



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE

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WAVE Position Paper for the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), February 2013

Prevalence studies reveal that approximately **one out of four women** (i.e., 25%) and in some countries up to 70% of women are suffering from physical and/or sexual violence by a partner during their lifetime.¹ This amounts to approximately 100 million women in Europe. Children are always affected by the violence against their mothers as well, either directly or indirectly by witnessing the violence or its consequences and impacts. Every day women and sometimes also their children are killed when trying to leave the violent partner/father.

Women's support services, such as women's shelters, women's helplines or rape crises centres are crucial to support survivors of violence. Unfortunately there is a concerning lack of such services worldwide and Europe is, unfortunately, no exception. According to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), every country should have at least 1 national women's helpline operating 24hours/7days and free of charge. Preliminary findings of the forthcoming WAVE Country Report however show **that only 16 out of 45 European countries have such a helpline. 15 countries have no national women's helpline at all.**²

Further, women's shelters play a vital role in supporting the empowerment and support of women survivors of violence and their children. Unfortunately there is a concerning lack of women's shelter places in Europe. WAVE research shows, that there are approximately 2,370 women's shelters in 45 European countries, offering ca 28,360 places. According to the minimum standard recommended by the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, Including Domestic Violence, there should be 1 place in women's shelter per 10,000 inhabitants,³ **amounting to ca. 82,320 women's shelter places needed in Europe. Thus at least 54,550 (66%) women's shelter places are missing.** The situation is especially concerning in Eastern Europe and in the new EU member states.⁴

Compared to the **costs of violence against women**, which in Europe amounts to an estimates 16 billion Euros per year⁵, governments' budgets for the prevention of violence against women and their children are meager. WAVE calls upon governments to publish **information about the extent of state**

¹ UN Women: Violence against Women Prevalence Data: Survey by Country Compiled by UN Women March 2011
http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/vaw_prevalence_matrix_15april_2011.pdf

² WAVE Country report 2012 on Violence against Women (publication forthcoming).;The report will be published on the WAVE website: www.wave-network.org

³ Council of Europe/ Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, Including Domestic Violence (2008): Final Activity Report, Strasbourg; minimum standard, quoted in the explanatory report of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2011.

⁴ See WAVE Fact sheet Statistic 2011on Women's Shelters in Europe

⁵ Psytel, 2006 Daphne Project on the cost of domestic violence in Europe

funding for women's support services and welcomes the suggestion of Prof. Sylvia Walby to develop an **indicator of the extent of state funding of women's support services**.⁶

Regarding the argument of some governments, that the **economic crisis** does not allow for adequate funding of services, WAVE recalls the Beijing Platform for Action Strategic objective E.2., in which states have undertaken *"to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women."*

All women survivors of violence, including undocumented migrant and asylum seeking women, should be able to exercise their fundamental right to protection and support

It should not be accepted that the economic crises is used as an excuse for further budget cuts and the deterioration of the situation, which would jeopardize health, life and freedom of hundreds of thousands of women and their children in Europe. No women's shelter shall be closed! Additional women's shelter places should be created daily in Europe, until we meet the minimum standard of providing 1 women's shelter place per 10,000 inhabitants to women and children survivors of violence!

WAVE calls upon the CSW to adopt strong conclusions demanding comprehensive and effective strategies to end violence against women. In particular, United Nations member states should be urged to increase the number of women's shelters and other women's support services and to provide adequate provision and sustainable funding.

Minimum Standards for Women's Support Services

Women victims of violence and their children need adequate support from the state and their communities to have a real chance to live a life free from violence. Often women survivors of violence cannot leave the violent partner or family because they are dependent economically and socially on the abusers. Undocumented migrant women would rather endure beatings than call the police for fear of being arrested or deported. They often face double discrimination and are denied access to services.⁷ These circumstances prevent women from seeking justice, protection and support and prolong the injustice they experience at the hands of their abuser. **States should guarantee all women survivors of violence access to justice, protection and support, irrespective of their immigration status.**

Independent, specialized and well-resourced women's support services are needed!

It is widely recognized among researchers, practitioners and in international documents, that women survivors of violence and their children need services specialized on the issue of violence (see Council of Europe Convention 2011). General services such as social services or general shelters are not adequate provisions. Instead, specialized women's support services are necessary, as are specialized doctors for specific health problems that are trained on identifying and appropriately responding to

⁶ Interview conducted by EIGE: <http://www.eige.europa.eu/content/document/violence-against-women-victim-support-interview-with-sylvia-walby>.

⁷ PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) (2012): Strategies to End Double Violence Against Undocumented Women, Report Download: <http://picum.org/en/publications/reports/>

cases of violence against women, taking into account that the health sector is often the first entry point for women survivors of violence in order to access key protection and support services.

Services need to be specialized in two ways: first, they need to be specifically targeted at women survivors and their children. Further they need to be specialized on violence against women as a gender-specific form of violence. In order to empower women to live a life without violence, this requires addressing the root causes of violence against women, which lie in the *“historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women.”*⁸

Services supporting women survivors of violence and their children should be run by independent NGOs. The principle of independence is important to guarantee that the interests of women victims of violence and their children are at the centre of the work. NGOs running services should be only committed to the rights and the support of victims and should not be dependent on any party, religious group, state authority or any other institution.

WAVE has established **minimum standards** in service provision, including the following⁹:

- Every woman survivor of violence and her children should be guaranteed effective protection and adequate support without discrimination on any ground (age, status, nationality, ethnic background, ability, residence status, religion or any other ground).
- Undocumented women survivors of violence and their children should be guaranteed the right to access shelters
- Adequate number of women’s shelters and rape crisis centres in every country and region, funded by the state and run by independent women’s NGOs, should be provided
- Women’s shelters. At least 1 place per 10.000 inhabitants
- Women’s centres/rape crises centres: at least 1 per 200.000 female inhabitants
- At least one national women’s helpline per country, where all women victims of violence can get assistance 24 hours a day/7days a week and free of charge.
- Ensure availability of specific support services for women with disabilities and for migrant/minority and refugee women.
- Outreach services to victims in rural areas.
- Middle and long-term support and – if the woman wishes - therapy to overcome the traumatic experiences of violence.
- All women’s services should apply a gender-specific and feminist approach.¹⁰
- Governments should ensure that all services reflect a multi-sectoral approach that is based on institutionalized partnerships of relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations and offers effective referrals to needed services for women survivors.
- All services for women victims of violence should be free of charge and should aim at empowering women and ensuring their safety; they should also have the necessary resources to provide adequate support to the women’s children.
- Programs for perpetrators should have the safety of survivors at the centre and should be run in close partnerships with women’s support services.

⁸ United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993

⁹ See WAVE Country Report 2010

¹⁰ Feminist means an approach aiming at establishing equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women and ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women, by empowering women and supporting their right to autonomy and self-determination.

It is also necessary to guarantee **social and economic rights of women** so that they have a chance to live a self-determined life and to not depend on their husbands or families. The following social and economic rights should be granted to all women and in particular to women victims of violence:

- The right to affordable housing. Women survivors of violence should not be constrained to live with a violent partner even after a separation, for lack of affordable housing. Also, women and their children should not have to stay in a women's shelter for a long period due to a lack of affordable housing.
- The right to free health care for all women victims of violence. States should ensure that health care providers are trained to identify and respond to violence against women and to refer survivors to other essential services.
- The right to free or affordable childcare.
- The right to education and training, including the right (not the obligation!) to free language courses for migrant and refugee women survivors of violence.
- The right for support in finding a job which ensures the subsistence of the woman and her children.
- The right to adequate financial assistance (at a level that ensures basic needs for all women who do not have a sufficient income of their own).
- Independent residence permits (independent from the husband) for women survivors of violence and humanitarian visas for undocumented women.

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