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NEWSLETTER #1

HELPLINES PROJECT

Advocating for Quality Support to Victims of Gender-Based Violence Through Specialized Women's Helplines

A new European initiative, HELPLINES – Advocating for quality support to victims of gender-based violence through specialized women's helplines, has officially launched with the aim of strengthening support services for women and girls affected by gender-based violence across Europe. The 24-month project is funded under the EU CERV DAPHNE Program and brings together seven experienced organizations from six European countries.

Specialized women's helplines are often the first point of contact for women experiencing violence. However, despite their essential role, quality standards and access to specialized support differ significantly across Europe. The HELPLINES project responds to this gap by developing unified quality standards for specialized women's helplines, strengthening advocacy efforts, and improving access to gender-sensitive and survivor-centered support services.

The project will facilitate mutual learning, study visits, professional training, and advocacy activities at national and European levels. Through cooperation among women's specialist support services and European networks, the project aims to ensure that victims of violence have access to high-quality, confidential, and accessible support regardless of where they live.

The project also contributes to the implementation of key European and international frameworks, including the Istanbul Convention and the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Project Partners and Their Roles

● VEREIN AUTONOME OSTERREICHISCHE FRAUENHAUSER (Austria) – AÖF is the umbrella organisation of 16 autonomous women's shelters in Austria and is committed to preventing and combating violence against women and children. With more than 25 years of experience in operating a national helpline (0800 222 555), AÖF contributes extensive expertise in victim support, service accessibility, multilingual counselling, quality standards, and inter-agency cooperation. Within the HELPLINES project, AÖF acts as the project coordinator and contributes to the development of common European quality standards for specialised women's helplines.

● FUNDACJA FEMINOTEKA (Poland) – FEMINOTEKA is a Polish feminist, rights-based NGO founded in 2005, as an activist organization. Since 2009 it provides direct support to women who have experienced violence, and since 2015 specialized in supporting women who have experienced sexual violence due to a lack of services, as the only specialist sexual violence organization in Poland, serving over 37 million people. The organization supports women affected by rape or any form of gender-based violence, including sexual assault, childhood abuse, marital rape, trafficking, exploitation, and wartime rape, regardless of the perpetrator, with a mission to provide holistic, empowering support—from crisis intervention to long-term healing—while working to transform public attitudes and systems. Feminoteka runs a national helpline, lead public education, advocacy, research, campaigns, and legal reform efforts. Since the war in Ukraine, we've expanded services to support refugee women facing violence and displacement.

● Fédération national solidarité femmes (France) – Contributing expertise from operating France's national 3919 helpline and supporting policy advocacy for sustainable specialist support services.

● FONDACIJA UDRUZENE ZENE BANJA LUKA (RS/BiH) – Supporting awareness-raising, national and regional advocacy, and specialized support for women and children survivors of violence and one of the operators of the 1264 helpline number for survivors of domestic and gender based violence.

● **CENTRS MARTA (Latvia)** – Centrs MARTA is a leading women's rights organization in Latvia, providing specialized support to survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence, the majority of whom are women. The organization operates a national helpline in Riga and two regional helplines in Liepāja and Rēzekne, which serve as the first point of contact for people seeking help. In 2025, MARTA's helplines received more than 2,800 calls from across Latvia. Currently, the helpline provides information about social rehabilitation services available at Centrs MARTA, including consultations with a social worker, psychologist, and lawyer, as well as access to safe shelter when necessary. It also offers psycho-emotional support and practical advice on legal and social matters, and provides information about other service providers.

● **ROSA-CENTRUM PRO ZENY ZS (Czech Republic)** – ROSA – center for women is nonprofit organization in the Czech republic, that has been providing specialized services to women, victims of domestic violence and their children for 33 years, since 1993. The organization has 4 registered social services – specialized social counseling: ROSA Information and Counseling Center, Shelter with a confidential address, Crisis help, which is provided in the ROSALIN Centre for Comprehensive Crisis Help for Victims of Domestic Violence and Crisis helpline 116 016.

● **WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE (Austria/Europe)** – WAVE is a European network of more than 190 women's specialist support services in 46 countries, working to prevent and respond to violence against women and their children. Within the HELPLINES project, WAVE leads the advocacy work package, contributing European-level expertise on women's specialist support services, specialised women's helplines, and violence against women and girls. WAVE supports the development of advocacy strategies, policy recommendations, and dissemination efforts, while amplifying project results through its European network and communication channels.

Through cooperation, innovation, and advocacy, the HELPLINES project seeks to strengthen women's specialist support services and ensure that all women experiencing violence can access safe, high-quality, and gender-sensitive support.

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