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Final Report "Shelters@net"

Project summary

The Daphne Project [Shelters@Net](http://www.shelters-net.com) was developed by CESIS in cooperation with several national and European partners, representing six countries (Denmark, France, Ireland, Portugal, Scotland and Slovenia). Our starting point was the awareness that there is a lack of knowledge and reflection at a European level on the work that is being developed in shelters. Consequently, our aim was to promote and share knowledge and experiences with other European countries.

This aim has mainly been achieved through the adoption of a specific working methodology involving a diverse working team and the development of a specific product:

- the building-up of a transnational partnership (representing different European countries) in order to make it possible to compare and confront different national situations regarding accommodation services for women and children victims of domestic violence and to exchange knowledge and valid experiences in the field of working practices and methodologies;
- the dissemination of such knowledge and experiences through the creation and implementation of a website specialising in this specific area where information has been systematised and is now available, representing the major output of the Project. The www.shelters-net.com website is available in two different languages (Portuguese and English) and will be updated once the Project has been concluded, thanks to a commitment undertaken by one of the Project's partners and in cooperation with all the partners involved.

The ensuing teamwork whilst carrying out the activities during the course of the [Shelters@net](http://www.shelters-net.com) Project also contributed significantly to identifying important priorities which have benefited from a joint reflection on the different national situations and from confronting different perspectives (and working practices) on the same phenomenon.

Thus, it emerged from the Project's results that it is important to reinforce our efforts in certain fundamental areas in order to improve the quality, efficiency and cohesion of the work that is currently being developed within the sheltering services operating in Europe, namely:

- ✓ to promote and/or reinforce national structures (networks, associations, etc.) in the field of support services provided to women and children victims of domestic violence;
- ✓ to promote the societal debate on domestic violence;
- ✓ to implement monitoring mechanisms on legislative efficiency in this area;
- ✓ to reinforce the investment in the production of knowledge and to ensure the incorporation of results into organisational and professional practices;
- ✓ to create and/or reinforce support and reflection strategies to address organisational practices and working teams;
- ✓ to create fora in order to allow and promote the debate on the ideological concepts underlying working practices/strategies which are devised and developed by organisations operating in this field;
- ✓ to promote and support the dissemination of the results of the work developed by providers of support services;
- ✓ to encourage the development of evaluation mechanisms to assess the results of the work developed in this area, namely by accommodation support services for women and children victims of domestic violence.

The project has given a major contribution to the need to reflect on a European level on working practices in the field of sheltering services for women and children victims of domestic violence and has drawn attention to the relevance of both national specificities and transnational comparisons in the analysis of existing situations with a view to contributing to qualitative changes in this domain.

1. Project objectives

The Shelters@net Project focused on the subject of violence against women and, in particular, on the work carried out in temporary shelters for women victims of domestic violence.

Based on the main results of the "Violence: institutional routes for reintegration" Project developed by CESIS under the DAPHNE Programme, the main objective of Shelters@net was to reflect on shelter practices within Europe and, above all, to solve the problem of lack of access to information concerning practices in shelters for victims of domestic violence.

The research work undertaken under the "Violence: institutional routes for reintegration" Project revealed the fundamental need to create an instrument to raise awareness of the main European studies and practices concerning the impact of this infrastructure on women and children who have used sheltering services and also to break down a certain feeling of professional isolation affecting the teams working in shelters.

Thus, the aim was to create an instrument in order to systematise the different information available in the various countries of the European Union – facing different situations and experiences in this area – so that knowledge could be transferred and practices improved through the exchange of valid experiences and data.

The direct beneficiaries are organisations and experts who must deal, on a professional level, with situations of domestic violence, for example those who work in social services, health services, judicial services, police forces, local authorities and NGOs.

The aim is obviously to ensure that the improved practices developed in this field should benefit the real recipients of these services.

The results initially expected were effectively achieved:

- establishment of a partnership on a European level comprising various different situations regarding shelters for women, including the following countries: Denmark, Scotland, Slovenia, France, Ireland and Portugal;
- drawing-up of national reports with a view to identifying existing resources and practices in the area of temporary shelters in each partner country, but also with the aim of describing the legislative environment and the way in which the public and political debate on domestic violence is evolving ;
- drawing-up of a European report summarizing the main conclusions of the national reports;
- establishment of a website to promote the exchange of knowledge and the updating and transfer of data, including the adjustment of successful responses and methodologies, namely by incorporating information and experiences from the following:
 - national reports from each partner state;
 - European report with a comparative analysis of the situation prevailing in the six partner States;
 - main conclusions of the “Violence: institutional routes for reintegration” Project with practical guidelines and suggestions concerning useful practices as a result of the experience gained by all the partners;
 - systematic gathering of information and indication of useful websites;
 - establishment of a forum to discuss and exchange information and experiences.

The Commission did not impose conditions for the approval of the project.

2. Project implementation

2.1. Activities planned and carried out

According to the objectives established at the outset, the planned activities were as follows:

- a) Comparative diagnosis, on a European level, of the support given by sheltering services to women victims of domestic violence.
 - Drawing-up of national reports concerning the six European countries which participated in the scheme (five Member States and one candidate country at the time the application was made), on the basis of information already available and to be gathered (on a qualitative basis) regarding resources, intervention methods and evaluation.
 - Benchmarking of the situation prevailing in the different countries, particularly with a view to identifying elements which may be transferred or factors nationally relevant for each participating State.
- b) Transnational partnership

The transnational partnership involved three main stages of teamwork and a constant exchange of information between all partners - according to a jointly agreed timetable – thereby allowing the activities to be carried out as planned on a shared basis and with input from all interested parties.

The three working meetings with all relevant partners took place in Paris, Copenhagen and Lisbon, the purpose being to exchange information and plan the Project.

The first meeting took place in Paris and allowed a detailed presentation of all partners involved in the Project and the effective start of joint activities. Thus, the structure of activities to be carried out by each partner was presented, discussed and defined in detail. During this first meeting, CESIS presented some guidelines concerning the analysis to be carried out by each country on the practices of sheltering services for victims of domestic violence, to be used by all partners in drawing up their national reports. These guidelines were discussed in detail with all the partners involved, thus benefiting from their input.

During this meeting in Paris a timetable was also agreed so that the measures could be pursued according to deadlines established by all interested parties. Likewise, the objectives for the following meeting were also established, in particular the presentation of national reports.

Besides the administrative matters included in the agenda of this first meeting in Paris, this event was also important because it provided a working platform and ensured the exchange of experiences which reinforced the relevance of and need for this Project. It also made it possible to foster a working environment oriented to achieving the planned objectives.

The national reports of each partner were discussed in Copenhagen. Beforehand, communication channels had been opened between all partners, which enabled the work under way to be closely monitored and ensured the circulation of the national reports before the meeting took place, thus smoothing the debate on the reports during this event.

In Copenhagen – further to the initial comparative analysis of the six reports carried out by the coordination team responsible for the Project – a structure for drawing up the summary European report in the light of the national reports was also presented. This proposal, put forward by CESIS, was once again a starting point for the work to be undertaken at this meeting and resulted in a very positive debate leading to an improved proposal which would then be adopted as the final structure for the European report.

During this meeting, the basic structure of the Project website was also discussed and an agreement was reached with a view to permanently sharing the results obtained in order to improve the final product.

The final conference to launch the website and to present the main results of the Project was also planned at this meeting. A preliminary programme for the event was agreed and different responsibilities and tasks were assigned to the various partners.

In November 2004 the partnership meeting in Lisbon was divided into two main events: the first, on the day prior to the seminar of the official launch, served to finalise details concerning the presentations of each partner and the public announcement of the website; during the second, which took place the day following the seminar, the meeting served to take stock of the Project and to discuss strategies for ensuring continuity and disseminating results.

The final seminar served basically to present the main results of the work undertaken under the Project – with a view to showing both its effective output and the learning curve inherent to the Project and the partnership – and to launch the website, the final product of the Project for its potential users.

As for the final assessment of the Project, the evaluation carried out was very favourable. The innovative nature of its approach was underlined, as was the committed and active way in which all partners undertook the work under this scheme.

One of the subjects broached at the final meeting on the Project, which brought together all the partners involved (both national and foreign), was the need to find solutions to ensure the sustainability and the updating of the website.

It was agreed that information would be transmitted periodically to the CIDM partner, which would designate someone responsible for updating and also for carrying on the website.

c) National partnership

Besides the transnational meetings, several meetings throughout the Project were also organised between the various Portuguese partners, with the aim of ensuring the effective involvement of all the participants and the constant monitoring of several activities.

One meeting of all the Portuguese partners took place in Viana do Castelo, during which a visit was organised to the shelter of the partner GAF and practical suggestions were put forward for the creation of the website. Other meetings took place in Lisbon, where the guidelines for the analysis of the national reports and the European report were also discussed. The suggestions put forward by the national partners were duly taken into account.

These meetings also served the purpose of checking at each different stage if the Project answered the real needs of its future users and, as mentioned before, this partnership included a national organisation responsible for defining policies in the area of domestic violence, shelter and a representative of the local authority, as such bodies are often responsible for implementing these initiatives.

The national report also relied on the cooperation of the national partners, in particular, the sharing of data and their suggestions for drawing up the report.

d) Creation of a website (**www.shelters-net.com**)

The website aims to divulge several matters which the partnership and the research undertaken considered useful from a practical point of view. It contains information on the situation prevailing in different countries and includes the national reports (in English) and the European report (in Portuguese and English). It also includes information on bibliography and important websites, as well as guidelines to reflect on practices. All these topics can be discussed in a forum set up on the website.

e) Final conference

The final conference for the launch of the website, as mentioned above, resulted in the dissemination of the Project's results and products.

f) Drawing-up of the final report

To sum up the final assessment, it may be concluded that the activities of the Project were effectively carried out in full, both as originally planned and within the timetable established, with the necessary and inevitable adjustments resulting from the implementation of the Project itself.

So, at the end of the Project, a website was available in two languages (Portuguese and English), as were 6 national reports (all drawn up in English) and a final report with a comparative analysis of the situation prevailing in the six participant countries, also drawn up in English and Portuguese.

The reports and other information produced throughout the Project have been incorporated in the website.

As a result of meetings with the partner CIDM, work is almost complete on establishing the format the website will take once the Project has been concluded.

It will contain a whole range of instruments with ample information on shelters for women victims of domestic violence and also incorporating information resulting from other projects in this field supported under the DAPHNE initiative.

Furthermore, this is an instrument with the potential to be updated and which will therefore carry on being relevant. Amongst other factors, the added value of this Project lies in the range of subjects raised, since it made it possible to exchange experiences, encounter different situations and encourage the debate between all the partners involved. Some of these subjects may actually give us some clues as to the research which needs to be undertaken in order to improve our knowledge in this particularly sensitive area, with the resulting impact on the practices adopted in this field.

2.2. Partners' involvement

The Project attempted to bring together a range of partners capable of giving their input to a comprehensive and useful set of guidelines for the dissemination of knowledge in this area.

For example, the presence amongst the Portuguese partners of such a wide diversity of bodies with specific practical experience in this field — such as a shelter, a local authority and a national state institution — meant that their contributions and points of view could be used to build up a holistic approach .

On an international level, an attempt was also made to include different situations, i.e. countries at various stages of development and with different theoretical approaches, once again with the aim of establishing a general and empowering approach of peer learning. The very diversity, from an institutional viewpoint, of the transnational partners (associations/federations directly involved with women and children in temporary shelters and research centres) allowed for a constant exchange of opinions and a mutual learning experience which would have been difficult to achieve if the participating institutions had been more homogeneous.

In short, the involvement of each partner was based on its experience in this domain:

- The Câmara Municipal (local council) de Cascais is a local authority which aims to promote social and economic development in this area and is willing to encourage innovative experiences by developing a local integrated strategy to support women victims of violence.
- CIDM – a government body, whose responsibilities include the establishment of policies for ensuring equality and protection of women and is also capable of influencing policies. It is experienced in the training of experts for shelters and in identifying resources available at a national level.
- Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes is a federation comprising 54 associations catering for the needs of and providing sheltering services for women victims of domestic violence, covering around 80% of existing shelters and with an in-depth knowledge of intervention and assessment methodologies.
- Gabinete Social de Atendimento à Família – carries out its activities in the district of Viana do Castelo, having established a shelter where innovative work has been carried out in the area of personal and social skills of women and children. Its experience is therefore vital.
- National Network of Women's Refuges and Support Services represents the sheltering and support services for women victims of domestic violence in Ireland and will contribute significantly to recounting the Irish experience in the area of inter-institutional cooperation.
- Scottish Women's Aid Limited is the national body representing the 39 existing shelters in Scotland with a vast working experience both in the area of inter-institutional cooperation (Domestic Violence Fora) and the assessment of work carried out by shelters.
- Social Forsknings Institutet is an independent research institute linked to the Ministry of Social Investigation, widely experienced in the study of the phenomenon of violence against women in Denmark, particularly the assessment of the way "crisis centres" work.

Each transnational partner was responsible for drawing up the report pertaining to its country on the situation faced by temporary shelters, according to the structure suggested by CESIS and in agreement with all concerned.

All partners (both national and transnational) played an important part in defining the criteria for the assessment of the national reports and for drawing up the European report.

Likewise, the creation of the website benefited from the support and active involvement of all the partners, who helped to identify the most relevant topics to be included on the website and the best way of ensuring user-friendly access.

All the partners were closely involved in monitoring and implementing all the different stages of the Project, not only during the actual meetings themselves but also during the course of its implementation, ensuring access to information and the exchange of opinions and suggestions mainly through the use of email.

GAF is a rather specific body since it also has a shelter, having made a contribution from the viewpoint of an institution belonging to the first target group of the Project, with relevant experience in this area.

The CIDM, as a national body responsible for shelters, also plays a concrete role in disseminating results, more specifically through its responsibilities for the website once the Project has been concluded.

Finally, the Câmara Municipal de Cascais not only made the same contributions as all the other partners in the implementation of the Project, but also helped to organise and hold dissemination events, in particular the final conference.

3. Project results and impact

3.1. Project results

At the end of the Project, the following results were obtained:

Establishment of a broad transnational partnership comprising countries with distinct situations in terms of sheltering women victims of violence, which helped to foster a more in-depth knowledge on a European level and enabled the exchange of valid experiences concerning intervention and assessments undertaken in temporary shelters for victims of domestic violence.

The most significant output of this Project has to be the dissemination of positive practices and of methodologies used in various different European environments and the systematic recording of the information available and shared between all interested parties, plus the possibility of this information being updated on a regular basis.

The creation of a website translated into two languages (Portuguese and English) effectively represents a global instrument for divulging positive practices, exchanging information, updating knowledge and breaking down the feeling of professional isolation, thus improving action undertaken in shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Achieving such improvement means making it easier for experts to work in this field and, ultimately, improving the services provided to their respective recipients.

3.2 Assessment

The aim was an ongoing assessment of the Project during its implementation and therefore special attention was paid to two fundamental factors, i.e. actually carrying out the activities within the agreed timetable and the assessment of this process on an ongoing basis, involving all partners.

An information sheet was drawn up to be distributed after each meeting to enable each partner to give its opinion on the way the Project was being undertaken and to make any suggestions.

The Project's partnership included a shelter for women which aimed to make a contribution from the perspective of the ultimate recipients of services provided in this field. It also presented its suggestions for the creation of a user-friendly website.

Finally, during the public launch of the website, all the Portuguese shelters wishing to participate in this event were also able to make suggestions with a view to improving the final product, namely the website. Various representatives of shelters and associations providing support services in this area from some of the partner countries (Denmark, France and Scotland) also attended this final session, contributing directly to the assessment of the final output of the Project. Therefore, suggestions were put forward by people working directly with women and children who need to use these services in different countries.

The impact this Project may have on its final recipients can be adequately assessed only after this instrument has been used for a certain length of time. Therefore, the only information presently available consists of unequivocal statements by all the experts working in shelters that an instrument of this nature is useful and necessary. They also stressed their intention to use it in a way benefiting both workers and recipients of services.

4. Dissemination of results and prospects for continuation

All the information on this Project and the information produced during its implementation has been published on the website And is therefore available to all.

As well as using the website to showcase the most relevant topics of the Project and the knowledge it produced, the partnership also wished to publicise as widely as possible the existence of the website itself.

Each partner was charged with disclosing the address and contents of the Project's website to bodies in their respective countries with responsibilities in this area.

In Portugal, a final conference was held to communicate the results of the Project and to present the website to representatives of institutions with responsibilities related to domestic violence and shelters which had received the information directly and had been invited to the abovementioned final conference.

This conference was also attended by institutions responsible for providing sheltering services to women and children in the partner countries involved in the Project and by representatives of European organisations concerned with violence against women.

The continuation of the Project also seems to be assured, as the partner CIDM has committed itself to updating the website once implementation of the Project has been concluded.

But for it to become a really useful instrument for all interested parties, not only must the website be kept up, but its content needs to be followed up. Therefore, CIDM has also offered to designate someone responsible for the website who will compile all contributions forwarded by the partners involved in the Project or by anyone else who may wish to do so.

It was agreed that the partners in each country and the national partners would periodically update the information published on the website, i.e. concerning new shelters, new bibliography, data on recent research, etc.

CESIS will receive this information and, in cooperation with CIDM, ensure the regular updating of the website.

It should also be noted that CIDM's website will include a link to the Project's website. This is important since CIDM is an influential Portuguese national government body working closely with institutions specialising in the field of domestic violence.

Finally, the website includes a forum, which may simultaneously be used to divulge the contents of the Project and the website itself and to keep it up to date, since it is a means of receiving contributions from all interested parties.

4.1. Visibility

The European Commission's visibility was ensured through the presence, in all the materials produced, of the Commission's symbol and by referring to its financial aid in all public presentations of the Project, namely in the meetings to which CESIS was invited to recount its experience in this area and in all contacts established with various institutions.

5. Conclusions

Shelters@net was a Project that resulted in the creation of a website (www.shelters-net.com) catering specifically for temporary shelters. On the basis of an innovative initiative, it aimed to gather and to make publicly available information on the situation prevailing in several different European countries regarding shelters, intervention in this domain, the ideological debate underlying this intervention and legislative and scientific developments in these different countries. It also aimed to create an instrument to promote reflection and the setting of practical guidelines not only concerning intervention in shelters but also information produced at this level. The project also included the possibility of promoting the active involvement of all interested parties through the setting-up of a forum on this website.

ANNEX: KEYWORDS

Beneficiaries	Daphne Objectives	Areas
Children	<i>Support to the collaboration of</i>	X Sexual violence
Young people	X Support to multidisciplinary networks	X Gender violence
X Women	X Exchange of good practices	X Violence in family
	X Studies	X Violence in domestic
Specific groups	<i>Support to public awareness</i>	Violence in schools
Homosexuals	Information campaign	Violence in institutions
Migrants	X Information sources	Violence in urban areas
Refugee	Recognition and reporting	Violence in rural areas
Asylum seekers		Violence in the work place
Trafficked persons		Trafficking in human beings
Ethnic minorities	Specific Objectives	Commercial sexual
Handicapped	X Prevention of violence	X Internet
Domestic workers	Protection from violence	Child Pornography
People in prostitution	Treatment of victims	Racism
Elderly	X Reintegration of victims	Self-harm
Prisoners	Counselling victims	Physical punishment
	Support to families	Female genital mutilation
Targeted Audience	Legislative measures	Health impacts
Violent men	Treatment of offenders	
Perpetrators / offenders	Reintegration of offenders	Instruments
Public Authorities		Network with NGOs
General Public		X Multisector network
Medical staff		Awareness-raising
X Educational staff		X Dissemination of good
Police staff		X Guidelines / Counselling
Judicial staff		Models (analysis /
Media / Journalists		Training
X Refuge workers		X Production of materials
		X Conference / seminar
		Telephone / Internet Helpline
		X Field work

Annex**List of materials produced along the Project**

- Shelters Logo
- Six National Reports
- One European Report
- Seminar Programme (brochure)
- Seminar Poster