

In relation to your NV Reference: UNW/2020/0002 dated 21 April 2020, and in order to provide information regarding the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions: A/RES/73/148 on Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment, A/RES/73/146 on Trafficking in women and girls and A/RES/73/149 on Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation, the authorities of the Republic of Croatia wish to inform of the following:

I. Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment (A/RES/73/148)

In 2018, the Republic of Croatia ratified the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**. Obligations from the Convention were anticipated by the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence and amendments to other laws (the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Code), while respecting international recommendations and EU Directives. From 2016 to 2019, the Gender Equality Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia printed the Convention in 1600 copies.

The new **Act on Protection Against Domestic Violence (2019)** systematises and envisages a broad catalogue of rights of victims and extends the definition of domestic violence, which includes physical violence, physical punishment or other forms of humiliating treatment of children, psychological violence that causes injury to dignity or anxiety, sexual harassment, economic violence as an act of prohibiting or preventing the use of joint or personal property, inability to dispose of personal income or property acquired through personal means or through inheritance, disabling the opportunity to be employed, deprivation of resources for maintaining a common household and child care, neglecting the needs of a person with a disability or an elderly person that causes them anxiety or insults to their dignity and thereby causes bodily or mental suffering.

Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the Government adopted a new **Protocol to be followed in Cases of Sexual Violence (2018)**, ensuring standardised practice of competent bodies and institutions in providing efficient assistance to victims. The Protocol specifies the obligations of competent authorities involved in the identification and suppression of sexual violence and in the provision of help and protection to persons exposed to sexual violence, and regulates the manner of their cooperation. It was printed in the Croatian and English language.

Furthermore, the Government adopted a new proposal of the **Protocol on Procedures to be followed in Cases of Domestic Violence (2019)**. The objective of the Protocol is to ensure timely and efficient implementation of legislation on the protection of victims of domestic violence in accordance with powers of competent authorities, to advance cooperation and to have long-term influence on reduction of violent behaviour. It was drafted in cooperation with ministries and CSOs active in the field of domestic violence and is aligned with new legislative provisions. It stipulates that proceedings should be conducted with urgency, taking into account the rights of the victim and with particular sensibility for women, children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons. A number of ordinances have been adopted: the Ordinance on the method of collecting, processing and submitting statistical data and reports in the area covered by the scope of the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence, the Ordinance on the Enforcement of the Security Measure of Compulsory Psychosocial Treatment (an expert supervisory body has been established) and the Ordinance on Manner of Implementation of

Protective Measures of Prohibition from Approaching, Harassing and Stalking a Victim of Domestic Violence and the Measure of Removal from the Shared Household.

This integral approach against domestic violence consists of contemporary professional work including victim empowerment and protection, as well as treatment of abusers in order to change his/hers abusive behaviour. It includes early risk detection, information exchange in order to achieve comprehensive victim protection, as well as protection of family members involved. The abusive behaviour prevention also includes the methods of:

- introducing the programmes of violence prevention into the educational institutions with the intention to change the stereotypes that lead to abusive behaviour,
- raising the public awareness regarding the problem of violence,
- reporting on suspected violence,
- enforcing the role of non-governmental organizations.

The **National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2017-2022** is the continuation of the implementation of the national policy and is aimed at ensuring a higher level of protection and improving the quality of victim's life. It covers seven strategic areas and its measures are based on articles of the Istanbul Convention. Competent authorities for the implementation of measures are state administration bodies, local and regional self-government units and CSOs.

In 2019, the MDFYSP launched the **EU project “Stop the violence against women – there is no justification for violence”**, which was presented on the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women. The project partners are the Ministry of Justice and the Association for support to victims and witnesses. The activities are aimed at ensuring a free help-line within the National call centre, as an integral part of the system for both prevention of violence and protection of victims of violence. Special emphasis is being placed on women victims of violence and domestic violence. The total value of the project is HRK 10 million (85% of the total amount is financed from the European Social Fund). The estimated project duration is 26 months.

A total of seven **SOS phones** for victims of violence operate in the Republic of Croatia 24/7. The MDFYSP financially supports 6 of the associations/shelters for victims of violence with the integrated SOS help-line service (the association Prompt women's help – SOS helpline for women and children victims of domestic violence in Zagreb, St. Ann's shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence under the Caritas in Rijeka, the “U.Z.O.R.” Association for family protection in Rijeka, “ADELA” Center for women in Sisak, “Korak” Women's group Karlovac and the Safe House of the Vukovar-Srijemska County). Along with the aforementioned SOS helplines, the Varaždin County's Red Cross provides 24-hour help-line “Team for crisis situations”.

Currently, Croatia has 19 **shelters** for women victims of violence. In line with the Istanbul Convention, and aiming to ensure equal regional coverage, the establishment of the shelters in the remaining 6 counties is underway and the possibility of applying for the financial support from the state is ensured.

Moreover, in order to further develop non-institutional supporting services, the MDFYSP provides financial support to the work of various providers of **counselling services** for victims of domestic violence in Croatia.

The Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care, in accordance with the Act on Housing Care in Supported Areas, carries out **housing care of victims of domestic violence** throughout Croatia - housing was provided to six families in 2019.

In 2019, the Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with representatives of the education system, the welfare system, the judiciary, the specialised ombudsman's offices and local and regional self-government units, business entities, institutions, media and CSOs, developed a **new prevention project "LILY", directed to prevention of all forms of violence against women as well as raising awareness on the importance of gender equality and life without violence**. The project was conducted systematically in cooperation with CSOs, through trainings of experts and campaigns aimed at raising awareness of consequences of violence on individuals and the community.

Specific data related to COVID-19

The MDFYSP prepared instructions for all social welfare institutions and other welfare system providers to continue performing their activities against domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic (including 24-hours help-lines for urgent response in domestic violence situations, accommodation for victims of violence, crises team interventions, psychosocial and legal assistance to the victims of violence).

Furthermore, the MDFYSP recommended to suspend social services that were not provided on a 24-hours base, including home assistance services if not causing harm to the user and/or his/her family members. However, there is an open possibility for home assistance in social services, in cases where parents and/or other family members are not able to provide appropriate care. In addition, the MDFYSP recommended prevention of further spread of COVID-19, while home assistance is provided.