

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The WAVE Report 2015 provides up to date information on specialist support services for women victims of gender based violence in 46 European countries¹, including the 28 EU countries. The report this year is broader in scope and, in addition to information on national women's helplines and women's shelters, this year includes information on non-residential support services for women who have experienced gender based violence. Furthermore, information on national women's networks is included for the first time as they play an essential role in developing specialist support services for women and data collection. Aside from core service provision, the Report this year includes, for the first time, examples of prevention and training work undertaken by women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and makes visible, the fact that women's NGOs are not only providing services to victims but also engage in manifold activities around awareness raising, prevention work and training. The report also attempts to set some base line data on policy, funding, emergency barring orders and collaborations with perpetrator programmes.

Basic standards for specialist women's support services have been published in the WAVE Report 2014 and they can be found in the annex.

¹ The following countries were surveyed: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. This list differs from the Council of Europe membership in that up to now WAVE has not included Andorra, Monaco and San Marino in surveys but does include Belarus and Kosovo who are not currently members of the Council of Europe.

National Women's Helplines in Europe

Over 60 million women in Europe are victims of gender based violence and their foremost need is to have someone supportive to talk to (FRA Report, 2014 p. 67). Therefore, an easily accessible and widely publicised helpline number is, for many, their first step towards the help and support they need.

TABLE 1 – Overview of National Women's Helplines in Europe

	Total Number of National Women's Helplines	National Women's Helplines Free of Charge	National Women's Helplines Operating 24/7	National Women's Helplines Free of Charge and Operating 24/7
Europe (46)	33 (100%)	26 (79%)	22 (67%)	17 (52 %)
European Union (28)	19 (100%)	16 (84%)	12 (63%)	10 (53 %)
Countries outside the EU (18)	14 (100%)	10 (71%)	10 (71%)	7 (50 %)

As the above table demonstrates 33 of the 46 countries surveyed had a national woman's helpline which provides women seeking help with an easily identifiable point of contact. 13 countries had no national woman's helpline at all, which makes it more difficult for women to access the help and support they need when they have experienced violence. 26 countries did have a women's helpline that was free of charge, which is very important as it enables women to contact the helpline without a partner finding out (for example, from a telephone bill). 22 countries did have a helpline which women could contact at all times of the day and night.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HELPLINES – KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ 17 out of 46 European countries provide a helpline that is both free of charge and runs 24/7
- ▶ Hence only 37% of European countries meet the standards set in the Istanbul Convention
- ▶ 10 out of the EU 28 Member States provide a helpline that is both free of charge and runs 24/7

Recommendations

- ▶ National women's helplines operating 24/7 and free of charge, should be available in all European countries. EU countries need to urgently increase the number of 24/7 helplines free of charge, since currently not even 1/3 of the countries are providing this core service.
- ▶ Women's helplines need to be staffed with trained professionals to provide empowering support for women survivors of violence and should also work closely with other victim support agencies in order to ensure appropriate and effective referrals for both short and long-term support.

Women's Shelters

For 45 years women's shelters have been the main support service for women and their children, if any, fleeing domestic violence. All but one European country has adopted this model of support which has proved most effective in empowering women to establish lives free from violence for themselves and their children, if any.

TABLE 2 – Summary of Findings on Women's Shelters in Europe

Countries	Total Population	Women's Shelters	Beds Needed	Beds Available*	Beds Missing	Minimum Standards Met
Europe (46)	831,096,151 (100%)	1,842	83,110	26,785 (32%)	47,556	5 (n=41)
European Union (28)	507,095,479 (61%)	1,481	50,710	20,831 (41%)	19,480	4 (n=25)
Countries outside the EU (18)	324,000,672 (39%)	354	32,400	5,954 (18%)	22,076	1 (n=16)
"Old" EU Countries** (15)	402,201,084 (80% of EU)	1,321	40,224	17,900 (45%)	11,509	2 (n=13)
"New" EU Countries** (13)	104,894,395 (20% of EU)	167	10,489	2,931 (28%)	7,971	2 (n=12)

* "Beds available" and "beds missing" do not add up to 100% as a surplus in one country does not ameliorate a deficit in another.

** Regarding the definition "Old" and "New" EU Countries see Glossary on p. 102.

The table above shows the total amount of women's shelter bed spaces available and how these are distributed throughout Europe. As can be seen, overall only a third of the accommodation in women's shelters which the Istanbul Convention considered to be the minimum required service provision is available. Out of the 41 countries for which WAVE was able to gather data in 2015, only 5 countries met this minimum standard of provision. These resources are, however, not evenly distributed throughout Europe and are mostly concentrated in the 28 EU Member States. Even within the EU there are more women's shelter resources available in the 15 EU Member States which joined before 2004. The EU Member States which joined after 2004 are still missing almost three quarters of the shelter beds they require.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS – KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ About 1,842 women's shelters for victims of domestic violence are available in Europe
- ▶ These provide approximately 26,785 places for women survivors and their children, if any
- ▶ 57% of the minimum standard for shelter place provision is missing in Europe
- ▶ 38% of the minimum standard for shelter place provision is missing in 28 EU Member States
- ▶ 76% of the minimum standard for shelter place provision is missing in "new" EU Member States
- ▶ 29% of the minimum standard for shelter place provision is missing in the "old" EU Member States

Recommendations

- ▶ The European countries outside the EU and EU Member States are urged to step up efforts to close the serious gap in service provision women face when fleeing violence with their children. The rights of victims to live in a safe space free from violence must be guaranteed. The minimum standard of 1 place per 10,000 inhabitants in specialist women's services should be met by all EU countries.
- ▶ There is an urgent need to expand quantity and accessibility of specialist services based on a gender sensitive analysis of domestic violence and a human rights approach to service delivery. In addition these services need to be expanded to more adequately meet the needs of differently abled women and migrant women, particularly undocumented migrant women.

Women's Centres

All 46 European countries provide non-residential specialist support services such as women's crisis or counselling centres serving women survivors of violence, rape crisis centres, pro-active intervention centres, regional domestic violence centres and similar services, serving only or predominantly women. Information on these services is included for the first time in the WAVE Report.

TABLE 3 – Summary of Findings on Distribution of Women's Centres in Europe

	Total Population	Total Number of Women's Centres
Europe (46)	831,096,151 (100%)	2,937
European Union (28)	507,095,479 (61%)	2,692 (92 % of all centres)
Countries outside the EU (18)	324,000,672 (39%)	245 (8 % of all centres)
"Old" EU Countries (15)	402,201,084 (80 % of EU)	2,522 (86 % of all centres)
"New" EU Countries (13)	104,894,395 (20 % of EU)	170 (6 % of all centres)

This table shows that the WAVE research uncovered a total of 2,937 specialist women's services in Europe offering non-residential services for women who have experienced gender violence. These services are, however, very unevenly distributed throughout Europe and mostly concentrated in the 15 countries which were members of the EU before 2004.

WOMEN'S CENTRES – KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ There are 2,937 women's centres in Europe
- ▶ The distribution of these services is very worrying – 86 % are located in "old" EU Member States and only 6 % in new EU Member States
- ▶ There is an urgent need to develop women's specialist non-residential support services in all European countries

Recommendations

- ▶ Women victims of violence and their children should have access to specialist women's centres in their vicinity. Therefore, women's centres offering various types of support should be available in all regions. The gap in service provision between "old" and "new" EU Member States must be urgently addressed.
- ▶ Existing specialist services should have secure funding for their work, be well networked and advertised to provide a safety net for victims of gender based violence. Services for specific groups of women, for example, minority ethnic women and women in difficult circumstances such as female asylum seekers need to be expanded.