

# Comparative study in response systems among Greece, Germany, Italy and Spain

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*–Policy brief–*

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Rights Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme (2014-2020) of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



## The overall objectives

Based on the comparative study of the national legal frameworks, the policies in place and the social context which determine the level of response to survivors of GBV, in particular of diverse needs of migrant and refugee women, we pointed to key challenges and gaps to be addressed as well as to good practices to be shared and be benefitted from.

Specifically, we examined: protection and security issues especially of the most vulnerable populations such as women's and girls' reception and settlement, arising within the national refugee management context.

Systems of response were examined in relation to: a) major (state and non-state) agents intervening in the field b) the policy measures and the services provided c) implementation of GBV prevention programmes as well as integration measures for newly arrived populations.

Common policy recommendations were concluded regarding amendments and upgrading of existing response systems.

### The response capacity is related to:

The size and the intensity of the phenomenon (numbers of newcomers), whereas Greece has comparatively received far greater numbers of refugees, in the last years few years.

The legal framework progressions and the relevant policies implemented and programmes running to combat gender based violence.

The engagement and the role played by the Civil Society Organisations, together with women's, as well as, migrant community

organisations, not to oversee the contribution of International Organisations i.e. UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM etc at least in Greece and Italy.

The depth and extension at which gender dimension (gender mainstreaming) has been incorporated into public policies at national, regional and local level to support GBV survivors, and the already established, integration policies/programmes to facilitate GBV survivors' rehabilitation.

The level of development of the preexisting specialized support services, in terms of know-how and allocated resources (human and money) to address diversified needs of refugee/migrant GBV survivors.

Monitoring processes, mechanisms and tools to coordinate stakeholders in particular among state and NGO led support services/programmes, such as networks, working groups, cooperation protocols and SOPs.

## Key findings

Gaps were evidenced across countries as regards early identification of GBV survivors, to be referred to support services and properly cared of.

Comparatively small number of GBV cases are recorded due to limitations in relevant services. That is, trained and specialized front line staff, availability of interpretation services, living conditions especially in the entry points and the reception and accommodation settlements (i.e. overcrowding camps) resulting in limited access to existing services, leaving protection needs unattended and creating risk of GBV, and more importantly, discouraging survivors to ask for help.



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Greater emphasis is paid to incidents of GBV taking place in the country of reception (Germany, Greece) leaving aside incidents occurring during the journey or the country of origin (which in many cases is the very reason to flee away from the country of origin).

### Gaps in GBV data

In all four countries there is lack of systematic and reliable GBV data, in particular regarding migrant/ refugee populations, despite the widely documented inherent rise of GBV in humanitarian crises.

Available data gathered by different public sources (police, judicial and health agents) even when available, only a small number of actual incidents is recorded. Moreover, there is no data about new forms of GBV i.e. FGM, forced marriages, threats of honour crime etc., most common among female refugee populations.

### Availability of, and accessibility to, support services

All four countries have well established specialized support services (counselling centers, SOS lines, shelters) which provide a spectrum of individualized services such as psychosocial support, information, legal assistance/legal aid.

*Barriers in accessing these services by the migrant /refugee GBV survivors, still persist due to a number of factors:*

Language barriers due to lack of adequate interpretation services especially in public services such as police, hospitals, social services etc.

Survivors are faced also with Cultural barriers created by the low level of cultural sensitization of front-line officers.

Limited or no access to livelihoods creates great dependencies on perpetrators, not to mention difficulties in accessing independently, the asylum procedures, when separated from the perpetrator.

Limited number of integration into the labour market programmes (Greece-Italy) in contrast to the cases of Germany and Spain whereas the Ministries of Labour implement integrated employment programmes specifically targeted to refugee populations, which contribute to survivors' social and economic autonomy in order to avoid recycling experience of violence.

Greece consists a good practice for making provisions for survivors' integration into the labour market still not well developed to include refugee survivors due to language barriers.

Inexistent data about the relation of the phenomenon of trafficking to new refugee flows and limited specialized services and policies addressing victims of trafficking – with the exception of Spain/Catalonia.

Far more advanced in response level is considered the government of Catalonia /Spain which has regulated and has created a network for support and rehabilitation of GBV survivors which include specific SOS-line, support offices, and (60) shelters run by NGOs which also provide services and support programmes in the countries of origin.

The signature in Spain of a *specialized medical protocol for FGM victims* as well as Police protocol to recognize forced marriages despite lack of relevant legal provision.

In all countries with the exception of Greece accessibility to support services is related to legal status (granted asylum) creating a



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vicious circle in dependence and inability to ensure their protection rights.

Insufficient knowledge about, and inconsistent implementation of, the existing legal framework and relevant mandatory professional protocols by public officers and police force undermining in reality policy initiatives at all levels.

Gaps in specialized training of key professionals across all public sector but also in NGOs staff.

### Major service shortages

Respond capacity to the needs of newcomers is greatly dependent upon sufficiency as well as quality of the services provided in relation to their intersectionality, their cultural diversification, their adaptation to the diverse needs arising and equally important to their degree of inclusiveness of specific groups such as males and LGBTQI individuals.

Front line professionals of the specialized agents (state and NGOs) are lacking previous experience and often are not well informed about legal progressions.

Provision of Psychosocial support services is usually short term and also there is no available psycho-therapeutic support (MhPSS) to survivors who usually experience severe psychological problems.

Great coordination gaps have been identified in particular in Greece and Italy which leads to the risk of either duplication of services or to gaps.

### Common policy recommendations

There is great need to put in place programmes and empowerment activities to ensure that refugee/migrant women get knowledge of their rights, become familiar with the new socio-cultural environment

they are living in, so as to mobilise their own resources, to develop their own talents and to be strengthened to cope with their new life's challenges.

There is an urgent need to launch prevention programmes (primary and secondary prevention) to avoid GBV incidents addressing also male population as well as both the local and refugee communities.

Last but not least, guarantee of respect of women's human rights by each one and all member states in Europe, the provision of a holistic type of support services gets through courageous legal reforms and policy measures, the erosion of all accessibility obstacles and of any kind of exclusionary procedures, the creation of multiple occasions to interact with locals in order to deconstruct prevalent gender stereotypes.

To this end, it is of great importance to build on a common understanding of refugee populations arriving in the European societies, not as a "crisis" but as a "society in the move" characterized by class, gender, ethnic and other classifications as well as needs and rights.



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