



European  
Commission



## “VICTIM-BLAMING HAS TO STOP. PROFESSIONALS MUST UNDERSTAND HOW BEST TO SUPPORT WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE.”

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

IMPLEMENT offers training and capacity building for health care professionals in six European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, France, Italy and Romania) to strengthen the support for victims of gender-based violence with a particular focus on its health consequences. The programme develops protocols and expertise on intimate partner violence in emergency and obstetrical care settings, and touches on numerous aspects of health services: from staff training and referral networks to advocacy measures for institutional change at policy level.

POLICE OFFICERS, NURSES, SOCIAL WORKERS, DOCTORS, LAWYERS... THESE PEOPLE ARE OFTEN THE FIRST TO ATTEND TO WOMEN AFTER THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE AND, THEREFORE, NEED TO KNOW HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THEM. THEY ARE ALSO THE VERY PEOPLE WHO WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE (WAVE) PROVIDE WITH TRAINING IN SUPPORTING AND ADVISING SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE EFFECTIVELY.

This area of work is close to the heart of WAVE project coordinators Andrada Filip and Kelly Blank. In their experience, lawyers, prosecutors, judges and police officers who come into contact with this issue share similar difficulties across all countries and the opportunity to discuss the challenges they face enables these professionals to work out practical strategies for overcoming them. Andrada highlights one common issue: "Legal frameworks are often not clear on the topic; while they regulate violence in general terms, they do not take the special circumstances connected to gender-based violence and gender inequality into consideration. As a result, there is a danger that legal professionals may – implicitly or

**NON.**  
**NO.**  
**NEIN.**

#SayNoStopVAW

## *“We create safe spaces for women who seek support and protection.”*

Andrada Filip, Project coordinator, WAVE

explicitly – think that the victim is to blame.” As Kelly explains, this means that, “for example, it is sometimes difficult for them to understand a woman who returns to a violent partner. They do not always realise that she may not be economically independent and, therefore, may feel she has no other options. They may simply think it is her own fault for going back and thus perpetuate victim-blaming.”

According to Maria Rösslhuber, who heads the WAVE Network, it is crucial that legal professionals take gender inequality into consideration, because women are disproportionately affected by violence perpetrated by intimate partners. She reports that participants often describe the frank discussions with colleagues during WAVE trainings as “eye opening” and routinely remark that the new way of looking at the problem has enabled them to support survivors of gender-based violence in a more effective way. One participant of a 2016 training said: “I was excited by the programme, because it has so many practical exercises, such as role plays, and I can use all the issues discussed in my work. I’ve been able to hone my skills in speaking to women affected in a non-judgemental, sensitive way and I know where to point them for further information and support now.”

This means that every professional trained by WAVE – over 150 in the past two years – is a step towards changing perceptions about violence against women.

But European and other countries still have far to go until that goal is achieved. This is why WAVE offers many more activities: for instance, best practice workshops for various professional groups to learn from each other, public conferences to raise awareness about the issue, publications to disseminate information about provision of support, and manuals that set out principles and contacts for better cooperation in the sector.

Additionally, each year WAVE receives requests for support from women survivors of violence, and handles on average 40 cross-border support requests. Despite WAVE not being a counselling centre, the WAVE Information Centre always tries to support women on an individual basis, providing information on laws, practices, and available local services for further support in what are often dangerous situations.



### **MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT**

[gbv-implement-health.eu](http://gbv-implement-health.eu)

### **MORE RELATED PROJECTS**

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