

# more than a roof over your head

A Survey of Quality Standards in European Women's Refuges  
WAVE Office/European Information Centre Against Violence

# Introduction

**The best part of two years have passed since experts and high-ranking government officials last met under the auspices of an EU presidency to discuss ways of eliminating violence against women. The far-reaching recommendations put forward by the conferences in Baden near Vienna in 1998 and in Cologne and Jyväskylä in 1999 have not to date resulted in the adoption of any practical measures at the national or European levels.**

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As part of the DAPHNE Project's "European Information Centre Against Violence" and as a further initiative by the WAVE (Women Against Violence Europe) Network, we have taken those recommendations which relate to women's shelters and have juxtaposed them with the actual status of these women's support facilities in Europe.

The present survey focuses on those eleven minimum standards for women's shelters which were defined by a group of experts at the Cologne conference in March 1999. Our principal concern was to ascertain whether the women's shelters in the EU and candidate countries already complied with these standards. Both the recommendations of the EU conferences and the principles of the WAVE Network are founded upon a feminist perception of violence against women and of preventive action.

The raw data were obtained by means of a questionnaire which was sent first and foremost to WAVE's national network partners, the Focal Points.\*

For the most part these Focal Points are national shelter networks or organisations with extensive experience in the field of prevention. Where such organisations do not exist, it proved difficult and in some cases impossible to obtain answers to the questionnaire. The results outlined in the present publication are, however, based exclusively on the data provided by means of the questionnaire.

The presentation of the results (pages 12-33) invariably relates to all the shelters in a given country, which means that that country may be rated as only partially complying although some of its shelters may fully comply with the standards. In some instances we were able to compile information only on a single shelter or a small number of shelters.

Apart from presenting the results of our survey, we also set out to give a concise account of the important role played by shelters in preventing violence against women, of the principles upon which their work is based, and why – almost thirty years after the founding of the first feminist women's shelter – they remain indispensable facilities for protecting women – providing more than just a roof over their heads.

Birgit Appelt and Verena Kaselitz

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# Background to Violence Against Women

**Violence against women is a social problem whose origins lie in the structures of our society.  
It is not a phenomenon that affects only certain women.**

## Violence against Women in the Family and in Intimate Relationships

**Violence has its roots in social structures.**

**The 1993 UNITED NATIONS Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women recognises:**

**“... that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”**

Women are discriminated against the world over. On every continent they are subjected to abuse, not just also but primarily by their partners. Neither ethnic nor social background are factors here. In all probability, violence against women constitutes the most frequently practised human rights violation in Europe. Even the most conservative estimates suggest that 12 million European women are subjected to violence.

Violence inflicted by a partner makes women refugees in their own countries. In many cases their last and only chance to escape from an abusive husband or partner is to flee their homes. Women's refuges, where they are available, afford the only safe haven. Since the first refuge opened its doors thirty years ago, the number of women's shelters has been growing steadily. However, there are still many battered women who cannot seek shelter in a refuge, either because there is no such facility nearby or because the refuge is so full that it has to turn women away. The Beijing Platform for Action defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The Platform for Action continues: “Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (1986)**

**Violence in the private sphere**

(...)

20. Calls on national authorities to make legislative and financial provision for personal counselling and help to be available from qualified staff in women's refuges.

(...)

24 (a) Calls on the national governments to provide an allocation of funds, or increased financial support for reception facilities for victims of in-family and sexual violence.

(...)

26 With regard to the availability of refuges, calls on housing authorities to recognize: the necessity of providing adequate refuge provision, at the rate of one family place per 10 000 of population, (...)

Even in cases of extreme violence, it cannot always be taken for granted that the abused woman will leave the perpetrator and, for instance, seek refuge in a shelter. It may even happen that she takes the perpetrator's side – a phenomenon that is familiar from hostage-takings. The victim is isolated, fears for her life, can see no way out of the nightmare, and eventually sides with the perpetrator. Isolation and dependence can create such a strong bond between victim and perpetrator that the latter becomes the victim's only contact with the outside world and she becomes incapable of seeking help.

Leaving an abusive partner is not a step that is easy to take nor quickly taken. It calls for a great deal of strength and even then is usually possible only where protection, safety and support are available. Economic considerations may also be a hurdle to leaving an abusive partner: the woman's financial resources may not be sufficient for her to lead an independent life, especially if she has children.

Once a woman has made up her mind to leave her partner, the risk becomes highest. Studies and experience gained from working with abused women show that the partner's behaviour grows potentially more violent during the phase of separation. The woman then needs an even greater degree of protection, which only shelters with their confidential addresses can provide.

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE RECOMMENDATION ON SOCIAL MEASURES CONCERNING VIOLENCE WITHIN THE FAMILY (1990)**

### **VI. Measures for women**

There should be general and sufficient provision of possibilities of finding accommodation in a hostel for battered women (shelter). The aim of shelters for battered women is to provide rapid help for women and children in danger. Before being provided with accommodation in a hostel for battered women, the persons concerned should, where possible, be given counselling. Victims of violence should not themselves be expected to meet the capital and recurrent costs of shelters. Public authorities should, in appropriate circumstances and according to national legislation, subsidise these shelters.

Each crisis centre and shelter for abused women should have its own policy concerning the disclosure of its address and the acceptance or non-acceptance of visitors. If the re-uniting of the family is considered possible, supervised meetings between family members in the shelters can be of help. In some countries, however, experience shows that shelters function more effectively if outside people have no access to them. Abused women must be entirely free to decide whether or not they want to return to their partners. Once a battered woman has been admitted to a shelter, she should, if she so wishes, be adequately helped by social workers, psychologists, lawyers and other qualified persons, including experienced voluntary workers who can help in particular with practical and administrative questions concerning the woman and, as appropriate, her children. An important element can also be mutual assistance and the exchange of experiences with other battered women in the shelter.

# Prevalence of Violence

**Violence against women is a widespread and grave problem in our societies.**

**In the countries of the European Union, one woman in five is subjected to violence at the hands of her partner at least once in her life. One violent crime in four involves a woman being the target of her husband's or partner's aggression.**

**A Eurobarometer survey showed that a mere 4.4% of Europeans had never heard of domestic violence, whereas 11% said they knew a woman who had been victim of some form of domestic violence where they worked or studied, 18% in their neighbourhood or immediate area and 19% in their circle of friends and family.**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN – SUMMARY OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (1998)

## Provision of Support to Women Experiencing Violence

Alongside the provision of an appropriate legal framework and education structure, it is also essential to ensure that those women and girls who experience violence have access, on an individual basis, to the appropriate support and services which will meet the variety of their needs and which will ensure their protection and safety.

## Governments should therefore consider the following:

(...)

The recognition of the expertise of specific services focusing on the needs and rights of women and the development of work in partnership with such organisations in relation to work to combat violence against women;

The provision of financial and other support to specialist organisations to allow new developments such as helplines and 24 hour services, and to expand the network of support available from such organisations, ensuring that key services are not dependent on fund raising and charitable donations, but receive stable and ongoing funding;

The provision of support to enable the development of additional victim and witness support schemes, as well as those services tackling under-recognised forms of violence;

The development of sufficient, well-funded refuge provision, with the establishment of a national minimum number of refuge places, provided in accordance with good practice;

The support and development of new services as new needs are identified.

Representative studies of the prevalence of violence against women and their children in the family and the social environment have been carried out in recent years in several EU countries. To give an idea of the extent of violence against women in Europe, here are a few of the results:

- A French study shows that 10% of the women surveyed had been subjected to violence at the hands of their partners during the previous twelve months. Young women aged between 20 and 24 are twice as likely to be abused by their partners as women over 45.
- According to a Finnish study, 22% of married women or women living with their partners had been subjected to physical or sexual violence or the threat thereof by their partners, while 9% of the women surveyed said they had experienced violence in the previous twelve-month period.
- In a study carried out in the Netherlands, 65% of the women interviewed said they had experienced mild violence, 26% moderate violence, 7% severe violence and 2% very severe violence. During the termination of an abusive relationship 33% suffered severe violence, 21% moderate violence and 23% mild forms of violence.

## References:

- Eurobarometer "Europeans and Their Views on Domestic Violence Against Women", Brussels 1999  
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, Service des Droits des Femmes (ed.): Enquête nationale sur les violences envers les femmes en France, Paris 2001  
Heiksanen, Piipsa M.: Faith, Hope, Battering. A Survey of Men's Violence against Women in Finland, Helsinki 1998: Statistics Finland  
Römkens, Renée G.: Prevalence of wife abuse in the Netherlands. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods in survey research. In: Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol.12 No.1, February 1997, pp. 99-126

# Forms which Violence Takes

**Physical abuse is not the only form of violence to which women are exposed.  
Violence can appear in many guises.**

**Physical assault** such as striking, pushing, punching, pinching, hair-pulling, hitting with an object, injuring or threatening with a weapon, burning, throttling.

**Sexual violence** such as rape, enforced sex, enforced sado-masochistic practices, enforced prostitution, forcing the woman to sleep with his friends.

**Damage to property**, destroying furnishings or personal belongings, inflicting pain on pets, displaying weapons etc.

**Menacing behaviour and coercion** are also common forms of physical violence, such as:  
"If you leave me, I'll kill you ...", "I'll kill the whole family ...", "I'll slash your face ...", "I'll take the children away from you ...". Making and/or carrying out threats like threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to the welfare authorities, making her drop charges, making her do illegal things. This kind of intimidation and extortion often makes actual physical violence "redundant" – the fear it inspires already has the desired effect.

**Isolation** is a strategy frequently used to manipulate and control the victim. Isolation can take various forms: preventing the woman from seeing her relatives or friends, locking her up at home, disconnecting the telephone, disallowing use of the car, using jealousy to justify actions etc.

**Harassment** like incessant telephone calls, calls in the middle of the night, threatening letters, following and stalking to and from work etc.

Verbal abuse, denigration and slander erode the victim's self-esteem and mental health. In time the woman loses her confidence in her own value, her identity and feelings, her rights and her ability to manage her own life. **Emotional abuse** encompasses: shouting at the woman, ridiculing the victim in company, making insulting remarks about her appearance or character, and assertions that she is insane or mentally ill, imagining things, a likely candidate for suicide etc. Such insinuations often serve to divert attention away from the perpetrator's own actions.

**Economic abuse** implies an imbalance in access to financial resources and exploitation of a stronger economic position. Within the family this can take the form of the perpetrator providing too little money for domestic expenses and/or keeping sources of income, assets or expenditure secret from the victim, making her ask for money, preventing her from getting or keeping a job.

**References:** Austrian Autonomous Women's Shelter Network, Quality Survey, Vienna 2000  
Pence, Ellen/Paymar, Michael, Education Groups for Men who Batter: The Duluth Model, New York 1993

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECLARATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (1993)

## Article 4

States should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination. States should pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women and, to this end, should:

- (c) Recognize the important role of the women's movement and non-governmental organizations world wide in raising awareness and alleviating the problem of violence against women;
- (p) Facilitate and enhance the work of the women's movement and non-governmental organizations and cooperate with them at local, national and regional levels.

# History of the Women's Shelter Movement

**Ever since the beginning of the autonomous women's movement, violence against women has been one of the main targets of its activities. Thus, women's refuges were among the first projects to have been realised. It was generally the urgent need for safe accommodation which provided the incentive to turn women's meeting-places and women's centres into shelters. This is exactly what happened in the London district of Chiswick, where the first refuge for battered women was set up in 1972. Much the same situation pertains twenty years on in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, where women's refuges started coming into existence soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In many cases women's counselling centres were – often provisionally – fitted out with temporary accommodation and then later enlarged as fully-fledged refuges.**

At the same time, the autonomous women's shelters have always reflected the political goals of the women's movement. Violence against women has its roots in the structure of our society, which has resulted (and continues to result) in gender-based discrimination. Autonomous women's shelters were and are thus designed to pursue an alternative approach:

"Domestic violence is a violation of women's and children's human rights, ... it is the result of an abuse of power and control, and ... is rooted in the historical status of women in the family and in society.

Women and children have a right to live their lives free from all forms of violence and abuse, and ... society has a duty to recognise and defend this right.

Women's refuges endeavour to draw attention to the structural violence which permeates all areas of society and which arises from inequality of influence, discrimination, social handicaps and the exploitation of women and children."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the women's shelters founded and run by church bodies or the social welfare system, which came later, the autonomous women's refuges do not treat violence against women as an isolated problem. The autonomous women's refuges are organised on non-hierarchical lines, and their non-hierarchical approach allows them to encourage the women who seek help from them to regain the initiative in fashioning their own lives and to develop a new, hopeful future.

<sup>1</sup> Women's Aid Federation U.K., [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk), December 2001

#### References:

- Christa Hanetseder, *Frauenhaus: Sprungbrett zur Freiheit?*, Verlag Paul Haupt, Bern/Stuttgart/Wien 1992.  
Lisa Glahn, *Frauen im Aufbruch. 20 Jahre Geschichte und Gegenwart autonomer Frauenhäuser*, UNRAST-Verlag Münster 1998.

# What Is a Refuge?

**A refuge is a safe house of accommodation in which women who have been subjected to domestic violence can live with their children without having to fear being abused.**

## The guiding principles of (autonomous) women's refuges

- Women's refuges are set up and run by women. They offer counselling and support for women by women. As a rule men are not allowed access to shelters.
- Women's refuges are run by private, non-profit and non-party women's associations. This helps to reduce victims' reluctance to establish contact, and it safeguards their anonymity.
- Women's refuges lend credence to women and children and make their safety a priority. The refuge workers are on the threatened/abused woman's side, represent her interests in official matters and help her to assert her rights.
- Women's refuges support and empower women to take control of their lives. The assistance provided helps in addressing the women's own needs and interests and in determining their own lives independently of their partners.
- Women's refuges recognise and care for the needs of children affected by violence.
- Women's refuges pledge not to disclose confidential information. No data are passed on without the consent of the person concerned – not even to the authorities.
- Women's refuges promote policies and practices to prevent domestic violence.
- Women's refuges challenge the disadvantage and social marginalisation which results from domestic violence.
- Women's refuges support and reflect diversity and promote equality of opportunity.

## Services and facilities provided by autonomous/feminist women's refuges

- Protection and accommodation for women and children exposed to male violence.
- Counselling: social, psychological, legal, also medical and psycho-therapeutic.
- Help for children in dealing with the violence they have witnessed and with their parents' separation.
- Round-the-clock availability, prompt and unbureaucratic help.
- Qualified staff to tend to the needs of women and children.
- Assistance in submitting official applications, in preparing for court proceedings, in finding accommodation and work etc.
- Accompanying women to court or the police.

#### References:

- Austrian Autonomous Women's Shelter Network, Quality Survey, Vienna 2000  
Women's Aid Federation U.K., [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk), December 2001

## FOURTH UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN – BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995)

Strategic objective D.1.  
Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

#### Actions to be taken

By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence;

# Minimum Standards for Women's Support Facilities

In 1998 the Austrian EU Presidency initiated an Expert Meeting to review measures to combat violence against women. This was followed up by similar meetings held during the German, Finnish and Portuguese EU Presidencies. At the three conferences held in Baden (Austria), Cologne (Germany) and Jyväskylä (Finland), the participating experts from non-governmental women's support organisations, representatives of the police and state authorities, and researchers formulated practical recommendations on minimum standards for women's support facilities.

## Standards and Recommendations of the Conference of Experts on Police Combating Violence against Women Baden, December 1998

36. Women's institutions were the first ones to address the issue of violence against women in public and to offer victims support and assistance. All states should pay tribute to these institutions and give high priority to the work they are doing.

37. States are responsible for creating a sufficiently dense network of women's institutions and for allocating funds to them to pay them for their activities. In accordance with the recommendation made by the Committee for Women's Rights of the European Parliament, in homes for battered women at least one place per 10,000 of the population\* should be available.

40. Basic funding must be assured for both women's institutions and all organisations committed to the goal of combating violence against women.

\*Amendment of the original based on the European Parliament Resolution on Violence Against Women, Doc A2-44/86

## Recommendations of the Expert Fora of the EU Conference on Violence Against Women Cologne, 29 and 30 March, 1999

### Expert Forum 4: Help organisations and co-operation with institutions, European networks

1. All national governments are to be obliged to establish and to finance a comprehensive and cost-free offer of support for abused women and their children, regardless of their legal status, under the management of women's NGOs. To this end, such support is to involve women's shelters, women's advisory offices, emergency organisations, legal and social help organisations, offers of support for children and intervention projects, for which standards have been developed in Expert Forum 4 and are to be implemented.

### Standards for Women's Support Services

- free of charge
- empowerment
- laws to protect women and children, right to stay in the home, remove the perpetrator

### Women's Refuges/Shelters

- 24-hour service
- safety of the women and children is paramount
- women helping women
- confidentiality guaranteed
- no time limit on stay, subject to finances
- run by women NGOs with feminist perspectives
- 1 family refuge space per 10,000 of the population
- empowerment/self-help model
- open to all women who are victims of violence (migrant women, black and ethnic minority women)
- sufficient funding through governments
- paid staff and training

## Recommendations of the EU Expert Meeting on Violence Against Women Jyväskylä 8-10 November, 1999 Finland

### Workshop 2 Recommendations on standards for shelters/refuges

#### Prerequisites

Laws to protect women and children are essential. Victims should have the right to stay in the home in cases of domestic violence; it is the perpetrator who should be removed from the residence in such cases. If the woman prefers to leave, accommodation in a shelter/refuge should be guaranteed.

#### Objectives

1. Prevention – the ultimate goal is the prevention of violence
2. Protection – protection of the victims (stop the present violence)
3. Provision – the provision of services and the empowerment of women

#### Principles

- The empowerment of women is essential.
- Victims' confidentiality must be guaranteed.
- No victim's right to stay in a shelter/refuge should be dependent on her financial situation, and the stay should be as long as needed for the woman to evaluate her options.
- Shelters/refuges should be open to all women, including women with no children and women of minority groups, who are victims of any form of violence.
- Children must be protected from violence and from the perpetrators.
- Shelters/refuges should be run by women's NGOs that have a feminist perspective and believe in women

helping women. However, there are also other models organised from the perspective of women's and children's rights.

#### Services

- Refuges/shelters for victims of men's violence should be easily accessible.
- Advocacy and support services should include help lines, drop-in centres, women's groups, self-help, proactive services (outreach work on awareness-raising), aftercare, and free legal aid.

#### Availability

- At least 1 family refuge space per 10,000 of the population and 1 drop-in centre per 50,000 of the population are required.

#### Staff

- The staff working in shelters should have an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and receive ongoing training.
- The staff should be properly remunerated for their work.
- Among staff there should be one qualified child care worker for each shelter/refuge (as at any given time about 2/3 of all residents at a shelter/refuge are children).

#### Training and research

- All staff who come into contact with victims of domestic violence, including social workers, health service workers, police, etc., must receive specialised training in working with victims of domestic violence.
- Ongoing training must be made available for all staff working with victims of men's violence.
- Those providing legal aid for victims must be specialised in family law.
- More research into all forms of violence against women and children is needed.
- Monitoring and evaluation of existing services should be ongoing.

#### Funding

- Governments are obliged to establish and to finance a comprehensive and cost-free offer of support for abused women and their children, regardless of their legal status.
- The responsibility for the violence should always be placed solely on the perpetrator.
- Women should be able to directly access refuge/shelter accommodation.

# One Family Place per 10,000 of the Population

A recommendation drawn up in 1986 by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities says that one shelter place should be available per 10,000 of the population.

## How many places for women and for children are available in the women's refuges?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
<b>Austria</b>			
	435 places for women and children in 23 refuges		
<b>Belgium</b>			
	Approx. 700 places for women and children in 38 refuges		
<b>Denmark</b>			
	250 places for women and 270 for children in 35 refuges (without Greenland and Faroe Islands)		
<b>Finland</b>			
	130 places for women in 22 refuges		
<b>France</b>		No data available	
<b>Germany</b>			
	8,789 places for women and children in approx. 440 refuges		
<b>Greece</b>			
	12 places for women in 1 refuge		
<b>Ireland</b>			
	425 places for women and children in 16 refuges		
<b>Italy</b>		No data on places available, 34 refuges	
<b>Luxembourg</b>			
	100 places for women and 40 for children in 1 refuge and 4 houses for women in need		
<b>Netherlands</b>			
	2,462 places for women and children in 105 refuges		
<b>Portugal</b>			
	25 places for women in 4 refuges		
<b>Spain</b>		No data available	
<b>Sweden</b>			
	Approx. 800 places for women in 151 refuges		

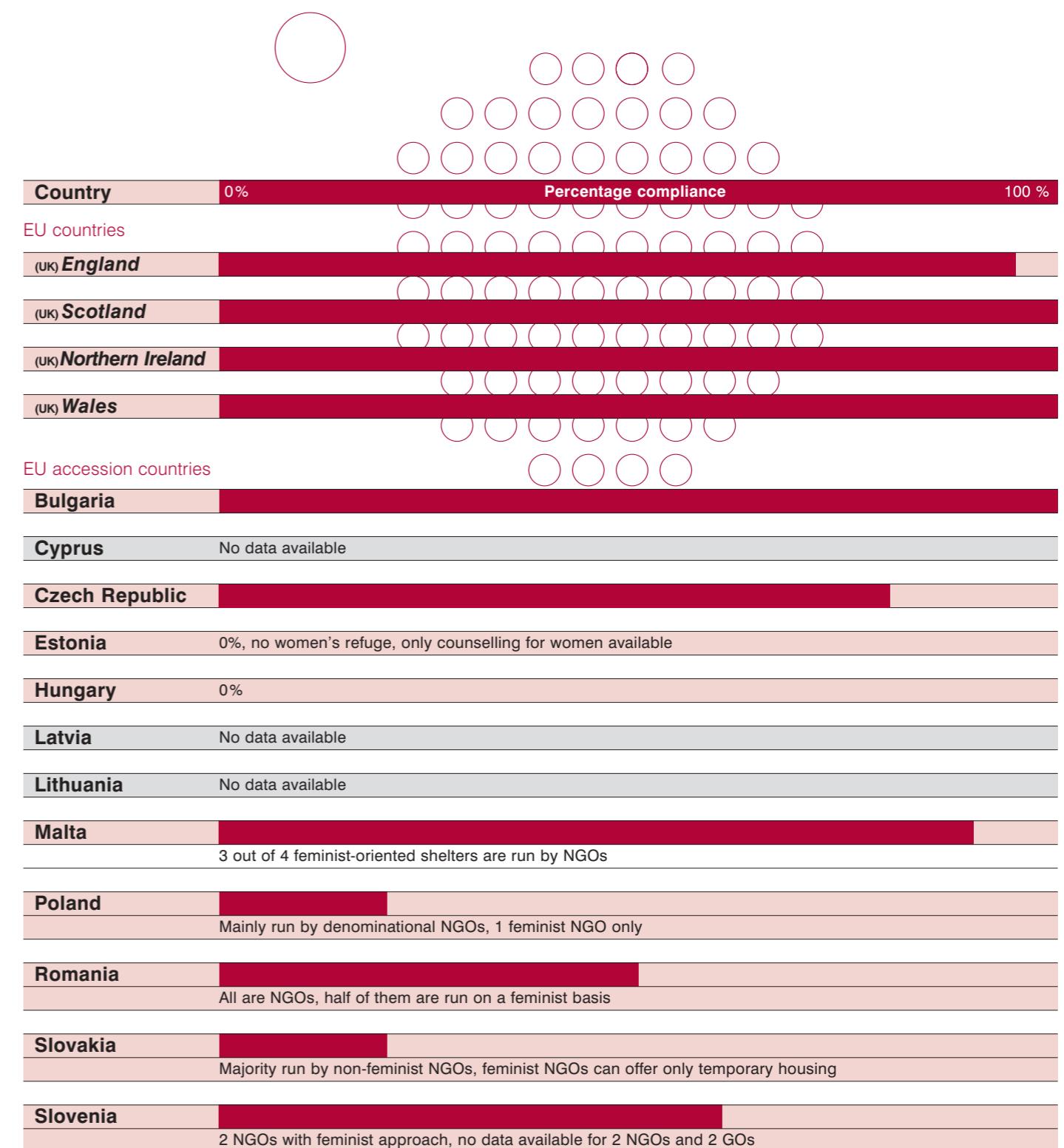
Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
<b>(UK) England</b>			
	Approx. 2,100 places for women in more than 400 refuges		
<b>(UK) Scotland</b>			
	330 places for women in 40 refuges		
<b>(UK) Northern Ireland</b>			
	331 places for women and children in 11 refuges		
<b>(UK) Wales</b>			
	177 places for women in 46 refuges		
EU accession countries			
<b>Bulgaria</b>			
	18 places for women and children in 1 refuge		
<b>Cyprus</b>		No data available	
<b>Czech Republic</b>			
	34 places for women in 3 refuges		
<b>Estonia</b>		No women's refuges, only refuges for children with room for 1–2 mothers	
<b>Hungary</b>			
	6 family places in 1 refuge		
<b>Latvia</b>		No data available	
<b>Lithuania</b>		No data available	
<b>Malta</b>			
	36 family places in 4 refuges		
<b>Poland</b>			
	Approx. 400 places for women and children in 30 refuges		
<b>Romania</b>			
	Approx. 50 places for women and children in 4 refuges		
<b>Slovakia</b>			
	53 places for women in 5 refuges		
<b>Slovenia</b>			
	89 places for women and children in 4 refuges and 1 crisis centre		

# Feminist Non-Governmental Organisations

It is recommended that women's refuges are run by private, non-profit and non-party women's associations. Feminist women's organisations regard male domestic violence as a violation of women's and children's human rights, that it is the result of an abuse of power and control, and that it is rooted in the historical status of women in the family and in society.

## Are the women's refuges non-governmental (independent, autonomous) organisations with a feminist approach?

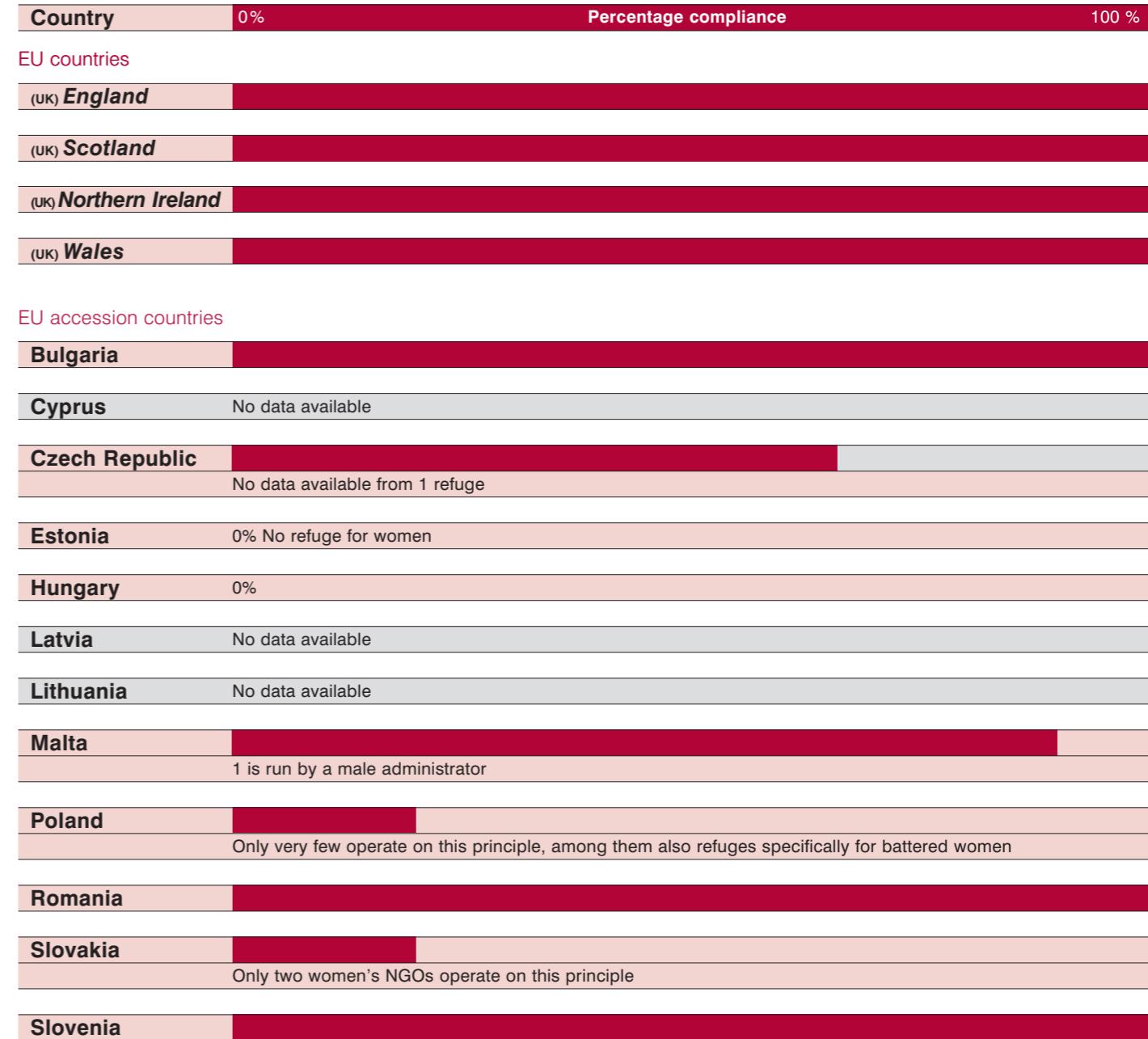
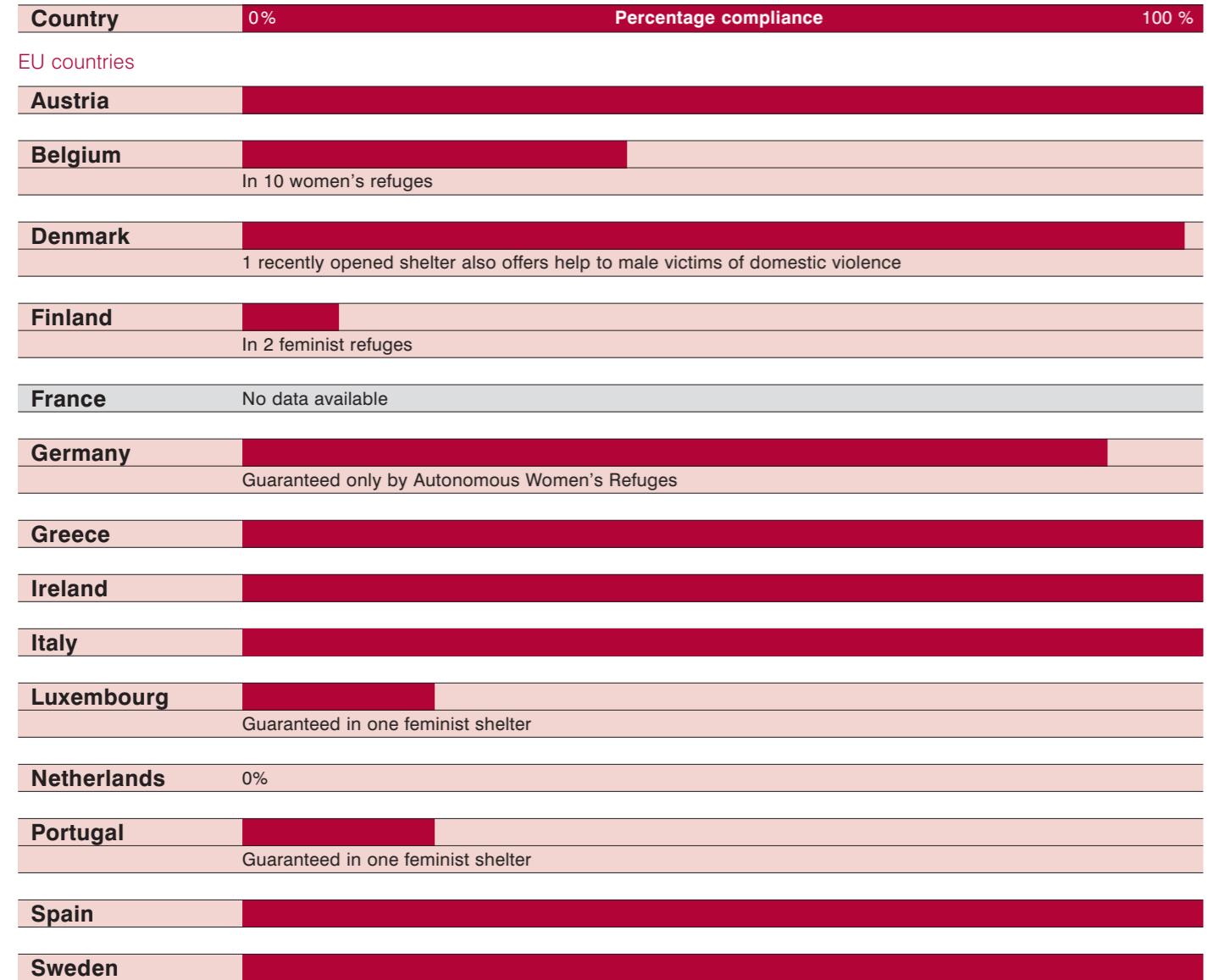
Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Autonomous Women's Refuges are feminist NGOs, others mainly run by denominational NGOs			
Belgium			
12 feminist refuges for battered women and their children			
Denmark			
All have a feminist approach, 7 out of 35 are run by counties			
Finland			
2 feminist NGOs, others are family-orientated NGOs			
France			
No data available			
Germany			
Autonomous Women's Refuges are feminist NGOs, majority run by denominational NGOs or charity organisations			
Greece	0%		
Ireland			
Most refuges are independent and are run on a clear feminist basis			
Italy			
Luxembourg			
1 feminist NGO, others partly family-orientated (different target groups)			
Netherlands			
Portugal			
1 feminist NGO, majority run by governmental organisations			
Spain			
No data on feminist principles, mostly governmental			
Sweden			
A minority is run by municipalities or non-feminist NGOs			



# Women Help Women

Refuges are run by women and offer counselling and support for women by women.  
As a rule men are not allowed access to refuges.

## Are the refuges run on the basis that only women help, support and counsel women (that no men have access to the refuges themselves)?



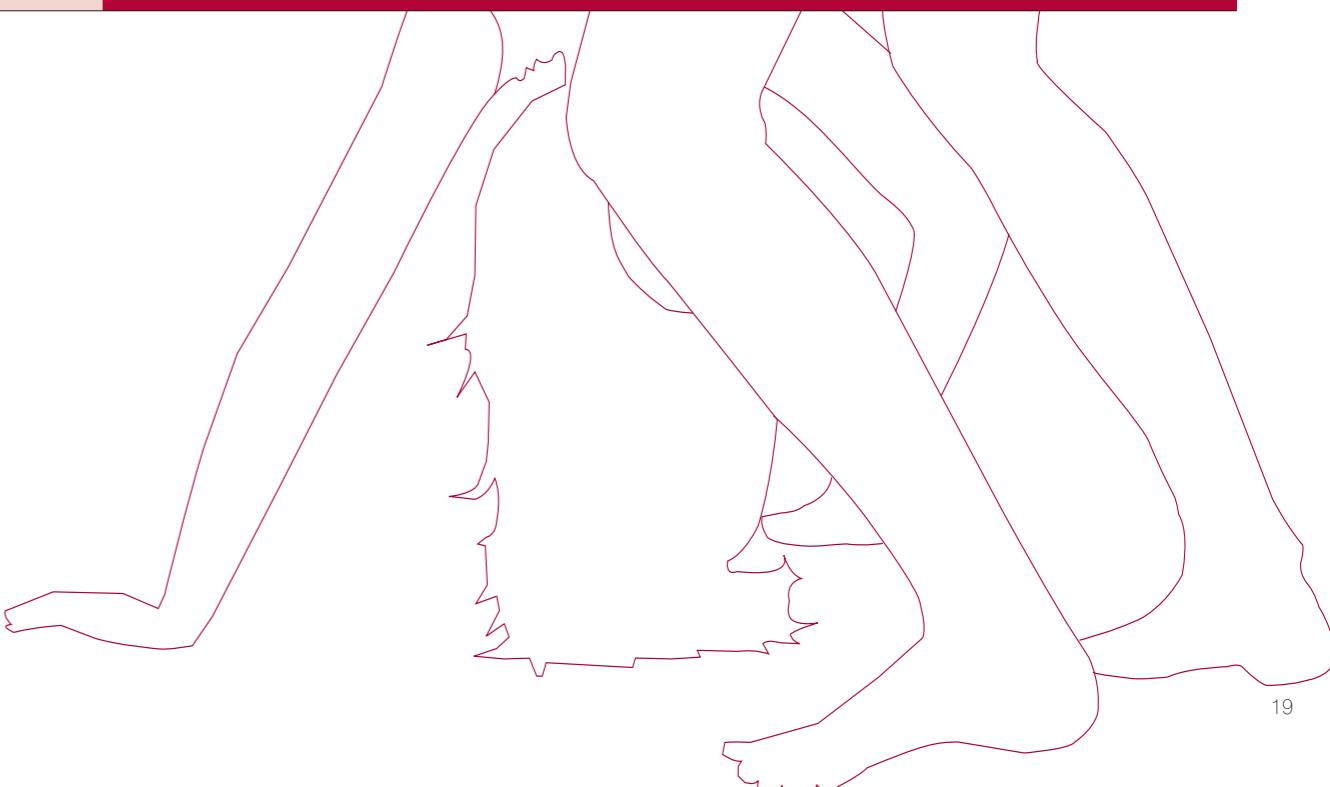
# Empowerment

Women's refuges support and empower women to take control of their lives. The refuge workers assist in addressing the women's own needs and interests and in determining their own lives independently of their partners.

## Is the basis for working with abused women in the refuges to empower them?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Belgium			
Denmark			
Finland	0%		
France	No data available		
Germany			
	Only guaranteed by autonomous refuges		
Greece	0%		
Ireland			
Italy			
Luxembourg			
Netherlands			
	Partly family-oriented		
Portugal			
Spain			
Sweden			
(UK) England			
(UK) Scotland			
(UK) Northern Ireland			
(UK) Wales			

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU accession countries			
Bulgaria			
Cyprus	No data available		
Czech Republic			
	Data available from only 2 refuges, no data available for 1 refuge		
Estonia	0% No refuge for women		
Hungary	0%		
Latvia	No data available		
Lithuania	No data available		
Malta			
Poland	0%		
Romania			
Slovakia			
Slovenia			



# Safety is Paramount

In women's refuges, the safety and protection of women exposed to or threatened by violence and of their children are paramount considerations. The measures designed to ensure their safety should include confidentiality of the refuge address, security features on the premises, and close co-operation with the police.

## Is safety guaranteed and does it rank higher than all other considerations?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Belgium			
	Partially secret addresses, co-operation with the police, but some problems with schools		
Denmark			
	Close co-operation with the police, partly video surveillance, only staff open the door, but addresses are in the telephone directories and on the Internet		
Finland			
France	No data available		
Germany			
	Secret addresses, but authorities may pass on the address		
Greece			
Ireland			
	Women are at risk when e.g. they have to go to the doctor, if they cannot obtain protection, safety or barring order, if no custody order for children is in place		
Italy			
Luxembourg			
Netherlands			
	Some refuges have no secret addresses		
Portugal			
Spain			
	Although police are part of the service provisions, abuser can find out address		
Sweden			
	Problems with social welfare authorities over custody		

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
(UK) England			
	Obstacles created by legal framework and response of statutory and other agencies		
(UK) Scotland			
	Can never be guaranteed but women are safer in the refuge		
(UK) Northern Ireland			
(UK) Wales			
	Obstacles created by location and/or design of refuge and sometimes by residents/ex-residents		
EU accession countries			
Bulgaria			
Cyprus	No data available		
Czech Republic			
	Problems in 1 refuge because of other apartments in the house		
Estonia	0% No refuge for women		
Hungary	0%		
Latvia	No data available		
Lithuania	No data available		
Malta			
Poland			
	Data available for 1 refuge only		
Romania			
Slovakia			
	Only paramount in feminist NGOs		
Slovenia			

# Confidentiality

Confidentiality requires that data pertaining to residents of the refuge are passed on to the authorities only with the consent of the woman concerned. There may be exceptions to this principle resulting from legal requirements. Such exceptions generally relate to the custody and protection of children.

## Is information about women staying in the women's refuge treated confidentially?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Belgium			
Denmark			
Denmark	Social services have to be informed if a child is in need		
Finland			
France	No data available		
Germany			
Greece			
Ireland	In case of child protection issues authorities will be notified		
Italy			
Luxembourg			
Netherlands			
Portugal			
Spain			
Sweden			
(UK) England			
(UK) Scotland	In child protection issues social welfare authority is informed by the refuge		
(UK) Northern Ireland	Social services have to be involved if children are at serious risk		
(UK) Wales	In child protection issues social welfare authority is informed by the refuge		

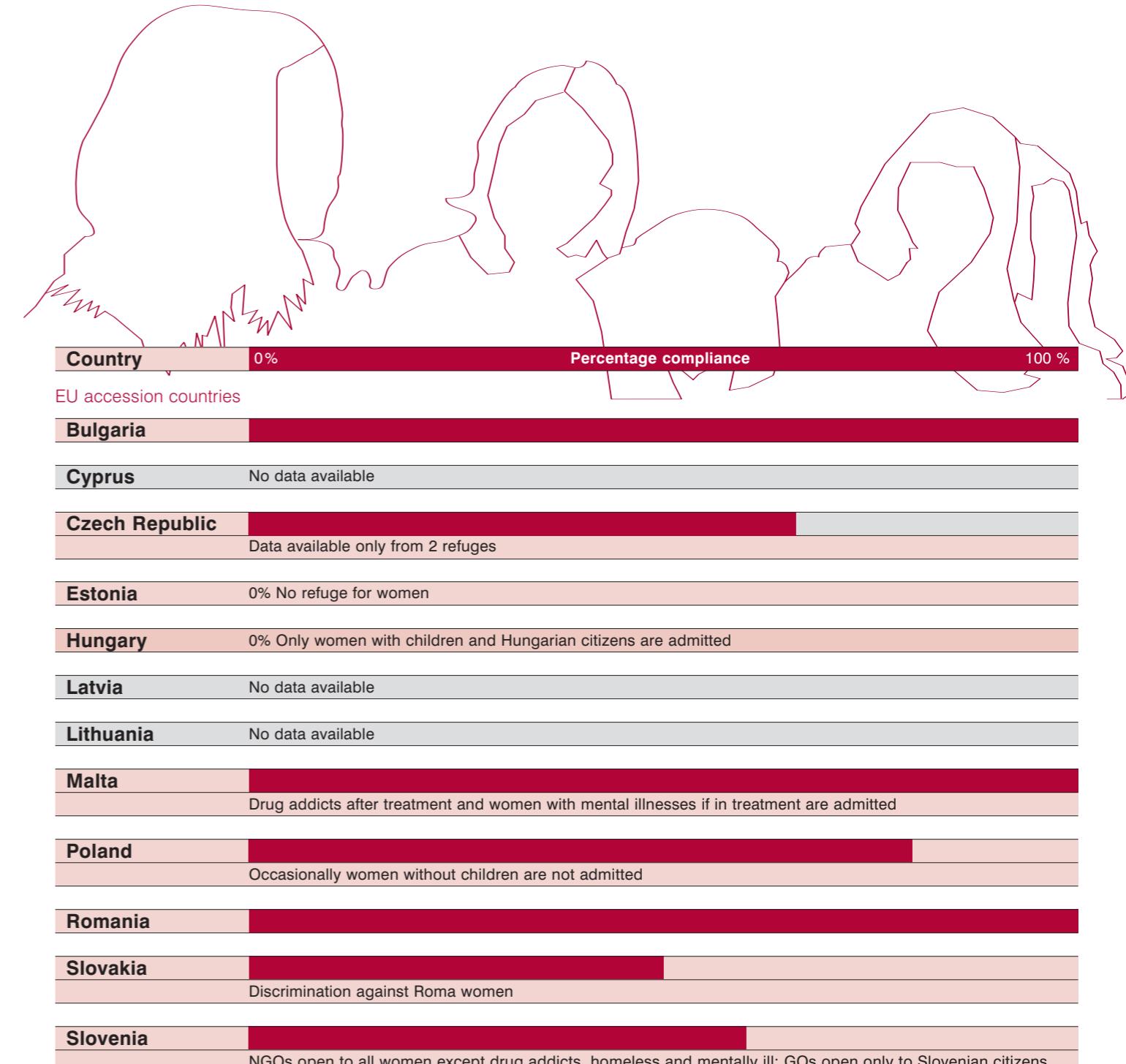
Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU accession countries			
Bulgaria			
Cyprus	No data available		
Czech Republic			
Estonia	0% No refuge for women		
Hungary	0%		
Latvia	No data available		
Lithuania	No data available		
Malta			
Poland	Data available only from 1 refuge		
Romania	Only if it's in the interest of the woman		
Slovakia			
Slovenia			

# Open to All Women

Women are subjected to violence irrespective of their ethnic, religious or social background or their age. It is therefore essential that no woman be refused access to a refuge on the grounds of social, cultural or demographic criteria.

## Are refuges open to all women (irrespective of such considerations as nationality, ethnicity, religion, political / legal status, or age)?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Minimum age of 18 but exceptions are made; there are financial difficulties if the woman comes from a different province			
Belgium			
Minimum age of 18 but exceptions are made			
Denmark			
Minimum age of 18			
Finland			
France			
Germany			
Financial difficulties if the woman has no legal status			
Greece			
Ireland			
Italy			
Data available from 1 refuge only			
Luxembourg			
Legally tied to residence permit			
Netherlands			
Portugal			
Spain			
In government-run refuges only women with legal status and women under age 60 are admitted			
Sweden			
Exceptions: drug addicts and mentally ill women			
(UK) England			
(UK) Scotland			
There are special refuges for black and minority ethnic communities			
(UK) Northern Ireland			
(UK) Wales			
1 refuge for abused ethnic minority women and their children			



# Free of Charge

In many cases abused women cannot afford to leave an abusive relationship. For this reason, refuges must be free of charge.

## Is residence in a refuge free of charge?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
	Donation requested		
Belgium			
	Income-related donation, grants from welfare		
Denmark			
	6.73 – 40.36 €		
Finland			
	Income-related donation		
France			
	No data available		
Germany			
	Between 5.11 and 79.69 € per day, social benefit possible		
Greece			
Ireland			
	Nominal rent between 5 and 15 Euro per week		
Italy			
	Data available for 1 refuge only (100% in this refuge)		
Luxembourg			
	2 months free, from the 3rd month one third of income		
Netherlands			
	Part of social allowance has to be paid		
Portugal			
Spain			
Sweden			
	Symbolic donation or free if woman has no income		

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
(UK) England			
	Rent is paid by state if no income; women with income contribute; women not entitled to state benefit are admitted free		
(UK) Scotland			
	Income-related donation; most of the women receive "housing benefit" which usually covers full costs		
(UK) Northern Ireland			
	Income-related donation; most of the women receive "housing benefit" which usually covers full costs		
(UK) Wales			
	Most women receive state benefits; charge is paid via housing benefits system; with no access to state benefits charges are according to woman's means		
EU accession countries			
Bulgaria			
Cyprus			
	No data available		
Czech Republic			
	Data available from 2 refuges, free in 1 refuge if woman is from the region		
Estonia			
	0% No refuge for women		
Hungary			
	Income-related donation		
Latvia			
	No data available		
Lithuania			
	No data available		
Malta			
	Donation requested		
Poland			
	No data available, depends on the individual refuge		
Romania			
Slovakia			
	In some refuges only children stay free of charge		
Slovenia			
	Usually a charge is made except for women without an income		

# No Time Limit for Stay

It may take an abused woman some time before she is capable of running her own life and working out plans for her future. Placing a limit on the time she may spend in the refuge could put her under pressure again. On the other hand, the refuge workers will try to find solutions jointly with the abused woman in the shortest possible time.

## Is residence in the refuge subject to a time limit?

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
Austria			
Belgium			
	Max. 9 months in Flanders and 6 months in Wallonia		
Denmark			
	Local social welfare authorities must find the woman new accommodation, although this may take time		
Finland			
	Usually very short		
France			
	No data available		
Germany			
Greece			
	1 month but flexible		
Ireland			
	Usually very short, varies from case to case		
Italy			
	5 months; data available for 1 refuge only		
Luxembourg			
	6 months but flexible; second-phase accommodation is provided		
Netherlands			
Portugal			
	Approx. 6 months		
Spain			
	6 months, occasionally longer		
Sweden			

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
(UK) England			
	Often a time framework is worked out together with the woman		
(UK) Scotland			
(UK) Northern Ireland			
(UK) Wales			
EU accession countries			
Bulgaria			
	4-6 weeks		
Cyprus			
	No data available		
Czech Republic			
	6 months in 1 refuge, for other refuges no data available		
Estonia			
	0% No refuge for women		
Hungary			
	3-6 months		
Latvia			
	No data available		
Lithuania			
	No data available		
Malta			
	Between 2 months and 1 year		
Poland			
	In some refuges women have to leave before new accommodation is found; in others not stringently applied		
Romania			
	From 45 days up to 6 months		
Slovakia			
	3 months – 1 year		
Slovenia			
	3 months – 1 year; 1 refuge for 1 night only		

# Adequate Funding by the State

Given the prevalence of domestic violence, women's refuges are essential facilities. If abused women are to receive qualified care, effective protection and adequate support, the existence and maintenance of the refuges must be safeguarded. The state is called upon to provide and ensure a secure financial basis for their operation.

## Do the refuges receive adequate and secure funding from the state?

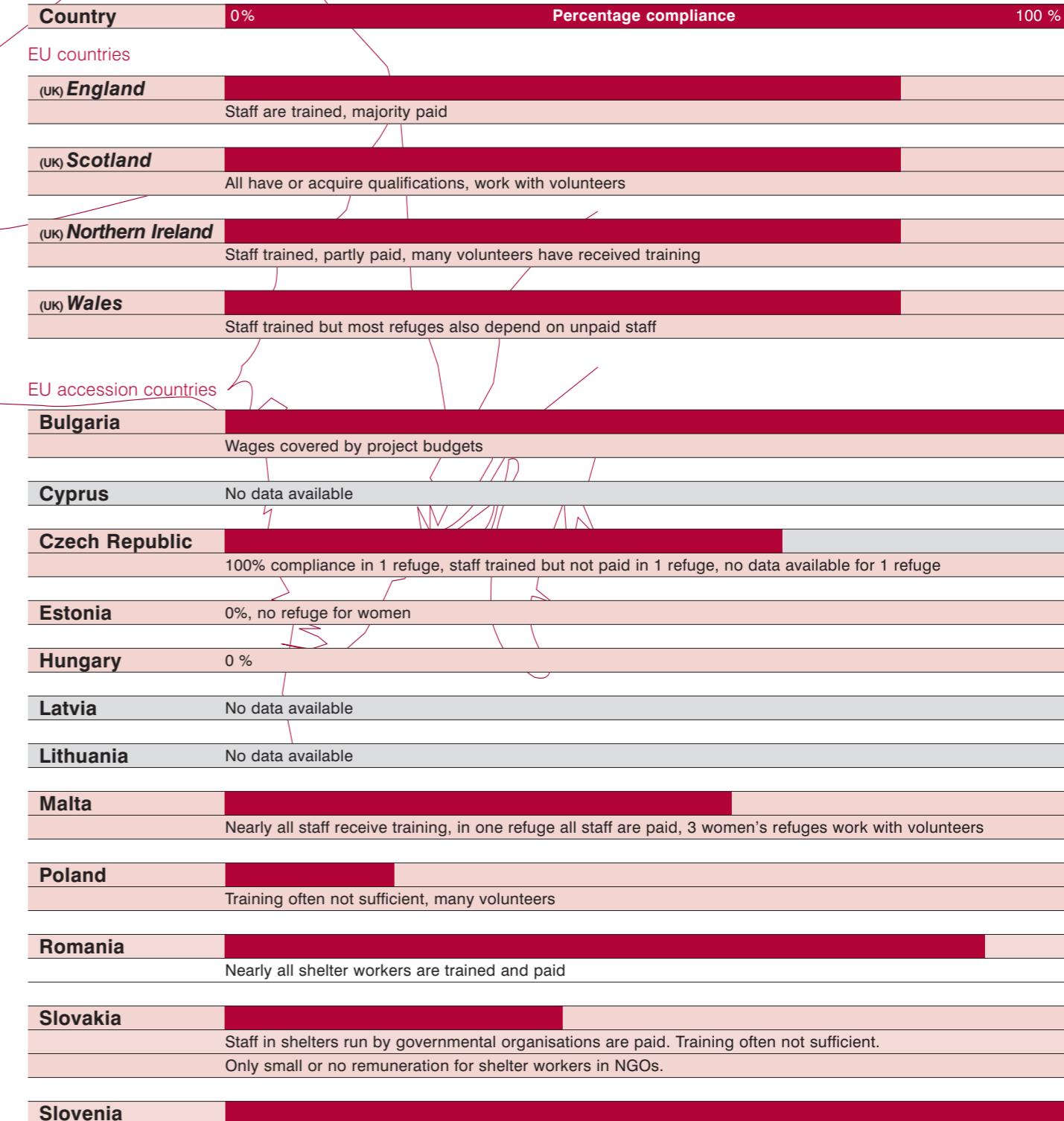
Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
<b>Austria</b>			
Varies from province to province			
<b>Belgium</b>			
Varies from refuge to refuge, but fund-raising is always necessary			
<b>Denmark</b>			
Private sponsoring and individual contributions are necessary; women must also contribute to costs of food and personal articles			
<b>Finland</b>			
Municipalities are responsible for financing, so there are problems if the woman comes from elsewhere; individual contribution required			
<b>France</b>	No data available		
<b>Germany</b>			
Land and municipality are responsible for financing; in some cases threat of closure on account of financial difficulties			
<b>Greece</b>			
<b>Ireland</b>			
Fund-raising, donations and trusts			
<b>Italy</b>			
Data available from 1 refuge only, 70% of the costs are covered by public authorities			
<b>Luxembourg</b>			
<b>Netherlands</b>			
In some cases serious financial difficulties, current parliamentary campaign for greater support			
<b>Portugal</b>			
State pays 80%			
<b>Spain</b>			
Not sufficient for shelters run by women's NGOs			
<b>Sweden</b>			
Dependent on municipalities			

Country	0%	Percentage compliance	100 %
EU countries			
<b>(UK) England</b>			
<b>(UK) Scotland</b>			
Supplemented by funds & charity, not enough from local government for children & young people			
<b>(UK) Northern Ireland</b>			
Not always; supplemented by donations and fund-raising events			
<b>(UK) Wales</b>			
EU accession countries			
<b>Bulgaria</b>	0%		
<b>Cyprus</b>	No data available		
<b>Czech Republic</b>			
No public funding in 1 refuge, 1 refuge fully and 1 refuge mainly funded by public authorities			
<b>Estonia</b>	0%	No refuge for women	
<b>Hungary</b>	0%		
<b>Latvia</b>	No data available		
<b>Lithuania</b>	No data available		
<b>Malta</b>			
1 fully financed, 3 partially – donations, church, project funding			
<b>Poland</b>			
50%–70%			
<b>Romania</b>			
Foundations, church etc.			
<b>Slovakia</b>			
1 refuge very unsatisfactorily funded, 1 emergency apartment does not receive any state funding			
<b>Slovenia</b>			
80% state funding for the 3 NGO refuges, 90 – 100% for the 2 governmental refuges			

# Personnel and Training Costs

Abused women need support from trained personnel. Refuge staff must therefore be qualified for the work and receive commensurate salaries.

## Are the levels of training and salaries for the refuge staff adequate?



# Conclusions

**The history of the women's movement in Europe goes hand in hand with the spread of women's support facilities, most notably women's shelters. However, the concept of the shelter as a place run by women for women to provide safety from violent partners has evolved differently from one region and country to another. Almost thirty years after the first women's shelter opened its doors, we wanted to ascertain to what extent the feminist principles which also formed the basis of the Cologne recommendations have been implemented. Are there enough (feminist) support facilities for abused or battered women? Is the future of women's shelters secure? Given the differences in the existing national structures, it was not always easy to ascertain the answers to such questions. The results which we present here should therefore be regarded as an initial survey.**

Broadly speaking, wide divergences in standards between the EU countries and the candidate countries were to be expected. It emerged that, more than a decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain, some erstwhile Eastern Bloc countries now preparing for accession to the European Union still have not a single women's shelter – Hungary and Estonia are cases in point. Welfare hostels and refuges for the homeless, some of which offer overnight accommodation, provide neither the protection nor the support needed by battered women and their children. Activists willing to set up a women's shelter tend to receive scant support from the local and state authorities. Some of the few women's support facilities which do exist lead a hand-to-mouth existence because, although they fully comply with the requirements, they are dependent on short-term project funding or donations.

From the Mediterranean candidate countries, we received data only from Malta, where the standard of women's support facilities appears to be quite high. Within the European Union, only a few member countries comply with the recommended number of shelter places. Luxembourg and the Netherlands comply with the standard, although not all of the shelters in these countries are run on feminist lines. Sweden and Northern Ireland come close to reaching the required capacity in largely feminist shelters. The majority of countries (including Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Scotland and England) generally meets the required standards, although more shelter places are urgently needed. In Austria there is an acute shortage of shelter places, in Finland and Belgium a shortage of places in feminist shelters. Greece comes last in the EU rankings with only twelve places in one single shelter. Portugal at least has four shelters, although only one – recently opened – is run on the required lines. Where Spain and Italy are concerned, we have received information only on the number of shelters available, not on their accommodation capacity. The Spanish shelters are run by the municipal authorities. We received no data at all from France.

Public-sector financing is generally unsatisfactory. Funding tends to be adequate only when the shelters are run by regional or municipal authorities, although this tends to have the drawback that such shelters do not work on feminist lines. The inadequacy of the funding for shelters run by feminist NGOs often means that women seeking refuge there have to pay sizeable sums for their accommodation. Funding provided only for a matter of months or for one year is a problem for the shelters in that it prevents them from carrying out long-term planning. Another result is poor levels of remuneration for the qualified shelter workers. Many shelters could not keep going without the work of volunteers.

One fact emerges clearly from the survey: where shelters are run by feminist NGOs (cf. pp. 14-15), they meet the required standards: women help women, empowerment, maximum safety for threatened women, and no time limit for staying in the shelter. The women's support facilities in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Austria are exemplary in these respects. The principle of confidentiality is fully complied with in almost every country and always in shelters run on feminist lines.

Within the EU free access to shelters for all women is guaranteed. As a rule, only male children up to the age of 16 are allowed to accompany their mother. Exceptions are Finland, where shelters require women to come either only with their children or only without, and Spain, where the government-run shelters require proof of legal residence status and where some refuges impose an upper age limit of 60 years and/or an age limit for children of 12 or 14. In the candidate countries the situation is less satisfactory. One extremely disturbing fact is that in Slovakia women belonging to the Roma ethnic group are in some cases refused access to shelter places.

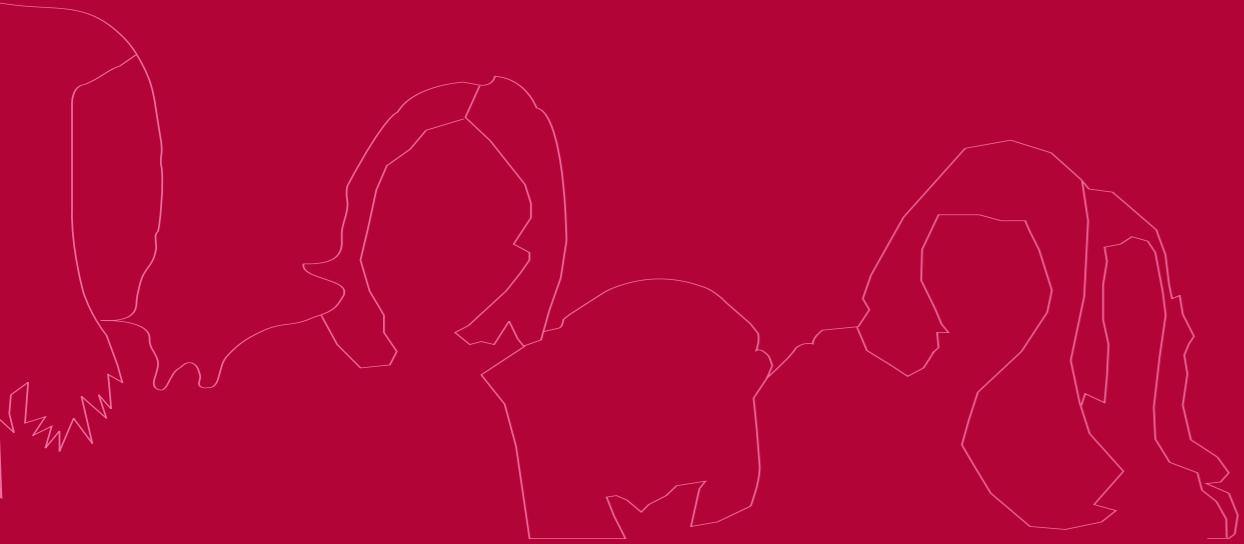
# Outlook

**Given the shortage of shelters and/or shelter places, concerted efforts are urgently needed in the countries of the European Union and even more so in the candidate countries (except Malta).**

**Initiatives to set up new shelters and enlarge existing ones must be supported by the political establishment. Long-term secure financing by the public sector is an absolute necessity.**

**Women's shelters should take the form of NGOs run on feminist lines, because this guarantees compliance with the required quality standards for women's support organisations.**

**The work in shelters calls for professional support and empowerment for women who need it. All the shelter workers should therefore have an appropriate training and be remunerated accordingly. Work in women's shelters should be based on feminist principles. Violence against women is not an individual problem but a social problem with far-reaching ramifications. Ultimately the objective is not merely to help women individually but to bring about the equality of women in society and in partnerships.**



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