



European  
Commission



**“POLICE OFFICERS SOMETIMES DON’T REALISE HOW MUCH DAMAGE THEY MAY DO BY NOT LISTENING CAREFULLY.”**

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project PROTASIS (Police Training Skills) aims to contribute to survivor-friendly, gender- and child-sensitive procedures and environments wherever women who have experienced violence come into contact with the police, aiming to enhance their rights and facilitate their access to justice. A total of more than 200 police officers will be trained as a result of the project, together with a number of professionals working in the field of violence against women as well as an academic audience that will promote the works of the project through dissemination and awareness raising activities.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS UNDERREPORTED – IN THE EU AS ELSEWHERE. NOT ONLY DO WOMEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE STRUGGLE WITH THE CONTINUING STIGMATISATION IN THEIR PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT, POLICE OFFICERS ALSO SOMETIMES FALL INTO THE TRAP OF VICTIM-BLAMING. THIS CAN LEAD TO A LACK OF TRUST IN THE POLICE FORCES AND CONTRIBUTES TO UNDERREPORTING.**

To address this issue, Professor Vasso Artinopoulou, who has been heading the Crime and Criminal Justice Unit and the Gender Issues Unit of the European Public Law Organisation (EPLU) since 2012, has initiated a project called PROTASIS – “Police Training Skills”. The project, which is supported by the European Commission, started in 2016 and will run until at least the end of 2018. Together with 6 partner organisations and institutions, and 3 associate partners from 4 countries across the EU, PROTASIS’s goal is to provide the police officers with skills and tools, and to sensitise them to the particular needs of women and children, who have experienced violence.

**NON.  
NO.  
NEIN.**

#SayNoStopVAW

# *“We train police officers to put the needs of women who have experienced violence first.”*

Prof. Vasso Artinopoulou, Senior expert, Protasis

This is crucial, as police officers are often the first point of contact for these women. Women's fear for their personal safety and the worry of not being understood or believed lead to an underreporting of offences to the police. Professor Artinopoulou's research shows that many women who have experienced violence are not comfortable with the way their situation is handled by representatives of the legal system. PROTASIS aims to change that.

Running PROTASIS in Greece, Italy, Portugal and the UK at the same time will create an internationally adaptable toolkit. The aim is that this will find its way into the curricula of police academies across the EU. The experience so far shows that police officers are very keen to take part in the trainings, especially as they are designed to be as hands-on and realistic as possible. The trainings go far beyond providing police officers with a simple list of theoretical guidelines or contact details of support services. PROTASIS teaches them to listen and to respect every woman's particular circumstances and decisions. For instance, if a woman does not want any contact with the offender, no matter if that would speed up closing the criminal case, the priority is protecting the woman – and not closing the case. A typical response from police officers the PROTASIS team has worked with is, “It was a revelation when I realised that focussing solely on the goal of solving the case does not automatically set everything right. I was

not aware of how much damage I could do by not listening carefully and recognising these women's worries and fears.”

The PROTASIS team believes that equipping police officers with the soft skills to make women who have experienced violence feel heard, understood and respected, they can help address underreporting and create a better environment for women in the legal system. The project's goal is to reach over 200 police officers who will help spread the word amongst their colleagues that every crime and its solution is different – and that carefully listening to the person who experienced the crime is a crucial first step for solving each case and for increasing reporting of violence against women crimes.



## **MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT**

[protasis-project.eu](http://protasis-project.eu)

## **MORE RELATED PROJECTS**

[ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/projects/](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/projects/)