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WAVE CONFERENCE

**'WOMEN'S SPECIALIST SERVICES AS
PILLARS OF PEACE IN TIMES OF CRISIS
AND BEYOND'**

2022

The 2022 WAVE Conference '**Women's specialist services as pillars of peace in times of crisis and beyond**' will take place this year in Prague, Czech Republic.

This year's conference is organised by the WAVE office together with WAVE members ROSA Center for Women and proFEM - Center for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence.

The WAVE 2022 Conference will take place from the **10th -11th October 2022**, with the first day being open to the general public and WAVE members, while the second one is only open to WAVE members.

This year's conference is dedicated to the **importance of women's specialist services (WSS) and their overall contribution towards society by navigating different contexts and building resilience and capacity in times of crisis and beyond**. Women's specialist services, such as shelters, centres, helplines and prevention services are essential in times of crisis and in times of peace to ensure that violence against women and girls is effectively tackled and prevented. The work of WSS entails providing holistic, victim-centred and trauma-informed support to women experiencing violence, whether or not women chose to engage with state services. This support is provided on various levels including e.g. practical, psychological, legal advice, emergency accommodation as well as specific support for their children. Furthermore, WSS apply a multi-agency approach to their work, bringing together and training key local and national stakeholders needed in addressing VAWG and thus ensuring an adequate structural response to VAWG, including a victim-centred and trauma sensitive approach.

Specialised women's services have been at the forefront of preventing and combating violence for decades, tirelessly offering services to affected women and girls. In times of crisis, WSS are often first responders on the ground to support women and girls affected by the impacts of crisis such as a pandemic or war. They often continue providing and adapting their services, in the face of challenging external circumstances, even where related government services are no longer operating or are disrupted.

WSS services are not provided in a structural vacuum. They adapt and respond to their given context, and the institutional mechanisms as well as socioeconomic and political circumstances present in that context. For WSS to operate adequately, appropriate policies, sustainable (governmental or international) funding, and adequate legal frameworks need to be in place for WSS to be able to respond to the needs of women and girls victims/survivors of violence.

The **main aim** of the conference is to (re)focus attention on the invaluable role women's specialist services play as key actors in preventing and combating VAWG in times of crisis and beyond. Participants will be offered a platform to share knowledge, experiences, and promising practice examples. The conference will encourage discussion on the importance that adequate contextual and institutional conditions have in preventing and tackling VAWG at the international and national levels, and what is needed for WSS to be able to continue to provide such services in times of peace and crisis. Furthermore, the conference will offer a space to potentially co-develop effective and women-centred advocacy strategies for women's NGOs at a national and European level.

Monday, 10 October 2022

The first day of the conference is open to the general public and will be in a hybrid format. The day will start with opening remarks from the President of the Network, WAVE Executive Manager and partner organisations ROSA Center for Women and proFEM Center for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Keynote speeches will be provided by international institutions and national stakeholders of the Government of the Czech Republic.

The first day will offer participants the opportunity to attend two panels.

The **first panel** will focus on framing the conversation, namely providing input on the legal context in which WSS operate, be it at a national and/or European level, highlighting how such a context interferes and/or supports the work carried out by WSS. It will address the synergies between different pieces of legislation, in place and under development, namely the EU Draft Directive on combatting violence against women and domestic violence, and other international legal frameworks, such as the Istanbul Convention. It will further tackle the implications that such European frameworks have at a national level and the significant role women's organisations play in this regard.

By first exploring the legal context, the **second panel** will then go into depth on the operational context of WSS and the difficulties of navigating a constantly changing environment. Appropriate implementation of legal provisions, be they national or European, paves the way through which WSS provide their services. A lack of implementation, coupled with different levels of crisis, be it the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine and its aftermath, has had exponential impacts on the way such services are delivered. Participants will gain knowledge on the role that such environments play and the impact they have on access to rights, as well as the role of WSS in times of crisis, with a particular focus on the challenges of offering support when different traumas coalesce. The panel will highlight different national perspectives of the WAVE Network, for participants to gain knowledge on the disparate realities women's NGOs have to navigate, and to find common ground and ways of supporting each other in the process.

Tuesday, 11 October 2022

The second day of the conference will be only open to WAVE Members. The purpose of the second day is to explore in-depth topics addressed in the first day of the conference, as well as other key topics which affect the entire network. It also represents an opportunity to address, discuss and strategise on other burning issues currently encountered by WAVE Members.

On this day a total of **eight workshops** will be offered to participants. Four workshops will run in parallel throughout the first session, and four workshops will run in parallel throughout the second session. Workshops are proposed and run by WAVE Members and are to fit in the overall framework of the WAVE Conference.

In the afternoon, WAVE members will get the chance to attend a plenary discussion and continue networking. The aim is to open up the space to talk with each other about key issues that were not or insufficiently addressed in other sessions. This will be an opportunity to hear the experiences of different WAVE members, where an active participation of everyone will be encouraged.

The conference will end with an informal networking event for participants - the WAVE party which is open to all WAVE members!

We hope that you will find the 24th WAVE Conference interesting and enriching, and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in person in Prague!

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