Expert Centre on Sexual Violence within the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.



The target audience are victims of sexual violence, the data show that 91 % of the victims are female, one third of them are younger than 18 years.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... victims receive comprehensive care at one place and at once. The centres receive 100 victims per month and six out of ten of them choose to file a complaint.



Reception for victims of domestic violence

Since June 2019, Bulgaria has a reception room for victims of domestic violence in the largest emergency hospital in the country (Pirogov Hospital), within the project “Coordinated multi-sectoral response to domestic violence by introducing a basic package of services”.

It is run with the participation of the National Police, Pirogov Hospital and Demetra Association. Doctors, police officers and psychologists are on duty in the reception room, providing victims of violence with the necessary counselling and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the reception room, there is a “**24-hour helpline offering psychological support in crisis – 0700 40 150**”, which provides counselling, advice and recommendations to citizens for preventing COVID-19 and dealing with anxiety and worry, which are one of the causes of domestic violence.

The aim is to ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence by providing a comprehensive professional service in a single place and by training the staff of the emergency department of the hospital, who are the first to meet the victims of domestic violence, in how to recognise/identify victims and what help to provide them with.



Victims of domestic violence seeking medical help

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... increased reporting and the efficiency of services for victims of domestic violence will be accomplished by building a single inter-institutional response service.



Shelters for victims of domestic violence in the Republic of Croatia

There are currently 19 shelters for victims of domestic violence (City of Zagreb and Zagreb County, Varaždin, Međimurje, Bjelovar-Bilogora, Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, Brod-Posavina, Sisak-Moslavina, Karlovac, Primorje-Gorski Kotar, Istria, Zadar, Split-Dalmatia and Šibenik-Knin County), 17 of which are financed by the Ministry responsible for social welfare with an annual amount of 860,000 euros. However, since there are six counties without shelters, the Ministry has announced a limited public call entitled “Providing a support system for women victims of violence and victims of domestic violence” from the ESF to assist these counties in implementing activities with the amount of 9.2 million euros.

In 2019, 15 projects of counselling centres for victims of domestic violence throughout the Republic of Croatia were financed with 400,000 euros with the purpose of establishing equal geographical coverage of services. The same amount was announced in 2020.

There are also seven active SOS helplines in the Republic of Croatia (24/7), with the Ministry providing financial support to the work of six associations/homes for victims of violence, which also operate SOS helplines.



Shelters are available to users (mostly women) and their children in case of need. Accommodation can be provided 24 hours a day at the request of the police, the social welfare centre and the victim herself/himself.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... the victims of domestic violence were provided with protection, accommodation and care in crisis situations.



The Woman's House

As part of the implementation of the obligations under the Istanbul Convention, on 27 November 2019 the Council of Ministers of Cyprus approved the operation of a "Woman's House", which will function as a multi-agency multi-disciplinary crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children. The Woman's House is based on the Family Justice Centre model, and will operate as a 'one-stop-shop' providing integrated services for victims of violence against women. The mission of the Woman's House is to provide safety and protection, crisis management and support to women victims of violence and their children through quality, specialised, accessible and coordinated services, all under one roof.

Specialist services from various disciplines including social workers, psychologists, medical staff, legal professionals, and police will work under the same roof to provide appropriate support and protection to women and their children.



Women victims of violence
and their children



*Through this measure
we achieved the ...*
... Operation of a Woman's
House: expected before
the end of the year.



Campaign to raise awareness of available help for victims of violence

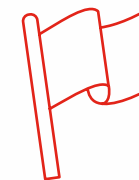
The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic launched a campaign to inform victims of the assistance available to them during the pandemic.

Information material directing victims to available support services was distributed through government social media and communication channels of organisations providing assistance to victims of domestic and sexual violence and organisations providing therapeutic programmes for violent people.

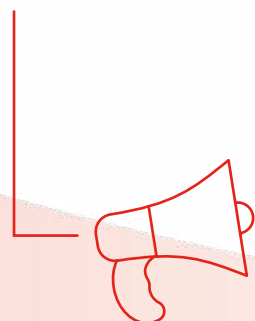
The Office of the Government also requested other institutions (e.g. providers, municipalities and cities) to distribute leaflets on their premises containing relevant information.

Information about the Bright Sky Domestic Violence Victims app was also disseminated. The Bright Sky App allows victims to assess their situation and risks, obtain advice, preserve evidence of violence and connect them with relevant organisations or the police.

The NGO "ROSA" also provided assistance to victims in shopping centres and trained letter carriers to recognise signs of domestic violence, communicate with victims and provide information on available help.



Victims of domestic and sexual violence, violent persons and people in crisis.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... information on available help for victims was widely shared on social media of relevant institutions and organisations, public transport and public television thus raising the awareness of victims.



National unit against intimate partner violence: Live Without Violence

“Live Without Violence” was established in 2017 as a national unit with a collective and inclusive approach to intimate partner violence (IPV). “Live Without Violence” is financed by the Government and run by five key NGOs combining the expertise of specialists working in different fields and with different target groups.

The unit offers counselling and support to victims of IPV and their families through a 24-hour helpline that refers victims to shelters, legal counselling and other support services and after-care group therapy. The helpline also refers perpetrators to out-patient treatment.

Furthermore, the unit carries out research and regularly publishes reports to develop the knowledge base for interventions and policies on IPV. Professionals, such as social workers and police officers, can get information on different forms of violence via the unit’s website, publications or through the helpline.

In addition, the unit educates the public and raises awareness of IPV and available help through social media and campaigns in order to support victims and prevent further violence.



“Live Without Violence” provides services to victims and their families, perpetrators and professionals and helps educate the public and raise awareness of intimate partner violence.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... one common entry point was created that directs victims and perpetrators to the services they need. Cross-sectional cooperation, coordination and sharing of knowledge was strengthened.

Protecting women and girls at risk: regular web briefings and virtual meetings

In the context of the current global COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Insurance Board of Estonia continues to hold regular web briefings with women's support centres all over Estonia to share good practices and solutions coordinated at the state level.

Also, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings have continued. Multi-agency teams participate in virtual meetings to share information about survivors of domestic abuse who have been assessed to be at risk of serious harm or homicide.

These virtual meetings ensure continuous coordinated highest level of support and keep the safety nets in place. The Social Insurance Board sends encouraging messages through the media about help services (victim support, 24/7 crisis helpline, women's support centres and shelters).

The extraordinary measures have been adopted by some women's support centres which practice and communicate (especially through social media) through web-based solutions and chat options, as a possibility to get help if making a phone call is not possible. Some women's support centres have moved the group meetings of victims of domestic and gender-based violence to private messaging on social media platforms.



Women and girls at risk or who are subjected to domestic and sexual violence, harassment and abuse.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... women and girls at risk, or who are subjected to domestic violence have had continued access to support. Staying in touch through these platforms helps them cope with isolation and anxiety.

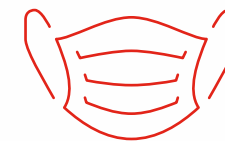


Ensuring the continuity of specialist support services during the COVID-19 pandemic

In Finland, the pandemic triggered a shift from face-to-face services to digital services; however, all shelters have remained open. Most specialist service providers increased their online and phone services in order to respond to the heightened demand for help and support.

Best practices:

1. All necessary precautions and measures were taken in order to keep the shelters open and accessible to all victims, including those infected with the coronavirus or those belonging to risk groups. The online services, such as the chat services of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, have been strengthened during the pandemic.
2. Nollalinja, a free-of-charge nationwide helpline for victims of psychological, physical or sexual violence remained open 24/7. Nollalinja operates in close cooperation with the service network of shelters for victims of domestic violence and provides up-to-date information about free shelter places across the country. A victim can obtain a shelter place from any available shelter regardless of place of residence.
3. Seri Support Centres for Victims of Sexual Assault remained accessible and there was a social media campaign to raise awareness of their service.



People who are subject to domestic violence, particularly women, their relatives and friends and professionals.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... the increase in reported violence and the increased risk of violence are met with continued support of the specialist services.



New methods for reporting violence during lockdown

There was concern in France about the effect the lockdown (from 17 March to 11 May 2020) would have on domestic violence. France has been particularly active in fighting violence against women and children. New reporting options have been developed to allow victims to report cases of violence without the knowledge of the perpetrator.

Since 1 April 2020, victims of domestic violence have been able to send an alert text message to the emergency hotline 114 to trigger the intervention of the police or gendarmes. Until now, the 114 emergency hotline was dedicated to the deaf and hearing impaired and its use has since been extended to victims of violence.

A reporting system for women and their children has been launched in pharmacies. If the spouse is present, the victim can use the code “mask 19” during her visit and the pharmacist will then make a report to the authorities.

Temporary information points have also been opened in shopping malls to help victims of domestic violence.

Additional “serious danger phones” were also given to women threatened by an abusive spouse or former spouse.



Women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Otherwise, it can be difficult for them in times of health crisis to raise the alarm, especially if their partner is constantly at home.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... women and their children who are victims of violence are able to report cases of violence and get help discreetly in times of lockdown.



National “Violence Against Women” Helpline

As part of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, Germany created a statutory basis for the nationwide helpline “Violence Against Women” in 2013.

It can be reached on **08000 116 016** and offers low-threshold support and advice to women who experience violence. The support offered by the helpline “Violence Against Women” is free of charge, anonymous, available around the clock and can be accessed in 18 languages. The service also offers accessible assistance to women and girls with disabilities or impairments. Support sessions can be conducted using simple language or sign language interpreting. The female helpline workers are qualified specialists. They can facilitate access to local support services such as specialist women’s support services, women’s shelters or healthcare providers.

Through the website www.hilfetelefon.de, women can also access online support via chat or email. The “Violence Against Women” helpline offers support in cases of all forms of gender-based violence – intimate partner violence, sexual violence, stalking and cyber bullying but also human trafficking and violence linked to prostitution and female genital mutilation.



The national “Violence Against Women” helpline offers support to women experiencing violence, to people from their social circle and to professionals (around 230,000 support sessions to date).

Through this measure we achieved that ...

... women, who usually struggle to access support services, use the helpline offer and receive qualified advice, which empowers them to take the next steps to leave the violent situation they are in.



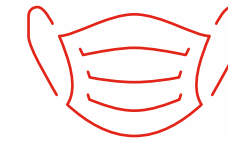
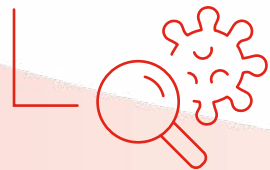


COVID-19 pandemic and VAW– response of Greece and the GSFPGE in quarantine conditions

In Greece, during quarantine, the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) ensured the accessibility of our network to women survivors across the country (42 counselling centres, 20 shelters, 24/7 SOS helpline 15900), allowing survivors and their children to seek immediate help and support from the network professionals and also ensuring the health and safety of staff and beneficiaries.

The GSFPGE provided the network staff with guidelines on teleworking, remote GBV case management and data protection. In this context:

1. Collaboration with the Hellenic Society of Forensic Medicine and the police domestic violence department.
2. For free medical tests for the victims' children: collaboration with the organisation "The Smile of the Child".
3. Communication with INGOs and CSOs Government TV/social media spot: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCGFDpoyfn4
4. Info newsletter: www.isotita.gr/en/bimonthly-report-newsletter-gsfpge-march-april-2020/
5. Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), an entity under the auspices of the GSFPGE: sponsored information campaign on support structures for violence victims on social media.



Adult women victims of GBV & multiple discrimination (refugees/migrants, single parents, Roma, older women etc.)

*Through this measure
we achieved that ...*
... during quarantine women were urged not to remain silent even though confined to their homes and there was still visibility of our supportive network of structures on preventing and combating GBV.



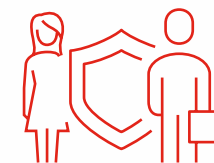
Break the silence; build bridges and break the walls

The project was launched in 2017 and operated until 2019 with the objective of eradicating intimate partner violence in Iceland. It was designed and executed by the Directorate of Equality and funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the EU (REC).

The aim was to strengthen existing infrastructure in Iceland and to better equip it to deal with intimate partner violence. The focus was on survivors, perpetrators and the system itself. Bridges were built between professionals through multi-sector cooperation that was established in all police districts in Iceland.

A strong focus was placed on marginalised groups who are at higher risk of becoming victims of intimate partner violence and on children exposed to violence. Part of the project was to increase education and awareness among professionals and to strengthen their ability to react in a safe and secure way.

This cooperation has led to clear and defined procedures, the role of each party within the system is more clear-cut, as is the collaboration. The project has highlighted different points of view and led to a common understanding on best practices in this difficult but important area.



Victims/survivors and perpetrators of intimate partner violence and experts providing support to victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including the police and local social care services.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... our functioning support system enables victims of violence to access help and support quickly and effectively. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the enhanced infrastructure has already proven itself.



Action plan for domestic abuse in COVID-19 response and Operation Faoiseamh

The Action Plan was developed to respond to the increased risk and incidence of domestic abuse during COVID-19 by:

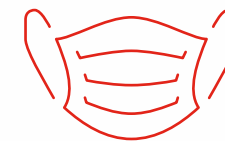
1. Raising awareness of supports available throughout the COVID-19 emergency for those experiencing domestic abuse;
2. Maintaining and prioritising services for those who need to access them;
3. Ensuring victims can access the courts and seek protection from perpetrators.

The plan involved the creation of an Inter-Agency Group comprising of An Garda Síochána (AGS) and relevant departments and agencies. It delivered: Continued availability of legal aid and court services; Increased funding to front-line supports to adapt their services; and A public awareness campaign to inform victims.

The Inter-Agency Group is now examining positive elements of the Action Plan and will permanently incorporate them into the wider domestic abuse strategy.

On 1 April AGS launched Operation Faoiseamh to prevent loss of life and ensure that victims of domestic abuse are supported and protected during COVID-19.

Phase I involved contacting victims of domestic abuse. Phase II focused on the execution of arrests and the commencement of prosecutions for offences relating to breaches of court orders obtained under the Domestic Violence Act 2018. Phase III launched on 28 October includes activities from Phases I and II. Phase IV will be announced in the understanding COVID-19 restrictions will continue.



Victims of domestic abuse in the past, perpetrators of abuse and those living in potentially abusive and violent situations during COVID-19.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... support for victims of domestic violence continue throughout COVID-19 and that victims are aware of them.



Mitigating gender-based violence through anti-violence centres (CAV) and shelters

The key aim of the Italian National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2017-2020 is to provide a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary response to the needs of women victims of violence, always ensuring the intervention of central and local institutional actors as well as the third sector.

It is aimed in particular at strengthening the network of support to women beneficiaries of assistance (territorial services, anti-violence centres (CAV) and shelters), at creating an integrated system of data collection, at raising awareness and informing in a general and targeted way on gender-based violence as well as educating the younger generations and training operators who act in support of women victims of violence.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, CAV activities have never been suspended. A public call was made online in April 2020 for the financing of urgent interventions to support CAV and shelters in relation to COVID-19 and further urgent funding for regions was released in a total amount of 40 million euros to support the activities of the CAV and the shelters to counter gender-based violence.



The measures, which also include the introduction of simplified procedures to access financial resources, are aimed directly or through the regions at anti-violence centres (CAV) and shelters recognised at regional level.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... the local network to support women victims of violence was strengthened through targeted financial support for anti-violence centres (CAV) and shelters.

One step closer: coordinated community response to violence against women

The Ministry of Welfare implemented the project in 2017-2019 in cooperation with other stakeholders within the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The project's objectives were: determining what encourages and empowers victims to report violence, developing, testing and replicating a multisectoral victim-centred institutional cooperation model for cases of violence against women (VAW) and raising public awareness of VAW through regional media and information material.

The institutional cooperation model, developed within the project, was piloted in Tukums municipality in 2017 and replicated in five other municipalities in 2018. The entry point to the coordinated community response is a call to the police about an incident of violence. The police then reports it to social services, which intervene, work with victims and perpetrators and monitor progress.

More than 300 professionals were directly engaged in the multisectoral teamwork and prepared a police risk assessment questionnaire, a monitoring instrument for social services (to track individual cases and provide interventions for victims and perpetrators) and a multi-agency risk assessment questionnaire (MARAC).



Professionals working with or likely to come into contact with victims of VAW, including police officers, social workers, children's rights experts, healthcare workers, experts working in crisis centres, probation officers, etc.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... institutional cooperation was standardised to respond to VAW cases more efficiently. The Cabinet of Ministers approved the developed institutional cooperation model for country-wide use in 2020.



Simplified way to contact authorities (in case of domestic violence)

During the quarantine period, it was (and still is) particularly important to ensure that the conditions for violent behavior were kept to a minimum.

To facilitate that, a system was created which allows (potential) victims of domestic violence to contact appropriate authorities, not only by calling but also via SMS. Authorities can be contacted by dialing the short number 112 and providing the minimum amount of information:

- 1. Name and surname of the person filing the report;
- 2. The exact address of the place of the event: municipality, city, settlement or village, street name, house and apartment number.
- 3. What happened and what emergency service (ambulance, police, fire and/or rescue service) is needed.

For potential victims, it was (is) also highly recommended to create such a SMS message template with the possible content of the help request and keep it at all times.

In addition, upon receiving such messages, authorities were dispatched immediately and specialized helpdesks providing further assistance (shelter, psychological guidance, lawyer services, etc.) to victims of violence were automatically informed by email about the incident.



(Potential) victims of domestic violence

Through this measure we achieved ...
 ... an easier way for (potential) victims to report the crime, faster and prioritised response from the appropriate authorities and smoother collaboration between authorities and victims help desk.



Launch of weekly monitoring and a helpline for the field of domestic violence

In 2003, Luxembourg put in place a “Cooperation Committee of Professionals Active in the Fight against Violence” to execute the law on domestic violence, to ensure effective coordination between ministries, judicial authorities, the police and associations assisting victims and perpetrators, to establish smooth communication lines among them and to collect data.

From the beginning of the crisis, during which the law and the possibility to expel a perpetrator from home have not been suspended, the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men has ensured that all victims (women, men and children) as well as all perpetrators (men and women) continue to have access to assistance.

In order to ensure targeted and effective assistance, Luxembourg, in close collaboration with the partners of the “Cooperation Committee”, has been monitoring the domestic violence situation on a weekly basis and has established, together with five different associations, a new helpline for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence accessible seven days a week from 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm. These measures have mitigated the expected increase and escalation of existing conflicts and domestic violence cases.



All persons affected by domestic violence – victims, perpetrators and children of all ages – as well as professionals fighting domestic violence at all levels.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
... relevant actors have received an assessment of the domestic violence situation, a high responsiveness to combat all forms of violence was ensured and the provision of assistance was maintained.

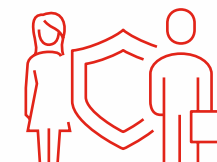


Free national 24/7 helpline for domestic violence victims

The primary mission of the Supportline, 179, is to provide immediate and unbiased help to those seeking information and support. The service is run by a team of full-time operators and volunteers who are all thoroughly screened and professionally trained and supervised by social workers and psychologists officers.

Supervisors are all registered social workers who are on call on a 24/7 basis. Each call is treated confidentially, the calls are not recorded but operators and volunteers are required to log each call which is password protected. This system ensures that the necessary data is stored and kept as evidence for cases which may eventually go to court.

Moreover, when victims reach out to the support line, they are given an appointment with a lawyer within a few hours and legal advice is provided free-of-charge to all victims, who wish to avail themselves of this service. If the caller wishes to receive further assistance the case is then followed up and referred to the domestic violence unit. This corroborates directly with one of the main principles of the Istanbul Convention, where we ensure that there is a multi-agency cooperation.



Victims of domestic and sexual abuse



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... victims have a national contact point where they can seek both legal and social assistance, without fear of any retribution from their partners.

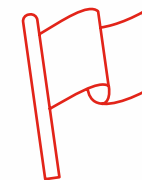


Act4Respect

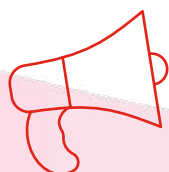
Act4Respect focuses on the goal of achieving equal relations among young people and young adults, free from physical, sexual or cyber violence.

Act4Respect aims to prevent that someone's sex, gender identity or personality becomes a cause or legitimisation for violence. It strives for gender equality and the acceptance of differences and seeks to break stereotypes, for example, through the development of campaigns aimed at changing attitudes and influencing social norms.

The activities of Act4Respect consist of a social norm campaign, education and training of professionals, specific interventions for youth at risk and the creation of a knowledge hub for the collection and dissemination of information on gender-based violence.



Youth & young adults
(aged 15 to 30)



*Through this measure
we achieved that ...*
... equal and respectful relations
are the norm and that most of
the younger generation already
agrees with this statement.

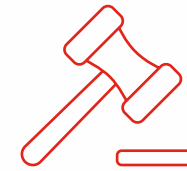


New Action Plan against Domestic Violence and other action plans addressing violence

Efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence have been a priority area for numerous governments over the past 20 years, and the first national action plan was launched in December 1999. The last Action Plan against Domestic Violence (2014–2017) was entitled “A Life without Violence”.

The Government is now working on the sixth national Action Plan against Domestic Violence (2020–2024), which will apply for the period 2020 to 2024. This action plan follows up on and further develops the Action Plan against Domestic Violence A Life without Violence (2014–2017) and outlines and addresses the remaining challenges.

There are also other action plans addressing violence, sexual assault, violence and abuse against children and young people, negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. In addition, there are plans addressing human trafficking, racism and discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, religion, etc. that are related to violence against women.



Stakeholders in government offices,
the public and private sector.



*Through this measure
we achieved that ...*
... violence against women and
domestic violence have been
addressed for several years
through various strategies and
action plans with the aim of
structuring and coordinating
work across sectors.

The “Blue Card” procedure

Upon suspicion of violence, the “Blue Card” procedure is initiated by filling in a form called “Blue Card-A”. At this stage the consent of victim, witnesses or perpetrator of violence is not required.

A person affected by domestic violence is provided with interdisciplinary specialist assistance, that includes comprehensive protection corresponding to their needs. Form “A” allows to document violence, identify witnesses, and persons suspected of using violence. After documenting violence, the victim receives a form called “Blue Card-B” which contains information about their rights, places where help is provided etc.

A person suspected of being affected by domestic violence is also invited to join the Interdisciplinary Team/Working Group, where in their presence and with their participation, a “Blue Card-C” (as well as an individual aid plan) is prepared and regularly developed.

Additionally the person suspected of domestic violence is summoned to a meeting of the Team/Group – this is to evaluate and determine what actions will be taken against the abuser and what actions the abuser is willing to or should take (“Blue Card-D”).



All persons and families experiencing violence. The measure covers not only the victim of violence but also the perpetrator.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... the protective actions are quick, interdisciplinary and easily accessible. A victim support plan is tailored to meet individual needs. A schedule of periodic assessment of results is set up.



Comprehensive government tools for professionals

In June 2020, the Portuguese Government launched four new guides, which, for the first time, establish harmonised lines of action and procedures on violence against women and domestic violence to be followed by all relevant professionals, in line with GREVIO recommendations:

1. Action manual for the criminal police forces in the 72 hours following a domestic violence complaint (including on urgent collection and preservation of evidence, containment and procedural position of the perpetrator, judiciary and social intervention);
2. Guide for an integrated intervention with children who are victims of domestic violence (including on detection, protection and referral procedures);
3. Common training plan on violence against women and domestic violence (including harmonised concepts, training content and methodologies based on concrete cases);
4. Standards for primary prevention programmes and projects on violence against women and domestic violence. These were the result of one year's intensive, unprecedented work bringing together professionals from all sectors, ranging from police forces and magistrates to equality bodies, education, health and social security professionals.



All stakeholders active in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, ranging from police forces and magistrates to education, health and social security professionals, including civil society organisations

Through this measure we achieved ...
... a truly integrated intervention approach through common lines of action for all professionals working in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution.



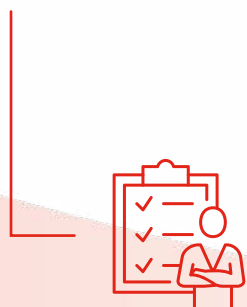
The VENUS project for combating violence against women and domestic violence

The VENUS project for combating violence against women and domestic violence is financed from European funds (POCU) is worth 11 million euros and is implemented between 2019 and 2023.

The project aims to develop measures focused on the integrated and uniform approach to social services in order to create and develop an integrated, national network of 42 shelters, 42 support groups (psychological support) and 42 vocational counselling offices (orientation and guidance on the integration/reintegration into the labour market) for victims of domestic violence in every county of Romania (41 counties) and in Bucharest.

The national network of 42 shelters will provide accommodation, information, counselling and support services to women victims of domestic violence in order to help them transition into active, independent living and socially and professionally reintegrate.

In this respect, the Romanian Government prepared a draft Government Decision on the approval of the National Programme for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence, providing for the methodology on the organisation and functioning of the innovative National Network of Integrated Housing for Victims.



6636 victims of domestic violence and violence against women

366 professionals and representatives of local authorities

Through this measure we achieved that ...

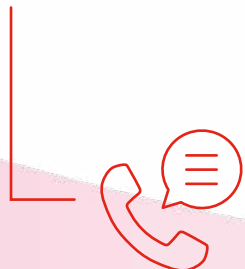
... innovative measures are being developed that focus on the integrated and uniform approach to social services in order to help women victims of domestic violence transition into independent living.



Selection of COVID-19 rapid response measures

From the very beginning of the lockdown, the Coordination-Methodical Centre for Prevention of Violence against Women (CMC) has repeatedly monitored the availability of counselling and emergency shelter capacities for women experiencing violence and their children. Based on the monitoring, the CMC proposed recommendations before a possible second (future) wave of lockdown.

1. The National Helpline for Women has expanded the possibility of communicating with counsellors via emails.
2. The CMC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, prepared a campaign drawing attention to the increasing number of cases of domestic violence against women and children. Supermarket and drugstore chains were asked to display campaign posters containing information on first points of contact for help-seeking victims and those who are trying to help them. A special focus is on ensuring that as many people as possible are aware of the help available.
3. Active emphasis is on a consistent issuance of eviction orders against the perpetrator for a period of 10 days and subsequent court protective measures in the form of emergency barring orders.



primary – Women experiencing violence and their children,
secondary – third parties i.e. acquaintances of women experiencing violence, witnesses, etc.

Through this measure we achieved that ...
 ... knowledge was gathered of available counselling and emergency shelter capacities and that victims/survivors of violence have an additional means to seek support and help (written/silent communication).

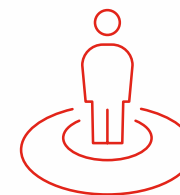


Training in social skills for men who perpetrate violence against women (TSV)

The TSV is the most extensive programme for work with perpetrators of violence against women and has been developed with the awareness that such programmes are only one element in the network of support for victims of violence.

The main objective of the programme is to always contribute to the greater safety of the victim of violence, which is why all other objectives and methods of work in the programme come second to this objective. Training is implemented by the non-governmental organisation Association for Nonviolent Communication (DNK) and is the most widespread programme for perpetrators of violence in Slovenia (both regionally and in terms of the participating users).

Perpetrators may join the programme voluntarily, but they are mostly referred to it by various institutions, such as courts, prosecutors, social work centres, probation offices, prisons, healthcare institutions, schools and other NGOs. In the programme, they have the opportunity to work intensively on changing inappropriate beliefs and behaviours and to develop non-violent communication skills. The programme includes 24 group meetings and several individual counselling sessions.



The programme is aimed at all men who commit violence.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... people who are violent learn non-violent communication and conflict resolution skills and how to take responsibility for their violent behaviour.



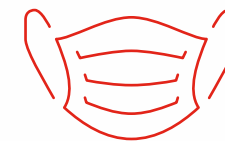
Contingency Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence During the COVID-19 Crisis

This “Contingency National Plan” has been created to support actions already in place under normal circumstances and to implement new ones adapted to the added difficulties for women and their children during the lockdown and the crisis arising from COVID-19.

During the first phase of the Plan (March 2020), measures were taken to protect victims and survivors of gender-based violence committed by partners and ex-partners, and to protect all victims of other types of gender-based violence such as sexual violence.

In the second phase, specific measures were taken to protect victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation and women in prostitution.

This Plan was adopted in March 2020 (and is still being implemented). Measures set out in the Royal Decree-Law 12/2020 of 31 March include emergency measures for the protection of and assistance to victims of gender-based violence.



All women victims of gender-based violence (and their children)

Through this measure we achieved that ...

... women are protected from of all forms of gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the measures taken under this Plan have been welcomed by international human rights organisations.



Sex must be voluntary

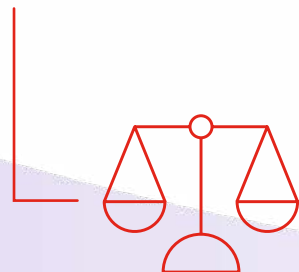
In 2018, the Swedish Government introduced new legislation regarding sexual consent that states the obvious: if sex is not voluntary, it is illegal.

The requirement of consent is the basis for the new legislation. To convict a perpetrator of rape, it will no longer be required to establish that violence or threats were used, or that the victim's particularly vulnerable situation was exploited.

Two new offences, "negligent rape" and "negligent sexual abuse", were introduced, both carrying a maximum prison sentence of four years. This means that it is possible to convict more people of sexual abuse than in the past, for example when a person should be aware of the risk that the other person is not participating voluntarily but still engages in a sexual act with that person.

The new legislation has already made a positive impact. It shifts the focus from the victim to the offender, who must explain how he assured himself of the victim's consent to a sexual act.

To bring about real change, we need to talk about the responsibilities of men and boys. More people must dare to report and more offenders must be prosecuted. The justice system must give priority to sexual offences.



Everyone,
but especially young adults

*Through this measure
we achieved that ...*
... more rape cases can be
prosecuted. The law has had a
measurable impact on court
cases and helped change the na-
tional discussion on sexual au-
tonomy.



Task Force “Domestic Violence and COVID-19”

In times of crisis, it is crucial that victims of domestic violence – the majority of whom are women – have access to existing support structures across all regions and receive necessary assistance.

For this reason, a national Task Force, which represents federal offices and intercantonal conferences and which works in close collaboration with the local police as well as centres and shelters for victims, was established at the very start of the COVID-19 crisis.

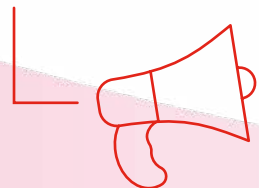
Since then, the Task Force has been meeting on a weekly basis with the aim of ensuring that all structures are operating as they should and informing the population about the situation.

The Task Force guarantees that:

1. Counselling centres and shelters continue to provide their services as usual;
2. The police remains available to intervene at all times;
3. In the case of violent incidents, the police continue to enforce restraining and protective orders, such as when removing a violent person from a home or reporting threats towards children to the relevant authorities. Despite the restrictive measures being lifted, cantonal authorities are continuing to deal with high-risk situations.



Victims of domestic violence, especially women – who represent a majority of this target audience – as well as their friends, relatives and neighbours.



Through this measure we achieved that ...
... victims of domestic violence were informed about support services and where to find them with the launch of a poster campaign in 13 languages in April.

03

Agreement for a Europe-wide violence against women phone number

Agreement

The broad range of measures to protect women from violence that are implemented in the EU Member States show: Europe stands strong in its fight to eliminate all forms of violence against women. And it sets out in clear terms that the strength of the EU lies within the diversity of measures and the commitment to ensure high standards of support all across Europe.

The importance of functioning and effective support systems for women who experience violence has become apparent especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased risk of violence against women during the contact and stay-at-home restrictions in many Member States has highlighted the importance of well-functioning support systems for women affected by violence all over Europe. It became clear that we need to do more to protect women from violence – especially in times of crisis.

We, the EU Gender Equality Ministers, agree to promote the implementation of a single Europe-wide phone number under which our national violence against women helplines can be reached. If we collectively use this shared number and join forces in actively promoting it, it will send a strong signal to women that wherever they are in the EU, help is always just one call away.

During the meeting on 20 November 2020 this agreement was supported by

AUSTRIA	ICELAND
BELGIUM	ITALY
CROATIA	LITHUANIA
CYPRUS	LUXEMBOURG
CZECH REPUBLIC	MALTA
DENMARK	POLAND
ESTONIA	PORTUGAL
FINLAND	ROMANIA
FRANCE	SLOVAKIA
GERMANY	SLOVENIA
GREECE	SPAIN
HUNGARY	SWITZERLAND

INITIATIVE for a SINGLE EUROPE-WIDE PHONE NUMBER for national

WHAT


Confidential

 Available at all times

Free-of-charge helpline


Let's send a strong signal


HELP is just ONE

TO-DO

- Integrate EU-wide activities
- Find technical solutions 

Portugal to continue with formal process

 Istanbul Convention not always ensured

... and gender-based violence increased during COVID-19




WHY

Target ALL genders 

Integrate holistically with social environment


- 22 EU-member states voted "YES"
- More helplines across Europe
- Additional services implemented

 e.g. apps

violence against women helplines

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* For general questions to all government offices and agencies, the general public service number 115 is also available. In the participating regions, the 115 is open from Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm. Calls to the 115 from a German landline and many mobile networks are charged at local rate and are therefore toll-free for flat rate holders. Deaf persons can access information by dialing the SIP address 115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de. To find out if the 115 is available in your region and for more information on the general public service number please visit <http://www.d115.de>.

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