

## 8. NATIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORKS

### Introduction

For detailed information on this section, please see table 19 on page 95.

Europe has over 100 national women's networks throughout 46 countries working in the field of combating violence against women. Within these countries are also regional networks, as well as transnational networks; for instance, WAVE is a European network joining over 112 Members of organizations, including national women's networks. The strength of national women's networks are particularly profound in lobbying, prevention and strengthening cooperation including enhancing the capacity and development of and between women's organizations within their respective countries.

Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention iterates that parties should take the necessary measures to adopt and implement comprehensive and coordinated policies related to violence against women, placing the rights and needs of survivors at the centre of all measures. Article 7 also states that the measures be implemented in cooperation with all relevant organizations. Since women's organizations are often at the core of providing holistic and empowering services for women survivors of violence, national women's networks are critical bodies for States to include in decision-making and policy development. National women's networks often work towards improving service provision, with aims at developing accessible and holistic services for women survivors of violence. Furthermore, national women's networks provide the opportunity for organizations working in the same field or for the same cause, to work closely with policy makers. Networks are in a particularly strategic position to act on behalf of its members in policy work and service provision. By uniting in a network, organizations have strengthened representation on a national level, which also strengthens the voice and impact of organizations in terms of policy developments and national standards.

Articles 12–17 of the Istanbul Convention highlight prevention work as an important tool in the prevention of violence against women. The term 'prevention' encompasses awareness raising, education, training of professionals, intervention programmes, and participation of the private sector and media. National women's networks foster enhanced collaboration for awareness raising and prevention work on a particular topic or theme. As the WAVE Report 2015 demonstrates, most national women's networks do conduct prevention and awareness raising activities, while also supporting the national campaigns and prevention work conducted independently by women's NGOs. When conducting joint projects and activities, a network allows organizations to collaborate on a national level, while still being supported in their own community and involved in regional activities.

National women's networks are key in enhancing cooperation between women's organizations; depending on the national law in which a formal network is established, organizations are given opportunities to meet on a regular basis, in which they can share experiences and best practices in the form of informal and formal meetings. During such cooperation, typically held together by the organizational body of a network office, the capacity and development of organizations are improved, allowing the space for the establishment of joint strategies, such as the development of national quality standards for service provision. National women's networks also are often the primary bodies for national data collection. Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention stipulates that data collection must be public and disaggregated at regular intervals on all forms of violence covered by the convention, and that parties should support research in the field and stimulate international cooperation. Due to their strengthened networking and cooperation on a national and international scale, national women's networks are in a strategic position to conduct data collection and research in their relevant areas, providing an independent women's NGO perspective to supplement national data collection by governments. When data is collected individually by organizations, a complete overview of the services and user statistics as a whole in the country is not

always provided. Therefore, networks are ideal platforms for data collection in that they can collect a wider range of data from a larger amount of services, thereby providing a more accurate depiction of services and statistics on a national-scale.

In this WAVE Report 2015, national women's networks can be broad in scope and definition, serving a range of purposes and engaged in various activities. There can be national women's networks which are composed of organizations working for a single cause, such as domestic violence or sexual violence; or networks which are composed of organizations working in one particular thematic area, such as women's shelters, women's helplines, or rape crisis centres. Women's networks can also be composed of mixed services, with a plethora of women's organizations in different services yet working in the same field of combating violence against women. Some networks can be politically affiliated, or be composed of both political and non-political bodies. Members of networks may be only women's organizations, or in some cases, could be individuals or institutions. Furthermore, national women's networks can be informal or formal bodies, with or without a national office, and do not necessarily need to be a legal entity.

## Aims and Content of Data Collection

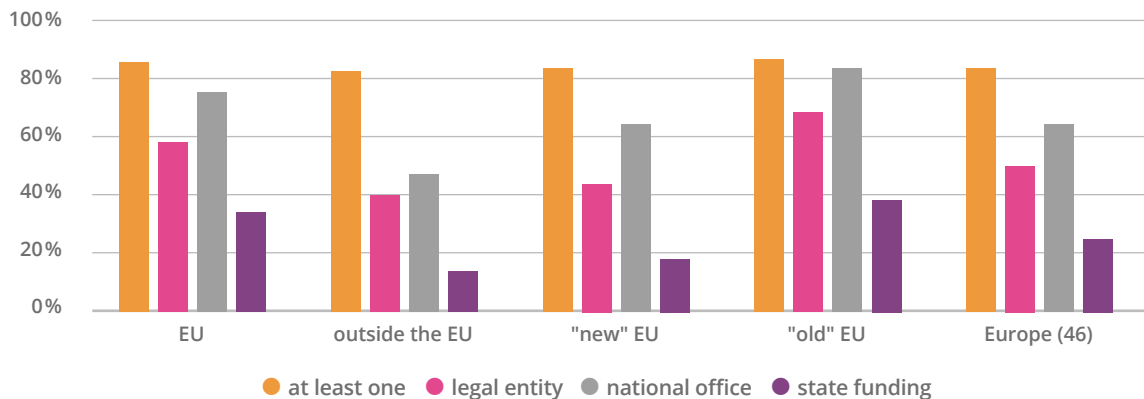
The aim of collecting data on national women's networks is to capture the capacity and cooperation of women's NGOs within networks and to highlight the ways in which networks facilitate data collection and improve cooperation. While individual women's NGOs have been researched in previous reports, there is little information on national women's networks, either in WAVE's previous reports or in other international European publications.

Another aim of collecting information on national women's networks is to determine patterns in population size and geographical regions of countries in relation to the number of national women's networks and women's services. By doing so, we are able to also determine patterns in the need for and quality of such networks. While there may be many national networks in one country in proportion to the amount of services and population, the quality of such networks are also important. Therefore, the analysis of data included indicators developed by WAVE to assess the strength of networks, such as legal entity status, existence of a national office, paid staff, and State funding, to determine the overall impact and sustainability of the networks. Analysing whether States are appropriately funding national women's networks is another important element to determining sustainability of women's networks.

The questions asked in the questionnaire pertaining to national women's networks were; the number of networks; including the type and number of members; activities of the network and strength indicators (legal entity, national office, paid staff, and funding from the national government); if there are plans to form a national women's network and obstacles to forming a national women's network.

## Findings on the Situation of Women's Networks in Europe

FIGURE 11 – Women's Networks in EU Countries and Countries outside the EU



This figure demonstrates that overall, there are not large discrepancies between EU countries and countries of the EU in terms of having at least one national women's networks. Women's networks are common throughout the continent, however, it is the strength indicators which demonstrate greater degrees of variation, with EU countries more likely to have national women's networks which have national offices and are legal entities as well as receive State funding.

## Number of National Women's Networks, and Obstacles to Forming a Network

### Overview of Europe

85% of European countries have at least one national women's network, with a total of 102 networks throughout 39 countries. However, many countries have more than one network, with countries such as Denmark and the UK each listing over ten national women's networks. However, the UK, which contains four countries, reports receiving State funding and has a range of specialist women's support services, so the opportunity to develop and sustain networks is more lucrative.

15% of European countries do not have a national women's network (Belarus, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain). Of these countries which do not have a network, over half (Iceland, Luxembourg and Malta) indicated that they do not have plans to form a national women's network in the future, reasoning that they are small countries with populations under one million. Therefore, having a small population is a major factor obviating the need for a national women's network. This suggests that in small countries, cooperation between organizations is generally good without a formal network structure in place.

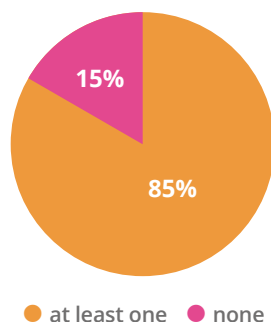


FIGURE 12 – Countries in Europe with at least One National Women's Network

This figure demonstrates that 85% of European countries have at least one national women's network.

## Comparison between EU & European Countries Outside the EU

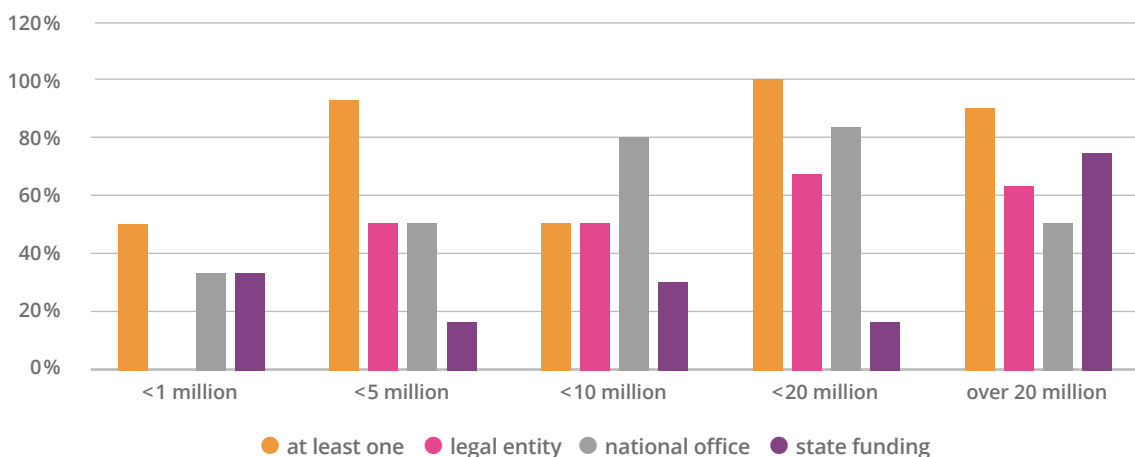
86% of EU countries and 83% of European countries outside the EU have at least one national women's network. There is no difference between the "old" and "new" EU countries in terms of having at least one national women's network. However, the difference in numbers is significant in terms of the amount of national networks per country between the EU and European countries outside the EU countries. While EU countries have on average three national women's networks per country, European countries outside the EU have on average nearly two national women's networks per country. This indicates that EU countries, particularly "old" EU countries, are more likely to have a variety of different national women's networks within one country, while European countries outside the EU are more likely to have a narrower focus for networks.

For instance Austria, an "old"-EU country, has six national women's networks, five of which have different specialist focuses: a network on women's counselling centres for sexual violence, a network of intervention centres, two networks of women's shelters, a network of counselling centres for women and girls and a political network platform against domestic violence. Furthermore, Germany has five different networks focusing on different service provision: a network of rape crisis centres and counselling centres, two networks of women's shelters, a network against trafficking and to promote the human rights of migrants and a network to improve the health care of women survivors of violence. These wide varieties of networks are in large part due to the vast amount of women's services available within some countries, and due to having the resources available to develop and sustain a network (both Austria and Germany report receiving State funding and are high in strength indicators developed by WAVE).

Ukraine, a non-EU country as well as a post-communist country, still has only two women's shelters and three women's centres. Despite the large population of over 42 million people, there is less need to form a network due to the low number of specialist women's support services and women's NGOs; hence Ukraine has four networks which focus more on gender equality and lobbying. Poland is another example; with a population around 38 million, Poland has only one national women's network called the Women's Rights Centre, since there are so few specialist services for women. Therefore, the type and number of networks often depends not only on the amount and type of services available within a country, but also on the historical, political, social, and economical development of countries.

Countries with a population of less than 20 million report having at least one national women's network, with the majority having over two networks per country, while the largest countries with over 20 million people tend to have on average four networks per country. On average the lower the population, the fewer number of networks per country.

**FIGURE 13 - Women's Networks in Europe - Existence, Legal Entity, National Office, and State Funding**



As the figure on the previous page shows, larger countries are more likely to have networks which meet the strength indicators (national office, legal entity, and State funding).

### **Obstacles to Forming a Network**

There are many reasons why a network does not exist within a country, which are not related to population. The size, variety and amount of networks also depend on the political, geographical and social context of a given country. For instance, Spain, a country with over 46 million inhabitants, has no national women's network, while Belarus, with a population of just over nine million, has no network either. While there are large population differences between the two countries, both refer to political and social obstacles, citing differences in views about gender-based violence, with some NGOs or governments recognizing different forms and definitions of violence against women. However, it is important to note that while there is no national women's network in Spain, there are regional networks, ensuring that women's organizations within such a large country are still able to organize collaboratively within their regions.

Although Latvia wishes to develop a network, the country does not have a national women's network which focuses exclusively on violence against women, citing a lack of financial and human resources as an obstacle to developing a network. In Romania, there is a lack of core funding to enable more than project based work, leaving the four networks in Romania relying on grants in the absence of governmental funding; similarly, Montenegro and Switzerland both refer to lack of funds. In Latvia, none of the NGO service providers for women suffering from violence receive financial support from the State and it is reported that there is a lack of cooperation between the government and women's NGOs. This is in stark contrast to the smaller countries like Iceland and Luxembourg, which do not want to form a network and also claim to have good informal and formal cooperation with the State.

There are also problems for some women's networks which do already exist, in terms of sustainability. Slovakia indicates that there is a lack of capacity and sustainability of organizations in the one network which already exists (the current network is weak in strength indicators: not a legal entity, lacks a national office, does not have paid staff, and receives no State funding). Hungary indicates that the budget of NGOs working in the field of violence against women, and the lack of sustainability, means that there is no financial support to form another network in the first place.

Language and cultural differences can be another hindrance to forming and sustaining a national women's network. In Belgium, there are language and cultural differences, as well as a segregated political system, which makes it difficult to find common ground and organize. The same applies to Switzerland, in that multiple languages makes cooperation and coordination challenging. However, to remedy this, Belgium has regional networks. For instance, in the Flanders part of Belgium, there is a network, which provides support to women's support services in the region. In Czech Republic, government funding tends to be geared towards favouring a gender-neutral approach, which does not recognize the gendered nature of violence against women. Consequently, women's NGOs which base their work on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence have difficulty getting funding, which poses an additional obstacle for feminist NGOs wishing to form networks.

In conclusion, common obstacles to developing a national women's network in countries are; lack of funding resulting in a lack of sustainability; linguistic, cultural and political divisions; differences in attitudes to and definitions of violence against women; national legislation which makes support difficult and fosters competition for funding among NGOs; intensified bureaucratic procedures; and a turn towards gender neutrality.

## Legal Entity, National Office, Paid Staff, Funding (strength indicators)

### Legal Entity

51% of European countries with at least one national women's network report having at least one network which is a legal entity, in addition 64% of countries indicate at least one national network in their country has a national office. There is a strong correlation between legal entity status and having a national office.

EU countries are more likely to have at least one national network which is a legal entity, 58% of EU countries with at least one national women's network have legal entity status, compared to only 40% of European countries outside the EU. The difference in legal entity status is even larger in terms of "old" and "new" EU countries, in which 69% of "old" EU countries and only 45% of "new" EU countries with at least one national women's network report having legal entity status. Therefore, EU countries, particularly old EU countries, are more likely to have at least one national network which is a legal entity.

The smaller the size of the country, the less likely it is that at least one national network is a legal entity. For instance, none of the countries under one million population have a network which is a legal entity, while 63% of countries with populations over ten million report a minimum of one national network being a legal entity.

### National Office

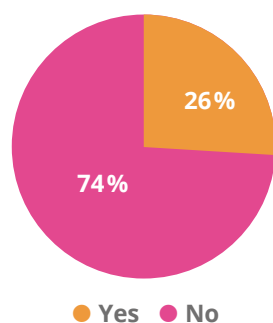
Generally, most national women's networks have a national office, with 25 of 39 countries reporting having a national women's network have a national office. EU countries, particularly "old" EU countries, are more likely to have at least one national network with a national office. While the gap between EU and European countries outside the EU is even larger. 18 of the 24 EU countries with a national women's network have a national office; on the other hand, only seven of the 15 European countries outside the EU which report having a national women's network have at least one network with a national office.

### Paid Staff

Eight countries report that national women's networks do not have paid staff (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey). This funding was withdrawn from the Romanian network at the end of 2015. All these countries except for Lithuania also report receiving no State funding. Government funding for women's support services in Lithuania are often project funding and this could be linked to the lack of paid staff. Otherwise, there is not enough data on the amount of paid staff for the national women's networks to draw any strong conclusions.

The data on paid staff is scarce. However, of the data which was provided: the countries with no paid staff for one national women's network are: Croatia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Turkey. The most paid staff are reportedly in Finland, France, Georgia, and UK.

### State Funding



**FIGURE 14 – Number of Existing Women's Networks receiving State Funding**

As this figure demonstrates, only one quarter of countries in Europe with at least one national women's network receive state funding.

All countries, regardless of geographical or political groupings, have one element in common; lack of State funding for national women's networks. European countries outside the EU are more likely to report lack of State funding: Liechtenstein and Norway. 33% of EU countries which have national women's networks report receiving State funding (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, and the UK), a majority of which are "old" EU countries. Additionally, only four countries which have networks with legal entity status also receive State funding, and meet all strength indicators developed by WAVE (Austria, Belgium, France and Germany).

There is not a high correlation between whether a national women's network is a legal entity and receives State funding. Some legal entities receive no State funding, while some legal entities do. However, when looking at State funding separately, a different pattern emerges. Countries with populations of less than 20 million have the lowest number of networks with State funding, while countries in the with populations larger than 20 million have the highest number of networks which receive State funding.

Sustainable funding is essential to the longevity and activities of the network, in terms of paid staff, data collection and conducting activities to prevent and combat violence against women, all requirements of the Istanbul Convention. Only four countries meet all these requirements (Austria, Belgium, France and Germany) all "old" EU countries.

## Conclusion

Many countries are low in strength indicators, particularly European countries outside EU. Three of these with national women's networks report not meeting any of the strength indicators, as in, they do not receive State funding, are not a legal entity, have no paid staff, and have no national office (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Turkey).

## Recommendations

- ▶ Since lack of State funding is an obstacle to establishing and sustaining a national women's network, and since a majority of European countries with at least one national women's network do not receive State funding, States are encouraged to provide sustainable annual core funding for national women's networks as part of their due diligence, particularly for European countries outside the EU.
- ▶ With some countries reporting a turn towards gender neutrality and increased competition for funding, States must develop and implement gender-sensitive policies, as required in Article 6 of the Istanbul Convention, and support the women-centred approach unique to specialist women's NGOs.
- ▶ It is crucial that States expand and improve their support of quality specialist women's support services, in order to strengthen the cooperation of women's NGOs across large geographical spaces and to enhance efforts to prevent and combat violence against women.
- ▶ A lack of administrative data on support services in most countries and the lack of homogeneity of such data, makes comparative analysis on the national level difficult or impossible. States should therefore provide adequate funding to support national networks of women's support services and develop their capacity for systematic data collection and promote the exchange and dissemination of information.

**TABLE 19 – National Women's Networks in 46 European Countries**

Countries	National Women's Networks	Number of Members	Legal Entity	Existence of a National Office	State Funding
Albania	3	18	Yes	Yes	No
Armenia	1	7	/	/	/
Austria	6	141	Yes	Yes	Yes
Azerbaijan	/	/	/	/	/
Belarus	0	/	/	/	/
Belgium	2	33	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2	69	No	No	No
Bulgaria	1	11	Yes	Yes	Yes
Croatia	1	30	Yes	Yes	No
Cyprus	1	9	No	/	/
Czech Republic	2	25	Yes	Yes	No
Denmark	11	42	/	Yes	/
Estonia	2	14	Yes	Yes	No
Finland	4	98	Yes	Yes	No
France	1	64	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	1	14	Yes	Yes	No
Germany	5	278	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greece	1	61	Yes	Yes	No
Hungary	2	27	Yes	Yes	No
Iceland	0	/	/	/	/
Ireland	2	35	/	Yes	Yes
Italy	1	73	Yes	Yes	No
Kosovo	2	101	Yes	/	/
Latvia	0	/	/	/	/
Liechtenstein	1	16	No	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	1	10	No	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	0	/	/	/	/
Macedonia	1	20	Yes	Yes	No
Malta	0	/	/	/	/
Moldova	1	18	/	/	No
Montenegro	1	6	No	No	No
Netherlands	1	70	/	/	/
Norway	2	86	/	Yes	Yes
Poland	1	7	/	/	/
Portugal	2	/	Yes	Yes	/
Romania	4	39	No	Yes	No
Russia	3	At least 150	No	No	No
Serbia	1	27	No	Yes	No
Slovakia	1	8	No	No	No
Slovenia	1	19	No	No	No
Spain	0	/	/	/	/
Sweden <sup>37</sup>	2	230	/	/	/
Switzerland	4	1,092 <sup>38</sup>	Yes	Yes	No
Turkey	1	21	No	No	No
Ukraine	4	60	Yes	No	/
United Kingdom	19	571	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>3,520</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>

<sup>37</sup> Information provided on the websites of the organisations Roks – <http://www.roks.se/about-roks-1>, and Unizon - <http://unizon.se/>

<sup>38</sup> The data is an aggregated number of organisation and individual memberships.

**TABLE 20 – Women's Centres in 46 European Countries**

Countries	Total Population	Number of Women's Centres	Indicator (Population/ Women's Centres)	Geographical Coverage
Albania	2,895,947	6	482,658	Major cities
Armenia	3,010,598	13	231,584	All provinces
Austria	8,506,889	32	265,840	Major cities
Azerbaijan	9,356,483	0	/	/
Belarus	9,463,840	0	/	/
Belgium	11,203,992	25	448,160	All provinces
Bosnia & Herzegovina	3,791,662	8	473,958	All provinces
Bulgaria	7,245,677	14	517,548	Major cities
Croatia	4,246,809	20	212,340	/
Cyprus	858,000	1	858,000	Major cities
Czech Republic	10,538,300	23	458,187	All provinces
Denmark	5,627,235	10	562,723	/
Estonia	1,315,819	0	/	/
Finland	5,451,270	20	272,563	/
France	66,320,000	/	/	/
Georgia	4,497,617	6	749,602	Major cities
Germany	80,767,463	420	192,303	Most provinces
Greece	10,816,286	57	189,759	Just major cities
Hungary	9,877,365	1	9,877,365	All provinces
Iceland	329,100	6	54,850	Capital city
Ireland <sup>39</sup>	4,605,501	23	200,239	/
Italy	60,782,668	140	434,162	Most provinces
Kosovo	1,794,180	10	179,418	All provinces
Latvia	2,001,468	21	95,308	Just major cities
Liechtenstein	37,129	5	7,426	Capital city
Lithuania	2,943,472	16	183,967	All provinces
Luxembourg	549,680	13	42,283	All provinces
Macedonia	2,022,547	3	674,182	Capital city
Malta	425,284	1	425,284	Capital city
Moldova	3,559,497	26	136,904	All provinces
Montenegro	621,521	3	207,174	Capital city
Netherlands	16,829,289	44	382,484	All provinces
Norway	5,107,970	23	222,086	All provinces
Poland <sup>40</sup>	38,017,856	35	1,086,224	Capital city
Portugal	10,347,822	7	1,478,260	All provinces
Romania	19,947,311	26	767,204	/
Russia	142,856,536	20	7,142,827	/
Serbia	7,146,759	28	255,241	All provinces
Slovakia	5,415,949	5	1,083,190	/
Slovenia	2,061,085	7	294,441	Just major cities
Spain	46,439,864	869	53,441	All provinces
Sweden	9,644,864	/	/	/
Switzerland	8,139,631	27	301,468	All provinces
Turkey	76,667,864	59	1,299,455	Just major cities
Ukraine	42,701,791	3	14,233,930	Capital city
United Kingdom	64,308,261	863	74,517	All provinces
<b>Total</b>	<b>831,096,151</b>	<b>2,937</b>	<b>282,975</b>	

<sup>39</sup> Information provided in the WAVE Report 2014, P.63, published in 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.P.70.