

**Contribution by Romania for the Secretary General's Report on *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/RES/75/161 and A/RES/77/193)* to be presented during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly**

By the Law no. 106/2020 for the amendment and completion of the Law no. 217/2003 for the prevention and combating of domestic violence, was introduced the concept of "cyber violence" related to the sphere of "domestic violence" and defined as "*online harassment, online messages inciting gender-based hatred, online stalking, online threats, non-consensual publication of information and intimate graphic content, illegal access to intercept communications and private data and any other form of misuse of information and communication technology through computers, smart mobile phones or other similar devices that use telecommunications or can connect to the Internet and can transmit and use social or email platforms, with the purpose of embarrassing, humiliating, scaring, threatening, silencing victim.*"

In 2023 was approved the Order no. 20.266/50/2023 for the approval of the Methodology on domestic violence prevention measures that envisages the improving methods of inter-institutional intervention and procedures in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence with specific measures to prevent situations of domestic violence and increasing awareness of these effects, both by the aggressor and the victim, as well as by public authorities and public opinion, mainly for police officers and professionals at the level of social services for domestic violence victims.

A number of 126 new integrated services were created starting 2020, in all counties of the country: 42 protected housing, 42 support groups, 42 vocational counseling offices, through the project "*VENUS - Together for a safe life!*" funded by European funds with a total value of €11 million, as part of a innovative national network of integrated services for victims of domestic violence.

Depending on the particularities of each case, the specialists ensured in the period 2020-2023 the access of a number of 4021 women and their children to at least two types of integrated services: 756 mothers plus their children were accommodated in these services; 1176 victims benefited from the services of support groups; 2089 victims benefited from vocational counseling services and support for integration/reintegration on the labor market; 791 victims benefited from other specialized services, provided for in the intervention plan created for each victim (counseling/legal assistance, medical services, other therapies) and over 97% of the people who accessed the services of the innovative national network integrated by services have overcome the vulnerability situation as a result of the support received within the project.

Another important component carried out within the VENUS project was the National Campaign regarding the awareness of victims of domestic violence and the awareness of professionals from the central and local public administration regarding the prevention and combating of domestic violence from the perspective of the new legislative regulations, including in relation to violence against children, in agreement with the Istanbul Convention. Thus, between September 2022 and August 2023, a number of 8 regional seminars with 366 specialists from all the development regions of the country participated and had the opportunity to debate the specific topics and share examples of good practice. The events took place in Slatina - September 15, 2022; Constanța - September 22, 2022; Timișoara - October 13, 2022; Bistrița-Năsăud - October 20, 2022; Brașov - October 27, 2022; Iași - November 3, 2022; Slobozia - November 10, 2022 and Bucharest - August 29, 2023.

At the same time, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities (Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse – ANES), as Project Promoter, in collaboration with several NGOs, implemented during July 2022-April 2023, the predefined project "*VERA - Positive change through integrated action in turbulent times!*", financed through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 within the "Justice" Program, with total value of €823.530, that envisaged the improving access to justice for

victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence and affected children, providing support and information regarding fundamental rights and freedoms, the powers of courts, prosecutors' offices, police, judicial proceedings, civil or criminal proceedings, divorce, trust of minors, exercise of parental authority, protection orders, etc., as well as information and guidance to benefit from free legal assistance and mechanism to guarantee non-discrimination on gender basis.

The professional knowledge was strengthened by training a number of 3228 professionals active at the local level in combating domestic violence, within the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection/Social Assistance Directorates/Public Social Assistance Services, and tools were developed so that will support and streamline their activity, such as the Guide for specialists and the National Barometer in the field of domestic violence and gender violence in order to substantiate the necessary guidelines for local authorities in the development of the local budget, strategies and plans to prevent and combat domestic violence.

During December 2021- March 2024, ANES, as Project Promoter, in partnership with the FILIA Center, Transcena Association, ANAIS Association and GRADO Association, implemented the *VioGen-RoJust* Project, financed by the EEA and Norwegian Grants 2014-2021, within the "Human Rights" Call - implementation at the national level", managed by the Romanian Social Development Fund, with the maximum amount of €731.755 .

Relevant activities:

-between May and November 2023, 15 virtual legal caravans were organized in the jurisdictions of the Romanian Courts of Appeal. The virtual legal caravan brought together around 600 professionals: lawyers, police officers, judges, NGO representatives and academics.

- an initial and continuous professional training program for judges, lawyers, prosecutors and police officers was initiated and carried out, which addresses the implementation of international documents regarding human rights and the treaties ratified by Romania (CEDO, CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, Convention from Lanzarote) and avoiding the procedural flaws that led to the conviction of Romania by the ECHR. Thus, 1029 employees of public order institutions (policemen, gendarmes, local policemen, proximity policemen), 116 magistrates, 287 lawyers, 500 social assistants and legal counsellors from all counties of the country were trained.

- an online platform was created as a resource point for informing public opinion, with a segment dedicated to professionals in the field: judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and a component dedicated to reporting abuses in the judicial system (police, prosecutors, courts) and insurance counselling/guidance of vulnerable people) regarding the defense of their rights and the methods of reporting to the competent authorities. For more details you can access the following link: <https://viogen.anes.gov.ro/>

- Information and Sensitization Campaign for young people aged 15 to 19 years. The campaign "*When I understand, I can choose - we don't continue gender violence*" took place in the partner high schools, on the online platform of the Transcena Association, in a dedicated section, but also on the association's Facebook, Tiktok and Instagram accounts. The following were organized: Webinars in 13 colleges or high schools in the country; Debates with physical presence in 8 high schools in Bucharest and in the country; 2084 students participating in webinars and debates; 6 video materials for webinars and debates; 30 materials for Tiktok and Instagram platforms.

The students participated with interest in a dynamic dialogue in which exercises and improvisations facilitated the understanding of the link between discrimination and violence as they appear in everyday life. The participants expressed their wish that such creative and debating sessions would be organized in the future.

- National campaign on education and raising awareness about gender-based violence by broadcasting spots on TV, radio and street display - *"We are all responsible. Let's stop gender violence!"*, as follows:

- The campaign with TV spot, between August 26 and September 30, 2023, had 50 national broadcasts on the following stations: Național TV (30 spots), TVR 1 (10 spots) and Prima TV (10 spots).

- The campaign radio spot, between August 26 and September 30, 2023, had 50 national broadcasts on the following stations: Radio Romania Actualități (10 spots), DIGIFM (20 spots) and Pro FM (20 spots).

- The offline display campaign was carried out in 6 cities in Romania, in two stages, as follows: between June and December 2022, 3 panels were displayed in Bucharest + 1 bus shelter in the municipality of Giurgiu and between January and June 2023, 4 were displayed panels in the municipalities of Arad, Oradea, Suceava and Piatra-Neamț.

Within the social media campaign 70 posts were published on social media channels as follows: 28 posts on Facebook, 27 posts on Instagram and 15 posts on TikTok. In total, the campaign posts on the social media channels of the partner FILIA Center achieved an organic reach of approximately 900,000 users.

Within the project *"Support for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania"* implemented through ANES, through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, within the "Justice" Program managed by the Romanian Ministry of Justice as program operator, running in the period 2019-2024 (€2.5 million), multiple information and training sessions were organized for several categories of professionals, for a total of over 17.000 people participated in information seminars and professional training sessions, with a view to developing the capacity for intervention and increasing the quality of professional assistance given to victims of domestic violence, respectively: judges, prosecutors and police officers, social workers from public and private social service providers, psychologists, professionals from local intersectoral teams. Working procedures and intervention methodologies were developed mainly for police officers based on the new amendments to the legislation in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women, as well as 2 national information and awareness campaigns on the phenomenon of domestic violence, as follows:

The national information and awareness campaign on changing the perspective on gender-based violence and gender equality and attitudes among pupils, students, educators and teachers, as well as among the Roma minority, comprising two components:

*Component I* - National campaign to raise awareness among pupils, students, educators and teachers about the negative effects of gender stereotypes, with a focus on gender-based violence, entitled "Together we build a world without violence".

Within this component, the national campaign was carried out by organizing information sessions organized between December 2021 and June 2022, in 23 high schools and 8 universities from all 8 administrative regions of the country, attended by over 10,100 pupils, students and teaching staff, as well as by organizing 4 regional debates, between April and May 2022, in which a number of 216 representatives of educational institutions from several counties participated.

*Component II* – The national information campaign regarding gender stereotypes and raising awareness regarding the Romanian society's perspective on the issue of Roma women - "Same dreams! Same chance!"

The national information campaign on gender stereotypes aimed at a target group of 20,000 people and was addressed to Roma women, representatives of Roma communities, representatives of local authorities and professionals with responsibilities related to Roma issues in the 8 development regions, being structured as follows:

Organization of a national media campaign on radio and television, between December 2021 and January 2022, to raise awareness of the discrimination against Roma women, which consisted in the development of a TV clip and its broadcast on 5 TV stations, at of maximum audience, with a number of 1072 broadcasts, as well as the development of a Radio clip and its broadcast on 2 Radio stations, at peak audience hours, with a number of 1000 broadcasts.

- The development and dissemination of information materials, developed including in the Romanian language, made for Roma women, Roma communities, local and professional authorities with responsibilities related to Roma issues.

- The organization of 21 seminars at national level, between February and March 2022, attended by over 700 people - representatives of public institutions and authorities from two counties/seminar, between February and March 2022. These seminars were focused on measures to prevent domestic violence and measures to protect Roma women, the new national legal provisions in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence adopted under the provisions of the Istanbul Convention (for example: issuance of provisional protection order, non-violent solutions of interpersonal conflict resolution, divorce case management, domestic violence prevention), including presentations.

- The organization of 4 regional debates focused on raising awareness of the issues of Roma communities, especially of Roma women, between April and May 2022, attended by over 200 participants, regional representatives of public authorities dealing with Roma women's issues.

Also, in 2023, 2 national conferences were held within the project, as follows:

- The national conference on the dissemination of informative materials produced and presented within the campaign entitled "Together we build a world without violence", held between 10 and 11 December 2023, at the Palace of the Parliament, with the support of the Ministry of Education through the County School Inspectorates, in the sense of dissemination to all the educational units of the informative materials produced and presented within the campaign Together we build a world without violence. Teaching staff with responsibilities in the field of promoting equal opportunities participated, representatives of university and pre-university education structures with the role of vectors at the level of educational units, thus ensuring a wider dissemination of the campaign information to the targeted target group and a real support for education to promote gender equality and prevent and combat violence against women and girls.

- National conference for the promotion and dissemination of information and messages promoted through the campaign entitled "Same dreams! Same chance!" for the promotion and dissemination of information and messages promoted to sensitize and raise awareness of the negative effects of the multiple discrimination phenomenon that affects Roma women in particular, organized between January 30 and 31, 2024, in which 100 people participated. The event was organized in Bucharest in collaboration with the National Agency for Roma and was addressed to territorial representatives at the level of County Offices for Roma and professionals with responsibilities in terms of facilitating the access of members of Roma communities to social, medical and educational services. At the same time, this campaign aimed to continue the information and awareness campaign through collaboration with the representatives of the county offices for Roma whose representatives are to ensure, as a result of the participation in the event, the information on social services created through the predefined project in order to increase access to prevention services and combating domestic violence by Roma women.

Within the same predefined project Support for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania, in 2023, the national campaign for the promotion of specialized social services established through the predefined project was organized a campaign that was structured in 4 regional events with the participation of approximately 100 people in each event. The participants were professionals from institutions and organizations with duties in the prevention and combating of domestic violence, professional associations and NGOs active in the field of preventing and combating violence, held as

follows: between October 10-12, 2023 in the municipality of Deva, during the 25 -October 27, 2023 in the municipality of Târgoviște, between November 9-11, 2023 in the municipality of Iași, between November 23-25, 2023 in the municipality of Slatina. The objective of the campaign was to increase the level of information regarding the social services established within the predefined project, as well as to encourage the development of as many such social services as possible to prevent and combat domestic violence, in all counties and at the level of as many local communities as possible.

