

[*FemCities*]

Gender-based violence: Strategies for Policy Responses

Conference Documentation

[*FemCities*] Conference 2025

Athens, Greece



Publishing information

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1. Photographic Impressions of the Conference







2. Program



FemCities Conference 2025 Athens

"Gender-Based Violence: Strategies for policy responses"

Thursday & Friday, June 5-6, 2025

Stelios Foundation Conference Hall, Kidathinaion 22, Athens, 105 58



CITY OF ATHENS

Thursday, June 5, 2025

09:00 – 09:30 | Arrival & Registration

09:30 – 10:00 | Welcome by Maria Stratigaki, Deputy Mayor, City of Athens

Official Opening:

• Haris Doukas, Mayor, City of Athens

• Katerina Patsogianni, General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights

Presentation of the Easy History Video, Stelios Philanthropic Foundation

10:00 – 10:30 | Presentation of the FemCities Network

Ricarda Goetz-Preisner, City of Vienna

10:30 – 11:15 | Policies of the City of Athens to combat Gender-Based Violence

Georgia Bouri, Sofoklis Panagiotou, Anastasia Foulouli, City of Athens

11:15 – 11:30 | Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00 | Presentation of the Latest GREVIO Report

Marcelline Naudi, GREVIO

12:00 – 13:00 | Panel Discussion on the GREVIO Report and the Role of Municipalities

Moderation by: Ricarda Goetz - Preisner, City of Vienna

Marcelline Naudi, GREVIO

Maria Stratigaki, City of Athens

Sabine Gasser, City of Vienna

Simona Topolinjak, City of Ljubljana

Ieva Dirmaite, City of Vilnius

Mahaut Bertu, City of Nantes

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:45 | Comparative Assessment of Equality Policies in 10 European Countries

Areti Mavrommati - Lagani, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences,

Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation scholar

14:45 – 15:30 | Supporting Survivors: Citad'Elles

Mahaut Bertu, Caroline Godard, City of Nantes

15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee Break

15:45 – 16:30 | Cyberviolence as a new form of Gender-Based Violence

Sabine Gasser, City of Vienna

16:30 – 16:45 | Wrap up of 1st day

19:00 | Networking Dinner in a restaurant (only for International Guests)

FemCities | Conference 2025 Athens

Friday, June 6, 2025

09:00 – 09:30 | Arrival

09:30 – 09:45 | Review of the first day

09:45 – 10:30 | LGBTQI+ The challenges regarding GBV and Hate Speech
Anna Aperi| Konstadinidi, Special Advisor Diversity Charter Greece,
Member of Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)

10:30 – 11:15 | Disabled women & GBV
Christina Sarri, Vaggelis Avgoulas, NPO "Me Alla Matia"

11:15 – 11:30 | Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:15 | Penal Mediation in Greece
Foteini Gkrouma, Municipality of Peristeri

12:15 – 13:00 | Across Europe, Towards Accountability: Comparative Insights on Perpetrator Programmes
Alessandra Pauncz, The European Network for the Work with
Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN)

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:45 | Trauma-Related Research
Erzsébet Fanni Tóth, Sigmund Freud University Vienna

14:45 – 15:30 | 365-Day Battle Against Violence Against Women
Simona Topolinjak, City of Ljubljana

15:30 – 16:00 | Closing Remarks

19:00 – 21:00 | Cultural Visit: Sunset Guided Tour at the Acropolis Museum "Women in Antiquity"

For any enquires, concerns, or issues during the event, please reachout **Anastasia Metaxa** at +30 696 192 4913 or **Sofoklis Panagiotou** at +30 693 881 9743

Conference moderation by **Dimitra Tsioniki** and **Anastasia Metaxa**, City of Athens.

Registration
The conference is free of charge, including all meals. Please register early to secure your spot, as capacity is limited.
Register here: <https://ticket.wien.gv.at/M57/femcities2025/>

Photography Notice
Photos will be taken during the conference and may be used in the conference documentation, on the FemCities website, on the City of Vienna's and the City of Athens' (social) media channels.

Conference Language
The conference will be held in English and Greek. Translation services will be provided.

Accessibility
The venue is fully barrier-free. If you require specific assistance, please inform the organizers.

Getting to the Conference
The venue is located in the heart of Athens, in the historic Plaka district (Old Town), just a few meters from Acropolis Station on Metro Line 2.

Cultural Event: Sunset Guided Tour
On the second day, conference participants will have the opportunity to join a Sunset Guided Tour at the Acropolis Museum on the theme "Women in Antiquity". Spots are limited and available on a first come, first served basis. Registration will take place at the registration desk on the first day. We are meeting in the courtyard of the Acropolis Museum, at the statue of the Owl (Glaucé), near the exit door.



[FemCities]



3. Review of the Conference

The FemCities conference 2025 took place on 5th and 6th of June 2025 at the Stelios foundation conference hall in Athens, Greece, bringing together representatives from European cities, researchers, and practitioners to address the complex issue of gender-based violence (GBV). The event focused on sharing effective municipal policies, interdisciplinary approaches, and comparative insights on victim protection, perpetrator programs, and the emerging challenges of GBV in both physical and digital spaces. The conference featured presentations from the city of Athens, GREVIO, and delegations from cities such as Vienna, Nantes, Ljubljana, and Vilnius, alongside contributions from academic institutions and civil society organizations. Key sessions explored topics such as cyberviolence, penal mediation, trauma research, and LGBTQI+ hate speech, as well as a comparative assessment of equality policies across ten European countries. Through panels, keynote speeches, and structured discussions, fem cities 2025 fostered knowledge exchange and reinforced the essential role of cities in combating GBV and promoting inclusive, feminist urban policy.

3.1 Welcome by Maria Stratigaki, Deputy Mayor, City of Athens

At the start of the FemCities conference in Athens, Maria Stratigaki delivered the opening remarks, warmly welcoming all delegations and emphasizing the city's ongoing efforts to foster gender equality. This commitment comes at a time when femicides are increasing in Greece, making effective public policies more necessary than ever.

She expressed deep thanks to Ricarda Goetz-Preisner and the City of Vienna for their coordination and inspiration in encouraging cities to actively participate in the network. Vienna was recognized as a model not only for gender equality but also for broader social policies, particularly in social housing.

Maria Stratigaki also acknowledged Georgia Bouri, head of the Gender Equality Department of the Municipality of Athens, for her consistent efforts since 1993 and her team's vital contribution in organizing the conference.

Further appreciation was given to the Stelios Foundation, the event's main sponsor, for hosting the meeting in Plaka and supporting it in multiple ways, including interpretation and logistics.



3.2 Official Opening, Harris Doukas, Mayor, City of Athens

The Mayor of Athens opened the conference by thanking the FemCities network and highlighting the ongoing crisis of gender-based violence in Europe. He referenced data showing that one in three women has experienced violence, and one in four has suffered sexual assault, with significant incidents also in the workplace.

He stressed that such violence has deep social and economic consequences, including daily femicides across Europe. The media's fleeting attention to these issues was criticized, underscoring the need for consistent civic action.

Athens is responding through concrete municipal initiatives—support services for victims, educational programs, workplace seminars, and partnerships aiming to combat sexism from an early age. The mayor emphasized the role of local authorities in fostering safe, equal, and inclusive urban spaces, starting from schools to public squares.

He concluded by calling for meaningful dialogue and lasting action.



3.3 Katerina Patsogianni, General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights

Katerina Patsogianni, General Secretary for Equality and Human Rights in Greece, outlined the country's efforts to combat domestic violence through coordinated social policies under the Ministry of Social Cooperation and Family. Highlighting the network of 64 advisory centers and shelters, she emphasized the free support services offered to victims, including counseling, legal aid, and psychological help.

She described the 24/7 helpline (15900) that receives thousands of calls annually and introduced the "Panic Button" app, which allows women in danger to alert police immediately. The government has strengthened legislation and police response, creating specialized family violence offices nationwide. Increased reporting indicates greater trust and awareness.

Katerina Patsogianni concluded by stressing the importance of local and global collaboration to fight violence against women and welcomed participants to Athens for the conference.

3.4 Presentation of the FemCities Network, Ricarda Goetz-Preisner, City of Vienna

FemCities coordinator Ricarda Goetz-Preisner from the City of Vienna delivered a welcome address emphasizing the importance of collaboration among European cities in tackling gender-based violence. Greetings were extended from Vienna's Vice-Mayor, Kathrin Gaál, highlighting the city's efforts in supported housing and gender equality. Ricarda underlined that gender-based violence affects all cities, with serious social and economic consequences. She referred to recent political developments as reminders that women's rights remain under threat, reinforcing the need for joint action and solidarity.

She warmly thanked the Athens organizing team and acknowledged the presence of political leaders from Athens, Nantes, and other cities. She presented the FemCities Network, established in 1997, as a valuable space for municipalities and NGOs to share effective practices and build common strategies.

Ricarda also addressed new forms of violence, especially online violence against young women, and emphasized the need for an intersectional approach to support all women.



4. Presentation of the City of Athens to combat Gender-Based Violence

Speakers: Georgia Bouri, Sofoklis Panagiotou, Anastasia Foulouli

Georgia Bouri opened the session by presenting Athens' long-standing engagement with gender equality and its successful hosting of the 2025 FemCities Conference. The city has consistently participated in previous conferences in Thessaloniki, Vienna, and Ljubljana, with Athens' hosting proposal initiated in 2023. She emphasized the evolution of municipal policies, starting from the establishment of the first Municipal Department of Gender Equality (1991) and the first shelter for survivors (1993), to the creation of the Center for Combating Gender-Based Violence (2021). In 2024, the city launched a workplace sexual harassment prevention program, including awareness campaigns and staff training for over 2,000 municipal employees. Athens reaffirmed its commitment to combating gender-based violence through comprehensive services and strategic partnerships.

Sofoklis Panagiotou elaborated on the work of the Center for Combating Gender-Based Violence, which has supported over 600 women since its inception in 2021. The center provides holistic services: social support, psychological counseling, legal assistance, and job counseling. The service process follows three stages—initial triage and assessment, tailored psychological and trauma therapy, and survivor support groups. Survivors retain full autonomy in decision-making while receiving professional guidance. New services introduced in 2025 include long-term psychotherapy and trauma-focused care. The center also emphasizes professional case management and staff supervision to ensure effective, ethical, and sustainable care delivery.

Anastasia Foulouli shared the personal story of Alexandra, a survivor of domestic violence who accessed the center's services. Alexandra's journey—from emotional entrapment to reclaiming independence—demonstrated the transformative impact of coordinated psychosocial, legal, and employment support. Her case highlighted the importance of empowering survivors to rediscover self-worth and rebuild their lives. Foulouli stressed that recovery from gender-based violence is not only about safety but about healing and autonomy, calling for ongoing investment in survivor-centered services and collective action to end violence.



CITY OF ATHENS

Policies of the City of Athens to combat Gender-Based Violence



TIMELINE OF WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE CITY OF ATHENS



- 1991 | Establishment of the first Municipal Department of Gender Equality
- 1993 | Opening of the first Shelter for women survivors of gender-based violence and their children
- 2013 | Upgrade and expansion of the Shelter through EU co-funded project (NSRF) under the European Social Fund
- 2021 | Launch of the Center for Combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV), offering psychosocial and legal support
- 2025 | Introduction of specialized and Expanded Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence, psychotherapy and trauma therapy



DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY DEPARTMENT FOR EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

- Designs and implements **equality and social policy programs** for vulnerable groups.
- Promotes gender equality and **supports** women survivors of violence.
- **Develops actions** for the inclusion and accessibility of people with disabilities.
- Coordinates efforts to prevent and address **addictions**.





SHELTER FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND THEIR CHILDREN

- **Safe Hospitality** for abused women and their children
- Aims to **support, empower and reintegrate** women, since 2013
- **Psychosocial** support
- **Job** counseling
- **Legal** counseling
- Operates on a **24/7 basis, 365** days a year
- Temporary and **transitional** character



CITY OF ATHENS ACTION PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

This initiative from the City of Athens aims to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace through awareness campaigns and training for 2000 people.

- **Awareness Campaign:** Posters, flyers, and online resources to inform employees of available support services.
- **Training & Sensitization:** Workshops to educate city employees on recognizing and responding to workplace harassment.

The Center for combating GBV will support and guide individuals seeking to report incidents.



CENTER FOR COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Since 2021 it provides **counseling services** to women who have experienced Gender-Based Violence.

Free support to women who are in need, based on a gender perspective and raising community awareness on issues of Gender-Based Violence:

- **Social Support**
- **Psychological Counseling**
- **Job Counseling**
- **Legal Advice**
- **Referrals**
- **Information**
- **Hospitality**





OTHER SERVICES

- **Greek language lessons** for women
- **Networking and awareness-raising activities** with national and local stakeholders, aimed at promoting the services of the Center, addressing the needs of beneficiaries, disseminating good practices, and developing synergies
- **Women's Space (Femspace)**. A safe space for women to meet, share ideas, and support each other.



SPECIALIZED AND EXPANDED SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The expanded services will support survivors of sexual violence, including women and other feminine identities.

- **Long-term Psychotherapy**: Providing therapeutic support to help victims process their experiences and emotional challenges.
- **Trauma Therapy**: Specialized trauma treatment to aid in healing and recovery from traumatic events.
- **Counseling and Support**: Personalized sessions with trained therapists to develop coping strategies and rebuild confidence.

The center aims to offer a safe, supportive space where victims can openly discuss their experiences and receive the support they need.



SERVICE PROVISION PROCESS

1. Initial Appointment & Social Support

- **Triage** – short-term support to assess urgency, stabilize the survivor, and guide next steps
- Survivor meets with a **social worker** (main point of contact)
- **Initial needs assessment** is conducted
- **Immediate** emotional and practical support provided
- **Referrals** made to relevant services (e.g., shelter, legal aid)





SERVICE PROVISION PROCESS

3. Support Groups for Women Survivors

- Facilitated by **trained professionals** with expertise in trauma therapy and crisis intervention.
- **Safe and supportive environment** for expressing emotions, sharing experiences
- **Empowerment** through connection with others who have gone through similar situations.
- **Activities** to build self-esteem, manage anxiety, and restore trust.
- **Individual counseling** available when needed.



SHELTER FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND THEIR CHILDREN

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SERVICE PROVISION PROCESS

Case Management & Supervision

- Weekly **case management meetings** ensure that each case is discussed and monitored by the multidisciplinary team.
- **Clinical supervision** is in place to support staff wellbeing and enhance professional effectiveness.

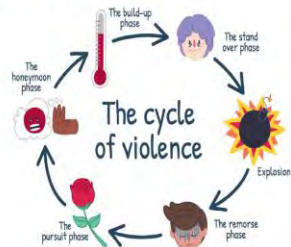


Alexandra's Journey: Overcoming Domestic Violence and Reclaiming Her Life



Case History

- Beginning and course of the relationship
- Start of the abuse



Ask for support





Meeting with the Social Worker



Legal Counseling



Psychological support

"I feel trapped and very alone. I no longer know what I like. I want to find a way to escape and rediscover myself. I want to leave, but I am afraid. At the same time I feel pity for him. Do you think I'm crazy? That's what he calls me. I dream of living in a house with a big garden all alone"





Job counseling



Escape Plan



Follow up

"I may not have found a house with a garden, but I created my own garden inside an outside myself. I have a corner filled with flowers in my living room and I take care of them every day. They lift my spirits. I especially love the ones that look a bit worn out, because they remind me of myself and how much I've achieved. I now live alone now, but I don't feel lonely."



Thank you for your attention!

<https://www.kentro-kevpd.gr/en/>



5. Presentation of the latest GREVIO Report

Speaker: Marcelline Naudi

Greece has made notable legal and policy progress in addressing violence against women, particularly domestic violence, since ratifying the Istanbul Convention in 2018. However, GREVIO highlights key shortcomings, especially in the handling of sexual violence, where laws still lack a consent-based definition.

The report urges stronger protection for women facing multiple forms of discrimination (e.g. migrant, LGBTIQ+, and disabled women), better funding for frontline NGOs, and meaningful consultation with women's rights organizations.

Major concerns include insufficient data collection, lack of mandatory training for professionals, limited shelters and rape crisis centers, and weak enforcement of protection measures. It also condemns the misuse of "parental alienation" in custody cases and raises alarm over rising femicides and data discrepancies.

Greece is called to intensify efforts and ensure long-term funding, coordination, and accountability to fully meet its obligations under the Istanbul Convention by 2026.

Presentation of the last GREVIO report on Greece

Prof Marcelline Naudi
Ex-President of GREVIO

brief background

- The Greek Government signed the Istanbul Convention in 2011 and acknowledged the importance of its implementation by its ratification on the 8th of March 2018 (Law 4531/2018).
- GREVIO monitoring of Greece - State report addressed to GREVIO received on 31 March 2022
- Monitoring visit February 2023
- Baseline evaluation report by GREVIO published on 14 November 2023
- Government comments to the GREVIO baseline evaluation report published on 14 November 2023
- Recommendation of the Committee of the Parties adopted on 5 December 2023
- To report back to the Committee of the Parties on the measures taken to improve the implementation of the Convention by 5 December 2026.

GREVIO report said...

The report highlights a good number of positive and promising legal and policy measures adopted by the Greek Government in the areas of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Greece has established a solid legislative framework and a national network of support services to address domestic violence,

However...

It also emphasised the need to strengthen efforts to combat all forms of violence against women, in particular sexual violence, among other recommendations.

Reports always praise where praise is due, but also identify areas where more action is needed...

Greek State said:

All recommendations provided by GREVIO are duly noted and will serve as important guidelines in future policy planning through synergies with all relevant stakeholders.

Legal Definitions

- ensure that the legal definitions of all forms of violence against women are fully aligned with those provided by the Istanbul Convention;
- ensure that laws, policies and programmes adequately address all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, and that they integrate the gender dimension of violence against women (paragraphs 8, 9 and 22);

intersectionality

- step up action to **prevent and combat violence against women exposed to intersectional discrimination**, by taking measures to eliminate any discrimination against these women, raise their awareness about their rights, improve their access to protection and support services, and support research into the forms of violence they experience (paragraph 18);

Policies, resources, ngo consultation

- ensure the effective implementation of the policies to prevent and combat violence against women by fostering **increased co-ordination and greater consistency** among the policies and measures at the various territorial levels, and by **allocating appropriate, sustainable and long-term financial resources** for the implementation of these policies;
- ensure sustainable funding levels for women's rights NGOs that provide support services for women victims of violence (paragraph 38), and step up consultation with a range of women's rights organisations in order to include their opinions and experiences in the design of laws, policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women;

Loss of funding from international organisations (UNHCR?) –
what we gonna do 'bout that?

- Real consultation with NGOs and inclusion of their contributions?

Research and data collection

- further improve data collection on all forms of violence by setting up systems to **collect data on victims of violence disaggregated** by sex and age of both the victim and the perpetrator, type of violence, relationship between the victim and the perpetrator and geographical location;
- introduce a system allowing cases of violence against women to be **tracked** at all stages of the law-enforcement and judicial proceedings;
- collect data on **decisions on the custody/visitation/residence** of children that have expressly taken into account incidents of domestic violence;
- collect data on the number of **asylum claims** on grounds of gender based violence against women (paragraph 57);
- **carry out research** on all forms of violence against women, including in relation to specific groups of victims who may be subjected to intersectional discrimination and invest in the evaluation of existing policies, laws and practices (paragraph 64);

Training of professionals

- ensure that all professionals working with victims or perpetrators of all forms of violence, in particular the judiciary, receive **systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training** to identify and respond to violence against women (paragraph 92);
- introduce **training and guidelines** for all relevant criminal justice professionals to ensure a common understanding of rape and sexual violence as offences based on the absence of consent

Perpetrator programmes

- strengthen the **capacity and outreach of perpetrator programmes** by rolling out programmes throughout the country, on the basis of common minimum standards, introducing them in custodial settings, ensuring that their impact is adequately evaluated and increasing the level of attendance and the rate of completion of such programmes ordered by prosecutors in the context of the mediation mechanism;
- ensure that the interplay between perpetrator programmes and criminal proceedings **does not negatively affect the victims' right** to fair legal processes;
- ensure that victims of domestic violence are **adequately informed and protected** during the mediation procedure (paragraph 96);

Coordination

- step up the co-ordination of responses to the needs of women victims of all forms of violence by setting up **institutionalised structures for co-operation and co-ordination** among all relevant stakeholders (paragraph 113);

Shelters, Rape crisis centres

- expand the **number and the capacity of shelters** for women victims of violence, address the lack of **resources** allocated to them and remove any obstacles which hamper victims' access to such shelters; ensure that accommodation is available to women in emergency situations;
- set up **rape crisis centres** and/or sexual violence referral centres in line with Article 25 of the Istanbul Convention; introduce **standardised protocols** for all health professionals on the treatment of women victims of rape/sexual violence;
- ensure that a victim's access to different support services is **not conditional** on her willingness to lodge a complaint;
- ensure timely **access** to forensic examinations across the country;
- providing immediate medical care, psychological trauma-informed victim support, forensic examinations and immediate, short- and long-term psychological assistance by qualified professionals who can **provide victim-sensitive examinations**, in line with the standards set by the Istanbul Convention;

An aside...

- A 2023 study by the National Centre for Social Research in Greece, funded by Eurostat in the framework of the EU survey on Gender-Based violence against women, found that 23.49% of women aged 18-29, and approximately 20% of women aged 30-44, have experienced sexual violence, including rape and attempted rape.
- underreporting is driven by deeply ingrained social taboos, widespread mistrust in the police and justice system, limited awareness of available support services and insufficient assistance to victims throughout the legal and other processes. For migrant women, these barriers are even more pronounced, as concerns relating to their legal status further discourage them from seeking help.

Children

- ensure that children exposed to domestic violence receive **counselling and support**, and that children of women victims of violence residing in shelters do not face obstacles to receiving education, healthcare services and psychological support;
- ensure that courts are under the **obligation to consider all issues** relating to violence against women and domestic violence when taking any decision related to custody and visitation rights;
- **incorporate risk-assessment and risk-management** procedures in the determination of custody and visitation rights, and **restrict these rights** when this is necessary to guarantee the safety of the mother and the child;
- end the practice of removing children from or limiting parental rights of non-abusive parents on grounds of "**parental alienation syndrome**";
- provide appropriate **training** to judges about the requirements of the Istanbul Convention on custody and visitation rights;

Prosecution and court

- Ensure **appropriate sanctions** for all sexual acts perpetrated without the consent of the victim (paragraph 219);
- enable a prompt and appropriate handling of investigations and criminal proceedings in cases of gender-based violence, grounded on a **gendered understanding** of violence against women, by developing **standard operating procedures** for prosecuting all forms of violence against women, providing all the relevant professionals with **appropriate training**, assessing progress through appropriate **data collection**, and an analysis of the handling of criminal cases by law-enforcement, prosecution authorities and courts to **identify possible gaps** in the institutional response to violence against women;

Risk assessments; barring/protection orders

- implement systematic, gender-sensitive, risk assessments and safety management in all cases of violence against women, **repeated** at all the relevant stages of criminal proceedings and based on an effective **multi-agency approach**, including specialist services and NGOs;
- ensure the availability of **emergency barring orders and protection orders** to all women victims of domestic violence;
- **monitor and enforce** protection orders;
- ensure that effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal or other **sanctions for breaching** protection orders are effectively applied and **collect data** on the number of protection orders issued, the number of breaches and the sanctions imposed;

Asylum seeking women

- ensure safe and adequate **accommodation** for all asylum-seeking women and girls as well as sufficient **support** to meet their basic needs;
- set up an effective system of **screening of vulnerabilities** of asylum seekers upon arrival with a view to detecting reception and procedural needs that arise from experiences of gender-based violence;
- establish effective **referral pathways** for women and girls victims of gender-based violence and set up dedicated focal points for sexual and gender-based violence within all reception and identification centres;
- develop and comprehensively implement **standard operating procedures** or guidelines on gender-sensitive reception of asylum seekers and on the prevention of gender-based violence in asylum accommodation;
- **remove the barriers** currently experienced by women victims of violence to accessing specialist support services and provide all asylum-seeking women with relevant **information** on their rights and existing remedies in case of gender-based violence (paragraph 354);
- uphold their obligation to respect the principle of **non-refoulement** of women victims of violence, including as regards asylum seeking women and girls arriving by sea;
- take resolute measures to **prevent** acts of gender-based violence against women and girls seeking international protection in Greece and investigate any such allegations.

Femicides

- A comprehensive 2023 report conducted by [European Data Journalism Network](#) with the participation of newsrooms across Europe revealed that Greece had the highest increase in femicides in 2021 with an increase of a staggering 187.5% from 8 incidents in 2020 to 23 in 2021.
- In Greece there is no specific law for the criminal prosecution of the act of femicide, and so the phenomenon is monitored in the country through the collection of data regarding the female victims of intentional homicide, while the relationship with the perpetrator is generated in combination with the law for the handling of domestic violence. For the EDJNet report, data in Greece was collected by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, which in turn collected data from the Hellenic Police and the Ministry of Justice. But these reports typically do not match independent reports conducted by NGO's and violence-monitoring groups, according to Professor Athena Peglidou. For 2020 and 2021, the non-official number of femicides recorded by the Greek section of the European Observatory on Femicide was higher in Greece than the official number by 2.1 times in 2020 (19 vs. 9 victims), 1.34 times 2021 (31 vs. 23) and 1 in 2022 (25 vs. 24).

Femicide – Prof Athena Peglidou

Year	All women killed (age 16+)	Rate per 100,000 inhabitant	Number of women killed by family members and (re-partners)	Number of women killed by (ex) partners
2021	31	0.29	27	18
2022	26	0.24	25	16
Total 2021 and 2022	57	0.27	52	31

6. Panel Discussion on the GREVIO Report and the role of Municipalities

Speakers:

Maria Stratigaki, City of Athens

Sabine Gasser, City of Vienna

Simona Topolinjak, City of Ljubljana

Ieva Dirmaite, City of Vilnius

Mahaut Bertu, City of Nantes

Moderated by Ricarda Goetz-Preisner, FemCities network coordinator

The conference gathered politicians and experts from European cities to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality in local governance. A key theme was the Istanbul Convention, with some countries, like Lithuania, still having not ratified it, while others, like France and Slovenia, have made varying progress.

Nantes presented its aim of becoming France's first non-sexist city, focusing on education reforms, anti-harassment campaigns, and support centers for survivors. Athens explained how GREVIO recommendations helped them transform an existing facility into a rape crisis center, overcoming challenges with funding and political will.

Vienna stressed the need for integrated support systems for survivors, including psychological care, trained police, and legal cooperation, while also highlighting the urgent need for better police handling of cases. Ljubljana introduced its innovative safe houses for marginalized women such as drug users and former prisoners, emphasizing the importance of intersectional approaches. Workplace harassment was also addressed. Cities like Nantes and Vienna have structured processes for municipal employees to report harassment, but challenges with implementation remain. Funding was discussed as a major issue, often tied to political choices. Some cities secured dedicated budgets for women's services, though risks remain with political changes.

The panel concluded by emphasizing that true progress requires committed leadership, cooperation, tailored approaches to women's diverse experiences, and long-term funding. Networking and sharing strategies were encouraged to support progress.



7. Comparative Assessment of Equality Policies in 10 European Countries

Speaker: Areti Mavrommati-Lagani (PhD, Panteion University)

This presentation summarizes the doctoral research of Areti Mavrommati-Lagani, conducted at Panteion University with the support of the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation. The research investigates how ten European countries respond to intimate partner violence (IPV) against women, with a focus on the policies they implement and the role of feminist and women's NGOs in shaping and delivering those responses.

The study highlights how feminist movements since the 1960s and 1970s laid the groundwork for today's support structures, such as shelters and helplines—often before any state intervention. These organizations continue to play a vital role in supporting survivors, influencing public policy, and advocating for systemic change.

Based on the mapping of key organizations and 33 interviews with NGO representatives, the research explores how different countries vary in their approaches. While countries like Sweden, France, and the UK demonstrate strong collaboration between the state and feminist NGOs, others—such as Hungary, Poland, and Greece—tend to rely more on state-run services, often adopting gender-neutral rather than feminist frameworks.

Municipalities were found to be particularly important in offering immediate, locally grounded support, though funding instability remains a major obstacle. The research also identifies key gaps across all countries studied: insufficient shelter capacity, lack of multilingual services, poor geographic coverage, and limited specialized training for professionals.

Another major concern is the treatment of joint custody in legal systems, where courts frequently overlook domestic violence. Feminist NGOs report rising hostility from far-right and anti-feminist groups, creating an increasingly difficult environment for their work, especially in countries where international frameworks like the Istanbul Convention are under threat.

Despite these challenges, the research underlines that women's and feminist organizations remain central to combating gender-based violence in Europe. Their work must be supported through sustained funding, stronger collaboration with public institutions, and active protection of their rights to operate freely. Their contribution is essential not only for survivor support, but for the broader fight toward gender equality and social justice.

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON POLICIES ADDRESSING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S AND FEMINIST NGOS IN DEVELOPING STRUCTURES TO COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: ONGOING PROGRESS AND EXISTING THREATS

Areti Mavrommati – Lagani (PhD/Dept. of Social Policy)
Supervisor: Maria Stratigaki (Prof. Emerita)



The research work was supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) under the 3rd Call for HFRI PhD Fellowships (Fellowship Number: 5236).



PANTEION UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES

HOW WE GOT HERE: A BRIEF HISTORY

The Second Feminist Wave as a Catalyst for Today's Fight Against Violence Against Women (VAW)

• Key Concepts:

- *Bodily integrity and autonomy* — women's right to self-determination, including the condemnation of male violence and the assertion of reproductive rights like abortion.
- Development of theoretical frameworks challenging male violence.
- According to Walby (1990), the second feminist wave significantly changed how violence against women was addressed.
- In England, feminist groups pioneered the creation of refuges for battered women and support hotlines for rape victims (Hague, 2021).
- Similar shelter movements emerged in other countries such as the US, Sweden (Lauri et al., 2023), Ireland (Diver, 2019) Germany, and France (Freeland, 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Democracy deepens and inequality decreases when violence is regulated.**
A hallmark of the modern state is the criminalisation of violence (Walby, 2009).
- **Are policies addressing violence against women influenced by the type of welfare state?**
The development of such policies is closely linked to feminist movements rather than the welfare state's advancement or model (Corradi & Stöckl, 2016; Htun & Weldon, 2012; Roggeband, 2012).
- The "**Nordic paradox**"—high levels of gender equality yet persistent violence against women—has spurred research into how VAW is influenced by factors beyond welfare state structures (Hearn et al., 2020, 2022; Strid et al., 2021, 2023; Pringle et al., 2010).

MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH:

To analyse the efforts of ten European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the U.K.) in establishing protective frameworks against domestic violence toward women, with a focus on:

- The influence of feminist movements on policy development and their demands against domestic violence
- International commitments of each country
- Legal frameworks and strategies against violence against women (VAW)

Additionally:

- Highlight the role of NGOs supporting women survivors of GBV and domestic violence today.

METHODOLOGY

Mapping Feminist and Women's Organisations

- Mapping feminist/women organisations that support women victims and survivors of violence, identifying key actors working against domestic violence in each country.
- Focus includes:
 - Women's and feminist organizations with umbrella networks supporting women across Europe (e.g., *Women's Aid, FNSF, The Federation of Mother and Child, ROKs*)
 - Independent organizations acting as pressure groups, raising awareness and submitting reports to international bodies (UN, Council of Europe)
 - Pan-European women's organizations addressing violence against women (e.g., *WAVE, EWL*)
- Collection and documentation of qualitative semi-structured interviews with key informants from relevant organisations and NGOs.

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

- **Empowerment through Local Action:** Municipalities are pivotal in providing immediate support and services to survivors of GBV.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Strong partnerships between local governments and NGOs enhance the effectiveness of support systems.
- **Need for Consistent Funding:** Sustained investment is essential to maintain and expand services locally.
- **Cutting-edge policies:** Model projects and ideas can emerge through the cooperation of women's NGOs and local authorities.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- Approaches vary:
 - Countries like Finland, Poland, and Hungary often use a **gender-neutral** perspective on gender-based violence rather than a clear **feminist** approach.
 - In Greece, Poland, and Hungary, shelters are primarily state-run rather than based on feminist/women's organisations and NGOs, unlike in other countries.
 - In the Northern and Western European countries we study, there is greater collaboration between NGOs and the state.
- Challenges differ by country:
 - Restrictions on abortion and opposition to feminism in Poland and Hungary
 - Previous experience of institutional violence against women (e.g. Ireland)
 - Previous socio-economic crises affecting support systems (especially in Greece)
 - Healthcare crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have further tested the existing structures.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- Across all countries, there is a pressing need for:
 - Increased and sustained state investment in shelters and support services
 - Better data collection on domestic violence
 - Training for professionals working with survivors and their children
- Significant gaps remain in:
 - Geographical coverage of shelters
 - Provision of services in multiple languages
- Adequate support is lacking for vulnerable groups, including:
 - Refugee, Roma, Sami (Finland), Irish Traveller women
 - Women in rural areas
 - Women with disabilities and women facing multiple forms of discrimination

WORRYING THEMES

•Joint Custody Challenges:

- Courts in several countries (Greece, Finland, UK, Germany, France, Ireland) often disregard domestic violence concerns in custody decisions.
- Parental alienation syndrome remains influential despite rejection by the Council of Europe and UN bodies.
- Seen by many organisations as a patriarchal tool allowing fathers to assert power over children and former partners.
- While 'parental equality' is embedded in the Scandinavian legal systems, it often compromises the safety of women and children.

•Country-Specific Issues:

- **Greece:** Law 4800/2021 institutionalizes compulsory joint custody, trapping victims in cycles of abuse.
- **Poland:** Groups of fathers actively challenge women's rights organisations; custody sometimes awarded to abusive fathers if mothers are in shelters.
- **Hungary:** "Fathers for Justice Association" advocates for stronger father's rights and shared custody.

•General Concern:

Joint custody provisions and court practices often perpetuate patriarchy, hindering legal reforms and putting women and children at risk.

WORRYING THEMES: RISING ANTI-FEMINIST BACKLASH

• Growing hostility toward feminist organisations:

- Participants report threats and attacks from **anti-feminist circles, far-right actors, and fathers' rights groups**—often overlapping in ideology and tactics.
- Some organisations have reduced their online presence to avoid being targeted by harassment and micro-attacks.

• Resistance to a gender sensitive understanding of violence:

- A growing trend challenges the framing of violence as gender-based.
- While feminist and women's organisations recognise that men can also be victims of domestic violence/IPV, this acknowledgement is used by some groups to undermine feminist analysis.

• Undermining of international frameworks:

- Serious concerns about the lack of enforcement of commitments made to **the UN and the Council of Europe** conventions.
- Some countries oppose the Istanbul Convention (e.g. Hungary), claiming it promotes so-called "*gender ideology*".

THE FUTURE

• Sustainable Support Systems:

- Strengthen and fund shelters and support infrastructure for survivors of violence against women (VAW) through **local institutions**.
- Ensure **centralised, long-term financing** and coherent strategies to support organisations and their programs.

• Collaborative Approaches:

- Promote **dialogue and cooperation** among feminist NGOs across Europe.
- Foster partnerships with **local authorities**, even when central governments are uncooperative or resistant.

• Resilience & Continued Advocacy:

- Many organisations report being stronger today than in the past, but agree that:
 - **Major challenges (like the far-right backlash)** persist at both European and international levels.
 - **Continued advocacy and coordination** are vital to combat violence against women effectively.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- The fight against violence is inseparable from the struggle for equality and justice.
- The recent EU Directive on combating violence against women and the Istanbul Convention are key tools in advancing legal protections and ensuring accountability.
 - Their implementation must be closely monitored across all member states.
- Continued pressure, solidarity, and feminist advocacy at a local level and across borders are essential.
- Let us ensure that every survivor is seen, supported, and safe—through research, policy, and collective action.
- Women's and feminist NGOs must be strengthened and supported—they play an irreplaceable role at the local, national, and European levels in prevention, support, and advocacy.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
AND ENGAGEMENT!

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8. Citad'elles: A Municipal Model for Supporting Women Victims of Violence

Speaker: Mahaut Bertu & Caroline Godard

Citad'elles is a municipal support and listening center for women victims of violence and their children, located in Nantes, France. Launched in 2019 following the political commitment of Mayor Johanna Rolland, the center was developed in partnership with local associations and institutions. It is open 24/7, offers free and unconditional access, and is designed to be a safe, welcoming space—what many describe as a “cocoon.”

The initiative emerged from growing awareness of gender-based violence in France. Each year, approximately 150 women are killed in femicides, and tens of thousands report sexual or domestic violence. In Nantes alone, an estimated 25,000 women are affected annually. Since its opening, nearly 6,000 women have accessed Citad'elles' services.

The center offers comprehensive and personalized support, including emergency shelter, legal and psychological assistance, healthcare, and help with accessing rights and housing. Children also receive care, with special attention to their emotional well-being and development. A multidisciplinary team of 22 professionals coordinates services, including case managers, healthcare providers (also a midwife), and legal experts. External partners contribute legal advice, employment assistance, and workshops aimed at restoring confidence and autonomy.

Citad'elles receives over 80 calls daily and supports more than 450 women each month. Most arrive due to domestic violence, although other forms, such as sexual, digital, institutional, and intra-family violence, are increasingly disclosed during the support process. Many women reveal histories of incest while at the center, shedding light on broader societal silence and insufficient state intervention in this area. In addition to individualized support, Citad'elles runs innovative programs like transitional housing, animal-assisted therapy, and art workshops. It also serves as a training and resource hub for professionals working in the field. The model has received recognition for its inclusive, trauma-informed approach. Citad'elles is primarily funded by the City of Nantes, with additional support from the state and local departments. This strong municipal commitment aligns with Nantes' broader goal of becoming France's first non-sexist city by 2030. The center is promoted through public awareness campaigns, partnerships, and media outreach.

Ultimately, Citad'elles stands as a powerful model of how a city can effectively respond to gender-based violence through coordinated services, political will, and a steadfast focus on the dignity and recovery of survivors.

Citad'elles presentation FemCities – 5th June 2025



1. The global and local context
2. The origin of the project
3. The centre today
4. Welcoming the public



As elsewhere, the extent of violence against women...

In France

147 women died because of their gender in 2023.

210 000 women (+18 years) victims of rape or attempted rape in the year 2021, i.e. **one rape or attempted rape every 2 minutes**. In 91% of cases of sexual violence, women know their attackers.

80 % of women with disabilities are victims of violence..

100% of women victims of harassment on public transport

In Nantes

> In the metropolitan area, we estimate that **24,500** women could be victims of physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months

> Since the opening of our center for women victims of violence in 2019, over **5,000** women have been registered, an average of **2 to 3** new women coming through the center's doors every day



2. The origin of the project



1. The global and local context



The fight against GBV, a relatively recent initiative by the City of Nantes...



Before 2014, the important role played by local associations in informing, guiding and supporting women victims of violence. **The City's action mainly consists of funding these associations, as well as protection measures** such as the "grave danger telephone"



2014-2020, the introduction of "municipal feminism": France votes to make it compulsory for municipalities to take action against violence. In 2014, Johanna Rolland was elected mayor of Nantes. She is very committed to this issue, and has pledged in her political program to set up a center for women victims of violence.



2020, the ambition set by Johanna Rolland for her second term of office to become France's first non-sexist city by 2030. It's mostly about :

- > recognize the systemic nature of sexism and its manifestations (including violence), and the City's role in this system
- > take more preventive measures against violence and its origins: sexism
- > extend the scope of gender equality action to include discrimination and violence suffered by LGBTQIA+ people
- > take better account of multiple discrimination
- > set up a network of associations working with the city to develop public policy initiatives

2014

When Johanna ROLLAND was running to become mayor of Nantes, four associations approached her about the **area's needs in terms of coordination between the various actors, and also in terms of reception facilities outside normal working hours (9am to 5pm)**. Johanna ROLLAND made a political commitment to set up a structure to meet these needs.

2016 > 2018

The political commitment is for the centre project to be developed jointly with the local area. Working groups are set up with :

- > specialized organisation in the defense of women's rights and the fight against sexist and sexual violence (planned parenthood, anti-incest association, shelters for women victims of violence)
- > generalist associations (victim support association)
- > institutions (departmental council, State, police, justice, etc.).

These working groups came up with a definition of the ideal centre: **one that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, that welcomes all women victims of violence (in all spheres and of all types), with their children, that has a multi-disciplinary team, that guarantees confidentiality while preventing them from repeating their story, and that is accessible and safe.**

2019

Work then began on fitting out the centre in conjunction with local partners and an architect familiar with the issue, with the aim of creating a "safe cocoon" for women and their children. **Citad'Elles opens its doors on 25 November 2019 with all these principles.**

3. The centre today



The Centre's Fundamentals and Missions

The fundamentals

- Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Safety
- Unconditional and free shelter for women who are victims of violence and their children
- Accessibility
- Care and support for children
- Women's independence

The missions

- Assess
- Listen, support, and assist in escaping violence
- Alert
- Empower women to take control of their journey
- Enable children to express their experiences
- Support mothers
- Refer women to common law operators and actors
- Liaise with the relevant services in the area
- Serve as a resource center for professional teams in the area



Multidisciplinarity at the heart of the centre's organization

→ A multi-disciplinary in-house team of 22 professionals providing a shared view about women's situations :

> 2 reception, listening and guidance officers : more than 80 calls a day, a little bit more than 3 new women contacting the centre every day, meaning more than 1100 new women each year

> 12 pathway coordinators, 9 of whom work day shifts and 3 night shifts (nurses, psychologists, social workers, specialist educators, etc.). The two main areas of expertise of these pathway coordinators are initial reception and referral to operators and partners in the area, and support in the reconstruction process following long-term violence.

> 4 specialist functions: a socio-educational assistant to support parenthood, a psychiatrist to assess patients and prevent breakdowns in care, the midwife for sexual health/general health, the project manager for access to rights for foreign nationals and accommodation/housing, etc.



Multidisciplinarity at the heart of the centre's organization

→ Operators present at the centre, reinforcing its multidisciplinary nature. These operators provide one-to-one support or group workshops for women in the following areas:

> the legal area (junists, lawyers, police)

> overall health (psychological support for women, psychological support for children, workshops to boost self-confidence, emotional and sexual life, osteopathy)

> access to social rights and professional integration

Although the framework for reporting offences is fairly restrictive in France, a partnership with the police enable us to offer women accompanied by the center to submit a complaint on site. While this is not a mandatory step, it does provide a safe and reassuring framework for women who want to start the legal process



Focus on Pathway coordination

Figures for daytime coordination

> 13, 500 interviews conducted by pathway coordinators in 2024

> 920 first appointments

> 12,560 follow-up interviews

> By comparison, in 2023, 11 100 interviews had been carried out by pathway coordinators, including 830 first appointments and 10 270 follow-up interviews: i.e.

Sensitive aspects of night-time coordination

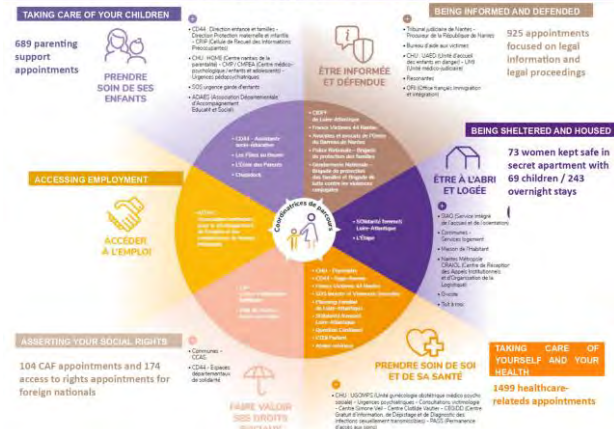
> The issue of psychological disorders, which may be more significant at night due to isolation ;

> A strong need for reassurance during the night for women who are already being supported, leading to a different level of telephone activity than during the day;

> A physical reception, mainly for safety reasons and mainly referred by the police or the hospital.



Focus on Local operators and Partners



A consolidated service offering

After more than 5 years in operation, **Citad'elles** has become a **key local resource** and **has developed the range of its services for women, but also for the professionals and the general public**.

- **Experimentation with temporary accommodation in the town of Coueron (metropolitan area)**: Since 1 December 2022, Nantes Métropole has made a metropolitan property in the town of Couéron available to Citad'elles (free of charge). This transitional accommodation, a detached house, can welcome 3 women and their children, living together. They can stay for a maximum of one year.



- **Strengthening the group**: In addition, since 2024, two new collective workshops have been set up: on the one hand, an animal mediation workshop; on the other, a dance workshop with a company called AIME as part of an experimental co-construction project with the women.



4. Welcoming the public



A consolidated service offering

- **New partnerships**: The Mouvement du Nid, an abolitionist association in the fight against prostitution, and Sésame 44, an association working with migrant women, have joined the operators present at the center.

- **Highlight the women's rebuilding process, while raising awareness among the general public**: In November 2025, to mark the 5th anniversary of Citad'elles, an exhibition was held in a big and well-known shopping center.

- **A common culture and shared expertise in in-house team and operators**: Harmonizing in-house practices and training for professional audiences. Operators and partners are even talking about a « Citad'elles » label.

- **Invention of new professions** such as pathway coordination and a new job description for the reception, listening and guidance officers.



Figures

Since its opening in 2019 :

> Citad'elles has welcomed more than **5,700 women**, with or without children

> **More than 60%** of women have embarked on a pathway out of violence;

> Of the 5 700 women who have been welcomed since Citad'elles opened, only **1539 files** have been closed.

> Every month, more than **450 women** come to the centre for appointments.

> **87%** of the women are mothers and 76% are under 45

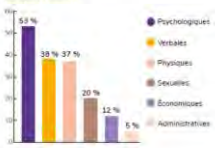
> **48%** of the women come from Nantes, 32% from the metropolitan area, 15% from the county and 5% from outside. It demonstrates the need to have local facilities but also facilities throughout France for situations requiring geographical distance.



Types and Areas of Violence

-> In terms of violence, **83% of the women we welcome are victims of domestic violence**, which is also in line with the public policies highlighted in recent years. However, we also welcome women who are victims of violence in the family, at work, in the public space, in the digital space too, as well as women who are victims of violence in the medical sphere. **Most of the types of violence reported were psychological and physical. However, over the course of the interviews, we have noticed that people are speaking out more freely about sexual violence.**

Les types de violence



Initial path Analysis Data

-> What's important to note when dealing with women who are victims of violence is **the importance of respecting the time frame of each woman, as they all have different backgrounds and different needs. As such, the time they spend with us is their own.** However, we can see that there are different types of pathway, with primary needs such as legal needs and access to social rights, followed by psychological support. Group workshops to boost self-confidence and osteopathic consultations take place at least 3 to 6 months after the start of the programme.

> In the case of certain women, there is a **continuum of violence**. While they initially present themselves in the case of one sphere of violence, in particular domestic violence, other spheres of violence are discovered in the course of the interviews, such as intra-family violence or violence in the social sphere. We also observe the growing issue of incest.

> For mothers, the **child's situation in relation to violence can be a trigger for their own actions.**

> **Free, unconditional and accessible reception** is also an important element in the early stages of a woman's life.





Thank you !

- As for safety, in addition to the secure space offered by the Centre, some of the women make the time spent in interviews and meetings their own, as a place where they can let go in complete safety.
- On the legal and social front, it's important to remember that legal and social procedures are often exhausting and time-consuming. **Women need to free themselves from the legal aspects before they can look after themselves.**
- Once this stage is completed, women can be directed towards the health aspect as a whole. When it comes to the psychological aspect, women are now more involved. From an initial consultation that used to be carried out in an emergency, women are now more in a secondary time for themselves, with a willingness to commit to a course of psychological support.



9. Cyberviolence as a specific form of Gender- Based Violence.

Speaker: Sabine Gasser, City of Vienna

Sabine Gasser, a clinical psychologist and counselor at Vienna's 24-hour Women's Emergency Hotline, presented the work of the Competence Center Against Cyber Violence, a pioneering initiative established in 2020 to support women affected by digital forms of abuse. The center is not a physical location but a structured cooperation between psychosocial services, women's shelters, and IT forensic experts from the city's tech unit, WienCERT. Cyber violence includes stalking, threats, account takeovers, and the distribution of intimate images. Often used by former partners, this type of violence is particularly harmful because it is invisible, can happen anytime, and isolates victims socially and emotionally. Victims frequently report loss of access to devices and accounts, constant surveillance, and threats via social media. Vienna addresses these challenges through a multi-level approach. The emergency hotline offers psychological, legal, and social support, including accompaniment to police or courts. A key tool is the Guideline for Action on Cyber Violence, which provides safety planning, risk assessment tools, and legal advice. Specialized IT support is available in complex cases, following a structured three-step process involving counselors and IT professionals.

Training and awareness campaigns are essential parts of the strategy, ensuring professionals stay informed and the public is educated. Since its founding, the center has received national awards for its innovative and effective collaboration. Despite ongoing challenges, such as the rapid pace of technological change and the need for time-intensive counseling, the model is considered unique in Austria and internationally.

Competence Center for Cyber Violence Against Women.

IT Support Against Cyberstalking for Victims of Violence

<https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/frauen/stichwort/gewalt/cyber-gewalt/kompetenzstelle.htm>

Präsentation:

Mag. Sabine Gasser

24-Stunden Frauennotruf der Stadt Wien

MA 57 - Frauenservice Wien

Stadt
Wien

Frauenservice Wien



24-Hour Emergency Helpline

MA 57 - Vienna city Women's department

Mag. Sabine Gasser

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

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24-Stunden
Frauennotruf
01 71719

Stadt
Wien

Frauenservice Wien



Services and Activities

- **24/7 Immediate Assistance, Counseling, and Support**
 - By phone, in person, via email, and accompaniment
 - For women and girls aged 14 and older who have experienced sexualized, physical, or psychological violence; relatives
 - Psychological, legal, and social work counseling
 - Clearing center: initial phone assessment for other crisis situations, → referral to appropriate facilities
- **Accompaniment to the police, court, and hospital**
 - Psychosocial process support and organization of legal process support
- **Professional coaching - by phone**
 - Work environment, hospitals, schools, etc.
- **Collaboration: Competence Center for Cyber Violence (cooperation MA 57 and MA 01)**
- **Thematic training and lectures**
- **Networking** (Violence Protection - Youth Forum, Victim Protection Groups, Working Group on Violence Against Older Women)
- **Projects, campaigns, statements**

Stadt
Wien

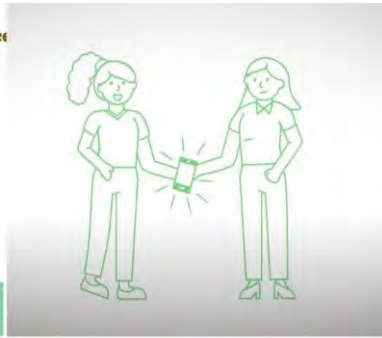
Titel der Präsentation

3

Competence Center Against Cyber Violence since 2020

Participating Institutions

- MD-OS/PIKT
- MA 57/24-Hour Emergency Helpline
- Association of Vienna Women's Shelters
- MA 01/CERT
- Expanded in 2022 to include 5 associations (Autonomous Emergency Call, Girls' Counseling, NINLIL, Orientexpress, Tamar).



The competence center is a collaboration. It is not a physical entity

The Business Group for "Housing, Residential Construction, Urban Renewal, and Women", along with the Business Group for "Innovation, Urban Planning, and Mobility", have enabled this collaboration together with MD-OS/PIKT.

Examples for Cyber Violence

Inquiries to counselors

- "Why does my Ex know where I and my children are?"
- "My mobile phone was physically destroyed. There was evidence stored on it (photos of an act of violence). Can these photos be recovered?"
- How can already deleted photos be restored on a mobile device?
- Is the communication history lost when blocking the stalker?
- A woman is threatened with publishing intimate material.
- "My Ex deletes my social media accounts and closes my online banking."
- "I cannot deactivate "find my mobile."
- An face-account was created, with embarrassing derogatory pictures.
- A colleague is bullying in online-groups.

Challenges

Technical expertise is essential

Complexity and rapid technological developments complicate counseling work.

- The additional shift of violence from the real world into cyberspace brings a high level of complexity.
- Securing evidence is often not possible or only possible to a limited extent without a high degree of technical specialization. However, evidence is the basis for effective prosecution.
- Therefore, professional counseling must be supported by technical-forensic experts:
 - From the side of counseling centers
 - From the side of authorities/police





What does Vienna do?

How does Vienna help victims of Cyber Violence?

Vienna strengthens and supports its counseling centers

- Guideline for Action on Cyber Violence
- Training on topics related to cyber violence
- Competence Center for Cyber Violence Against Women

seit 2017, 2023 überarbeitet

seit 2017

seit 2020

Technology and Cyber-Stalking - A Guide for Women's Counseling Centers

- Identify Methods.
- Plan Safety.
- Preserve Evidence.

A practical guide on technology and cyberstalking for supporting counselors with step-by-step clarification procedures and information on evidence preservation and risk assessment.

Regular trainings in order to keep counselors at various women's counseling centers up to date.



Technik- und Cyberstalking
Ein Leitfaden für Frauenberatungsstellen
Methoden erkennen, Sicherheit planen, Beweise sichern

Structure of the Guide

Overview:

- Risk and threat assessment
- Clarification of stalking methods

Common counseling topics:

- Unwanted, repeated contact attempts
- Surveillance, reading, eavesdropping
- Computer security and Wi-Fi
- Social networks
- Cameras, microphones, answering machines, baby monitors
- GPS localization
- IoT – Internet of Things
- Retrievable data from the internet and databases

Each chapter contains:

- Background information
- Checklists:
 - **Clarification questions**
 - **Safety planning**
 - **Evidence preservation**
- Legislation in Austria

Factsheets:

- Safety planning in the organization
- Technology as safety planning
- Reporting to the police
- How can a new mobile phone be securely set up?



Stadt
Wien

Handout for affected persons
13

supports its counseling centers

- Guideline for action on cyber violence
- Trainings on topics related to cyber violence
- Competence Center for Cyber Violence Against Women

since 2017,
revised in 2023

since 2017

since 2020

Additional resources and networks

- Information video on cyber violence
- IT guideline / checklist on behalf of MA 01 / WienCERT
- Expanded in 2022 to include 5 associations (Autonomous Emergency Call, Girls' Counseling, NINLJ, Orientexpress, Tamar)
- Awareness campaign on cyber violence during the 16 Days Against Violence (not a direct joint project of the competence center)

<https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/frauen/stichwort/gewalt/kampagnen/cyber-gewalt/index.html>



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Who is supported?

Women in Vienna who are:

- experiencing cyber violence during or after relationships
- experiencing cyber stalking by people in their social environment (e.g., colleagues)

Online hate comments: Referral to ZARA counseling center against all forms of online hate



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Wien

IT guide/
checklist by
MA 01 /

Process of counseling in cases of cyber violence:

Assessment of the overall situation and history of violence:

Cyber violence is often one of several forms of violence in a relationship. Therefore, assessing the full context is crucial for proper risk assessment and subsequent safety planning.

Clarification of the various forms and manifestations of cyber violence

Many issues regarding safety planning and evidence preservation can already be addressed in psychosocial counseling. Involvement of IT security experts from WienCERT is rather rare.

Three-step procedure:

- Phone call - joint consideration by counselor and IT expert.
- Video or phone counseling: together with the client, counselor and IT expert.
- Technical examination of devices by IT experts from Wien Digital: all preliminary steps must be completed beforehand. Participants: client, psychosocial counselor, and (usually) two IT experts (four-eyes principle). Explicit client consent, clear scope, and full transparency are essential.

Working structure

24-hour women's emergency hotline

- 10 counselors (training)
- Possibility to call MA 01 / CERT directly

Coordination:

- Addressing topics, further developments
- Intervention
- Regular exchange
- Advanced training
- "Filter": case discussions with external/additional associations, clarification and, if necessary, transfer of client support

Vienna women's shelters:

5 shelters + transitional housing
Counseling center

Main coordination at the counseling center:

- Working group of all women's shelters / counseling centers.
- The counselor first consults a colleague in the working group, who then contacts MA 01 / Wien CERT.



Women in Vienna
center

Competence Center for Cyber Violence Against Women



The cooperation has existed for 3 years, stands out nationwide in Austria, and is unique internationally.

What we have achieved:

- Systematic, regular exchange of experiences between partners (coordinated by Urban Innovation on behalf of MD-PIKT)
- Collaboration and mutual support
- Knowledge building through case discussions (including during counseling)
- Development of statistics for systematic tracking and presentation of counseling contacts on cyber violence
- Inclusion of counselors from other women's counseling associations
- Planning of awareness and prevention campaigns
- Revision of the guideline; own MA 01 / CERT guideline with checklist
- Regular trainings for counselors; revision of training materials



October
2020 –
November

Competence Center for Cyber Violence Against Women



What have we learned?

Challenges

- The topic of cyber violence is existing and rapidly evolving
- Counselors need training, exchange, and collaboration
- Networking with other institutions in violence protection is necessary
- Counseling requires support from technical expertise
- Cyber violence counseling is often very time-consuming
- Public awareness efforts (e.g., campaigns) should focus on prevention
→ A balancing act between raising awareness for perpetrators vs. equipping women's counseling services (who benefits from this knowledge?)

The competence center is a collaboration. It is not a physical institution.



The
cooperation



Awards for the Competence Center against Cyber Violence for Women

2021: Austrian Administration Award

2021: Golden Baton of the City of Vienna

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