

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Aim

The WAVE Report 2015 was more ambitious in scope than in previous years and the aim was to address some measures in the Istanbul convention central to the provision of protection and support for women survivors of violence and their children.

Data was collected as in earlier years on national women's helplines and women's shelters in all 46 countries³. In addition this year the questionnaire addressed some aspects of National Networking of women's NGO's; National Policy and Funding; Journeys to women's support services; Women's centres; Prevention, awareness raising, campaigning; Training; Legal protection for women and cooperation on work with perpetrators. Furthermore, in order to contextualise the data on women's shelters and women's national helplines we also asked for data on other domestic violence shelters and other national helplines.

By broadening the knowledge base on specialist women's support services in Europe, WAVE aims to respond to the call for improved data collection by the European Parliament and Commission among others.

The fact that in many areas data was not available to inform questions, indicates which areas need improvement and what the problem is. For example, it was difficult for respondents to provide information on funding of specialist services for women who have experienced gender based violence, because in many countries the government does not make this information available. Also there is very little data on how many protection orders are issued in countries, which points to serious problems in implementation. The common lack of data in many areas, resulted in the author's deciding, that the report would not only focus on existing data, but also on making gaps in data collection visible.

Research Design

It was the aim of the research, to not only focus on quantitative data, such as number of services available, but also on the quality of services and to try to find out if standards from the Istanbul Convention, such as immediate protection and safety for all victims are realised. Multiple methods for data collection were used, such as literature research, information gathering from international bodies such as CEDAW and a questionnaire in combination with telephone interviews with respondents to the questionnaire to clarify information.

An obvious consequence of covering new fields as well as quantitative and qualitative aspects was that the questionnaire became very long covering 30 pages. The questionnaire was first drafted and introduced to WAVE members in June 2015. It was redrafted and following feedback from members and piloted in Austria and England and as a consequence some questions were taken out. The research started from the assumption, that not all countries will be able to provide data, either because there is no data or because they will not be able to gather the data in the time. Despite these anticipated difficulties, the research aimed to make the many challenges in data collection visible. The goal, to gather baseline information in as many countries as possible, rather than to aim for a complete overview in all countries, which is not realistic at this point of time, has resulted, in some questionnaires being returned with only partial information, as can be seen in many of the tables presented in the report.

³ Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, 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.

To avoid asking for information we already had the WAVE office team filled in some parts of the questionnaire for each country, using existing information from sources such as CEDAW Shadow Report, EIGE and Council of Europe Monitoring Report and previous WAVE reports. Experienced practitioners in WAVE member organisations were invited as experts on women's specialist services in their country to review the information sent and make a note of any changes. For ease of understanding the WAVE members who completed the questionnaire are referred to as respondents in the rest of this report.

The final electronic questionnaire was sent to 50 WAVE respondents in 46 countries, that is, in the UK the questionnaire was filled in by WAVE respondents in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the responses were aggregated for one analytical category, UK. Similarly in Belgium two WAVE respondents in Belgium Flanders and Belgium Walloon (including Brussels capital city) completed questionnaires and the results were aggregated for analysis into a single entity, Belgium.

WAVE respondents were expected to contact other agencies in order to gather the breadth and depth of information required to complete the questionnaire. Given the fact that WAVE respondents are mostly working in women's networks and NGOs with very few resources and a large workload, the WAVE researchers were delighted to get 46 questionnaires from 42 countries back. Only four countries were unable to return a completed questionnaire (Azerbaijan, Ireland, Poland and Sweden). For these four countries the data from earlier WAVE reports are used.

In addition to answering the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to make themselves available for up to two hours for a skype interview with a member of the WAVE office team to clarify any anomalies or fill any gaps in information. This obviously demanded a considerable investment of time from WAVE respondents and it is another measure of their commitment that 26 respondents were able to comply with all these requests. Three skype interviews could not be completed because of technical difficulties and seven respondents preferred to answer queries through email correspondence rather than a skype interview. In ten cases respondents were not able to find time for a skype interview.

This WAVE Report has been compiled from the wealth of data provided and, in addition, a summary of each country has been made available on the WAVE website <http://www.wave-network.org>. Population statistics have been taken from the Eurostat database, last updated on 13.04.2015 or, if available, WAVE respondents provided population data from their most recent country census.

Data Analysis

In some areas of data collection it was to be expected, that many countries would not have "hard" data. This is especially the case with questions on quality standards, for instance the question of whether women's shelters provide services free of charge. It is very rare that countries collect such data on the national level or have a research addressing this question. Thus respondents were first asked for data and if none was available, they would be asked for an estimation, based on their expert opinion. In the absence of national data collection this is often the only way to get an impression of the level of support for women experiencing gender based violence.

A further caveat in interpreting the information provided is that some have only included services in their questionnaire which have been specifically developed to meet the needs of women and children affected by gender based violence. Other countries have included a larger number of services and include those which were not specifically developed to assist women victims of gender-based violence, but which nevertheless provide a support structure.

Definitions of terms are difficult when conducting research in 46 different countries, with different economic, social and political histories which have influenced the development of social welfare structures. Organisations wishing to improve support for women who have experienced gender based violence have adapted to these differing conditions often in pragmatic ways, filling gaps in provision and influencing or supplementing existing structures. This can make comparison difficult and in particular for the range of women's centres, the information provided in the report can be taken as base line data to inform further research. Categories of non-residential support services need to be better defined in future research to avoid counting services twice, for example, in this report we have attempted to distinguish between non-residential services of women's shelters and not count these as women's centres. Similarly, there is a continuing difficulty in assessing the number of resources available for women who have experienced sexual violence. Women's centres also serve survivors of all forms of sexual violence, which is especially important in areas where no specialist services such as rape crisis centres exist. Rape crisis or sexual assault centres can be quite diverse and be located within other institutions and structures. Differentiation of specialist services has taken place in the past decade which can be seen as a positive sign, but it also makes it difficult to collect information and to get an impression of the extent to which countries meet the recommendation that one such centre should be available per every 200,000 inhabitants (Council of Europe, 2012 p. 83).

Another factor which has to be taken into account in comparing service provision is, obviously, size of population. Where population size was a factor, we have grouped countries into the following categories for population size for comparison purposes.

Countries with populations of under 1 million:

Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta and Montenegro

Countries with populations of under 5 million:

Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova and Slovenia

Countries with populations of under 10 million:

Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland

Countries with populations of under 20 million:

Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania

Countries with populations of over 20 million:

France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, UK

Another difficulty is in comparing the amount of shelter resources available to women in each country. Some shelters count beds and others count rooms. If shelters are under very heavy pressure for space, women may double up in rooms or extra beds will be placed into rooms to accommodate children. For this reason, calculation of the number of spaces available for women in shelters can be fluid. In WAVE data, spaces have been equated with beds, since this seems to be the most common way to count resources available.