



QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR SHELTERS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Quality guidelines for shelters for victims of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Enhancing services for victims in Kosovo*

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Acronyms

AGE	Agency for Gender Equality
CCR	Coordinated Community Response
CSW	Centre for Social Work
CM	Case Manager
DV	Domestic Violence
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
LGPTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer people
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
VA	Victims Advocate
VAW	Violence against Women
WHO	World Health Organisation
WAVE	Network women against violence Europe

1. Introduction

In accordance with Article 3 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), violence against women (VAW) is understood as a:

Violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Domestic violence (DV) is understood as:

All acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

The reason why women's shelters are urgently needed is that in all European countries women still experience violence from their husbands, partners or strangers. According to international surveys every third to every fifth woman after the age of 15 years old experiences violence (FRA, 2014 and OSCE, 2019). Women's shelters are considered as essential services for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Violence against women is not random violence, it is a specific form of violence which affects women and girls disproportionately. The Istanbul Convention defines "gender-based violence as violence "directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention).

The Istanbul Convention frames VAW as a "manifestation of 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." VAW is therefore not an individual problem, it is not a matter of having chosen the wrong husband, it has a structural nature and is "one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men." Consequently, "the achievement of de jure and de facto equality between women and men is a key element in the prevention of violence against women." Thus, effective measures to reach gender equality as well as comprehensive and coordinated measures to address violence against women and domestic violence at all levels, are required to reach the goal to eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls (Preamble to the Istanbul Convention).

2. Scope of the quality guidelines for shelters for victims of violence against women and domestic violence

The quality guidelines for shelters of violence against women and domestic violence presented here are inspired by the Istanbul Convention and other international standards, as well as by practical experiences and good practice examples for running women's shelters and women's support services.

The contents of these guidelines are further based on the Council of Europe report "Needs Assessment for the development of Quality Guidelines for Shelters of VAW and DV in Kosovo* (2019)" and the input by local experts and other stakeholders in Kosovo* including the authorities from Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), National Coordinator on domestic violence, Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), shelter representatives, among others. The involvement and cooperation with key stakeholders was organised through: Presentation of the findings and validating the recommendations of the "Needs Assessment Report on Quality Guidelines for Shelters in support of victims of violence against women and domestic violence in Kosovo*" (March 2020) and through follow up discussions with stakeholders on the preliminary content and methodology for the development of the quality guidelines for shelters, held online in July 2020.

The quality guidelines for services which are transparent and guarantee effective and efficient services based on the human rights and needs of service users are important elements of good governance. As citizens, we expect good quality services if we, or our family members, are in need of support, and it is the government's duty to provide the best support possible, based on evidence and international standards such as the Istanbul Convention.

For many countries, the main difficulty of implementing quality standards lies in the question of resources: high-quality standards of women's shelters can only be guaranteed if adequate resources are provided for implementing them. The following women's shelter guidelines are intended to support government funded shelters and institutions providing support to licensed women's shelters in Kosovo* such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) in providing and overseeing the delivery of good quality and consistent services to women survivors of violence and their children.

Domestic violence, including partner violence, is the most common form of violence women and girls experience in our societies. However, in these guidelines terms and definitions used in the Istanbul Convention presented in the introduction are applied and the term "violence against women and domestic violence" is used in order to ensure consistency.

And, while the focus of these guidelines is on the standards for women's shelters, still many core principles also apply to other specialist support services such as women's centres and helplines, as well as to general services provided to victims of violence including social and health services.

3. Kosovo*'s legal and institutional obligations

3.1 Shelter assistance provided in Kosovo*

Women's shelters in Kosovo* have been playing a crucial role in providing specialised support to victims of domestic violence, while also being an integral part of the VAW and DV intervention system. Historically, women's shelters were set up in the late 1990s and early 2000s to support victims of rape as result of the war. Gradually, and with the support of international donors, the shelters expanded their services to victims of other forms of violence, focusing for the most part on domestic violence.

Under Article 8 of the Kosovo* Law 02/L-17 on Family and Social Services, the role of the non-governmental sector is defined under the status of the legal entities that are licensed to provide such services in cases when municipal or central level authorities do not have the appropriate capacities to do so. These services can be provided either on their own initiative (with support of donors) or under contract, on behalf of the municipal Directorate in the case of local services, or the Department for Social and Family Policies by the support of MLSW when the need arises to provide Kosovo wide services. Accordingly, the non-governmental sector providing services for victims of domestic violence predominantly, have been registering with the MLSW and have undergone licensing and agreed to adhere to the licensing regulations as set out by the respective ministry. According to the Law on Family and Social Services (Article 8 paragraphs 4, 5 and 6), the MLSW and the municipalities are encouraged to enter into contracts with the NGO's providing family and social services. Also, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has been providing financial support to shelters as of 2005. Shelters also can seek funding support from the municipalities, however shelters have complained often to have not received sufficient funding and mainly this funding has been ad hoc rather than systemic (Council of Europe, 2017).¹

Every year, the MLSW advertises through a public call the outsourcing of social services and funding of NGOs, according to the Government of Kosovo Regulation (Ministry of Finance) No. 04/2017 on the Criteria's, Standards and Procedures for Public Financing of NGO's. Currently, there are 41 NGOs licensed by the MLSW out of which ten NGOs have been licensed and contracted as service providers for sheltering victims of gender-based violence and victims of trafficking and another 21 NGO's providing social services in general. By December 2019, there were 900 licensed individuals to provide social services and 21 licensed NGO's., There are 22 minimal standards policies adopted by the MLSW for provision of social services (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Strategy, 2018-2022; Council of Europe, 2019).

Kosovo* currently has eight shelters run by NGO's providing specialist services to women victims of domestic violence and their children. However, when male children turn 12 years of age, according to MLSW rules, they need to leave the joint shelter with their mothers and are commonly accommodated in a specialised shelter for children victims of various forms of abuse (Agency for Gender Equality, 2019 and Council of Europe, 2017). Additionally, one shelter provides services for women victims of trafficking in human beings and one shelter offers services to children in need i.e., child victims of abuse including child victims of domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2019). The shelters cover seven main regions in Kosovo such as Pristina (three shelters), Mitrovica, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Novo Brdo. The shelter in Zubin Potok municipality covers also the victims from Mitrovica North and is still not licensed by the MLSW.² Gaps remain with provision of assistance to victims of rape (including marital rape), harassment or other forms of sexual violence. Specialised

shelters or rape referral centres do not exist, with most of the services provided by domestic violence shelters.

Further, women's shelters offer safe accommodation and some provide others forms of services combined (Qosaj Mustafa, A., 2018). Most common types of support provided are counselling, information and advice, support and self-help groups, outreach, advocacy, economic empowerment and legal advice although not equally by all shelters. Less common are crisis support, telephone counselling and less common is also mediation and couple counselling, even though cases as such have been reported. Only one of the shelters declared the provision of immediate financial relief (Council of Europe, 2017).

According to the Law on Family and Social Services, each municipality shall give priority to victims of domestic violence in order to provide shelter for the victims. In some municipalities there are also social housing available for victims and their children (Council of Europe, 2017). Case managers appointed by the Centres for Social Work (CSW) assess and provide recommendations for the need to extend the inclusion of victims in social assistance in compliance with legislation in force. If the victim qualifies for social assistance, he/she shall apply in the social housing program, in the municipality that the victim resides. Further, the CSW case manager should also coordinate with the Social Assistance Unit (within the CSW) to assist victims for applying for social housing, even though shelters report that this does not happen on a regular basis, as it should (Qosaj Mustafa, A., 2018).

In principle, NGOs providing shelters to victims of domestic violence accommodate victims for the period of six months. Shelters have confirmed that rape victims would be assisted by the shelters providing support to victims of domestic violence, in case of urgency (Council of Europe, 2019). There have been reports that shelters such as the Gjakova and Gjilan shelters have kept victims up to two years, or have rotated victims sending them from one shelter to another after the period of six months ended (Qosaj Mustafa, A., 2018).

Some shelters for example such as the Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica also provide best practices related to longer-term assistance of cases. For example, they have entered into agreements with municipal authorities or with Regional Employment Centres in order to provide employment opportunities for victims of domestic violence. The agreements also provide for skill enhancement courses such as hairdresser courses, bee-keeping or tailoring courses. A few shelters such as Gjakova and Gjilan have also reported to provide for social housing in cases when victims cannot return to their violent homes due to security reasons and also provide for legal aid and assistance in courts for custody of children or divorce cases (Ibid, 2018). However, most of the shelters agree that this assistance is not easily achievable in all cases as there is lack of funding by the existing governmental funds to provide for this support on regular basis. Institutions do not engage in employment, skill enhancement courses or social housing activities for victims of domestic violence, if there is no follow up by the shelters. Overall, longer-term reintegration continues to be reported as a challenge and a rare example for other regions of Kosovo* (CoE Needs Assessment Report, 2020).

As Kosovo* voted in September 2019 the direct applicability of the Istanbul Convention in its legal framework, the implementation of its requirements will further guide the work of the Kosovo* institutions that will be responsible to implement these requirements. Existing policies such as the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for protection from Domestic Violence will need to cover assistance to other forms of VAW such as rape (including marital rape), harassment and other forms of sexual violence as per the Istanbul Convention.

Referral Scheme of Assistance: Role of shelters

Victims are referred to shelters mainly by the Kosovo* Police as foreseen by Kosovo*'s SOP's which specify the legal roles and responsibilities of each institution in protecting DV victims such as the Kosovo Police, Prosecution, Victim's Advocates, Social Work Centres and Shelters. They were adopted in 2013. Shelters have stated that if cases are not officially registered with the police the number of cases registered and for funding has to match when send out to MLSW for financial support. For cases to be registered and considered for assistance they have to be officially registered via the police reporting mechanism. Therefore, shelters are encouraged to register every case via the police (Council of Europe, Needs Assessment Report, 2019).

According to the procedures set out in the SOPs on Protection from Domestic Violence, shelters follow the four main principles of 1) Identification; 2) Referral; 3) Advocacy and 4) Rehabilitation and Integration. According to the SOP's the following steps summarise the assistance offered by shelters:³

- a. The referral starts from the moment the shelter receives the referred victim;
- b. Shelters provide for the initial safe place and care for the first 24 hours and also observing the victim's reflection period (up to 48 hours);
- c. Address victim's emergency needs for clothing, food, health care;

- d. After the emergency period of up to 48 hours the shelters invite Victim's Advocates to provide services of legal counselling in relation to court procedures and if the victim is a child, the CSW is also informed by the shelter;
- e. The shelter provides services and refers victims to other services as needed including referral to medical centre for the medical check-up;
- f. Develop the individual care plan jointly with the victim and the CSW case manager;
- g. Each shelter appoints a case manager for the victim;
- h. Shelters should prepare the plan for children's school attendance by accompanying victims contacting the school in the surrounding area to accommodate the children, etc.
- i. Victims are referred to the CSW when they need administrative services and personal documents and victim's contact with family and society is enabled;
- j. External contact should be monitored for security purposes when victims are classified as high-risk;
- k. Victim's may also be transferred from one shelter to another in compliance with agreements among shelters and on the basis of emerging needs. The transfer can be done only after approval by the Department of Social Welfare of the MLSW;
- l. The victim is released from shelter with the decision of shelter and CSW case manager and with victim's consent. When the victim leaves the shelter should inform the family, police, CSW and the Victim Advocates for further follow-up (SOP's page 42). The victim shall be informed about the responsible bodies and contact numbers in case of risk, if the victim refuses assistance, he/she should be made aware that assistance is available in the future, whenever needed (SOPs, page 88 and 89). Shelters are obliged to provide psychological support in individual and group sessions and have confirmed to provide these services (SOPs, 2013 pages 88,89).

Shelters have confirmed that there is no specific case management manual except the referral mechanisms that are described in the SOP's.⁴ Further, shelters also use separate forms detailing the treatment of the victims once the victim is offered sheltering.⁵ There are ten forms addressing the agreement by the victim to be assisted by the shelter with rules and procedures detailing the process of acceptance to the shelter, care and assistance individual plan for the victim and the general assistance to be provided (Council of Europe, 2019).

These responsibilities of shelters are also reflected in the "Minimal Standards for providing Social and Family services" of the MLSW. Based on the Law on Social and Family Services, the Monitoring/Inspection Unit (IMU) of Social and Family Services under the MLSW, oversees the provision of quality social and family services including by shelters. The MLSW also ensures through monitoring the compliance of activities and compliance with existing national and international legislation requirements, minimum standards for social and family services, and compliance with the Code of Ethics for Social Service Providers.

Overall, Kosovo* does provide for an institutionalised mechanism detailed in the SOP's for referral and assistance to victims of domestic violence. The referral mechanism is based on the provision of services by specialised shelters registered and licenced NGO's at the MLSW. Shelters are not fully funded for their running expenses by the government, the remaining funds are mainly sought from donors which makes the assistance not sustainable. Other forms of violence against women are addressed ad hoc within the existing shelters including rape or other forms of sexual violence.

The following guidelines propose to undertake certain efforts based on the existing resources aiming to expand the provision of services and assistance to all forms of violence against women in the near future.

4. Standards for a network of specialist support services for victims of gender-based violence

4.1 Background

Enhancing support and protection is essential for preventing and combating violence against women. Women victims of violence and their children need various types of specialist support and services should be well tuned and co-ordinated: the first step for a women victim of violence is often to contact a helpline where women can get 24/7 help on the phone and can remain anonymous.

A next step might be to seek face-to-face counselling in order to talk with a professional and to obtain information and advice. It is important that women get support even if they do not need accommodation in a shelter (non-residential help). Thus, women's centres are needed alongside women's shelters in all regions to serve, for instance, women who have been raped by an acquaintance or women victims of sexual harassment. Women's centres also support victims of domestic violence who have not yet decided if they want to leave the violent partner or not. It is a well-known fact that violence can escalate when women try to leave a violent partner and it is thus very important that women and their children receive support before, during and after separation. Rape crises and sexual assault centres are specific types of women's centres and they are important services to recognise the existence of sexual violence which is still a taboo in many societies.

A strict distinction between services for DV victims and services for victims of sexualised violence and rape has developed over the years in some countries. This separation does not always meet the needs of women survivors of violence who experience various forms of violence simultaneously with domestic violence often also including sexualised violence such as rape by the husband or ex-partner, and women victims of rape often suffer physical and psychological violence and/or stalking by the same perpetrator. In the majority of cases women are exposed to violence including sexual violence by their intimate partners (WHO, 2020) thus sexual assault and rape are committed by partners or ex-partners rather than by strangers.

It is essential that all support services – women's helplines, centres and shelters apply a holistic approach and are addressing all forms of violence in their services. This holistic approach is also a principle of the Istanbul Convention.

4.2 International obligations

The Istanbul Convention highlights the importance of general services in the area of health and social services (Article 20) and the necessity to provide specialist women's support services for all women victims of violence and their children (Article 22). Specialist services need to be available in an adequate geographical distribution and provide immediate, short- and long-term specialist support to all women victims of violence and their children. At least one state-wide round-the clock (24/7) telephone helpline free of charge must be available in every county (Article 24) as well as appropriate, easily accessible rape crises or sexual violence referral centres (Article 25).

Concerning shelters for women victims of violence and their children, the Istanbul Convention calls for the “setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children.” (Article 23). Shelters need to be easily and immediately accessible when victims need it and that victims can turn directly to the shelter.

Regarding the protection of children experiencing domestic violence, the Istanbul Convention stipulates that “to ensure that in the provision of protection and support services to victims, due account is taken of the rights and needs of child witnesses of all forms of violence”(Article 26). This calls for the provision of age-appropriate support for children in all women’s shelters and other specialist support services.

Sometimes there are concerns that women’s specific services could be seen as discriminatory because they do not serve men. However, specific measures are necessary to address the existing gender-inequality and the Istanbul Convention points out, that “special measures that are necessary to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence shall not be considered discrimination” (Article 4.4).

The Explanatory Report of the Istanbul Convention (paragraph 132) emphasises that it is important to ensure that the staff of specialist women’s support services “need to be able to address the different kinds of violence, and provide support to all groups of victims, including hard-to-reach groups.”

Regarding the necessary establishment of rape crisis centres or sexual violence referral centres, states parties are provided with an alternative not the obligation to set up both of the types of centres, but they are highly encouraged to have separate crisis or referral centres with specialised staff to ensure appropriately the collection of evidence such as forensic evidence for rape victims.⁶ Article 25 of the Istanbul Convention states that the traumatic nature of sexual violence, including rape, requires a particularly sensitive response by trained and specialised staff. Victims of this type of violence need immediate medical care and trauma support combined with immediate forensic examinations to collect the evidence needed for prosecution.

Furthermore, there is often a great need for psychological counselling and therapy – often weeks and months after the event. Article 25 therefore lays particular emphasis on providing this type of specialised support by obliging Parties to provide for the setting-up of accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres in sufficient numbers. The Explanatory Report (paragraphs 138 and 139) explains that various research reports have shown that it is good practice to carry out forensic examinations regardless of whether the matter will be reported to the police, and to offer the possibility of having samples taken and stored so that the decision as to whether or not to report the rape can be taken at a later date (paragraph 141).

Recommendations for a national network of support for victims of VAW and DV

The following specialised women’s support services should be part of a national network of support for victims of VAW and DV.

Women’s shelters

- A network of specialised women’s shelters accommodating all women victims of violence and their children
- At least one such specialised women’s shelter in each region (in Kosovo* at least seven women’s shelters)
- Number of places needed as per Council of Europe minimum standards for support services for victims of VAW and the Istanbul Convention: Council of Europe minimum standard: one shelter place (bed) per 10.000 head of population. Recommendation according to the Istanbul Convention (Explanatory report, paragraph 135): 1 family place per 10 000 head of population.
- A family place can be defined as a place for one woman and her child/children based on the average number of children per family in a country (Council of Europe 2008a).
- The number of shelter places should depend on the actual need (Explanatory paragraph 135).
- 24/7 immediate access to women’s shelters;
- Free transport of victims to the shelter;
- Support for all children without discrimination of gender and age;
- Safety and security of victims as core goal and task of women’s shelters (see further sections in these guidelines).

Women's centres including rape crises centres

- According to the Istanbul Convention, one centre for victim of sexual violence should be available per every 200 000 inhabitants (Istanbul Convention Explanatory Report, paragraph 142).
- Women victims of other forms of violence (physical violence, psychological violence) also have the right to the same standards of support. Thus, women's Centres need to be available in all regions providing support to women survivors of all forms of violence, including sexualised violence and rape by specially trained staff. They should provide crisis support as well as short and long-term support to women victims of violence and their children including pro-active support (i.e., after police interventions) and outreach.
- The Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (Council of Europe 2008a) recommends one women's centre per 50.000 women and one women's centre per region (this would amount to seven women's centres in Kosovo*).

Women's helpline

- One national women's helpline addressing all forms of violence against women, operating 24/7 and free of charge.

General principles for the provision of specialist women's support services

- All specialised women's support services should be free of charge and aim at empowering women and children.
- They need to have the necessary means to provide adequate support to the children of women victims of violence.
- Besides support in acute situations of violence, middle and long-term support, including psycho-social support and counselling, should be provided to victims in order to overcome traumatic experiences of violence.
- The safety of victims (women and children) is at the centre of their work. In order to provide safety, the victims, staff, including volunteers, need to be safe as well.
- Every woman victim of violence should have the right to be supported and represented by a counsellor/advocate of her choice, throughout all legal and institutional proceedings.
- Outreach services should be made available to women victims of violence, especially in rural areas. Outreach services means all kind of services which aim at pro-actively contacting victims by phone, social media or by visiting them at home, instead of expecting victims to seek help and to come to the service location.⁷
- All specialist women's support services need to be able to provide support to vulnerable groups/groups facing multiple discrimination: i.e., women and children with disabilities or mental health problems; older women; young women; minority ethnic women, migrant and undocumented migrant women, asylum-seeking women, lesbian and transgender-women and other groups.
- Migrant women victims of violence need to be able to exercise their right to separate from the violent partner and receive an independent residence permit (Istanbul Convention Article 59).

Victims' social and economic rights

Social and economic rights should be guaranteed to all women victims of violence and their children, so that they have a chance to live independent lives free from violence. This aspect is particularly important in the prevention of violence, since women who are dependent and have no secure income on their own, are at higher risks of experiencing violence. Consequently, the following social and economic rights should be guaranteed for all women, including women who experience violence:

- **Right to social assistance:** all women victims of violence need to have the right to basic financial aid, if they have no income on their own; this right should be granted to all victims regardless if they have children or not and independent of the age of the children.
- **Right to affordable housing:** Women survivors of violence should not be compelled to live with a violent partner, especially after separation, because of the lack of affordable housing. Likewise, victims and their children should not have to remain in women's shelters for a long time because they have nowhere to go. Therefore, housing programs that guarantee the right of victims of violence and their children to

obtain affordable housing is paramount for them to live a life free from violence.

- **Right to free or affordable childcare.**
- **Right to education and training**, including free language courses for migrant and refugee or asylum-seeking women.
- **Right to support in accessing the labour market**, to guarantee the subsistence of women and their children.
- **Access to free health care** for all women survivors of violence and their children.

Assistance for elderly persons victims of domestic violence

Violence unfortunately also concerns the elderly and many old women and men experience abuse and neglect by caretakers by family members, within the domestic sphere or in institutions. The Istanbul Convention recognises the problem but does not include any specific provisions, because it is a problem of its own with root causes differing from the root causes concerning violence against women and domestic violence. It therefore needs specific measures and policies, such as provisions outlined in the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 on the promotion of human rights of older persons (Council of Europe 2014). Shelters are not the right place for these group of victims because they often need more complex and comprehensive care. They need residential homes and the Council of Europe recommends that “Member States should provide for sufficient and adequate residential services for those older persons who are no longer able or do not wish to reside in their own homes.” (Council of Europe 2014, para 40)⁸

Assisting men victims of domestic violence

Domestic violence also concerns men, especially older men or young boys. It is especially important that boys of all ages are admitted to women’s shelters, further elaborated under chapter 6. Kosovo* currently provides support to male victims of violence until the age of 18 if accompanied by their mothers.

It has to be recognised that domestic violence affects women disproportionately (Istanbul Convention, Article 2.1) and therefore specific, gender-sensitive shelters are needed for women and their children.

Parties to the Convention are free to set up shelters for male victims of domestic violence, but they should be separate from women’s shelters. Experience has shown, that shelters for male victims have rarely been established, because there is little need for such services. Due to the gender-inequality between men and women, it is women who most often have to flee from violence. But, as stated, all victims should receive support and general victim’s services might be a good choice to help male victims of violence. However, one group of young people – men and women – can be in high danger of being killed, and should be considered for safe accommodation i.e. victims of honour based violence.

5. Principles of empowering human-rights based support for victims of VAW and their children

The following principles are core elements of empowering human rights-based support for women survivors of violence and their children as enshrined in the International human rights standards presented above.

Respect and dignity

Women victims of violence are in danger not only of being victimised and injured, but also of losing their dignity, because of the gender discrimination they face, for instance, with victim blaming attitudes, example of blaming victims of rape if they have drunk or justifying violence because the woman did not take care of the husband nor the children). These are common statements heard in shelters working with victims of violence and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2017). Often victims have to justify themselves and continue being blamed for what happened.

It is of utmost importance that the support for victims of violence is based on the principle of respect and dignity for the victim as well as the principles that there is no excuse for violence and that any form of victim blaming is unacceptable and the cause of secondary traumatising of victims.

Gender-sensitive approach

Violence against women is not an individual problem or a problem that only exists in certain countries or cultures, on the contrary, it is a global phenomenon which exists in all countries of the world. The Istanbul Convention requires that a gender perspective is included in the implementation and evaluation of all measures to combat violence (Article 6) and that the support for victims is based on a gendered understanding (Article 18).

Women's shelters and other specialist women's support services therefore need to include a gender perspective in the management of their services. The "women helping women" approach is an important principle to strengthen women: male dominance and violence lead to a low self-esteem of women and the feeling that they cannot master their lives on their own. Women's shelters serve as a model to women to experience their own ability to lead a self-determined life.

- The vision and mission statement of support services addresses gender equality in all areas as key element to end violence against women.
- Women's shelters organisations should be led and run by female staff.
- All paid staff and volunteers in specialist support services need to be trained in applying a gender perspective.
- Awareness for gender in-equality is included in all areas of work, including in the support of children, girls as well as boys.
- Programs and activities for the empowerment of women are promoted.
- gender impact assessment of all measures is carried out regularly to evaluate if and how the policies and measures are promoting women's advancement and preventing discrimination of women and girls.

Non-discrimination and inclusiveness

The Istanbul Convention requires that all women victims of violence and their children have access to general and specialised support services. Discrimination on any ground is prohibited: "The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status." (Article 4)

There are groups of women and children who are victims of multiple discrimination and who are in danger of facing barriers in accessing services or are even excluded from them. Some of the groups who often face problems of exclusion are: women and children with disabilities, including women with learning difficulties; minority ethnic women such as Roma women; migrant women, especially undocumented migrant women; refugee and asylum-seeking women; lesbian and trans-gender women.

"No one left behind" is the principle and slogan of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Agenda 2030. To leave no women and no child behind is also the goal when it comes to provide essential services to victims of violence against women and domestic violence. This requires that policy makers and service providers need to ask the questions: Are there groups of women and children who are excluded from accessing support services? If yes: Which groups are excluded and why? What are possible negative consequences of such practices? What measures need to be taken to remove barriers? (WAVE, 2017).

- Women's shelter needs to be barrier-free and allow all women and children access to support, including persons in wheelchairs or women with learning disabilities. At least some rooms in women's shelters need to be wheelchair accessible and, in every region, there should be at least one wheelchair accessible shelter place.
- Information material needs to be provided in all official languages, including the most common languages spoken by migrant and refugee groups; information material also needs to be available in easily understandable language, in Braille and in language easily to understand for people with hearing disabilities. Such information material and criteria for support should be best developed together with organisations advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.
- Minority ethnic women and their children need to have full rights to access shelter, likewise migrant women, refugees and asylum seeing women.
- Undocumented migrant women need to be admitted to shelters, even if they do not have a valid residence status. Their rights should include to obtain protection from violence, to file charges against the perpetrator, to participate in legal proceeding and to claim compensation rights.
- If services are run by faith-based organisations, they always need to be open to victims from all religions and backgrounds.
- Other groups of women facing multiple discrimination and barriers to access services are lesbian and trans-gender women. LGBTIQ persons still face prejudices, intolerance and even violence in many countries and regions in Europe and beyond, because of their identity and sexual orientation. It is important that lesbian women and persons who identify as women are admitted to women's shelters.

Victim-centred and human rights-based support

The Istanbul Convention is based on human rights and a victim centred approach. It requires that states parties ensure that policies “place the rights of the victim at the centre of all measures” (Article 7) and that support measures “focus on the human rights and safety of the victim” (Article 18).

Violence against women and domestic violence are structural problems: gender inequality, violence and discrimination affect women not only at the personal level, but also at the level of institutions when seeking help. A result of the deeply rooted discrimination is that women victims of violence are often not believed when seeking help or are blamed for the violence they experience. Institutional structures are often hierarchical and male dominated. Social and family services might put pressure on women to preserve the family. In Kosovo*, it has been reported also that victim-blaming and reconciling the victim with the perpetrator remained common among judicial and social services monitored, often justified with the aim of “saving “the traditional family” (Qosaj Mustafa, A., Morina D., 2018).

Because of the mechanisms of institutional power over women victims of violence, it is of great importance that general and specialist women’s support services apply a victim-centred and human-rights-based approach in which the central principle is “nothing about victims without victims.” Another core element of the rights-based approach is that services to victims are unconditional and that the victim can choose the service that is appropriate for her in a given situation. Especially victims should not be forced or put under pressure to take legal steps. The Istanbul Convention stipulates that “the provision of services shall not depend on the victim’s willingness to press charges or testify against any perpetrator” (Article 18.4).

Kosovo’s Strategy on Protection against Domestic Violence 2016-2020 and the new Kosovo Programme on Gender Equality 2020-2024 take into account the victim-centred approach according to the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. Also, under the recently amended Kosovo Criminal Code the mechanism of the Victims’ Advocates is foreseen to represent the rights of all victims of crime in courts including victims of domestic violence.

- All victims must be able to exercise the right to take free decisions regarding their life.
- Victims are listened to, and believed
- Victims are well informed about their rights and possibilities so that they can take informed decisions.
- Children are also enabled to exercise the rights guaranteed under the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Women and children victims of violence receive human rights based and victim-centred support throughout their help-seeking process and their journey through institutions, by councillors/advocates standing at their side.
- Councillors/advocates are working on behalf of the victim, are well trained in victims’ rights and are able to represent the rights and interests of victims.
- In multi-agency work or co-operation between agencies, the rights and interests of the victim are represented by a counsellor/advocate of the victim’s choice.
- No decision is taken on the victim without the victim’s informed consent.
- Exceptions from this rule are only made in situations of immediate danger and have to be transparent, justifiable and documented.

Victims’ right to self-determination

The right to self-determination to stay or to leave the relationship is another central aspect of the victim-centred and human rights-based approach. There are two fundamental human rights of victims which have to be safeguarded in this regard: the right to a live free from violence; and the right of the victim to respect for private and family life (article 8 European Convention on Human Rights).

It would not be legitimate to put pressure on victims to separate from the abusive husband - or the contrary, to urge or press victims to stay in the relationship. The support for victims needs to be unconditional and respect the right of the victim to self-determination. Pressure to change can and should be put on the aggressor regarding the abusive behavior, never on the victim.

- Victims need to be guaranteed the right to live free from violence and the right to respect for private and family life.
- Society needs to demand and promote change in the behavior of the perpetrator while providing unconditional support for victims and their children.

Confidentiality and data protection

Confidentiality and data protection are further aspects of the victim-centred and human-rights based approach. As stated above, exceptions can be made if there is an immediate threat to the life, health or freedom of a victim or the children. For example, a counsellor in a women's shelter realises that a victim is in great danger because the perpetrator has threatened to beat up the victim and is about to come home; the victim does not want the counsellor to call the police. In such a situation it is even an obligation of the women's shelter worker to react because the fundamental right not to be subjected to violence is stronger than the right to confidentiality and data protection.

- Exceptions are only made in situation of immediate danger. Such decision must be transparent to the victim and well documented so that they can be defended in the case of a complaint.
- Victims support services must guarantee victims that the information they give is kept confidential and that it is only shared with the explicit consent of the victim.

6. Standards of services in women's shelters

Help free of charge

The services of women's shelters as well as other women's support services should be free of charge. Victims of violence fleeing their homes often have no other option and they should not face financial burdens.

Immediate access to help 24/7

Violence does not necessarily occur during the day – it will happen day and night. Women often experience domestic violence in the evening, when their husband is at home, or during the night, especially sexual violence and rape. It thus happens regularly that women have to flee, sometimes even without being dressed properly.

If the case is known to the shelter, such as a recidivist case or if it has been earlier reported and identified, safety planning should include the preparation of women and children for such a violent outburst, and women are advised to pack a safety bag and deposit it with a neighbour or friend, including a list of service numbers and the number of the closest women's shelter (see section on safety). In such a situation, women must be able to get a place in a women's shelter immediately for herself and her children. The shelter must also be able to provide free transport to the shelter for the woman and her children (such as taxi expenses). In Kosovo*⁹ context this service to the shelter is foreseen under the Standard Operating Procedures and is provided by the Kosovo* Police once the victim reports its case for assistance to the Police.⁹ In the same way as hospitals, women's shelters must be staffed properly to be able to admit women and children in situations of acute crisis 24/7.

Sufficient capacities and places in shelters

Women's shelters need to have sufficient capacities to accommodate women and children in emergency situations. The shelter should thus never be (or expected to be) fully occupied; at least one place should always be free. This implies that the funding of the shelters is always sufficient to be able to keep free spaces available.

Right of self-referral

Immediate access means that victims can call and access the shelter themselves, without going through a bureaucratic procedure and without any other institutions deciding whether they are admitted or not. The women's shelter needs to have the decision-making power to admit women and children to shelters 24/7.

Duration of the stay in the women's shelter

Women victims of violence and their children should have the right to stay in the women's shelter as long as they need. Any restriction in the length of time victims can stay in the shelter causes stress. It is good practice that shelter staff and victim jointly discuss what kind of support the victim needs and for how long, and that in the end it is the victim who decides about the length of stay.

It is a common experience in women's shelters that some victims leave after a relatively short period. This can cause stress for shelter workers or staff of social services. However, victims should get the clear message that her decision is respected and that she can return to the shelter at any time, without conditions.

Often victims may actually be forced to live at the shelter for a longer time than they would want to, because they have nowhere else to go. Victims and their children should have the right to affordable housing, social housing or the right to be paid the rent¹⁰ so that they are not forced to stay at the women's shelter longer than necessary (see also section on social and economic rights of victims).

Integral recovery from trauma into all areas of support

Violence against women and domestic violence are often repeated forms of violence, causing severe traumatisation because the violence is committed by partners and family members who should be persons one can trust. Understanding trauma and avoiding re-traumatisation must be a central goal of all measures taken in the context of support services. This includes that:

- All staff, both paid staff and volunteers, at women's shelters and support services needs to be trained in the forms, dynamics and strategies of violence against women and domestic violence, the traumatic impact of violence and how to avoid flashbacks and secondary victimisation.
- The victim receives multiple and coordinated services at one location and does not have to talk to several persons.
- A counsellor/advocate is assigned to the victim quickly at the women's shelter so that the victim knows whom to turn to in confidence. The victim should also be able to request to change the support person if confidence building does not work out.

Comprehensive support for children

Children are always affected by the violence their mother suffers. Often, they are also direct victims experiencing psychological, physical and sexualised violence by the father or step-father.

The Istanbul Convention recognises that witnessing violence also is a form of violence against children. Children experiencing and witnessing violence have the right to age-appropriate counselling (Article 26). In legal procedures concerning custody and visitation rights of parents, the authorities in charge need to apply the principle that violence must always be taken into account. The authorities are also responsible for ensuring that visitation and custody rights do not jeopardise the children's rights and safety (Article 31).

All victims need to be admitted to women's shelters without discrimination. This includes male and female children aged under 18 years. Many shelters have age limits for boys and often are only admitted until the age of 12 or even younger in Kosovo* (Council of Europe, 2019). This is a form of discrimination and might convey the unintended message that boys are not children but already "dangerous young men". Some shelters have developed solutions such as separate rooms with bathrooms to accommodate families with boys. One or two rooms per family, with a bathroom, should be the general standard in a shelter.

- All children, girls and boys up to 18 years, need to be admitted to women's shelters and need to get age-appropriate counselling and support when residing in women's shelters, or by other specialist support services.
- Their rights to safety and their best interest must be represented by the support person in all proceedings, with the consent of, and in cooperation with, their mother. If there is a conflict of interest between the mother and the child/children which cannot be solved, the child counsellor can also support the child without their mother's consent.
- Support for children needs to be ongoing, from their arrival until they leave the shelter, and also beyond, through non-residential children's services.
- Facilities in shelters need to be child-sensitive, and guarantee children's safety.
- Staff, both paid staff and volunteers, needs to be trained with regard to child-sensitive and child-friendly interventions.

Support for migrant, refugee and minority ethnic women victims of violence and their children

All women victims of violence need to receive support regardless of their nationality or status.

- It is important for general and specific support services to pursue an approach to violence against women and domestic violence that recognises it as a global problem, and avoid blaming any specific culture, nation or minority group.
- Minority ethnic women, such as Roma women and their children, refugees, as well as asylum-seeking women and their children, including victims "without papers" or so-called "undocumented migrants" need to be admitted to women's shelters without discrimination.
- Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of biases and discriminatory practices and attitudes and need to reflect on them; they need to be trained in providing culturally sensitive services to all victims, and to treat them with respect and dignity.
- Co-operation with the diverse cultural groups in the community is important to ensure and facilitate access of victims from these communities to shelters and specialised services, as well as provide support to victims by the community.
- Staff in support services need to represent the diverse local communities to the highest possible degree and provide counselling services in languages spoken by minority ethnic, migrant and refugee women and children.

Support for victims with special needs

- It is important that staff (paid and volunteer staff) is trained with regard to awareness of existing forms of discrimination against people with disabilities and recognise their needs.
- Organisations running women's shelters need to ensure the accessibility of women's shelters, particularly regarding wheelchair accessibility, at least on the ground floor, to allow access to all services needed.
- Victims with mental health and addiction problems also face problems regarding access to women's shelters, and their special needs must be recognised and met.
- Staff (paid and volunteer staff) needs to be trained regarding mental health problems and work sensitively with these clients.
- Staff and survivors need to learn how violence, trauma, mental health problems and addiction are connected and what is important for healing.
- Close co-operation with specialist services for people with disabilities, mental health problems and/or addiction problems is helpful for meeting the special needs of these groups and for creating an atmosphere of inclusion.

7. Safety measures in women's shelters

The safety and security of victims needs to be at the core of all measures to combat VAW and DV in general as well as in providing specialised women's support services. Women victims of violence may face a high risk of femicide and children are also at risk of being murdered by their violent father when their mother tries to leave, especially if there has been a pattern of violence and abuse. Women victims of stalking and victims of human trafficking can also be affected by escalating violence.

Safety and security comprise four different levels, all of which need to be taken into account and managed, with detailed standards:

Technical safety and security precautions of women's shelters

- Confidential address (if possible)
- High security standards and systems (alarm system and video monitoring)
- Security staff, available 24/7, at least in the phases of elevated danger
- Safety regulations for victims, visitors and staff
- Alarm system connected to the police.
- Secured yard and/or garden.
- Secured ground floor windows, no living rooms facing the street.
- Safety as a core standard in the access protocol for victims (process of entering and leaving the women's shelter).

Safety of the individual victim including her children

- Risk assessment and safety planning with every victim and her children, at the women's shelter, at least upon entering and leaving the women's shelter and in any situation of change or risk.
- Specific safety planning for women and their children.
- Assessment of elevated and lethal risk using, for instance, Jacquelyn Campbell's Danger Assessment Tool.
- Systematic risk assessment and safety planning as part of empowering support for victims.

Safety of staff at the women's shelter

- Development and implementation of a written safety plan for staff (paid staff and volunteers).
- Emergency safety plan for the organisation (what to do in dangerous situations, i.e., perpetrator attacking the shelter, taking of hostages).
- Cooperation with the police on safety plans for emergency situations in women's shelters.

Safety and security of victims as a core element of a coordinated community approach

- Safety and security of victims¹¹ must be the centre of multi-agency work.
- Representation of the victim's rights and interest by a counsellor/advocate of the women's shelter is a crucial element to guarantee the focus on victims' safety.
- Additional to these safety standards women's shelters must also meet general safety standards such as fire safety and evacuation regulations and electrical and technical structures regulations, etc.

8. Advocacy for Victims

The support that victims get from counsellors/advocates is often referred to as “case management”. While this is a professionally correct term, the term “case manager” might not be appealing or even sound intimidating for a victim of violence who might feel that someone is managing them. It is thus advisable to use a more accessible term, and these guidelines use the term “counsellor” and “survivor’s advocate” interchangeably.

The Istanbul Convention requires that “all measures are based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence and shall focus on the human rights and safety of the victim” (Article 18). The convention further states that all measures taken to protect and support victims need to “aim at avoiding secondary victimisation”, which includes that victims do not need to tell their story to many different persons, which might cause flashbacks and the recurrent recollection of traumatic events.

The Victim Advocates in Kosovo* are a unique example including with the countries of the region, to ensure legal representation of victims during criminal proceedings (Article 63 of the Criminal Procedure Code). They are part of the State Prosecutors Office and represent the interests and rights of victims of crime, including victims of domestic violence, before, during and after criminal proceedings.

- Victims should be assigned a counsellor/survivor’s advocate quickly when moving to women’s shelter; this is important in order to enable survivors to get familiar with the new environment, to build a relationship of trust to one person and to avoid having to tell the story of violence several times.
- If a relationship of trust is developed, the counsellor should continue to be the support person for the survivor throughout her stay at the women’s shelter, and if possible also after the survivor leaves the shelter (known as the “anchor” person).
- It can be important for the victim’s empowerment that the victim and the counsellor jointly develop and write down a support plan which addresses the issues of safety, support, practical needs and how to enforce her rights. This can help the victim feel more secure but it should not be obligatory for the victim.
- Preferably, the counsellor should also be the person accompanying the victim to court and other authorities. If this service is provided by an external expert such as the victims’ advocate in Kosovo* it is important that this takes place in agreement with the victim and that the victim can trust that the professionals to cooperate in an effective way.
- The counsellor should also be the person representing the victim’s rights, interests and needs in multi-agency forums, and is authorised by the victim to do so.
- If a victim is unable to develop a relationship of trust to a counsellor, she has the right to turn to the management and ask for a change; whenever possible the victim should be able to choose her counsellor.

9. Management standards for women's shelters

The following management standards should be followed in the women's shelters in line with the standards in the Istanbul Convention presented above:

Facilities in women's shelters

A women's shelter is more than just "a roof over the head". First and foremost, it must be a safe place for women victims of violence and their children (see section above on safety and security). And it also needs to be a place in which women and children feel welcome at their temporary home.

If the quality of the shelter is poor, this conveys the message to women and children that they are not worth much. While a good quality women's shelter does not mean that it has to resemble a 4-star hotel it is important to keep in mind that, as women victims of violence have suffered injustice, that have been injured and hurt, lived in fear and distress. In order to heal, recover, gain strength and be empowered, society should offer the best support possible to restore their health and dignity. In that sense, a safe, well-built and appropriate infrastructure offered by the service providers is a necessity.

- Women's shelters should have enough space to provide a minimum standard of one room per family (woman with one child); if more children stay at the shelter with the survivor there should be one additional bedroom, or two additional bedrooms in the case of three children.
- Wheelchair-accessible rooms and areas.
- A bathroom and a kitchenette for each family, especially if there are older children/boys in the family.
- One shared bathroom for two single women.
- Sufficient cooking facilities and laundry areas for all women and their children and storage rooms.
- Space for age-appropriate activities for children.
- Room for studies, courses and homework, equipped with computers.
- Recreation space for women (living room), if possible, a garden and wellness area.
- Meeting rooms for women to get to know each other, share their stories, raise awareness and find solidarity.
- Rooms for counselling (individual and group sessions) and staff offering care to children during sessions.
- Office room and night-shift room for staff.
- One large room for large meetings, seminars and festivities.
- If possible: one room for meditation, contemplation or praying.

Rights and responsibilities of shelter residents

Women's shelters provide professional services to women victims of violence and their children, aimed at ensuring support in line with the highest possible professional standards. To be able to deliver these high standards, a certain degree of institutionalisation is necessary. Still, it should not be forgotten that women's shelters are the temporary home of women and children, where they should feel at ease and safe and where they are empowered and live in solidarity with others.

Rules are important for living together safely, but they need to be kept at the minimum that is necessary for pleasant community living and for ensuring maximum freedom for the individual residents. Any information provided needs to be clear and written in a simple language so that the residents can understand and remember easily. Residents in women's shelters should know that they do have rights, which have been written down and which they can enforce and responsibilities to comply with. They also need to know where to turn in the case of a complaint¹².

- Protocol for entering and leaving the women's shelter including information on:
 - the range of services available to women and children, principles of service provision and information about staff;
 - the rights of service users at the women's shelter;
 - the procedures for entering and leaving the women's shelter;
 - information on complaint procedures.
- The access protocol should also inform victims explicitly that they and their children can return to the shelter any time whenever they need support.
- It should also contain confidentiality rules including limitations on confidentiality and data protection rules.
- It should specify who will be informed about the victim's move to the shelter and her leaving the shelter.
- The sanctions for a breach of rules should not include expulsion from the shelter. Such a severe sanction should only be imposed in cases of serious breaches of rules.

Written needs assessment and action plan

The counsellor should help the victim to evaluate her and her children's needs and develop a plan of steps to take. If the victim agrees, this plan is written down and can be used by the victim to reflect on her situation, to become aware of her needs and rights, and ways of realising them.

Residents' participation and democratic decision-making structures

Women residing in women's shelters and their children, should have the right, and should be encouraged, to participate in shelter activities and be involved in decision-making to organise community life at the shelter.

Right to use a mobile phone

Smartphones are valuable devices for women victims of violence. They provide access to support apps and other information and enable women to call the police when hiding from the abuser in an acute situation of danger. However, smartphones can also be used by perpetrators to track and stalk victims of violence. Therefore, some shelters see smartphones a safety problem and prohibit women from using their mobile phones in the shelter or in certain areas. This is understandable but also problematic because it restricts women's freedoms.

- A better way of dealing with the problem might therefore be to train victims in how to use their mobile phones in a way that does not jeopardise their safety.¹³

Good governance structures and accountability

Each women's shelter needs to develop and implement its own management structure.

- It is advisable to build the structure along the principles of flat (horizontal) hierarchies, democratic decision-making structures and participation of staff and residents.
- The women's shelter should serve as role model aimed at empowering victims, which calls for participation and teamwork (WAVE, 2004, page 49).

Staff hours' requirements at a women's shelter

WAVE Manual (2004, page 57) ¹⁴ includes a calculation of staff hours for a medium-sized women's shelter for 10-15 family units, i.e., a total of 25-35 places and operating a 24-hour shelter helpline and providing counselling services. The minimum staff requirements for a shelter such as this are:

- 5 full-time staff for the 24/7 shelter services
- 2 full-time staff for counselling and support for 10-15 women
- 1 ½ full-time staff for support for the children at the shelter
- 1 staff member for administration
- 1 staff member for management, networking and PR.

An additional staff member is needed to give the necessary attention and support to children with special needs, for instance children with a disability or children with autism or a hyperactivity disorder.

That means that approximately 10-11 full-time staff members are needed.

Staff training

Paid staff, as well as volunteers, needs to be properly trained in all areas of service provision, shelter principles and standards. WAVE (2004) suggests an initial basic training for at least 80 hours (about two work weeks) followed by specific training modules.

The Council of Europe minimum standards for support services (2008, page 49) suggests the following subject matters for training:

- a gendered analysis of violence against women;
- communication and intervention techniques;
- confidentiality;
- child protection;
- accessing translation and disability services;
- appropriate referral procedures;
- information on trauma, coping and survival;
- risk assessment and safety planning
- non-discrimination and diversity;
- Empowerment.

Supervision to ensure quality standards

Regarding the staff's well-being and the proper implementation of service standards, supervision is an important means of reviewing and improving services.

- Supervision should be compulsory for all staff, including volunteers.
- Counsellors should have monthly individual supervision; in addition, group supervision should be provided for all team members every 4-6 weeks.

Victim-centred evaluation, monitoring and data collection

An ongoing compilation of statistical data is necessary for the evaluation of the services provided by women's shelters. According to the Istanbul Convention Explanatory Report (paragraph 74), recorded data should be disaggregated by sex, age, type of violence as well as the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim and geographical location.¹⁵

Quality standards of services need to be evaluated by the services users, i.e., the women and children seeking help at women's shelters.

10. Institutional advocacy and prevention work of women's shelters

Women's shelters also play an important role in their communities and with society at large by engaging in the following activities:

a) Awareness-raising and training

Specialised women's support services do not only provide support to survivors. As civil society organisations, they also engage in awareness-raising and prevention activities as well as training, as such making an important contribution to social change in society, and to the elimination of the root of violence against women and domestic violence.

Specialised support services including shelters should be provided with adequate funding to support the services' work in the areas of awareness-raising and prevention of violence.

b) Coordinated community response and multi-agency cooperation

Women's shelters and other specialist women's support services engage in coordinated community response and multi-agency work.

Women's shelters need to have a core role in multi-agency work representing the rights and interests of women and children and making sure that the empowerment of victims is of central concern.

c) Co-operation with social services and work with the family

It can be beneficial for all sides if social services work with the perpetrator (and if necessary, with other family members) to address the problem and to emphasize the importance to stop violence and to respect the rights of women and children to live free from violence. If the victim agrees and if it is safe, it can be beneficial and empowering for her to join such meetings, accompanied by the women's shelter advocate, if this is the victim's wish.

d) Victim-safety-oriented work with perpetrators

The Istanbul Convention requires ensuring that the safety of, support for and the human rights of victims are of primary concern in perpetrator programmes (Article 16).

- Perpetrator programmes need to be set up and implemented in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims.
- Women's shelters and women's centres play an important role in securing that the focus on safety of victim is actually implemented in the work with perpetrators.

11. Adequate funding of women's shelters

According to international standards, the funding of women's services needs to be appropriate and include financial and human resources (Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention).

In Kosovo* licensing of NGOs and also their financial support is defined under the Law on Family and Social Services and Regulation on Criteria, Standards and Procedures on Public Funding of NGOs. Income generating projects, such as the bakery or honey production projects run for example by the Safe House Gjakova shelter, are important initiatives for the empowerment of women, but they should not have to replace missing financial aid for women without in income or inadequate funding of women's shelters.

- Good practice includes that governments provide secure and sustainable funding with multi-annual contracts.
- Contracts need to outline the conditions and standards that apply.
- Regular reporting allows for monitoring in the areas of both financing and implementation of standards.
- Women's shelters should be run by independent, non-profit organisations (NGOs) with clear structures and responsibilities to ensure the implementation of standards (WAVE, 2017).
- Funding should also be provided for the work women's shelters carry out in the area of awareness raising, campaigning and providing training to different professionals and groups.
- It is important to set up and fund national networks of women's shelters and support services, with the goal of a joint evaluation and improvement of service standards, improvement of the national system of data collection, and promotion of an exchange of knowledge.

12. Conclusion

Violence against women and domestic violence is a severe problem causing enormous harm and suffering for victims, their families and the society in general. In the past two decades many countries, have started to step up their measures to tackle the problem and have developed new and innovative practices and models. The problem is still severe and lack of funding often hampers progress. No country has resolved the problem yet and gaps in prevention and service provision remain everywhere.

Kosovo* does provide for an institutionalised referral mechanism detailed in the SOP's for referral and assistance to victims of domestic violence. These referral mechanisms need to continue to be updated and are currently being reviewed in line with the recent legal amendments to the Criminal Code of Kosovo*, the direct applicability of the Istanbul Convention as well as of other international standards of assistance and protection for victims of VAW and DV.

Shelters are not fully funded for their running expenses by the government with remaining funds mainly sought from donors which makes the assistance not sustainable. Other forms of violence against women- such as rape or other forms of sexual violence- are addressed ad hoc within the existing shelters e. A holistic, consistent and coordinated multi-agency support in this regard is necessary. The guidelines propose to undertake efforts based on the existing resources aiming to expand the provision of services and assistance to all forms of violence against women in the near future. Quality guidelines for services that are transparent and guarantee effective and efficient services based on the human rights and needs of service users are important elements of good governance. The quality guidelines for shelters on VAW and DV are intended to support government funded shelters and institutions providing support to licensed women's shelters in Kosovo* in providing and overseeing the delivery of good quality and consistent services to women survivors of violence and their children.

The main difficulty for implementing the quality standards lies in the question of resources: high-quality standards of women's shelters can only be guaranteed if adequate resources are provided for implementing them. but Kosovo* citizens expect good quality services if they or their family members, are in need of support, in line with the government's obligations to provide the best support possible based on the most comprehensive European standard, the Istanbul Convention.

ANNEX I: Examples from other countries on specialist support services for victims of VAW and DV

The following examples are only a small section of the various measures which have been established but are not presented as “best practices” but rather as an illustration of experiences and inspiring models.

Specialist support services

AUSTRIA

Women’s shelters in Austria – Capacities and funding

Austria has approximately 8,8 million inhabitants. The first women’s shelter was founded in 1978 in Vienna. Currently 30 women’s shelters exist, most of them are situated in cities. All women’s shelters are accessible 24/7 and provide immediate support to women and their children. Unfortunately, not all women’s shelters offer places for boys over the age of 14 years. Services of women’s shelters are free of charge for women without an income. All women’s shelters are run by NGOs and are fully funded by provincial governments and municipalities.

The provinces Upper Austria and Burgenland adopted a legal base for funding women’s shelters. The four of the Viennese women’s shelters also have secure funding and an unlimited contract with the City of Vienna. The federal government also funds a network of women’s shelters which among other tasks collects and publishes national data of women’s shelters annually.

For further information: <https://www.a oef.at/index.php/frauenhaeuser2>

GERMANY

Violence against Women Support Hotline provides easy access to women’s shelters

The federal-run Violence against Women Support Hotline is accessible 365 days a year, 24 hours a day and free of charge. The hotline advises women victims of all forms of violence, such as domestic violence, rape, forced marriage, stalking or trafficking. The support is provided confidentially and anonymously and in 17 languages. Besides telephone counselling victims can also get advice online per e-mail and a help chat. The federal hotline is connected to women’s shelters and other specialist support services in the Bundesländer. A regular up-dated database provides information about regional and local services and available places in women’s shelters. Germany has about 330 women’s shelter serving a population of approximately 84 million inhabitants in 16 regions/Bundesländer.

Further information: <https://www.hilfetelefon.de/en.html>

AUSTRIA

Proactive approach by Intervention Centres

The Intervention Centre in Vienna is the biggest specialist support service in Austria, serving about 6000 victims of violence against women, domestic violence and victims of stalking on annual basis. The victims are mainly women and children referred to the Centre by the police after they are issued an Emergency Barring Order. The Centre applies a gender-sensitive, pro-active and holistic approach. Risk assessment and safety planning with every victim is based on the Risk Factors of the Protect II project Capacity Building in Risk Assessment and Safety Management to Protect High Risk Victims.

For further information: <https://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at/download/?id=Statistics-2019-Domestic-Violence-Intervention-Centre.pdf>

Risk assessment and safety planning

EUROPEAN UNION

WAVE Network Manual

The WAVE Network carried out two EU projects on Risk Assessment and Safety planning for women victims of violence and their children. A manual has been developed which is available in 12 languages (Bulgarian, Czech, English, Estonian, French, German, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish and Swedish). The manual contains information on the risk assessment and on the important role that women's shelters and support services play in ensuring that the rights of victims are placed at the centre of all measures.

<https://www.wave-network.org/2019/05/20/protect-ii-capacity-building-in-risk-assessment-and-safety-management-to-protect-high-risk-victims-2012-available-in-12-languages/>

United States of America (USA) and Canada/Alberta

Danger Assessment Tool

The Danger Assessment Tool developed in 1985 by Jacquelyn Campbell, professor of nursing and public health at Johns Hopkins University uses a calendar to support women victims of partner violence to recall frequency and severity of violent incidents. It uses a 20-item danger assessment questionnaire. Institutionalising the Danger Assessment represents a promising practice both in shelters' efforts to identify women in more serious danger and provide them with more targeted tools and services, and in using action-based research for advocacy purposes.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters in Canada began using the Danger Assessment tool in 2003. The high level of danger among shelter residents was confirmed by use of the Danger Assessment: in 2019, data revealed that nearly 2/3 of women entering shelter are at a severe or extreme risk of being killed. The project improved women's understanding of their abuse and the need for personal action, increased their understanding of safety planning, and reduced minimization of the violence.

For further information: <https://cawes.com/events/10-news/149-acws>

Information on the Danger Assessment tool and application: <https://www.dangerassessment.org/About.aspx>

Housing

AUSTRIA

Housing program for women victims of violence in Vienna

In order to empower women victims of violence, and to safeguard their right to live free from violence, housing programs are of utmost importance. To be empowering, the goal must be to provide permanent housing, not provisional or transitional housing.

In Vienna the city's housing department has a special unit, focusing on prioritising housing needs of special groups, including women victims of domestic violence. With the support of women's shelters or other women's support services, victims can apply for housing online and are allocated affordable apartments within a few weeks.

For further information: Soziale Wohnungsvergabe Stadt Wien <https://www.wienerwohnen.at/interessentin/sozialewohnungsvergabe.html>

Awareness raising and training

FINLAND

Video on how shelters work

In order to encourage women victims of domestic violence to seek help, the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland produced a video that illustrates how the Finnish shelters for victims of domestic violence work: Who and how one can apply for a shelter? What happens in the shelter, and how is the family supported thereafter?

For further information:

<https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/services/special-government-services-in-social-welfare-and-health-care/shelters-for-victims-of-domestic-violence>

United Kingdom (UK) / Europe

Support groups for women victims of violence

The Power to Change is a European Union (EU) project to learn how to set up and run support groups for victims and survivors of domestic violence. The Power to Change is a practical guide to running support groups and self-help groups with victims and survivors of domestic violence.

For further information:

https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-Power-To-Change-Cosgrove_Barron_Harwin_2008.pdf

Supporting women and children after domestic abuse

This toolkit was developed by Women's Aid England as a learning material for staff in women's shelters and specialist women's support services. It provides knowledge and skills on how to support pregnant women and women with babies and toddlers. The toolkit helps to understand the impact of domestic violence on early parenting and on the development of infants and very young children. It also contains a model of support that is woman-centred and infant-centred.

For further information: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/downloads-and-resources/children-young-people/>

Support measures in times of COVID Crises

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Collection of measures and practices of member states to respond to the Covid-19 Crises

The Council of Europe set up a web-page compiling information on measures and practices that member states have put in place during the Covid-19 crises to mitigate its impact on women's rights. The compilation includes: "measures to prevent violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators as well as available data and indicators on gender-based violence and domestic violence during this period-and measures taken with respect to other relevant aspects, such as sexual health and reproductive rights, women's economic independence and their role as workers in the pandemic, women's role in unpaid and care work, vulnerable groups of women, etc."

For further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights>

ANNEX II: LIST OF RISK FACTORS (WAVE, 2012)

	Risk factor	Category of risk
I. History of violence		
1.	Previous domestic violence against women	Across studies of risk factors for domestic violence against women, prior domestic violence is shown to be the most common risk factor.
2.	Violence towards the children or other family members	<p>Frequent violence within the home will extend to other family members, including children. Initial concerns for the safety of a child can reveal far more extensive patterns of violence within a family. Children may also be used by the perpetrator as a method of emotional manipulation and control over a victim. (Duluth Model of Domestic Violence).</p> <p>There is some evidence that risk towards children who are experiencing violence is often not taken seriously. The rights of the child and safeguarding actions for children are a parallel concern for practitioners engaging in risk assessment.</p>
3.	Generally violent behaviour	Perpetrators of domestic violence also often exhibit general anti-social attitudes, behaviours and a use of violence outside of the domestic sphere. Violence outside of the family indicates a general tendency to use violence, can increase the risk to the woman victim, and poses a risk to other people including practitioners.
4.	Violation of protective orders	Violations of protective orders (by police, criminal or civil courts), and contact or non-contact orders, are associated with an increased risk of future violence.
II. Forms and patterns of violence		
5.	Severity and frequency of violent acts	An increasing severity and frequency of violent acts are one of the most significant factors of severe and potentially lethal assaults.
6.	Use of / threats by weapons	The use of, or threats to use weapons are a significant risk factor for serious and lethal violence. In domestic violence, all weapons including fire arms, knives and dangerous objects that could be used as an instrument to hurt the victim must be considered.
7.	Controlling behaviour and isolation	Controlling behaviour is perceived as a significant risk factor for repeated severe and potentially lethal violence. Isolation is a common strategy for control and can take on severe forms like deprivation of liberty (locking women up).
8.	Stalking	Stalking is related to lethal and serious violence against women, and coupled with physical assault, it is significantly associated with femicide and attempted femicide.

9.	Sexual violence	Sexual violence is commonly experienced as part of domestic violence against women. Women who are sexually assaulted are more likely to be subjected to more serious injury and serial abuse in domestic violence.
10.	Threats to kill, threats to harm, coercion	Practical experience has shown that severe violence is often preceded by threats. Coercion can take on different severe forms, including forced marriage.
11.	Strangulation and choking	Strangulation and choking are very dangerous forms of violence; approximately half of victims of femicide face a strangulation attempt in the year before their death.
III. Risk factors related to perpetrator behaviour		
12.	Issues related to drug and alcohol use	Whilst drug and alcohol use is not a cause of or an excuse for domestic violence against women, a perpetrator's alcohol and drug use is associated with an increased risk of femicide and more severe violence.
13.	Possessiveness, extreme jealousy and other forms of harmful attitudes	Extreme jealousy and possessiveness are associated with severe violence. In addition, the patriarchal attitudes of perpetrators, such as very rigid concepts of male or family honour and a sense of ownership of women can impact risk.
14.	Issues related to poor mental health, including threats and attempts to commit suicide	Perpetrator mental health problems, including depression, are associated with an increased risk of repeat and severe violence. Threats to commit suicide and a perpetrator's poor mental health are risk factors for femicide-suicide cases. In 32% of femicide cases, the perpetrator committed suicide afterwards.
15.	Economic Stress	Changes in the perpetrator's financial status and unemployment are strong risk factors in femicide cases related to domestic violence and link to concepts of masculinity and gender roles.
IV. Victim's perception of risk		
16.	Fear for herself and others	Research shows that there is a strong correlation between the self-assessment of risk by the victim and the actual use of violence by the perpetrator. However, some victims of violence may also minimize and underestimate the violence. In a study of femicide by Campbell et al (2003) approximately half of victims did not perceive there to be any risk that the perpetrator would kill them.
V. Aggravating factors		
17.	Separation	Separation is commonly understood as a significant risk factor for severe harm or femicide.
18.	Child Contact	Conflict in relation to child contact is common following separation and often poses a risk of repeat violence for both women and children.
19.	Step child living in the family	Risks factors of intimate partner femicide include any of the perpetrator's stepchildren living in the home.
20.	Violence during pregnancy	About 30% of domestic violence starts in pregnancy. Violence during pregnancy is a risk factor of severe and lethal violence. Pregnant women have a greater risk of both minor and severe violence than non-pregnant women.

ANNEX III: SAFETY PLANNING (WAVE, 2004)

A) SAFETY PLANNING FOR VICTIMS

The following points should be considered in supporting women victims of violence and their children:

- Whom can she talk to about her situation, and whom can she trust? (friends, relatives, employer, teachers in school, etc.)?
- She should pack a bag with her most important belongings and those of her children, especially with all her important documents, and leave it with someone she can trust. Remind her always to have the keys for the house/apartment and the car with her so that she won't leave them behind.
- If there are weapons in the house, explore ways to have them removed.
- In an emergency, what works best to keep her safe?
- Whom can she call in an emergency?
- Encourage her to call the police if the violence starts again. How can she call the police? Does she have a mobile phone? (The number of the police can also be dialled if the phone is blocked or if there is no credit balance left; 112 is the number of the European emergency line operating in all the countries of the EU.)
- Can she devise a signal with the children or the neighbours to have them call the police or get help if she cannot do it herself?
- If she needs to escape immediately, where can she go? Help her think through several places where she can go in an emergency. Write down the addresses and phone numbers and tell her to keep them someplace where the perpetrator won't be able to find them.
- If she has to escape, what are the escape routes?
- Remind her that, in the middle of a violent assault, it is best to try to run away, or sometimes to placate the assailant, anything that works to protect herself and the children.

If the woman is planning to leave the violent partner:

- How and when can she leave most safely?
- Does she have transport, money, a place to go?
- Does she know how to get to the nearest women's shelter? Does she know the telephone number? Advise her to write it down and keep it where her partner won't find it.
- What can she and others do to prevent her partner from finding her?
- Whom in her support network does she trust to protect and support her?
- How will she travel safely to and from work or school/kindergarten to pick up the children?
- What community/legal resources will help her feel safer?
- What custody and visitation provisions would keep her and the children safe?
- Can she get a restraining order to prohibit the perpetrator from coming near her or contacting her?

If the woman has separated from the violent partner, discuss the following with her:

- Increasing safety measures such as changing or installing safety locks on doors and windows;
- If possible, installing a better security system (window bars, locks, better lighting, a fire extinguisher, etc.);
- Instructing the children or family/friends to call the police in a situation of danger;
- Talking to school teachers and child care providers about who has permission to pick up the children, and developing other special precautions to protect the children;
- Building up a social network to support her, e.g., finding women's support services, asking family, friends, colleagues for support, etc.;
- Obtaining a barring/restraining order by the police/the court, if possible.

Safety bag:

- Advise the client to have the following available in a safety bag, in case she and the children need to escape:
- Passports, birth certificates;
- Marriage certificate;
- Health and social security cards;
- Immigration documents;
- Driving licence, car papers;
- Divorce papers, other legal documents and important contracts;
- Phone numbers and addresses of family, friends and community services;
- Clothing and comfort items for herself and her children;
- Keys (house, car, etc.);
- Children's favourite toys, school books, etc.

B) SAFETY PLAN FOR INSTITUTIONS

Services and institutions can only support and protect victims successfully if they also take care of their own safety. For the police, safety measures for police officers are usually a matter of daily routine. In social and health services, safety for the employees is not always an issue.

Protecting the employees and the clients against all sorts of violence as well as supporting them should be part of the policy of every organisation involved in the prevention of domestic violence.

A safety plan for institutions has been developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Centre Vienna along the following guidelines:

Steps in safety planning

1. The institution's policy

There needs to be a clear policy concerning the occurrence of violence, harassment or discrimination, and planning of safety measures. This includes:

- Development of a written safety plan for the support of employees and clients in cases of violence (Who is responsible for support, what kind of support, e.g., a lawyer, some time off, etc.);
- A comprehensive written safety plan covering what to do in dangerous situations, giving full information about the safety plan;
- Planning of implementation of the safety plan at all levels:
- Association, Management, Employees, Clients.

2. Prevention of violence and implementation of the safety plan

- Technical safety precautions (safety door, video, direct line to the police, etc.);
- Monitoring of day-to-day security measures (e.g., Who is allowed to enter the institution? When are the doors open, when locked? Who is to take which safety precautions?);
- Regular briefing of new employees on safety measures in place;
- Regular 'safety practice' (checking the safety precautions, discussing the measures with all concerned);
- Early warning system: in case of imminent danger (e.g., a perpetrator demanding something calls or appears at your door) take measures in time, discuss the situation in team meetings, don't put it off.

3. Follow-up after occurrences of violence

- Plan what is to be done immediately following violence: Who is to do what and when (e.g., call the police/make a report, apply an 'institution ban' for clients, hold emergency meeting, etc.);
- Support directly affected people (determine their needs, arrange and implement supporting measures: What kind of support, competency, etc.);
- Determine the needs of the other employees, arrange and implement supporting measures (e.g., supervision);
- Reflect on safety planning processes (What worked, what didn't?);
- If necessary, improve/upgrade the safety plan.

Considerations for the development of a safety plan

- Which dangerous situations can occur in our institution?
- What types of violence could occur?
- By whom? Against whom? When especially? Where especially?
- What do we need / What do we have to do to avoid dangerous situations?
 - clarity
 - agreements/rules
 - technical facilities/conditions
- Safety plan for everyday life: Who is to do what and when? Safety plan in case of emergency
- Follow-up after violence: What kinds of support are available for the employees (e.g., lawyer, supervision, time off, etc)? Which ones for affected clients? Which ones for other employees?
- Who is responsible for what concerning safety? Who is responsible for the ongoing implementation of safety plans? How is it ensured?

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Endnotes

- I As an exception there have been few municipalities that have provided Kosovo shelters with premises free of charge such as in the Prishtina municipality example and the example by the Gjilan municipality of offering by international donor the building of the premise, as well as in the case of Gjakova or Peja. From the "Needs Assessment for the Development of Guidelines for Shelters of VAW and DV in Kosovo*," December 2019...
- II 1) Centre for Protection of Women and Children in Pristina, 2) Raba Voca Shelter for Women and Children Mitrovica, 3) Women's Wellness Centre in Peja, 4) Safe House in Gjakova, 5) Centre for Sheltering Women and Children in Prizren; 6) Liria Shelter in Gjilan; 7) Hope and Homes for Children in Pristina; 8) Centre for Protection of Victims and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings in Pristina and 9) Women's Shelter in Zubin Potok and Novobrd. Information from Zubin Potok provided by shelter representative from Zubin Potok, online conversation with shelter representative, November 2020.
- III See Annex I for a detailed list of SOPs referral checklist for assistance to victims.
- IV Assistance steps foreseen by the Kosovo SOPs include (see SOPs Annex 15, Checklist) : 1) Respond to basic needs of the victim upon victim's arrival in the shelter; 2) Provide food, clothing, medical care; 3) Victim referred to health institutions for other medical services when needed; 4) If the victim is a child, referral to health institution is made in the presence of the CSW Representative; 5) Victim informed on his/her rights; 6) Victim informed on the rules of the shelter, services provided, schedule and security measures explained when accommodated in the shelter; 7) If the victim refuses accommodation in the shelter; 8) Consequences and risks of staying outside the shelter are explained to the victim; 9) Victim receives advice on preventive actions; 10) Advice is provided to the victim in requesting a protection order if needed; 11) Identify and assess risk safety of the victim by shelter officers; 12) Police and other authorities informed once risk is identified; 13) Case manager in the shelter assigned; 14) Case file opened and file, containing information about the victim should be kept confidential; 15) The reflection period of 48 hours for a newly-referred victim in the shelter should be observed; 16) Individual plan for the victim developed by the victim, shelter case manager and CSW case manager; 17) Services provided on the basis of the individual plan developed for the victim; 18) Other community services coordinated to assist in victim's reintegration; 19) Victims' Advocate informed to provide legal counselling in relation to court procedures; 20) School or Ministry of Education, Science and Technology contacted to coordinate school attendance for children of the victim; 21) Victims referred to the CSW when victims need administrative services and issuance of personal documents; 22) Victim's contact with the family, relatives and social contact facilitated if the safety of the victims allows for family contact; 23) Contacts monitored for security purposes when victims are classified as high-risk; 24) Meetings with family and others made possible accompanied by police; 25) Victim's transfer from one shelter to another is arranged according to the agreements among shelters and on the basis of emerging needs; 26) Transfer implemented in case of approval by the Department of Social Welfare (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare); 27) Victim is released from the shelter with the decision of shelter and CSW Case Manager and the victim's consent; 28) Police and victims' advocates informed on the victim's release from the shelter. Additional detailed steps should be undertaken prior to the reflection period and during the reflection period for the first 48 hours.
- V The drafter of the form remains not clear. The forms were provided by the Pristina shelter representative and are followed by other shelters. The forms were shared during the drafting of the "Needs Assessment for the Development of Guidelines for Shelters of VAW and DV in Kosovo*.". The following forms are used: 1) Admission Form; 2) Form registering beneficiaries personal belongings; 3) Statement for voluntary residence in the shelter; 4) Consent form for giving or for sharing of information; 5) Authorization Form for visits or health services; 6) Form for the Individual Care Plan for the victim; 7) Register of visits or services provided; 8) Statement for Voluntary Temporary Departure and Voluntary Departure; 9) Form of transfer or release and 10) Personal belongings obtained or donated by the shelter (see full list of the forms attached to the report.
- VI See Appendix I from good practice examples from countries
- VII Council of Europe (2014): Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons, adopted on 19 February 2014, Strasbourg. At https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c649f
- VIII According to the Kosovo SOPs (Annex 9) these are Kosovo* Police checklist of responsibilities: a) Protect victims, children and other witnesses; b) Perpetrator of domestic violence is taken away; c) Basic form completed, needs and risk assessments' conducted; d) Victim informed on his/her rights; e) Victim informed on existing services; f) Provide contacts of the police officer for the victim or legal representative; g) Inform the Centre for Social Affairs and Victims' Advocates or victim's legal representative; h) Victim, perpetrator, children and witnesses interviewed; i) Victims under the age of 18 interviewed in the presence of the custody body/Centre for Social Affairs; j) Copy of the form submitted/information sharing with other actors involved in the process; l) Transportation provided or ensured for the victim and his/her carriers to the health institution; m) Transportation provided or ensured for the victim and his/her carriers to the shelter or any other safe location as requested by the victim; n) Temporary emergency protection order issued outside court working hours, if that is requested by the victim, CSA, Victims' Advocate or shelter; o) Protected orders issued by the court executed and monitored; p) Victim accompanied to take personal belongings; q) Report compiled for the case and a copy of the report given to the victim, CSA and Victims' Advocate; r) The domestic violence case investigated If there are elements of a criminal offence, a criminal charge shall be initiated and case referred to the competent prosecutor; s) Transport for the victim during court proceedings provided; t) Victim informed if the perpetrator of domestic violence is arrested or in relation to his/her whereabouts; v) Victim, Victims' Advocate, Centre for Social Welfare and shelter informed on the changes made to the detention or arrest status of the perpetrator.
- IX According to Kosovo* Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, the courts can order a number of protection measures when issuing the protection orders including the measure to order the perpetrator to pay for rent of temporary living premise for the victim and her children as well as pay alimony to the victim and children, for whom the domestic violence perpetrator has an obligation to support. See Article 11, paragraph 1,2 of the law available at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2691>
- X For more detailed information on risk assessment and safety planning see WAVE, 2006; WAVE 2012; Council of Europe, 2015.
- XI Detailed examples are provided in "Away from Violence. European Guidelines for Setting up and Running a Women's Refuge" (WAVE, 2004).
- XII See good practice example: National Network to End Domestic Violence NNEVDV-The Safety Net Project: <https://nnedv.org/content/technology-safety/>.
- XIII Istanbul Convention Explanatory report paragraph 74.
- XIV For full references see WAVE network (2012) Protect II: Capacity Building in Risk Assessment and Safety Management to Protect High Risk Victims, Vienna.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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