



### CONTEXT GBV AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Greece ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in March 1983 and its Optional Protocol in January 2002. In January 2013 Greece signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and ratified it in October 2018.

Greece is one of the six members of the EU which defines GBV in its legislation (Law 4531/2018).<sup>1</sup> In Greece, as codified in its Penal Code (mainly Section 19), Trafficking (Art. 323A), Rape (Art.336), Assault of sexual dignity (Art.337), Abuse of a person incapable to resist to sexual act (Art.338), Sexual actions with minors or in front of them (Art. 339), Abuse of minors (Art 342), Abuse in a sexual act (Art.343), Sexual act among relatives (Art. 345), Facilitation of sexual acts with minors (Art. 348), Pornography of Minors (Art. 348A), Procuring (Art.349), Sexual act with a minor against remuneration (Art. 351A), Violation of sexual decency (Art. 353) are all punishable crimes introduced through several laws, including 4619/2019, 4637/2019 and 4855/2021.<sup>2</sup>

Greece does not cover the four forms of domestic violence specified in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention within its criminalization or definition of domestic violence. While it covers physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological violence, it excludes economic violence. Greece has not legally defined femicide either. As a result, such legal provision does not exist<sup>3</sup> even though in the first ten months of 2021 Greece had already 13 cases of femicide recorded.

The legal concept of domestic violence that, among other things, charges rape as a felony, prohibits spousal rape, (including rape in a free union), and provides for prosecution by force of law for all domestic violence crimes was introduced in 2006 by Law 3005 on domestic violence.

Despite this significant progress in legislation, provisions are not thoroughly and consistently implemented, and a few significant gaps persist: the justice system does not have an information system on domestic violence offences,<sup>4</sup> there is a

lack of disaggregated statistics on women victims of sexual crimes, and not enough specialized and trained professionals for the adequate management of victims of sexual crimes, the treatment towards minors victims of sexual abuse by the Criminal Justice System remains anachronistic (Hellenic Ombudsman, 2020), the 2019 ministerial decision that ordered the establishment of Independent Protection Units for Child victims and defined standards for conducting forensic interviews with child victims of sexual abuse is yet to be implemented,<sup>5</sup> there are no procedural criminal law provisions aimed to avoid re-victimizations during the prosecution and court hearings and rape reported to the police is not prosecuted ex officio.<sup>6</sup>

Despite rapid progress made in terms of women's rights, there are still many issues that Greek women face, particularly in the workplace. Research conducted in 2020 revealed that 85% of Greek women say they have faced sexual harassment at work with only 6% having it reported due to fear of retribution or loss of employment and the fear of not been taken seriously by the authorities.<sup>7</sup>

### FACTS

According to the Hellenic Police, for the year 2020, the annual number of A) women victims (aged 18 and above) of domestic violence was 4.264, B) reported domestic violence offenses were 5.699 (4.026 of them were reported with male perpetrators and female victims), C) women victims of physical intimate partner violence with male perpetrators were 2.350, D) women victims of psychological intimate partner violence committed by men were 2.494, E) women victims of sexual intimate partner violence committed by men were 47, F) women victims of economic intimate partner violence committed by men were 1.638, G) women victims reporting rape were 202 and H) the number of women victims of intentional homicide (Art. 299 PC) in connection to the law on domestic violence were 8.<sup>8</sup>

Since 2020, the Hellenic Police records the victim's and the perpetrator's gender as well as the relationship ►

between them. In this regard, and for that year, there were 4.758 male perpetrators (82%). Their victims were 3.693 women and 795 men.

There were also 1.047 women perpetrators (18%). Their victims were 301 women and 746 men. Regarding the relationship that perpetrators and victims had: 1859 male perpetrators exercised violence against female spouses, 481 against ex-spouses, and 459 against permanent intimate partners. On the other hand, 280 female perpetrators exercised violence against male spouses, 116 against ex-spouses, and 53 against permanent intimate partners. The percentage of violence toward their sons (13.9%) and daughters (10.1%) exercised by female domestic violence perpetrator is higher than the percentages of men perpetrators (5.4% and 5.8% respectively). However, the number of women victims of violence committed by their fathers is more than twice the number of women victims of violence committed by their mothers (277 versus 140).<sup>9</sup>

Adding some perspective on the matter, the annual number of reported offenses of domestic violence over the last 10 years for which data are available, has been constantly increasing. The reported crimes increased from 5220 in 2019 to 5669 in 2020, documenting an increase of 8.6% compared to the previous year. The negative effects of the COVID lockdowns are clear.

## WOMEN'S CSOs LANDSCAPE - Challenges and Needs

Greece does not count on a strong network of women's CSOs and there are only a few women, non-binary and LGBTQI+ people who are active to claim their rights. The Greek government does not fund CSOs gender-based violence (GBV) programming. Instead, the organizations run response services through EU funds, UN agencies/INGOs and funds from private donors. The General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSDFPGE) encourages the implementation of co-funded projects through the provision of a "Letter of Support" and also through its active participation in projects' consortia.<sup>10</sup>

### Direct Victim Support Activities

Women's CSOs in Greece don't have the financial capacities to run support services for women victims of violence such as shelters or helplines. The Greek government runs the main infrastructure that deals

with the direct consequences of GBV. It does so through a system that includes a SOS 15900 helpline, 19 Women's Shelters that provide safe accommodation and meals to women victims of GBV and their children and 43 Counselling centres providing social, psychological, legal consultation and occupational support; referral or accompanying services to police and prosecution authorities, courts, hospitals, health and mental health centres, welfare social services or other benefits such as access to structures for the promotion of employment and entrepreneurship and for protection and support of children.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/738126/IPOL\\_STU\(2022\)738126\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/738126/IPOL_STU(2022)738126_EN.pdf) Retrieved March 31, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> GREVIO Baseline Government report (2022) Retrieved March 31, 2023 from <https://rm.coe.int/inf-2022-4-state-report-greece/1680a60a4e>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/738126/IPOL\\_STU\(2022\)738126\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/738126/IPOL_STU(2022)738126_EN.pdf) Retrieved March 31, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> 2nd Annual Report on Violence Against Women. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSDFPGE). Retrieved March 31, 2023 from <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG-EKTHESH-SITE.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> RETREAT – Reshaping treatment approaches towards victims of sexual violence within criminal proceedings. WP2 – National Report Greece. Retrieved March 31, 2023 from [https://sexualviolencejustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Retreat-REPORT-GREECE\\_FINAL\\_ENGLISH-02.21.pdf](https://sexualviolencejustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Retreat-REPORT-GREECE_FINAL_ENGLISH-02.21.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Observatory of the GSDFPGE 2020. "Completion of the Questionnaire on Criminalization and Prosecution of Rape – United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women - Thematic report on rape as a grave and systematic human rights violation and gender-based violence against women". Retrieved March 31, 2023 from <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/RapeReport/governments/greece.docx>

<sup>7</sup> <https://greekreporter.com/2020/11/24/vast-majority-of-greek-women-say-theyve-been-sexually-harassed-at-work/>. Published November 24, 2020. Retrieved March 31, 2023

<sup>8</sup> 2nd Annual Report on Violence Against Women. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSDFPGE) <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG-EKTHESH-SITE.pdf> (retrieved March 31, 2023).

According to the CSOs, the public infrastructure is a resource-deprived and understaffed network that is not by any means sufficient for the number of women in need across the country, especially to address the specific needs of migrant women and the forms of violence they face. Despite this fact, this network remains the main provider of crucial direct victim support activities. There are women's organizations who try to cover the gaps in state support, but due to lack of funding, the financial crisis and lack of policies related to gender equality and GBV prevention most of those organizations struggle to survive and somehow come to their surface and showcase the work that they do. In the north of Greece for example there is only one community centre for women providing them with a safe space regardless of their legal, status, and origin.

There is a public helpline to provide psychological support and a newly introduced app with a 'panic button', however mental health support is still a taboo in Greece and it's difficult to access services. So, women's CSOs provide these spaces for women, also collective group activities for **psychological support**.

Nevertheless, women's CSOs are very much on the front line, attending women victims of violence with scarce resources, often being their **first contact points, they are the 'entrance' for survivors of GBV** and through the women's CSOs they get the support to access a public shelter. They also offer **support to access the medical system** and getting medications if needed. They also cover the costs for private health services in emergency cases for women and children. Particularly for refugee, asylum seeking or undocumented women it is very difficult to access the generally free public medical services and if they do they need a translator. There is also a lack of professional knowledge on how to attend GBV cases particularly of related to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Women's CSOs are the extended community network, the first safe place women can go to and are taken care of.

The main needs identified by women's CSOs are emergency shelter (short term emergency accommodations) and legal aid. Given that providing legal aid is priority and that it is very expensive to argue in court, particularly when legal cases call for a submission to the European justice, women's CSOs offer it particularly to women with low economic capacities, poor women, migrants and refugees.

## Indirect Victim Support Activities

Women's CSOs had an important role in the past in advising and monitoring the process of policy implementation and had been invited by the Government for consultations. However, with the new Government this is not the case. In this scenario, there is not much place for the needed advocacy work and **domestic lobbying activities** aimed at addressing important gaps in the legislation and the lack of fully-fledged implementation of policies. This scenario has also a negative impact on extant gaps in data collection on GBV, which cannot be covered by CSOs and which deprives CSOs (and society at large) of a realistic picture on this matter. Women's CSOs express that it is a top priority **to set up a monitoring and advocacy system** aimed at reverting this state of things.



Because Europe is a source of both norms to be nationally transposed and funds for CSOs, women's CSOs are very aware of the importance of both monitoring what happens at the European level and making things happen at the European level too. Hence, research and analysis of the Greek reality in terms of GBV aimed at informing policy making (EU and potentially domestic one) is another identified priority.

**Tackling gender stereotypes and working specifically with youth** groups is also a key priority for women's CSOs.

## Community Building and Outreach Activities

A key priority for women's CSOs is community building and to support with collective actions to strengthen a social network for women victims/survivors of GBV or at the risk of it to have peer-to-peer support and safe spaces to access and express and be themselves. ►

Regarding community building women CSO's have identified **the need to engage in networking with relevant stakeholders** so to promote and protect fundamental values (including gender equality) in the EU. In that regard, it is of interest for the CSOs to speak and act in the name of EU values.

Additionally, given the deficit of gender-sensitive skills and capacities of professionals managing GBV situations, increasing the offering of **gender-responsive capacity training and education** particularly in GBV first responders' professions (police, health system, judges, etc.) is a clear priority.

## **CSO Competency Building**

CSOs in Greece don't receive any Government GBV funding and therefore they have to be skilled to apply for **funding** to private, European or international sources. Because women CSO's are well aware of the need to submit competitive proposals and to have the competencies needed to have the biggest possible impact on the ground they have pointed to the need to **receive technical and methodological support for the preparation and implementation of activities**. In relation to that, they need to build competencies on both **project/programme design as well as on monitoring, evaluation, impact assessment and reporting**.

The lack of Government funding for CSOs working on the GBV field turns the subject of CSO's overall capacities as the key to ensure their sustainability. **Flexible funding** is an urgent request. They need to develop **team and managerial capacities**. They need to improve their fundraising abilities.

*“The annual number of reported offenses of domestic violence over the last 10 years has been constantly increasing. The reported crimes increased from 5220 in 2019 to 5669 in 2020.”*

<sup>9</sup> All this data, notwithstanding, “The full extent of violence against women is difficult to estimate, as it continues to be under-reported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality” (EIGE, 2016) “Combating violence against women”. [https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2016\\_5475\\_mh0216770enn\\_pdfweb\\_20170215100603.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2016_5475_mh0216770enn_pdfweb_20170215100603.pdf). Similarly, the E-bulletin no. 23 of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality of Greece (November 2019) states that “official statistics are only a fraction of the actual incidents” <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Observatory-E-bulletin-no.-23-Gender-based-violence.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Report submitted by Greece pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report). Received by GREVIO on 31 March 2022. GREVIO/Inf(2022)4. <https://rm.coe.int/inf-2022-4-state-report-greece/1680a60a4e>.

Additionally, women CSO's pointed out to the need of socially promoting gender expertise so to increase the level of watch dog activities regarding GBV. Related to this, it is important to maintain a solid base of volunteers and to them in the use of **social media and in video-making**.

The CSOs made clear also that there is a void that needs to be filled regarding the **building of knowledge and thematic training on EU values, law and GBV policies** so to change the language and the terms of the Greek conversation around GBV. The grounding of EU viewpoints and values through GBV is strategic also to strengthen gender equality as a fundamental right and as a shared aspiration.

## **ABOUT THE STUDY**

This study analyses the women's CSO landscape in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Spain. It identifies the challenges women's CSOs face and their needs to prevent and combat GBV. The study was carried out by INDERA SL at the request of **Calala Women's Fund** jointly with the **Mediterranean Women's Fund (MedWF)** and **Ecumenical Women's Initiative (EWI)**.

### **Methodology:**

Based on a review of the current initiatives at grass-roots level in the 11 countries and the project portfolio of EU supported initiatives, a model of activities was created comprising the following four areas: 1) Direct Victim Support Activities: services and activities which are provided directly to the victims of GBV; 2) Indirect Victim Support Activities: monitoring, advocacy, and watch dog activities regarding the adoption and implementation of laws and policies to combat and prevent GBV as well as research, awareness raising and preventative activities. 3) Community and Outreach: activities to strengthen stakeholders' collaboration, networking and community building; 4) CSO Competency Building: activities to strengthen women's CSOs structural, technical, financial and operational capacities.

Stakeholder interviews with women's CSOs and experts from the 11 countries, together with desk research provided information and data about legal and policy frameworks, actors, tools and methods in the area of GBV and VAWG to identify needs to support actions with potential in prevention, protection, prosecution, service provisions, partnership building and prevalence.

The data provided in this study was collected in March 2023. More information at: [www.calala.org](http://www.calala.org)

