

# Fempower

*A magazine published  
by the WAVE office*

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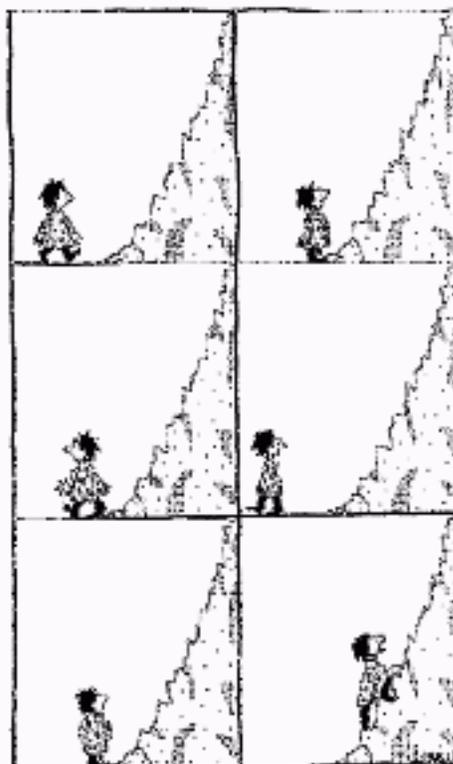
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## PROTECTION & EMPOWERMENT

This year 2010 is the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. It has been designated by the European Commission to raise awareness for the causes and effects of poverty. In this same year 2010, governments cut funding for women's shelters. Budget cuts effect women's shelters all over Europe. WAVE has been informed by several countries that shelters are at risk of being closed. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there seems to be a common track in European politics:

Violence against Women is still considered a women's issue and "women's issues" are still less important - though 50% of the population are affected...



WAVE thanks you for your commitment and wishes you all the best for the upcoming year 2011.

May it be a good one!

It is true, important progress has been made in the fight against violence on women. However, laws are only effective if applied and protection is only possible if resources are provided. This is also stressed by PROTECT, a project WAVE carried out in 2010, funded by the European Commission's Daphne Program to improve the protection of high risk victims.

Women's shelters not only offer a safe place to victims of male violence, they also protect women and children from poverty. The Draft Report (PR\837399EN.doc) published the 9th of November 2010 by the European Parliament recognizes this fact and calls on the Member States to provide adequate funding for the support and protection of victims of violence, as a way to prevent and reduce poverty.

Cuts in funding affect the most vulnerable groups in society, but they also imply a dangerous political message: If discrimination and violence are tacitly tolerated, the very basis of democracy is undermined.

WAVE dedicates this FEMPOWER edition 2010 and the upcoming edition in spring 2011 to all the wonderful women uniting against male violence.

Both editions will focus on the situation of women's shelters, laws against violence on women, and the difficult struggle for funding.

In this edition, women from Albania, Armenia, Czech Republic, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Ukraine highlight the situation in their countries.



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on behalf of the WAVE TEAM.

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# Albania: Law no. 9669 and situation of women's shelters



## **Monika Kocaqi**

Master of Social Work, Executive Director of the women's Association "Refleksione". Coordinates the program of the "Network against Gender Based Violence and Trafficking", teaches "Social Aspects of Trafficking of Human Beings" in the School of Magistrates, was part of the expert group who drafted the first National Strategy for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence in Albania (2007 - 2010). She is also active in the development of Civil Society Organizations.

### **56% of women between 15 and 49 victim of domestic violence**

Domestic violence is a highly significant issue for women in Albania. Over the last ten years, the number of reported cases of domestic violence has increased, but it hardly reflects the true extent of the problem. Studies on domestic violence are relatively few in Albania, and data on its prevalence continue to be limited. A survey from 2007, funded by UNDP and UNICEF and carried out in cooperation with the Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) found that no less than 56% of women aged between 15 and 49 years experienced at least one type of DV. The study authors concluded that the prevalence of DV was most likely an underestimate.

### **New Law "For Measures against Violence in Family Relations"**

The Law no.9669 "For Measures against Violence in Family Relations" (LDV) was passed in 2006 and entered into force in 2007. It was a result of the long campaign by the NGO community, whose efforts to combat domestic violence began with the Association "Refleksione" in 1995, and international support. The law assigns specific duties to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The support of rehabilitation centers for DV victims is one of their duties, but also programs for perpetrators.

The law recognizes the contribution of specialized NGOs.

In September 2010, additional changes were made to this law: the establishment of a national center (a shelter) for DV victims is obligatory.

### **Effective implementation ensured by Albanian Network against Gender Violence and Trafficking**

Starting in November 2007, the Albanian Network against Gender Violence and Trafficking, with the support of UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, piloted a multi-sectoral approach to address domestic violence at the local level and thus ensured the effective implementation of the LDV. The project established five regional Councils against Domestic Violence (CaDV) with the participation of governmental, educational and judicial institutions and NGOs.

As a result of this project, 312 public administration officials, teachers, health care and social workers, policemen, lawyers, and bailiffs have been trained and 395 community members - women, men, girls and boys - have been educated about LDV and the rights of victims.

Over 170 000 men and women have been informed through media activities about the new law. A tracking system for DV cases was developed and is being put in place.

Most importantly, for the first time ever in Albania, the local governments in four of the five regions obliged themselves to support services for victims with their own budgets in 2009.

### **Second phase "Developing a sustainable system"**

In July 2010, the Albanian Network against Gender-based Violence and Trafficking has started the implementation of the second phase of this initiative, supported again by UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. This new project, named "Developing a sustainable system for addressing VAW in Albania" combines efforts to create institutional mechanisms with capacity-building to make these mechanisms function well. In November 2010, Refleksione started to implement this intervention in another municipality of Albania, based on the requests of the Municipality and with the financial support of "Equity in Governance", a project of the Austrian Embassy in Albania.

### **Seriously affected by economic crisis**

Most of the work to combat VAW is still carried out by NGOs, who continue to provide critical, though localized, assistance to DV survivors, and engage in awareness-raising activities. The first Shelter for Women and Girls victims of DV was opened by "Refleksione" Association in 1998. Since 2004, this shelter is working as an independent NGO, but it is surviving only through donor's support. The shelter's existence is seriously affected by the economical crisis. There exist also four other shelters established by NGOs, their main focus is on victims of trafficking, although in many cases, they are trying to support DV victims as well.

### **First government-supported shelter**

The first government-supported shelter for DV survivors shall – hopefully – be operational in Tirana this year. The initiative was launched by the government in December 2008.

This is a very welcome development; however the shelter will only provide places for around 30 women and their children. The goal is to meet the European Parliament Recommendation of one shelter for 10,000 inhabitants.

The capacity of both governmental institutions and NGOs to respond to the needs of survivors remains low compared to neighboring South Eastern European countries. The government still does not have all needed legal instruments as its disposal, and there is no clear strategy to cooperate with NGOs, although improvements are made in this direction. In September 2010, an Advisory Board composed by the Deputy Ministers of the five Ministries responsible for the implementation of the DV law, was established in the frame of the Network project. However, more coordination and common efforts are needed to support DV survivors. Another concern is related with the fact that services for VAW victims are not standardized and vary widely in terms of quality and effectiveness. Specialized programs to support Roma women or victims of "honor"- related crimes do not exist.

### **No programs targeting perpetrators**

There is little work to involve men and boys in efforts to combat VAW and there are no programs targeting perpetrators of VAW, despite the fact that the LDV requires their establishment.

## Responsibility of the State

It is essential that more and more men and women are aware of the law and strategy to combat VAW, that governmental institutions at the central and local level develop their capacity to combat VAW, that standards for services for VAW victims are set up and that the state provides more resources.

The elimination of Violence against Women shall not only be in the NGO focus, but has to be sustained by state-funded resources and supported by a critical mass of citizens.

## Armenia: Still no Domestic Violence Law



### Susanna Vardanyan

Founder and President of Women's Rights Center and National Monitor on Violence against Women in Armenia. In 2002, Ms. Vardanyan was awarded the Human Rights Award by the Advocates for Human Rights organization in recognition of her outstanding work for women's human rights in Armenia. In 2005, the "Peace Women Across the Globe" organization from Switzerland nominated her for the Nobel Peace Prize.

### Domestic Violence Law still missing

Domestic violence devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development. Armenia is not an exception: domestic violence exists in all its forms. Armenian government still does not take adequate steps to address the issue as officials initially denied the existence of domestic violence in Armenia.

Armenian law punishes physical assault but has no legal provisions that specifically proscribe domestic violence. Government officials at all levels either minimize the problem or consider it a matter of private concern outside the

purview of the legal system. Police reportedly discourage women from making complaints against abusive husbands, and abusers are rarely removed from their homes or jailed. The overwhelming response of the legal system to domestic violence is to urge women to reconcile with their abusers. In cases in which women seek to prosecute abusive husbands, they receive little assistance or protection from the government. Monetary penalties for assault often deter women from making a complaint, especially when fines are paid from their family budgets.

Although law enforcement officials acknowledge that women turn to divorce as an escape from abuse, divorce procedures fail to take domestic violence into consideration.

### **No state funded services**

There exist no state funded or operated services for female victims of domestic violence and their children.

The following services are operated only by Women's Rights Center:

- National Hot Line Service, in operation since 1997, provides free psychological and legal counseling and reveals domestic violence.
- Women's Support and Drop-in Center in Yerevan provides free face to face psychological counseling and legal assistance.
- In 2009, the WCR could establish four Crisis Centers in the biggest four regions of Armenia.
- Emergency Shelter with Transitional Housing can host five families and provides free dwelling and food, psychological and legal counseling, medical and social assistance, and special conditions for work with children.

Thanks to new funding, the Emergency Shelter could be reopened (for the third time) in 2008. Since September 2008 up to 98 persons (38 families) lived in WRC's Shelter, out of which 38 were women and 60 were their children.

### **Draft Law submitted by the Women's Rights Center**

In September 2009, the Women's Rights Center (WRC), working on prevention of domestic violence in Armenia for more than 12 years, submitted a draft Law on Domestic Violence to the government. Unfortunately, no essential steps have been undertaken yet in this regard, though some good changes were done in the sphere of gender equality policy on the governmental level.

The Gender Policy Concept Paper was approved by the Prime Minister in February 2010 to become the first national strategic document. It refers to the equal enjoyment of rights and opportunities by all citizens in all spheres of social life regardless of their sex, defines main principles and objectives and a general strategy to implement gender policy in Armenia.

In March 2010, the Interagency Commission on Combating Gender Based Violence had been established (decree N 213-A) and a Working Group was formed to elaborate a National Action Plan on Combating Gender Based Violence. The Women's Rights Center is, as an observer of the Commission, included in the Working Group and strives to promote the adoption of the Draft Law on Domestic Violence.



## Czech republic: only three women's shelters

### **Mgr. Martina Hronová**

worked as a journalist after her studies of Social Sciences. Since 2004, she is a manager for ROSA. She published or contributed to several books, i.a.: Enchantress book (book for children witnessing domestic violence, 2009) and Dating violence – Manual for teachers (2009).

### **Violence against women – still taboo?**

Violence against women has been for a long time taboo in the Czech Republic. The first organization that started working with this issue was ROSA – Centre for Battered and Lonely Women.

Due to numerous obstacles, the first consulting centre and subsequently a shelter ROSA could only be opened in 1998, five years after ROSA had been founded. In the years from 1995 to 2010, legislative changes have been passed, mainly due to efforts of NGOs like proFem, ROSA and later on other organisations connected in the KOORDONA network. In 2004, a new crime called „battering of people living in the same house or dwelling“ (§215) and in 2007 the law 135/2006 Sb. on „expelling the violent person from the common flat or house“ for 10 days were introduced. Since January 2010, stalking is defined as a crime (law 40/2009).

### **Contrary to the UN and the Council of Europe**

Contrary to the UN and the Council of Europe demanding zero tolerance towards *violence against women* and *gender-based violence*, the Czech Republic uses the term „domestic violence“ even on the governmental level and in the National Action Plan, thus limiting the approach to a criminological aspect.

### **Only three specialized centres**

Looking at official statistics, it could appear that there are many shelters in the Czech Republic: according to the data from the register of social services providers, 106 shelters for 10.2 millions of inhabitants respectively 5.5 millions of women exist.

However, these shelters are charities, offering housing to homeless people and other persons in need, both men and women, and do not follow specific standards or safety planning. Only three shelters are specialized in the work with female victims: ROSA and ACORUS in Prague and MAGDALENIUM in Brno (Helena house) offering 84 beds (including those for children). This signifies that the Czech Republic provides one bed per 121.000 inhabitants, respectively 62.000 women. The standard of secret addresses for women's shelters is still not introduced. Since 2010, shelters as well as other social services in the Czech Republic, face budget cuts by the state and the regions – though even prior to this date subventions did not cover the expenses.

### **Children forced against their will**

Another serious problem is the fact that authorities and courts do not take the exposure of children to violence into account. Children are forced against their will to meet the violent parent, even in cases when their mothers had to hide with them in a shelter because of threats to their life and health. Children are also forced into joint custody with the violent parent.

## Italy: We Need Change

### **Nicoletta Livi Bacci**

has been active in the feminist movement and in social work since the seventies. She was a co-founder of the Florence women's bookstore "Libreria delle donne" di Firenze in 1979. Bacci founded "Associazione Artemisia, Centro Donne contro la violenza Catia Franci" in association with other women in the early nineties. Artemisia provides help for battered women and children and runs two secret shelters.

### **Gender differences for the first time main subject**

The end of the 80s was a very special moment in the history of the Italian feminist movement, which began as a mass movement in the 1970s. For the first time gender differences became the main subject of politics and social mobilisation. Italy's first women's crisis centres were established in Bologna and Milan at the end of the 1980s by women of the feminist movement. Many women had to deal with the misogyny that was entrenched in every kind of institution, including left-wing political parties.

To talk about the oppression of women or - worse - separatism, sexuality and self-awareness was perceived as not agreeing with the political strategies based on class conflict. The "male counterattack" arrived swiftly and the bitter struggle that followed lasted for years - all through the 1970s and most of the 1980s.

### **Women uniting are still a provocation**

At the end of the 1980s the women's movement in Italy changed. Mass demonstrations ended and the movement switched to a more "operational" mode. Everywhere social and cultural activities for women were set up, such as Family Planning Centres managed by women, women's libraries, document centres, publishing firms, magazines for women, women's studies centres and crisis centres. This is how the first women's crisis centres were established.

Currently 56 of these anti-violence centres, whose political views are based on the principles of the feminist movement, have founded the D.i.Re association (women networking to stop violence). Women uniting this way in Italy's current political climate, characterised by conflict and complete lack of unity, was and still is a provocation.

### **5,913 places are missing**

There are 40 women's crisis centres that have a sheltered house with a secret address, which can accept up to 400 people at one time. The percentage of foreign women asking for help from a women's crisis centre is about 30 %, the percentage of those seeking refuge is 80 %. These women need extra help because they have less money, no family and cannot rely on social services. Only five sheltered houses with secret addresses offer a 24-hour service. They are all in central and northern Italy. To comply with the recommendations of the European Parliament, there should be room for another 5,913 people. With a few exceptions, most centres rely on voluntary workers and are struggling to survive in the present economic crisis. Over the past two years a few of them have had to close. As there are no proper national laws dealing with the matter, most centres depend on donations or participation in European or Italian projects.

Violence against women is increasing and the condition of women is becoming worse.

## Every 3 days, a woman is murdered

Although some regions have good laws for protection against violence and fund women's crisis centres, there are no national laws like in other European countries such as Spain.

Despite the fairly high number of crisis centres in existence, no government - left or right - has made any plans to deal with the matter. The new Minister for Equal Opportunities met the directors of the centres about a year ago but we are still waiting for an opinion. According to a law from 2001, violent partners must leave the family home, although in most cases it is still the woman and children who move out.

In 2009 the current government approved a law concerning "urgent measures to deal with public safety and to fight sexual violence and other kinds of harassment". Stalking, considered a kind of severe harassment, carries a prison sentence.

This law has not stopped the escalation of violence - a woman is murdered every three days.

The current government's focus is more on public safety than on protecting victims. According to the old fascist law (the "Rocco Code"), sexual violence was a crime against morality. Despite the long and successful efforts of feminist groups to have the law abolished, the situation does not seem to have changed much.

## Malta: continue struggling in hope



### Marceline Naudi

Dr. Ph.D., studied Social Work and Women's Studies in Malta and UK and has been lecturing Social Work at the University of Malta since 1994. Represents Malta in the CAHVIO meetings and chaired the Domestic Violence Commission in Malta from December 2006 to June 2010.

## Malta meets requirements of Council of Europe

Malta, with a population of about 400,000 inhabitants, meets the requirements from both the Council of Europe defining an 'adequate number' of shelter beds as one place in a women's shelter per 7,500 inhabitants, and from the EU-Parliament recommending one shelter place per 10,000 inhabitants.

Malta, which lies in the middle of the Mediterranean, where east meets west and north meets south, is extremely

small in comparison to other European countries and has one of the highest population densities in the world.

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has had a very strong presence, and is still a force to be reckoned with today. Malta displays strong primacy of the 'family'.

Until about 30 years ago, when the sisters of the Good Shepherd Congregation opened the first shelter, the issue of domestic violence was well hidden and definitely did not form part of the public consciousness. Since then great strides have been made and we now have good services for women escaping abusive situations, but further improvements are needed.

### **Current services**

- four women's shelters:  
one emergency short term (State-run)  
one emergency long term (Church-run)  
one second stage long term in Malta (Church-run) and a further one in Gozo (Church-run)
- a specialised social work unit dealing with cases of domestic abuse (State-run)
- and a 24-hour telephone helpline (State-run, but operated by volunteers).

The state does not restrict the work done in any way. The state-run emergency shelter is fully funded by the state, the shelter run by the Good Shepherd sisters receives some funding from the state, but relies greatly on volunteer workers for staffing, and donations for everything else.

### **Empowerment**

Apart from safe accommodation, the shelters provide various services. Each woman is supported by a professional social worker from the state run specialized domestic violence unit, who together with the woman and the staff at the shelter work on devising and implementing an individual care plan, which can include emotional and psychological support, help to find employment or training for employment as well as access to benefits, assistance with legal issues, longer term housing or school issues for the children. Some shelters also organize "educational" talks on for example self-care, parenting or budgeting, or fun activities such as barbecues, parties, outings, dance classes etc.

In each and every case, the workers strive to empower the woman to choose the direction she wants her life to take.

### **Close cooperation**

The domestic violence direct service providers cooperate closely and meet regularly to share their experiences and to discuss common problems and solutions. These fora turned out to be very helpful to improve services and to support the staff who often has to deal with harrowing and frustrating situations. However, further efforts are necessary to strengthen the networking with other agencies such as the police and the law courts and more resources are needed for both the shelters and the specialized social work unit.

### **Additional resources are needed**

The staff has to deal with ever-increasing work-loads and it is very demoralizing to know that one could do more for the women if only one had the time to do so. More and more women are coming forward for help thanks to increased awareness-raising, but unless this is matched with increased resources it is going to result in less good services being provided.

The Domestic Violence Act, in force since 2006, set up the Commission on Domestic Violence which is striving to bring these matters, amongst others, to the attention of the political leaders.

The request for additional resources has been made time and again over the last four years, and yet so far it has not been heard. We continue struggling in the hope that soon it will.



## Slovenia – where are we?

### **Karmen Fras**

shelter manager in the Association SOS Help-line, has a B.A. in social work and has been working since 1995 with women and children who survived violence.

### **First women's shelter in 1991**

The first two women's shelters in Slovenia were opened by governmental centers for social work in Krško in 1991 and in Maribor in 1996. The first NGO shelter for women and children was opened by the Association SOS Help-line in 1997. In 2009 a second one was opened which can also accept handicapped women. The Association SOS Help-line, founded in 1989, is Slovenia's oldest women's NGO.

### **National Program for Social Security**

In the Resolution on the National Program for Social Security 2006 – 2010 the state has obliged itself to ensure 350 places in shelters and maternal homes and established that all regions should have maternal home or shelter or crisis centre available until 2010. There are two regions that are not covered yet, otherwise shelters are located around the state. Eleven shelters are led by NGOs, three by centers for social work and one by Caritas. Since 2009, there is also a shelter for female survivors of violence who use illegal drugs. Some NGOs have feminist background but not all of them. The programs of the shelters differ therefore.

Few NGOs that run shelters execute only services in the frame of the program and are not activist. According to data of the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs there were 15 shelters with a capacity of around 63 rooms (205 beds), three crisis centers with 54 beds, and nine maternal homes with 57 rooms (139 beds) in September 2010. The shelters were occupied in total of 84.06 % in 2009, the maternal homes of 80 %. Maternal homes are mainly intended for pregnant women and women with small children in social and economic need. Though they have started to accept

survivors of violence in the last years, they do not provide the same services as shelters and do not have secret addresses.

### **Challenge to find sufficient funding**

Shelters in Slovenia are co-funded by the state from 50 % up to 80 %, additional funding has to be ensured through local communities, and donations etc. For instance, the Ministry covered 58.76% and the Municipality of Ljubljana covered 18.38 % of all costs of the first shelter of the Association SOS Help-line in 2009. It is a challenge for many shelters to find enough funding.

### **Challenge to retain autonomy and criticism**

In the last years, the Ministry of Labour has taken the problem of violence seriously and has done a very good work in establishing a net of shelters, crisis centers and maternal homes. Approximately 1,5 million EUR per year are allocated for that purpose. However, new problems have arisen especially for activist women's NGOs like Association SOS Help-line, Association for Non-Violent Communication and Women's Counseling Service for which shelter programs are only one part of the whole activities, as the Ministry has a tendency to uniform the work in the shelters. Specificities of the programs and autonomy in deciding on the contents and execution of programs could be limited or lost.

The main challenge for the NGOs in 1990s was how to make the state realize that violence against women and children are problems of the whole society and that a comprehensive support system including shelters, prevention programs and legal measures are needed. Today this challenge is completely different: how to retain the autonomy and criticism without losing funding.



## Ukraine: victims still stigmatized

### **Svitlana Zakharchenko**

President of the Sumy "Local Crisis Center". In 2010, she has been awarded the Diploma of the Mayor for her hard work and fruitful personal contribution to the development of the social sphere of the city.

### **Law "on prevention of domestic violence" enacted in 2001**

Ukraine ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1980 (CEDAW) and signed the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. In 2001, the law "on prevention of domestic violence" has been enacted. So far its implementation is imperfect and amendments are necessary, but until now no changes have taken place. The state still fails to provide assistance to victims of violence. Programs for victims as well as for perpetrators are still lacking.

### **Taboos and lack of specially trained experts**

One main reason is the lack of specially trained experts in the government, particularly in the higher education system. Domestic violence can only be overcome by joint efforts of social welfare workers, law enforcement, and the public. Because of taboos in the discussion of the topic and stigmatization of victims of violence, neither the public nor law enforcement agencies are paying enough attention. Women and children continue to suffer at the hands of oppressors.

We need commitment and professional specialists of law enforcement organizations that directly interact with victims of domestic violence.

### **Shelters only in four regions**

The National network of specialized institutions for victims of domestic violence tries to provide social and psychological care and to establish Crisis and rehabilitation centers in all regions of Ukraine: At the present 23 regional, district and city centers have already been created. Their funding comes from regional, city or district budgets. Each center has its own statute, which sets the conditions for granting aid for victims of violence or for people who are in crisis situations.

Though, only in the four regions Kiev, Zhitomir, Kharkov and Kherson, Crisis centers are shelters, which are organized and supported by NGOs. Their financing is at the only expense of the NGOs. The cuts in funding in these times of crisis affect also charitable institutions and threaten the very existence of the centers.

### **International standards not yet fulfilled**

In all objectivity, we can say that Ukraine apply the international standards to protect women in a very limited way as victims of violence have very limited access to social and legal assistance.

NGOs are developing innovative proposals and solutions and are trying to improve the assistance for victims of violence; however, the issue remains very difficult to deal with.