



European  
Commission

# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

## Combating domestic violence


Romania, 26-27 April 2023

Comments paper – Greece



Ein Unternehmen der ÖSB Gruppe.

*The information and views set out in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.*



*This publication is supported by the European Union Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).*

*This programme is implemented by the European Commission and shall contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected.*

*For more information see: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv>*

# Domestic Violence Landscape in Greece: How femicides and joined campaigns have shaped policies and attitudes

Eleni Fotou

Independent Expert

## Abstract

Greece has implemented significant policy changes in recent years that have led to a marked increase in the report of incidents of domestic violence. Societal attitudes have shifted to request for harsher punishments for offenders and for more support for victims. The ratification of the Istanbul convention has indeed increased policy and legislative efforts for a more comprehensive support system, but there are more steps needed, particularly for victims of coercive control, stalking and psychological violence.

## 1. Data and Resources for Domestic Violence victims in Greece

### 1.1. Overall landscape

In Greece, the primary national regulatory body for domestic violence is the Gender Secretariat of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs. The Gender Secretariat oversees an [extensive network](#) that provides support to victims of domestic violence, which comprises of a national helpline “SOS15900”, operating nationally 24/7 year round, 44 Women’s Aid centers, where psychosocial, legal and work-related counselling is offered to female victims of domestic and gender-based violence, and 19 shelters spread throughout the country. Further, there are numerous civil society organisations that operate locally and nationally, that offer additional support to victims. In addition, the [Hellenic Police](#), in order to better address the needs of victims of domestic violence, introduced a specialised division focusing on Domestic Violence, with 72 executive offices throughout the country, and 18 specialised Police Departments, where victims can report abuse.

### 1.2. Key Legislative Measures

In Greece the primary legislative framework for domestic violence includes Law 3500/06, which defines important socio-legal concepts, such as “family”, “violence” and “marital rape”. Within the Greek legal framework verbal, physical and sexual violence is explicitly stated, and psychological violence is framed in the context of the psychological repercussions experienced by the victim, and in particularly feeling threatened and disquieted. Further, the legislative framework for the Offender treatment programmes is outlined in the same law, however there is need for further

clarity. In 2018 Greece has ratified the Istanbul convention, and further amendments were implemented in the law. Other abusive behaviours were included in the criminal Law in the past 3 years, including legislation pertaining to revenge porn ([Law 4947/2022](#)), more extensive and thorough protection for minor victims of sexual assault ([Law 4855/2021](#)).

### 1.3. Reporting

Statistics from the [Annual Domestic Violence Report](#) (2021) compiled by the Hellenic Police show a 62% increase in the reporting of domestic violence cases from 5620 incidents in 2020 to 9303 in 2021. Monthly statistics published by the [Hellenic Police](#) depict the continuation of this increased reporting trend into 2022. The [3rd Annual Violence Against Women report](#) published by the Gender Secretariat reports 5,295 cases attended by the Women's Aid Network, which represents an increase from the 4.767 cases presented in the previous year's [annual report](#). Although the pandemic and the stay-at-home measures were initially expected to increase domestic violence, but decrease reporting<sup>1</sup>, it appears that the joint campaigns organised by the police, and the gender secretariat lead to the significant increase of reporting. Moreover, in 2019, the restructuring of the Hellenic Police (with the introduction of the specialised [domestic violence division](#)), lead to increased levels of trust in civilians towards the police.

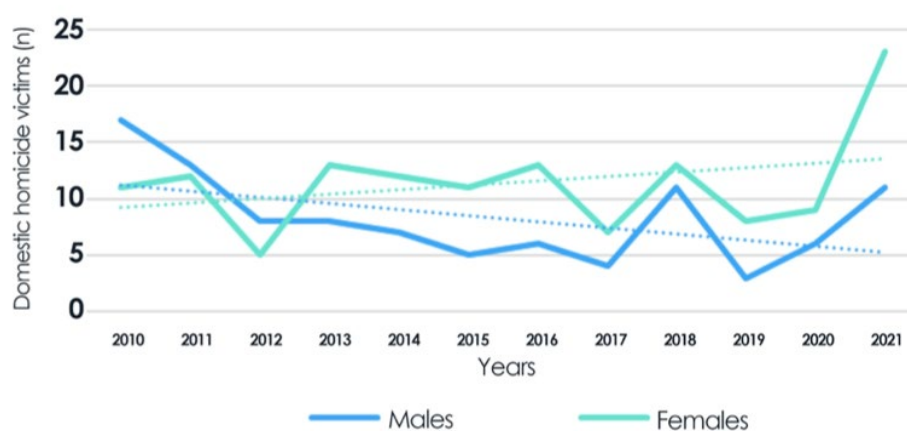


Table 1. Domestic homicide victims 2010-2021

### 1.4. Femicides

In 2021, a significant movement was brought about by civil societies on a discussion regarding femicides, reacting to a number of high-profile murders that received extensive media coverage<sup>2</sup>. The campaign "[strong me](#)" designed and carried out across many Greek cities to increase awareness, and to start a conversation on whether femicide should be a legally recognised term. In terms of data, there is an evident increasing trend on domestic homicide with female victims, raising from 11

<sup>1</sup> Kourti, A., Stavridou, A., Panagouli, E., Psaltopoulou, T., Spiliopoulou, C., Tsoia, M., Sergentanis, T. N., & Tsitsika, A. (2021). [Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review](#). *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 0*(0).

<sup>2</sup> Al Agkmpari, F. (2020). The portrayal of femicide in Greek media.

victims in 2011 to 23 in 2021<sup>3</sup>. Most women (65.3%)<sup>4</sup> were murdered by their intimate partner, while the rest by another family member. The rate of female victims of homicide in Greece was 0.52 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2018, which according to [EIGE's](#) factsheet on femicide, is the eighth lowest rate among the 24 Member States for which information is available and the United Kingdom. The past couple of years represent the first time the country was able to provide official data on [femicides](#), but the phenomenon needs to be evaluated and studied further before instituting policy and practice.

### 1.5. Perpetrator Programmes

In Greece, with the introduction of [Law 3500/06](#), the first outline of perpetrator programmes were mentioned. Drawing from notions from restorative justice, under certain conditions that must be met. The section of the law is called penal mediation, where mediation is occurring between the prosecutor (representing the Hellenic State) and the perpetrator, and only for misdemeanour offences, and only after the agreement of the victim. The perpetrator must make financial restitution to the victim, must attend a perpetrator programme, and must not commit any other offence of domestic violence for a minimum of three years. However, although the legislative framework is very robust, there is not a national protocol for the perpetrator programmes. Various health and social agencies throughout the country (mental health hospitals, social services, etc) have implemented short-range programmes, ranging from 5 to 15 sessions. The National Centre for Social Welfare (EKKA)<sup>5</sup> is a national agency that has offered in Athens and Thessaloniki perpetrator programmes of brief duration since 2008, and in Northern Greece the NGO VIA-STOP has offered a comprehensive perpetrator programme that last ad minimum 3 years and has a very good recidivism rate. There is currently no governmental funding for agencies offering perpetrator programme, but in 2021 the Gender Secretariat of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs has contracted out a study aiming to map out the available perpetrator programmes and the offender characteristics, with the results aiming at improving the therapeutic programs. The study is expected to be completed by June 2023.

## 2. Policy debate

In the past five years, significant policy changes were implemented nationally in order to prevent and combat violence against women and children and vulnerable groups, focusing particularly on combatting sexual violence. Most policy changes were part of the [“National Action Plan for Gender Equality, 2021-2025”](#), introduced by the Gender Secretariat of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs. The ratification of the [Istanbul Convention through Greek law](#), was the driving force for these policy changes before the pandemic, while the COVID-19 health crisis saw a significant increase in reported cases of domestic violence in the national Women’s Aid centres. Further, a number

---

<sup>3</sup> Karakasi, M. V., Voultos, P., Fotou, E., Nikolaidis, I., Kyriakou, M. S., Markopoulou, M., & Pavlidis, P. (2022). Emerging trends in domestic homicide/femicide in Greece over the period 2010–2021. *Medicine, Science and the Law*, 00258024221103700

<sup>4</sup> <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/3h-ethsia-ekthesi-Via-kata-twn-Gynaikwn-GGDOPIF.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/el/programma-gia-thytes-endooikogeneiakis-vias>

of high-profile femicides<sup>6</sup> that gathered significant media attention, created a discussion of domestic homicide that was unprecedented in the country. At the same time, a significant change took place within the police, with the implementation of a [new core division](#) focusing on crimes of domestic violence. There are still areas that further improvements are necessary, which are discussed below.

### **2.1. Policy Challenge 1: Data privacy**

A major policy debate in Greece pertains to [data privacy, and sharing of information](#). Many governmental agencies are very reluctant to communicate openly over cases, including even high risk cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and child maltreatment. This often leads to delays in the handling of these cases. It could even be perceived that in certain instances the protection of personal data is more important than the protection of the victims, and ultimately the only parties directly benefiting from data protection laws are the perpetrators. The data privacy legislation could potentially create obstacles in the risk assessment and the panic button projects, and should be resolved before MARACs, multi-agency risk management and police body-worn cameras could even be considered. The revision of the [domestic violence law](#), which is currently being discussed presents a good opportunity for legislative and policy changes, that could have profound impacts.

### **2.2. Policy Challenge 2: Multi-Agency approach in the handling of domestic violence incidents**

One of the major policy challenges for domestic violence currently in the country is a horizontal approach for handling incidents of domestic violence. Although victims of abuse seek help at various front-line governmental and non-governmental agencies, and help is provided, there are no defined lines of communication between the front-line agencies, which often results to the victim having to reiterate their trauma, and to secondary victimisation. Front-liners at the moment have varying levels of training on Domestic Violence, and lack common terms of reference.

### **2.3. Stalking and Coercive control**

Stalking behaviours have been included in recent legislation as part of the ratification of the [Istanbul Convention](#). However, police officers, judicial staff and other frontlines have not been adequately trained to identify and assess stalking behaviours, which is a significant reason for low allegations and convictions on stalking. Moreover, there is a general perception in frontliners that stalking does not pose significant risk to victims. A targeted strategy for the training of police officers and judicial staff should be implemented, intergrating also tactics of coersive control frequently used by perpetrators of abuse. Coercive control tactics are not explicitly included in the Hellenic legislation and are usually included in the overall psychological violence experienced by the victim. However, there is inadequate training for professionals,

---

<sup>6</sup> Karakasi, M. V., Voultos, P., Fotou, E., Nikolaidis, I., Kyriakou, M. S., Markopoulou, M., & Pavlidis, P. (2022). Emerging trends in domestic homicide/femicide in Greece over the period 2010–2021. *Medicine, Science and the Law*, 00258024221103700.

and the terminology is not perceived or addressed sufficiently by most professionals, particularly police officers and justice officials.

### 3. Good practice examples

#### 3.1. Gender Based Violence Awareness campaigns during COVID-19

During the pandemic, victims or third parties could report an incident of DV through SMS, calls, or emails to the police, and a media awareness campaign was rolled out (Image 1), while the Gender secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) implemented a thorough [protective campaign](#), utilising strategic alliances with governmental agencies (i.e. SOS 15900 helpline, Hellenic Society of Forensic Medicine), as well as with civil society organisations (i.e. “Smile of the Child”). Both campaigns used the same slogan (“We Stay at Home but We Don’t Stay Silent”). This joined, comprehensive campaign is thought to have led to the increased domestic violence reports that were brought in [2021](#) and [2022](#).

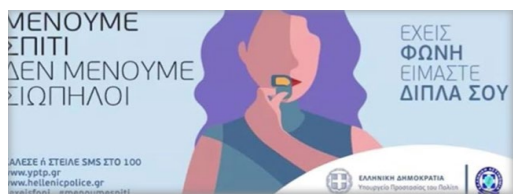


Image 1. Poster on Reporting Methods by the Hellenic Police

#### 3.2. Risk Assessment and Panic Button

Within the framework of the ratification of the [Istanbul convention](#), the Gender secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) designed two projects in accordance to articles 11 and the “Protection” pillar of the convention, which are the horizontal risk assessment tool and the [panic button application](#). Both of these preventive measures that are in different stages of development are expected to have considerable impact in preventing repeat victimisation and lethal domestic violence. The risk assessment tool is aimed to be utilised by all frontliners, and assesses the risk for re-victimisation, lethality, and the overall situation of the victim, following a dynamic, victim-centric approach. The risk assessment tool was piloted in three Greek cities for 7 months, in all front-line agencies (police, health, social services, migration, GSFPGE network). The panic button application is currently piloted by the Police and the counseling centers of the GSFPGE network in Athens and Thessaloniki.

#### 3.3. Employment

In March 2021, the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, rolled out an ambitious employment scheme where employers were offered support covering up to 90% of the wages (up to 800 Euro) of a victim of domestic and gender-based violence. The project aimed at reinstating victims in the workforce, increasing survivors’ autonomy, either as a steppingstone in the strategy of escaping the violent relationship, or as a foundation for the new, violent-free and autonomous life of the

survivor. In December 2022, this scheme was modified partially to cover the next financial period. In order for a victim to qualify for this scheme, they needed to complete a round of job counselling session within the GSFPGE network.

### 3.4. GBV Pocket Guide

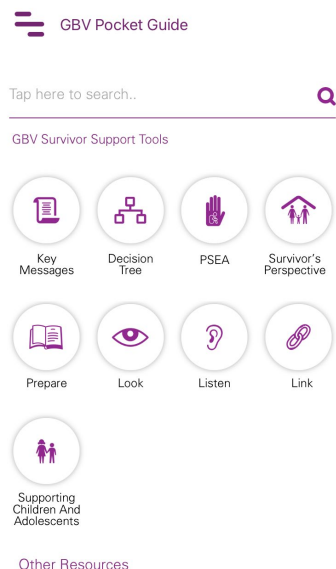


Image 2. GBV pocket guide screenshot

In January 2023, UNICEF Greece in partnership with the Gender Secretariat announced the development of an application, the [GBV pocket guide](#), a very helpful tool that offers resources for victims, witnesses, and people supporting victims of abuse and gender based violence. The app is available in 12 languages, and details thoroughly the available support by the GSFPGE network, and civil society organisations. One of the innovations of the app is that the target audience includes witnesses, that are not specialised professionals, in the hope that more victims will receive support.

### 3.5. Resources for Ukrainian Refugee Women<sup>7</sup>

Since 2015, Greece was faced with large numbers of refugees, and was able to respond comprehensively to the ever-increasing migration flows. Thus, from the start



Image 3.

of the war in Ukraine, the country was very well situated to respond to the needs of refugee women. More specifically, the GSFPGE network, with the 15900 SOS line, the 44 Women's Counselling centres and the 19 Shelters throughout the country, was made immediately available for Ukrainian women. In the summer of 2022, GSFPGE published a brief informational pamphlet, in Russian, Ukrainian and English, that was distributed at the country's entry points, and at the Ministry of Migration's various primary and secondary residential facilities. Moreover, with the support of UNHCR, there is a cultural mediator available in the SOS help line daily, for Ukrainian and Russian victims. In addition, in collaboration with UNHCR, a

<sup>7</sup> <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/3h-ethsia-ekthesi-Via-kata-twn-Gynaikwn-GGDOPIF.pdf>



protection monitoring tool for the Ukrainian Population was implemented in the Ministry of Migration's facilities.

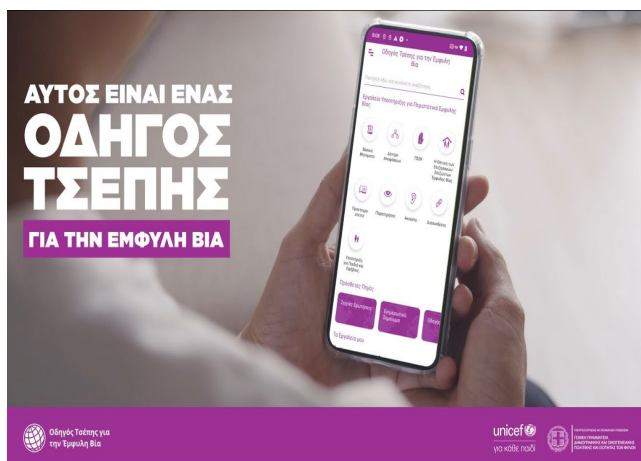
#### **4. Transferability aspects**

The primary good practice that has the capacity for transferability to Greece are the Network of the 8 perpetrator counselling centers. In Greece, offender management programmes are not widespread, there is no protocol in place for what the therapeutic outcomes should be, the length of the intervention, or which agency should offer these programmes. At the moment, social services, hospitals and NGOs receive perpetrators, but there is a lack of recording of these cases, and an evaluation of each programme. Therefore, a nationally funded approach, with a concrete protocol that can be externally evaluated is an aspect that could be transferred to the country to fulfill a specific need.

#### **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

Although significant changes were made in policy and practice in the country, there are still further key steps that need to be undertaken, for a holistic and impactful approach that safeguards victims and keeps offenders accountable. The first recommendation is the development of protocols and programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence. This is an area where Romania's good practice could be transferable to Greece. Further, civil society involvement in introducing and evaluating policies and strategies in Greece are not extensive currently. Small, regional civil society organisations working with victims of abuse do not receive national funding and are in competition with the larger scale national NGOs, which leads to precarious circumstances and a real fight for survival. Finally, there is a significant need for training of front-liners working with victims of abuse, and in particular those working in the medical and judicial fields.

## 6. References



[https://youtube.com/watch?v=KmTfTSKX\\_DY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=KmTfTSKX_DY)

Al Agkmpari, F. (2020). The portrayal of femicide in Greek media

Chroni SA, Kavoura A. From Silence to Speaking Up About Sexual Violence in Greece: Olympic Journeys in a Culture That Neglects Safety. *Front Psychol.* 2022 Apr 6;13:862450. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.862450. PMID: 35465498; PMCID: PMC9020591

Council of Europe. (2022). [Greece - First baseline evaluation](#)

European Institute for Gender (EIGE). [Glossary and Thesaurus](#)

European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, Gender inequalities in care and pay in the EU

European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, Benefits of gender equality through infrastructure provision: an EU-wide survey

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018), Recommendations to improve data collection on intimate partner violence by the police and justice sectors – Greece, EIGE, Vilnius

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017), Recommendations for the EU to improve data collection on violence against women, EIGE, Vilnius

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2021), EIGE's indicators on intimate partner violence, rape and femicide: Recommendations to improve data quality, availability and comparability, EIGE, Vilnius

European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, Gender and Migration

European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, Gender and Security

European Parliament/ FEMM Committee, 2020, Report on the gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period (2020/2121(INI))

FRA - European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights. (2014). [Violence against women. An EU wide survey. Main results](#)

General Secretariat for Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, [Statistics - Studies](#) (n.d.)

Giagkoudi, A. (2022). The portrayal of femicides in Greek newspapers: A content analysis in a selection of Greek newspapers.

Hellenic Republic (2022). [National Reform Programme 2022](#)

International Labour Organisation, 2019, Violence and Harassment Convention, (No. 190)

Karakasi, M. V., Nikolaidis, I., Fotou, E., Kyriakou, M. S., Voultos, P., & Pavlidis, P. (2022). Femicide in Greece: A Phenomenon on the Rise. *Forensic Science Review*, 34(2), 83-87.

Karakasi, M. V., Voultos, P., Fotou, E., Nikolaidis, I., Kyriakou, M. S., Markopoulou, M., ... & Pavlidis, P. (2022). Emerging trends in domestic homicide/femicide in Greece over the period 2010–2021. *Medicine, Science and the Law*, 00258024221103700.

Kourti, A., Stavridou, A., Panagouli, E., Psaltopoulou, T., Spiliopoulou, C., Tsolia, M., Sergeantanis, T. N., & Tsitsika, A. (2021). [Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse](#), 0(0).

[Law on Substantive Gender Equality. Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence \(2019\)](#)

Law on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the adaptation of Greek legislation (Istanbul Convention) (2018) (Κύρωση της Σύμβασης του Συμβουλίου της Ευρώπης για την Πρόληψη και την Καταπολέμηση της Βίας κατά των γυναικών και της Ενδοοικογενειακής Βίας και προσαρμογή της ελληνικής νομοθεσίας). *Government Gazette (ΦΕΚ) 62/A/5-4-2018*.

[National Action Plan and Strategy on gender equality 2021-2025](#)

Ελληνική Αστυνομία. (2021). [Στατιστική επετηρίδα 2021](#)

Νόμος 4808/2021 - Για την Προστασία της Εργασίας - Σύσταση Ανεξάρτητης Αρχής «Επιθεώρηση Εργασίας» - Κύρωση της Σύμβασης 190 της Διεθνούς Οργάνωσης Εργασίας για την εξάλειψη της βίας και παρενόχλησης στον κόσμο της εργασίας - Κύρωση της Σύμβασης 187 (ΦΕΚ 101/A/19-6-2021)

<https://www.astynomia.gr/odigos-tou-politi/chrisimes-symvoules/endooikogeneiaki-via/>

<https://www.astynomia.gr/file/2023/01/20012023ethsiaekthesiendooikogeneiaki2021.pdf>

<https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Actions-taken-by-the-General-Secretariat-for-Family-Policy-and-Gender-Equality-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55684152>

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/EL>

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C190](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190)

<https://www.sepe.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ΕΤΗΣΙΑ-ΕΚΘΕΣΗ-ΕΤΟΥΣ-2021.pdf>

<https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-dedomena-prosopikou-kharaktera/nomos-4624-2019-phek-137a-29-8-2019.html>

<https://womenontop.gr/adeies-patroitias-kai-anatrofis-vasika-eyrimata-symperasmata/>