

Protocol for Roma Mediators and GBV Professionals



Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV

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Introduction

This guide is developed within the framework of the EU-funded project RoW-POWER: Enhancing Support for Roma Women Victims of GBV. The project's main objective is to support Roma women at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) in overcoming the cultural, linguistic, and social barriers they face in reaching out to and accessing relevant support services. This will be achieved by bringing together Roma mediators and GBV professionals to promote mutual exchange and cooperation, enabling them to better understand, respond to, and support the needs of Roma women at risk of GBV.

Furthermore, the RoW-POWER project aims to provide training, enhance skills in addressing violence against Roma women, and foster cooperation across two key sectors that, until now, have not collaborated in an organised manner:

- a) Roma mediators
- b) GBV prevention organisations and victim support professionals

The project is being implemented between 01/09/2023 and 31/08/2025 in Germany, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Ireland, Romania, and North Macedonia.

This guide is the result of the findings from mapping activities (desk and field research) and the Cooperation Workshops organised in all participating countries, bringing together GBV professionals and Roma mediators, where experiences, methods, tools, and ways of working with individuals at risk of or affected by GBV were exchanged.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- List good practices and tools used within GBV services in the participating countries and in the EU for consideration and use by GBV professionals, and to inform Roma mediators about them.
- Provide guidelines to those involved in the processes of reception, case registration, and provision of all kinds of support for Roma women affected by GBV (GBV counselling, psychosocial support, and legal counselling), to enhance good cooperation between GBV professionals and Roma mediators.
- Provide a basic protocol for cooperation between GBV professionals and Roma mediators, describing the commonalities in gender-based violence response processes in each country, analysing the principles and steps of cooperation, and clarifying the distinct roles between the two sectors.



Good Practices and Tools

The good practices and tools were collected during the implementation of the mapping activities of the RoW-POWER project as well as during the implementation of the Cooperation National Workshops between Roma Mediators and GBV Professionals in the participating countries (Germany, Greece, Spain, North Macedonia, Ireland, Slovakia). Below are summarised the relevant tables of the sixteen (16) good practices and useful tools collected:

Name	Protocol for managing incidents of gender-based violence in migration
Country:	Greece
Short Description	This protocol and the practices it includes are primarily relevant at the level of collaboration between translators and cultural mediators with GBV professionals and gender-based violence response mechanism practitioners in migrant shelters. It aims to ensure accessible protection services for individuals affected by GBV, and the best possible cooperation and consultation with GBV professionals and specialists.
Procedure and Stage /Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Reporting the incident procedures • Offering psychosocial support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering legal counselling support to individuals affected by GBV
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	Methods of working with women from different or underprivileged cultural backgrounds Methods of cooperation between intercultural mediators and translators with GBV professionals and social services

How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	To a large extent, the methods, techniques, and procedures of the cooperation protocol regarding the collaboration of translators and intercultural mediators with GBV professionals could be transferred almost unchanged or adapted and enriched in a context primarily concerning Roma individuals affected by GBV in Roma communities.
Website link:	https://eody.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/protokollo-emfylis-vias_gr-4.pdf

Name	SARAH – Toolkit for Enhancing Counselling for Victims of Gender-Based Violence
Countries:	Greece, Finland, Germany Italy
Short Description	This toolkit can help GBV professionals, primarily GBV counsellors and social workers, to collect information on individuals affected by GBV, obtain feedback from them, and choose discussion topics designed to: i) ensure that individuals and their needs are heard, while helping them understand their strengths, resources, expectations, and priorities. ii) assist the counsellor in designing next steps and making decisions in collaboration with the individuals affected by GBV.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Reporting the incident procedures • Offering psychosocial support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	All relevant tools on recording, feedback, and the methods for discussion topics can help GBV counsellors adapt easily to procedures for reporting, psychosocial support, and counselling related to GBV.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	Many methods and tools from this toolkit are versatile and easily adaptable, and can be directly transferred to the GBV procedures of different GBV centres.
Website link	https://rm.coe.int/sarah-impact-tool-en-1-2-/1680a42ca8

Name	PATTERN Domestic Violence Protocol for Social Workers and Roma Mediators
Countries	Greece, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Bulgaria
Short Description	Domestic Violence Protocols can assist and support professionals, such as intercultural mediators and those working in community centres or other local/community services. This approach enables staff in any setting to respond to domestic violence affecting Roma women in a comprehensive and institutionalised manner.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Reporting the incident procedures • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV • Referring individuals affected by GBV to a service
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	Utilisation of the described tools and methods for Roma mediators and social workers, including screening, identification/assessment, documentation, safety planning, discharge planning, and referral.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	Several methods, tools, and procedures of the domestic violence protocol regarding the cooperation of social workers and Roma mediators could be transferred and adapted in the context of this project.
Website link:	https://www.scribd.com/document/610242460/PATTERN-D3-4-Greece-Domestic-Violence-Protocol

Name	In from the Margins – Roma in Ireland: Addressing Structural Discrimination Against Roma Communities
Country	Ireland
Short Description	Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting integration, human rights, and equality for migrants in Ireland. Their work includes providing legal information, advocacy services, and campaigning for systemic change. A key focus of Nasc's work has been addressing the challenges faced by Roma communities, as outlined in their report <i>In from the Margins: Roma in Ireland</i>. This report identifies significant barriers Roma face in accessing employment, social protection, housing, healthcare, and education, as well as their experience of discrimination, including that of Roma women. The report provides informed recommendations for tackling these challenges, calling for holistic and multifaceted approaches to prejudice and discrimination against Roma communities. Key proposals include formal recognition of Roma as a minority group, promoting communication between public bodies, and developing initiatives inspired by best practices from other European countries. While the report does not outline specific GBV-focused practices, its emphasis on addressing systemic discrimination and fostering inclusion provides a foundational framework for reducing vulnerabilities, including those related to gender-based violence. By building Roma women's awareness of their rights and encouraging advocacy, the recommendations aim to improve access to services, encourage trust, and combat isolation, which are crucial for supporting Roma women at risk of or experiencing GBV.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV	• Awareness-raising and rights education for Roma women. • Capacity-building to support community advocates.

protocol that it is relevant	• Advocacy for systemic change to improve access to GBV services. • Building trust between Roma communities and institutions to enhance reporting mechanisms and service access.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This practice highlights the importance of addressing structural discrimination as a means of reducing vulnerabilities to GBV and promoting access to critical services for Roma women. Key trends include: • Holistic Approaches: Tackling discrimination across multiple sectors (e.g., housing, healthcare, and employment) reduces the overall marginalisation of Roma communities and enhances their ability to access GBV services. • Community Empowerment: By building capacity within Roma communities, individuals are equipped to advocate for their rights, fostering inclusion and greater confidence in seeking support. • Collaboration and Coordination: Improved communication between public bodies, NGOs, and Roma communities fosters trust and ensures services are more accessible and culturally sensitive. • Policy Advocacy: Strategic lobbying for recognition and integration of Roma communities creates systemic change, addressing the root causes of discrimination and exclusion. The potential benefits include increased trust in institutions, greater engagement with services, and the empowerment of Roma women to report and address GBV. By promoting inclusivity and addressing systemic barriers, these practices lay the groundwork for long-term societal change and improved outcomes for Roma women.
How this Best Practice could be	The principles and recommendations from Nasc's work can significantly inform the RoW-POWER project. For instance, capacity-building initiatives could incorporate training for

used/ transferred in our project	mediators on advocating for Roma women’s rights and accessing services, directly addressing the barriers highlighted in Nasc’s report. The emphasis on building communication and trust between Roma communities and public institutions is particularly relevant. The RoW-POWER project can incorporate practices that encourage collaboration between Roma mediators and GBV professionals, ensuring services are accessible, culturally appropriate, and inclusive. Furthermore, Nasc’s call for a coordinated approach among NGOs aligns with the project’s aim of improving support networks. By promoting partnerships and shared goals, the project can ensure that Roma women are supported holistically, with integrated services addressing their specific needs. Initiatives to combat stereotypes and improve understanding of Roma culture among service providers can also strengthen trust and engagement. Finally, adapting Nasc’s community-focused recommendations, such as raising awareness of rights and building Roma-led advocacy initiatives - can empower Roma women.
Website link:	https://nascireland.org/sites/default/files/NASC-ROMA-REPORT.pdf

Name	Gender-based violence a resource document for services and organisations working with and for minority ethnic women
Country	Ireland
Short Description	This resource by the Women’s Health Council in Ireland provides comprehensive guidance for organisations supporting minority ethnic women affected by gender-based violence (GBV). This resource is designed to help service providers address the specific barriers minority ethnic women face when disclosing GBV and seeking support, such as fear of deportation, lack of knowledge about rights, stigma, and social isolation. The document outlines effective practices for responding to disclosures, including active listening, being non-judgemental, communicating belief, and validating the woman’s decision to disclose. It emphasises confidentiality, the importance of appropriate referrals to GBV-specific services, and developing personalised safety plans. Recognising the complexities of leaving an abusive relationship, it highlights that this is a process requiring ongoing support and patience. The resource also encourages organisations to play an active role in GBV prevention by reducing social isolation through support networks and awareness-raising initiatives in minority ethnic communities. It highlights the critical role of culturally sensitive practices and collaboration with community leaders. The document includes practical tools, such as safety planning discussion points, and information on relevant support organisations and resources in Ireland.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Disclosure and Support: Guidance on responding to and supporting GBV disclosures. • Safety Planning: Developing tailored safety plans to minimise risk.

	• Referral: Linking survivors to appropriate specialist GBV services. • Prevention: Establishing support networks and community awareness initiatives to reduce social isolation and prevent GBV.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This practice demonstrates the importance of tailored support for minority ethnic women experiencing GBV. Key trends include: • Culturally Informed Support: The guidance prioritises understanding the specific barriers faced by minority ethnic women, enabling service providers to respond with sensitivity and relevance. • Focus on Empowerment and Safety: By equipping women with safety plans and validating their experiences, the approach promotes empowerment while prioritising immediate safety needs. • Prevention Through Community Engagement: Raising awareness and fostering networks within minority ethnic communities addresses root causes, such as social isolation, that increase vulnerability to GBV. • Collaboration with GBV Specialists: The document underscores the value of partnerships with dedicated GBV organisations for effective referral and case management. These practices collectively improve trust, access to support, and outcomes for minority ethnic women experiencing GBV.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	The <i>RoW-POWER Project</i> can adapt several elements from this best practice to support Roma women experiencing or at risk of GBV. Key applications include: • Culturally Sensitive Training for Mediators: Incorporating the resource's guidance into training for Roma mediators and professionals to improve their ability to respond effectively to disclosures.

	• Safety Planning Strategies: Adapting safety planning tools to address the specific circumstances and risks faced by Roma women, enhancing their preparedness in crisis situations. • Community Awareness and Support Networks: Building on the emphasis on community engagement, the project can develop Roma-specific support groups and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and isolation. • Strengthening Referral Pathways: Establishing partnerships with GBV organisations to provide Roma women with seamless access to specialised services and tailored case management. These strategies align with the project's goals of improving GBV support, reporting, and counselling services for Roma women while empowering them through knowledge and accessible support networks.
Website link	https://www.lenus.ie/bitstream/handle/10147/91487/40_MEW_Resource_Document.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Name	A Good Practice Guide: Improving service provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller domestic abuse survivors
Country	United Kingdom
Short Description	This best practice focuses on addressing the unique needs of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) survivors of domestic abuse through culturally informed and flexible service provision. Based on findings from the report <i>A Good Practice Guide: Improving service provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller domestic abuse survivors</i>, the initiative highlights barriers to engagement such as discrimination, unmet literacy needs, and mistrust of mainstream services. Good practices identified include partnerships like the one between Solace Women's Aid (SWA) and the Traveller Movement (TM), which provide culturally sensitive caseworkers and advocacy, offering survivors both GRT-specific and mainstream support options. Long-term support, insight into GRT culture, and respectful communication are core elements. The best practice underscores that services must respect survivors' identities, avoid treating them as victims of culture, and acknowledge the socio-economic isolation faced by many GRT survivors. It also stresses the need for flexible, accessible solutions, particularly for those excluded from traditional systems.
Procedure and Stage /Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Survivor-centred case management and advocacy. • Shelter and refuge services, tailored to cultural needs. • Building awareness and capacity in mainstream services to support marginalised ethnic groups. • Risk assessment and safety planning, particularly for cases involving honour-based abuse.
Trends and Potential Benefits	This best practice demonstrates the potential to enhance outcomes for marginalised survivors through culturally specific and inclusive approaches. Key trends include the need for:

from this Best Practice	• Cultural Competence: Services must recognise the diversity within GRT communities and adopt culturally sensitive practices. • Flexible Support Models: By addressing barriers such as literacy, mobility, and digital exclusion, services can improve access and engagement for GRT survivors. • Community-Led Solutions: Involving survivors and GRT community members in project design ensures that services reflect their self-defined needs. Potential benefits include increased trust and engagement with services, reduced isolation for survivors, and more effective safety planning.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	The identified best practices align well with the aims of the RoW-POWER project. The focus on culturally sensitive, community-informed approaches can inform the training of mediators, equipping them to address the specific barriers Roma women face, such as mistrust, discrimination, and social isolation. Flexible service models, such as emergency accommodation and tailored workshops, offer valuable examples for designing accessible and responsive GBV services. These can be adapted to tackle issues like digital exclusion, literacy challenges, and mobility restrictions, ensuring Roma women can confidently access the support they need. The RoW-POWER project can also adopt the partnership-building strategies highlighted, strengthening collaboration between mediators and GBV professionals. By encouraging mutual understanding and shared objectives, the project can create a cohesive support network where Roma women receive holistic assistance from both community-specific and mainstream services. These practices offer practical insights to develop an inclusive, sustainable framework that enhances reporting, counselling, and support services for Roma women experiencing or at risk of GBV.

Website link	https://travellermovement.org.uk/static/8b8aea8acfcde52e4665d28035bde2d5/2022.02.25-DA-Good-Practice-Guide.pdf
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Name	Center for offering psycho-social help and support for victims of gender-based violence and family violence - "ISI ARKA"
Country	North Macedonia
Short Description	This project is implemented by the Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari. The project is supported by UNFPA within the work plan: Provision of shelter and psychosocial support for all individuals affected by gender-based violence and domestic violence, by replicating best practices of cooperation between civil society organisations, local self-government, and the private sector, funded by the British Embassy. The project aims to ensure the sustainability of the Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari through multi-sectoral cooperation with all local stakeholders as a centre for reducing and preventing domestic violence against Roma women, as well as to offer assistance and support services to individuals affected by domestic and gender-based violence. The project also aims to increase awareness and strengthen cooperation between institutions and individuals affected by family and gender-based violence. During 2023, the Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari provided support for 35 Roma women affected by family and gender-based violence.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Reporting the incident procedures • Offering psychosocial support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering legal assistance and support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering support in acquiring social rights • Career counselling and reintegration

Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This best practice shows that when specific support is provided for a vulnerable category such as Roma women, services led by Roma women for Roma women generate the highest level of confidence for individuals seeking help. At the same time, having a place to seek support in one's native language eliminates language barriers in communication, as well as cultural barriers, since individuals can seek help from a Romani woman from the same ethnic group when addressing violence or asserting rights. • Methods of working from Roma women for Roma women • Methods of cooperation between intercultural mediators and translators with GBV professionals and social services
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	This practice could be used/transferred in our project through direct cooperation with this Center and the Roma Health and Educational Mediators. Roma mediators, apart from working in the office and receiving clients, also visit the Roma community in the field and are in direct contact with community members. During these visits, they can identify and map potential individuals affected by GBV, who can then be referred to the Center for offering psycho-social help and support for individuals affected by gender-based and family violence – "ISI ARKA". Through cooperation and work with the Center, mediators can gain the necessary experience and knowledge in working with Roma women, potential individuals affected by GBV, and those already affected by GBV.
Website link	https://zenisutoorizari.org.mk/isi-arka/

Name	SOS National mobile helpline to support women victims of domestic violence
Country	North Macedonia
Short Description	The SOS National Mobile Helpline to support individuals affected by domestic violence is a project implemented by the National Council for Gender Equality. The main goal of the project is to provide 24/7 access to help, support, and protection for individuals affected by violence through a national free SOS mobile line, available from all mobile operators in the country (T-Home, VIP). The service operates 24 hours a day on three SOS mobile lines (accessible from all mobile operators, every day of the month), providing continuous access to support, counselling, referral to other direct services, and connection with institutions responsible for addressing violence. The project is supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• 24-hour open centre for help and assistance • Reporting the incident procedures • Offering psychosocial support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering legal assistance and support to individuals affected by GBV
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This best practice provides support to women as a vulnerable group through trained personnel with practical knowledge of working with individuals affected by GBV. Support is available 24 hours a day and provided in the individual's native language,

	removing language and cultural barriers and ensuring more appropriate and high-quality service.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	This practice could be used/transferred in our project through direct cooperation with the National Council for Gender Equality and the Roma Health and Educational Mediators. Roma mediators, apart from working in the office and receiving clients, could cooperate with SOS agents to support individuals affected by GBV and contribute to prevention efforts. Through field visits, mediators can identify and map potential individuals affected by GBV, who can then be referred to the National Council for Gender Equality for psycho-social help and support.
Website link	https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/specijalizirani-uslugi-za-zrtvi-na-semejno-nasilstvo.nspx https://nsrr.org.mk/

Name	National Action Plan for the Protection, Promotion and Fulfillment of the Human Rights of Roma Women and Girls 2022-2024
Country	North Macedonia
Short Description	The National Action Plan for the Protection, Promotion and Fulfillment of the Human Rights of Roma Women and Girls 2022–2024 is an important strategic document developed and adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of North Macedonia. This action plan aligns with national policy and the Strategy on the Advancement of Roma Women and Girls. It is also an important document for GBV at the national level, as it gives special attention to improving and advancing the situation of Roma women and girls at an institutional level.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• 24-hour open centre for help and assistance • Reporting the incident procedures • Offering psychosocial support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering counselling support to individuals affected by GBV • Offering legal assistance and support to individuals affected by GBV
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This best practice provides support to women as a vulnerable group through trained personnel with practical knowledge in working with individuals affected by GBV. Support is available 24 hours a day and provided in the individual's native language, eliminating language and cultural barriers and ensuring higher quality and more appropriate service.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	This practice could be used/transferred in our project through direct cooperation with the National Council for Gender Equality and the Roma Health and Educational Mediators. Roma mediators, apart from working in the office and receiving clients, could cooperate with SOS agents to support

	individuals affected by GBV and contribute to prevention efforts. Through field visits, they can identify and map potential individuals affected by GBV, who can then be referred to the National Council for Gender Equality for psycho-social help and support for individuals affected by gender-based and family violence.
Website link	https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/specijalizirani-uslugi-za-zrtvi-na-semejno-nasilstvo.nspx https://nsrr.org.mk/

Name	Cali Programme
Country	Spain
Short Description	This programme addresses the specific needs of Roma women by understanding their reality, promoting their personal development for the full exercise of their citizenship, and enhancing their pre-employment skills and competencies to improve access to employment and achieve the empowerment and emancipation they seek. To achieve equal opportunities for Roma women, the Fundación Secretariado Gitanos works with the Roma community and broader society. Key institutions and agents play an important role in the programme, as they recognise that everyone should be involved in achieving a more equal society with access to goods, services, and rights on equal terms. The programme ran from 2016 to 2023.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	Care for women who have experienced gender-based violence includes information, guidance, support, and individualised accompaniment, as well as referral to specialised resources to remove or prevent barriers to access or discriminatory treatment.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This best practice was implemented by the Fundación Secretariado Gitanos, a Spanish national organisation promoting the well-being and integration of Gitanos (Spanish Roma). Their approach integrates GBV assistance with mediation services, with GBV professionals being culturally sensitive to Gitanos and able to act as mediators.

How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	This best practice may be useful for understanding how to combine the roles of GBV professional and mediator effectively.
Website link	https://www.gitanos.org/que-hacemos/areas/inclusion_social/cali.html

Name of Best Practice	Me quiero libre
Country	Spain
Short Description	<i>Me quiero libre</i> (I Want to Be Free), <i>Guía de Prevención de la Violencia de Género para el Trabajo con Adolescentes</i>, is a guide for the prevention of gender-based violence aimed at youth workers, specifically adolescents. Fundación de Secretariado Gitano created this document in 2020 to promote a more equal society, free from discrimination that still exists today. Written by Belén Martos Losada for Fundación de Secretariado Gitano, this guide includes teaching materials, worksheets, workshops, guidelines, and strategies that can be used in classrooms with students. Through this participatory and experiential methodology, groups can work on their behaviours and attitudes related to gender inequality and gender-based violence. It also creates a space for reflection and analysis to explore psychological violence, which often goes unnoticed.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	· Awareness-raising and rights education for Roma women. · Capacity-building to support community advocates.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	This guide includes 13 workshops/activities divided into five categories, designed to help young people from the Roma community identify early and common signs of gender-based violence. It aims to promote healthy and respectful relationships, eradicate gender-based violence, and build spaces that encourage equal opportunities and respect among different cultures.

	The content provides practical tools for professionals working with youth to implement with groups, empowering them to raise awareness about gender-based violence.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	Gender-based violence affects women worldwide, regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, as it is rooted in inequality stemming from socially assigned gender roles. Roma women have specific socio-cultural realities that should be considered, as many are still in vulnerable situations. Using guides such as this, young Roma people can learn from an early age what gender-based violence means and how to recognise it. Roma mediators and gender-based violence professionals can incorporate these tools into their work, expanding their methods to strengthen education for young people and support efforts to prevent gender-based violence.
Website link	https://www.gitanos.org/upload/93/50/Guia_didactica_Me_quiero_libre.pdf

Name of Best Practice	Mujeres gitanas víctimas de violencia de género: Protocolo para la atención específica
Country	Spain
Short Description	<i>Roma Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence: Protocol for Specific Care</i> is a protocol created in 2022 by Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Gitanas (FAKALI) for Instituto Andaluz de la Mujer. This publication contains a series of action protocols and legislative developments of the Andalusian Law on Gender Violence, aiming to guarantee and improve the coordinated response of the Andalusian Administration, local authorities, social agents, and relevant services, while defining the areas of action that can intervene in different situations of violence against women. It seeks to address coordination challenges, making actions more effective and efficient, to ensure prevention, personalised attention, and the recovery of women at risk or affected by gender-based violence. Its main objective is to achieve an Andalusia that is equal and free from gender-based violence.
Procedure and Stage/Step of GBV protocol that it is relevant	• Capacity-building to support community advocates • Building trust between Roma communities and institutions to enhance reporting mechanisms and access to services • Advocacy for systemic change to improve access to GBV services
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	One of the greatest challenges faced by professionals working with women affected by gender-based violence is establishing a level of trust that allows for appropriate intervention. This situation is particularly complex with some groups, such as Roma women affected by gender-based violence, which is

	why specialised training and more individualised protocols for action are essential tools. This protocol is not only a working resource but a significant step forward in the fight against gender-based violence. It highlights the specific circumstances of Roma women and provides points of action to make interventions more effective and efficient, ensuring prevention, personalised care, and recovery of women and minors at risk or affected by gender-based violence. Following the guidelines in this protocol, GBV professionals can strengthen relationships with Roma women affected by gender-based violence and provide the support they need to manage and overcome these situations safely.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	This document, establishing for the first time in Andalusia a series of guidelines for prevention and intervention on gender-based violence for a particularly vulnerable group, includes measures, tools, best practices, and recommendations to improve assistance and professional understanding of the complex situations faced by Roma women experiencing abuse. The RoW POWER project can benefit from this protocol by supporting mentors and GBV professionals in capacity-building, offering intervention models depending on the situation: raising awareness of gender-based violence, preventing cases of GBV among Roma women, and providing direct intervention in ongoing cases of gender-based violence. The protocol helps professionals improve their understanding of the situation of women affected by GBV and empowers them to support women effectively and ensure their safety.
Website link	https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodelamujer/index.php/publicaciones/novedades/mujeres-gitanas-victimas-de-violencia-de-genero-protocolo-para-la-atencion-especifica

Name	Active against digital violence
Country	Germany
Short Description	The bff's InterAction project aims to address a gap in support for individuals affected by digital gender-based violence. Existing organisations within the outpatient support system, such as women's counselling centres and women's emergency hotlines organised under the bff, will be networked with local IT experts to implement the necessary measures to address challenging cases of digital violence. Initially, this cooperation will be tested at two model locations. The goal is to identify IT professionals willing to acquire knowledge about gender-based violence, trauma, and the corresponding support structures. These IT professionals can then be approached by counselling centres in cases where clients suspect they are being stalked or encounter situations requiring specialised knowledge of IT devices and digital media. As part of the project, IT specialists will provide initial advice to individuals affected by digital violence. The cooperation is intended to continue beyond the project, and results and findings will be documented and published in the form of a white paper. InterAktion is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) as part of the federal innovation programme <i>Together Against Violence Against Women</i>.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	Digital violence is a collective term for various forms of gender-specific violence. It refers to acts of violence that use technical aids and digital media (cell phones, apps, internet

	applications, emails, etc.) as well as violence that occurs in digital spaces, such as online portals or social platforms. Digital violence usually does not occur independently of “analog violence” but is often a continuation or supplement of violent relationships and dynamics.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred in our project	Digital attacks can cause severe and enduring feelings of anxiety, guilt, shame, and helplessness in those affected. They often result in a loss of trust and diminished self-confidence. Because many perpetrators act anonymously, individuals affected frequently experience strong feelings of powerlessness and may believe they cannot act against the abuse. Roma mediators and GBV professionals should be prepared and trained in techniques to address digital violence. Roma women are often targets of such attacks, especially on advanced social media networks such as TikTok, Instagram, and similar platforms.
Website link	https://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/de/aktionen-themen/bff-aktiv-gegen-digitale-gewalt.html

Name :	Handbook provided by Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities: How to prevent partner violence and how to effectively help women experiencing violence in Roma community
Country:	Slovakia
Short Description	This methodology is intended to specify and describe violence against women in intimate partner relationships. Violence against women is a society-wide phenomenon that deserves attention. The aim of this handbook is to raise awareness of the problem of violence against women, increase sensitivity to the needs and rights of women affected by violence, and improve professional competence in preventing and reducing violence through activities with the target group. Increased societal sensitivity to this phenomenon can be achieved if professionals are familiar with the specific issue of violence against women in marginalised Roma communities and if women experiencing violence are aware of their rights and know where to turn for help. Professionals should be able to identify warning signs or characteristics of risky partners, understand the cycle of violence, know the possibilities for protection, and respond appropriately in situations of violence, whether directly or indirectly. The reality of violence against women is often more severe than it appears. With the help of this methodology, professionals should be able to recognise early signs and, based on these, provide assistance or refer women to specialised support centres.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	The handbook includes nine carefully designed activities aimed at equipping professionals with the tools and knowledge to address gender-based violence (GBV) within Roma communities. These activities focus on empowering professionals to support women affected by GBV, providing

	effective strategies for offering assistance, fostering trust, and navigating sensitive situations. The activities also help professionals teach women how to recognise early signs of GBV, raise awareness about their rights, and access available resources for protection and support. By engaging with these activities, professionals can foster a more informed, empathetic, and proactive approach to preventing and addressing GBV in Roma communities.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred	These activities provide a critical framework that informs the creation of guidelines for the RoW POWER project, emphasising practical, culturally sensitive approaches to addressing GBV. Drawing inspiration from these activities, the RoW POWER project highlights the importance of developing a comprehensive handbook tailored specifically for Roma mediators and professionals working in GBV contexts. This handbook will serve as a practical tool, offering step-by-step guidance, best practices, and culturally relevant case studies. Additionally, targeted training sessions are essential to ensure that mediators and professionals are equipped with the skills to identify early warning signs of GBV, navigate complex social dynamics, and provide survivor-centred support. These trainings can deepen understanding of the unique challenges faced by Roma communities while promoting collaboration between mediators and professionals. By integrating these activities, the RoW POWER project can ensure that mediators and professionals are informed and empowered to act effectively. This approach contributes to building trust within Roma communities, ensures that women affected by GBV feel supported and understood, and fosters a sustainable, community-driven strategy to prevent and address GBV.

Website link	https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1495/metodika_ako_predchadzat_nasiliu_web_demjanovicova.pdf?csrt=260490964906749503
More Info	0800 212 212 Freephone Non-stop Helpline for Women Experiencing Violence - The National Women's Helpline is a confidential and safe space for women who are at risk of or experiencing violence. Counsellors are on hand to talk about all types of violence that women experience in their lives. Together with the woman who calls, they will try to minimize the risk she faces in a violent relationship.

Name of Best Practice	Cesta Von - OMAMY
Country	SLOVAKIA
Short Description	OMAMY is a Slovak non-profit organisation that specialises in supporting marginalised communities, particularly Roma settlements, with a focus on early childhood development. Its mission is to strengthen families and promote parenting competencies in the poorest areas of Slovakia, ensuring that every child is given a fair chance to succeed from birth. The organisation was founded in 2018, and its name symbolises the importance of motherhood and the parental relationship in shaping a child's future. OMAMY's main activity is to engage local Roma women, called <i>omamas</i>, who undergo specialised education and training to become mentors in their communities. These <i>omamas</i> work directly with children and parents in their settlements, using scientifically proven child development methods. Education holds different value for people living in poverty compared with those in the middle class. There are few examples in their neighbourhoods of individuals who have prospered through education. The benefits of education are abstract, uncertain, and long-term, whereas immediate survival needs are pressing. This is most acute in the most deprived communities. In more developed and less segregated areas, concern for education is more apparent, but interventions need to start much earlier than school. Research by Charles University for ETP Slovakia showed that children from excluded communities are, on average, two years behind when they start primary school. For example, a child who is physiologically six years old may be at the developmental level of a four-year-old, with many children lagging even further. This educational gap often widens over time.
Trends and Potential Benefits	The AMAL programme is part of the initiatives of the non-profit organisation Cesta Von, aimed at supporting marginalised communities in Slovakia. Its main goal is to improve the

from this Best Practice	language skills of women from these communities, particularly <i>omamas</i> who work with children in the OMAMY programme. • Individual conversation classes: Volunteers, called <i>amali</i> and <i>amal</i> women, conduct individual conversation sessions with women from the communities, creating a safe and stimulating space for discussion and learning. • Developing language and IT skills: The programme improves fluency and understanding in Slovak and provides participants with basic IT skills, enabling them to work effectively with information. • Strengthening self-confidence and self-development: Through regular meetings, women learn to express their thoughts and feelings, promoting personal growth, self-confidence, and motivation for further education.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred	The RoW POWER project could draw inspiration from the AMAL programme, which highlights the importance of capacity building for women mediators through training in language and digital skills. This model is particularly effective when working with women from marginalised communities, as it enables them to access information and communicate more effectively with social institutions. For women experiencing domestic violence, this support is crucial. Improved language skills help them express their needs more clearly, describe their situation, or explain their problems to health professionals, police, or social workers. Digital skills also open access to other sources of help, including information on rights, online counselling services, or support networks for women experiencing violence. The RoW POWER project could implement training programmes for female mediators that would not only assist women in their communities but also empower the mediators themselves, increasing their independence and confidence. This creates a cycle of support, where women in the community both receive

	help and are equipped to pass it on, contributing substantially to the long-term sustainability of the project.
Website link	https://cestavon.sk/program-ama/
More Info	Further information about other support programmes aimed at the Roma community can be found on the organisation's webpage.

Name of Best Practice	QUO VADIS O.Z.
Country	SLOVAKIA
Short Description	QUO VADIS O.Z. is a non-profit organisation that implements domestic and international projects in line with its programme concept. Key themes for QUO VADIS O.Z. are tolerance and human rights, gender equality, inclusive education, desegregation of Roma children, and protection of women experiencing gender-based violence in disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. Education on human rights, anti-Gypsyism, and gender equality is considered a prerequisite for change. The organisation runs courses, prevention programmes, and accredited education for children, youth, and adults. QUO VADIS monitors the activities of local and national government in fulfilling human rights obligations, addressing Roma issues, poverty, and domestic violence, with an emphasis on desegregation, inclusion, and respect for human rights.
Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice	Field Research: Analysing the current situation is essential for understanding barriers that need to be addressed. QUO VADIS participates in research on gender inequality, the status of Roma women, and violence against women in Roma communities. Expertise: Employees are active members of commissions or committees at local, regional, and international levels. They advocate for coalition building and the creation of informal partnerships. Petitions: QUO VADIS raises public awareness and engages authorities, including government representatives and the President, through public commentary, petitions, and lobbying.

	Watchdog: Monitoring and oversight focus on public policies related to Roma issues, application of gender equality instruments, and their impact on marginalised communities. Campaigns: QUO VADIS organises campaigns and public events to highlight societal issues and positively influence public opinion. Networks and Connections: QUO VADIS is part of coalitions and independent platforms that contribute to shadow reports on government policies. It participates in commissions and committees shaping new policies and initiates and coordinates platforms and networks.
How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred	The purpose of the training is to provide professional and methodological support to schools, other educational institutions, and all interested parties through: • Accredited education • Training, seminars, and workshops for educators • Prevention programmes for primary and secondary school pupils • Publication of methodological materials The modular training “Gender Inequality and Multiple Discrimination” includes four modules: 1. Gender Stereotypes 2. Gender Socialisation 3. Gender-Based Violence 4. Standards for the Provision of Assistance to Women Experiencing Violence

	This accredited programme is a form of citizenship education, enabling participants to satisfy personal interests, engage in civil society, and develop their overall capacities. Education on gender inequalities for women who experience multiple forms of discrimination is unique in Slovakia, addressing previously taboo topics such as gender inequality and violence against women in marginalised Roma communities. The primary target group is individuals seeking professional knowledge and skills regarding gender inequality among multiply discriminated women.
Website link	https://www.quovadisoz.com
More Info	Further information about training availability, programmes, and accreditations can be found on the organisation's webpage.



Guidelines for GBV Professionals and Roma Mediators

This section of the guide provides general guidance for those involved in reception, case registration, and the provision of support to Roma women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) [including GBV counselling, psychosocial support, and related services]. The following thirty-one (31) guidelines apply to professionals and should be followed or adapted flexibly by both GBV professionals and Roma mediators, always respecting the codes of conduct of the National Gender-Based Violence Response Mechanism.

1. Always use a survivor-centred approach

The personality, dignity, health (mental and physical), well-being, and safety of the survivor must be the top priority. This approach is implemented through showing respect and acceptance throughout the process, maintaining safety, ensuring confidentiality of information, and avoiding any form of discrimination.

2. Respect

Respect the choices, wishes, rights, and dignity of the survivor. If a survivor chooses not to access a particular service (e.g., a shelter), their decision must be fully respected. Always seek the survivor's consent before taking any action on their behalf.

3. Maintain confidentiality and protect information provided by the survivor

Survivors choose, based on their personal criteria, who they will or will not speak to about their experience. [For example, they may not have confided in relatives, friends, or others close to them]. This must be fully respected. All information shared with GBV professionals, or translated and conveyed by Roma mediators, must remain completely confidential and may not be shared with anyone not directly involved in the process. Under no circumstances should GBV professionals or Roma mediators report any information to family members, police, community leaders, colleagues, supervisors, etc. Sharing this information can cause greater harm to the survivor and may even put their life and health at risk.

4. Protect the personal identity and safety of the survivor

The safety and identity of the survivor is crucial for all victims of GBV without exception, and especially for survivors from very vulnerable social groups where gender-based violence or cooperation with authorities may be considered taboo, such as in Roma communities. GBV professionals and Roma mediators involved in reception, registration, or counselling (psychosocial, GBV, or legal) must:

- i) Protect the identity and safety of the survivor, even if they know each other (e.g., a Roma mediator from the same community).
- ii) Not record, photograph, or share verbally or in writing any personal or identifying information about a survivor or their experience, even with supervisors, spouses, or close acquaintances. A survivor's identity is confidential; disclosure could jeopardise their safety, life, and physical and mental well-being.
- iii) Leave personal computers, laptops, mobile phones, tablets, or any audio-visual recording media outside the room to avoid the concern that the survivor's voice or image is being recorded.

Identifying information may include the survivor's full name, initials, community or neighbourhood, names of children, relatives, or spouse, or any details about their educational, professional, or personal life, including physical appearance.

5. Principle of non-discrimination

Non-discrimination must guide all actions and attitudes of GBV professionals and Roma mediators in all processes and at all stages. Both professional sectors must provide equal and fair treatment to all individuals in need of support¹.

¹ As a general rule, discrimination may relate to gender, race, economic status, ethnic group, minority or cultural group, age, disability, religious or political beliefs

6. Raising awareness on issues of intersectionality

Be sensitive to issues of intersectionality and avoid drawing arbitrary conclusions or assumptions about survivors, their experiences, or histories. Survivors should be allowed to communicate freely, and professionals must actively listen.

Keep _____ in _____ mind:

- i) Anyone can be a perpetrator of GBV, whether they are a spouse, relative, partner, _____ caregiver, _____ or _____ stranger.
- ii) Anyone can be a survivor of GBV, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status, financial situation, substance use, or occupation.

7. Awareness of language and cultural differences

GBV professionals should be prepared to treat Roma survivors with respect and patience, particularly those who do not speak the official state language fluently or who may have limited understanding of the colloquial language. Many Roma survivors may not be familiar with concepts, complex terms, or the detailed context of gender-based violence, their rights, and legal prohibitions. It is essential to remember that a significant proportion of GBV perpetrated within the closed walls of Roma communities may be normalised by both survivors and the community. Cultural elements, such as forced marriages or traditions regarding marriage and divorce, may place additional constraints on survivors and may not apply to the majority of GBV survivors outside the community. Professionals must take these differences into account to provide sensitive, culturally aware support.

8. If there is a reporting of an incident of GBV consider the following first:

Third-party reporting: If the complaint is made by a third party rather than the survivor (e.g., a relative, friend, neighbour, or social service worker), the GBV professional must provide the third party with accurate, up-to-date information about available support services for GBV survivors and a brief description of what each service provides. Encourage the third party to safely and confidentially pass the information to the survivor, so that they can decide whether or not to seek support. Your involvement ends here until either the survivor or third party returns for follow-up. It is strongly recommended that GBV professionals **do not share confidential information** or attempt to contact the survivor themselves by any means (telephone, written message, verbal communication, social media, or other online platforms).

Direct reporting: If the survivor reports the GBV incident directly (by telephone or in person at the GBV centre):

- a) Introduce yourself as a GBV professional and provide a brief introduction of your role.
- b) Reassure the survivor with your attitude and behaviour, and ask how you can support them.
- c) Explain clearly to the survivor that everything they share with you, including personal details, will remain confidential unless they provide consent.
- d) Apply a survivor-centred approach by prioritising the survivor's personality, dignity, mental and physical health, well-being, and safety.

9. Supporting Initial Contact and Comforting the Survivor

During incident recording or initial counselling sessions, ask the survivor if there is a friend, family member, carer, or anyone they trust to contact for support. Provide your phone or communication device if it is safe to do so, allowing the survivor to reach out to someone they trust. Close the conversation supportively, offering statements of comfort and reassurance such as:

"I'm sorry this happened to you." or "What happened was not your fault."

10. Avoid Forcing Disclosure or Revisiting Trauma

When recording an incident or during an initial counselling session, avoid dwelling on details, analysis, or narratives of the survivor's traumatic experiences that may create stress or exacerbate negative emotions. **Do not pressure the survivor** to share more than they feel comfortable disclosing. The specific details of what happened and by whom are not relevant to your role, which is to provide information on available services and support. Suggested statements include:

- "I will try to support you as much as I can, but I am not a psychologist or mental health counsellor. I can share information about support available to you."
- "Please share only what you want. You do not need to disclose your experience in order to receive information or assistance."

- “If you wish, you may discuss your experience and feelings with a trained psychologist or mental health professional who can provide appropriate support.”

The survivor can later access psychosocial counselling with the assistance of qualified psychologists or mental health professionals if they wish.

11. Ensure Clear Communication and Understanding

If the survivor shows difficulty understanding you or the language used during any procedure (registration, psychosocial support, counselling, etc.):

- a) Suggest that a Roma mediator, who follows the same confidentiality and discretion protocols, assist with communication.
- b) Explain directly to the survivor that all information shared with you and the mediator is confidential and will not be disclosed without their consent.
- c) Involve the Roma mediator to manage language and cultural mediation.

12. Speak directly with the survivor during procedures

When a Roma mediator is present during any procedure (recording, psychosocial support, counselling, referral to services, etc.), always address the survivor directly, maintaining eye contact. The survivor must not feel sidelined or treated as a third party in the consultation.

13. Responding to Requests for Specific Support

If the survivor requests specific assistance (e.g., a shelter) not available at your GBV centre, consider:

- i) If a GBV actor or referral pathway exists: Follow the GBV referral pathway to inform the survivor of available services and refer them, with their consent. Use a Roma mediator to explain if the survivor does not fully understand.
- ii) If there is no accurate information on alternative services: Explain this to the survivor and use a Roma mediator to assist with understanding if necessary.

14. Prioritise the survivor's needs and characteristic

Ask the survivor if they feel comfortable talking at the GBV centre. If they are accompanied by someone, do not assume it is safe to discuss their experience in that person's presence. Provide practical support, such as water, coffee, tissues, or a private place to sit.

15. As a GBV professional but also as a Roma mediator your reactions should not be excessive

Show compassion and understanding towards the survivor while remaining neutral, focused and emotionally calm. This allows for accurate communication, understanding of language, and clear interpretation of cultural explanations. In this way, you remain focused more directly and realistically on the survivor's needs and on how you can respond to them, while at the same time ensuring safety and confidentiality are maintained. Emotional stability and professional composure contribute significantly to building trust with the survivor and maintaining a sense of safety during the counselling or recording process.

16. Translating Accurately and Without Bias

As a Roma Mediator in any recording or counselling process you participate in, you should only convey or translate accurate information about services, solutions or options suggested by GBV professionals to the survivor. Do not convey personal opinions, make comments, or provide additional remarks during the translation of information. When a word, phrase, or meaning does not exist in the Romani language, you must fill in the cultural or linguistic gap for the survivor using simple, clear, and respectful explanations. Be cautious when communicating—convey the information neutrally, without adding any positive or negative tone or connotation. Especially when the survivor has significant language or cultural differences, you must make sure that they fully understand what is being offered to them and what the possible outcomes of their choices are. Caution: under no circumstances should you influence the survivor's decisions or choices. Your role is to support understanding, not to guide decision-making.

17. Maintaining Neutrality and Accuracy in Mediation

The Roma mediator does not comment on the incident, take sides, misrepresent questions or information, or add elements to the survivor's narrative. The Roma mediator's role is to help convey information as accurately and truthfully as possible, maintaining the correct meaning and intention of what is being said. The mediator should only comment when invited to do so by the GBV professional, for example, when there is disagreement or confusion about a specific concept or question with the survivor. Maintaining neutrality is essential to preserve the survivor's trust and to ensure that the communication process remains fair, objective and supportive.

18. Ensuring Understanding Without Imposing Decisions

During a counselling session as a GBV professional, if necessary, talk briefly with the Roma mediator to make sure that the Roma survivor (in cases of a significant language gap) understands what service, solution or option is being offered and what its possible outcomes are. Remember, however, that you should not, under any circumstances, try to impose an option or solution on the survivor. It is your duty as a GBV Professional to respect the Roma survivor's right to make their own decisions. The role of the professional is to provide accurate information, guidance, and clarity, not to make choices on behalf of the survivor. Encouraging agency and respecting autonomy are fundamental principles of the survivor-centred approach.

19. As a GBV Professional during the recording of the incident, or during a counselling session, you must not force the survivor to choose any option or service at that time.

Always allow the survivor to make their own decision at their own pace, and make sure they know that they are not obliged to make a decision immediately. Emphasise that they can change their mind later and access the same services in the future if they wish. Survivors must feel in control of their own process and that they are respected and supported regardless of when or how they choose to act.

20. Promoting Honesty and Avoiding False Promises

Both GBV professionals and Roma mediators participating in registration, counselling and referral processes must be honest with survivors and must not make false promises or provide misleading information. At the same time, both professionals should avoid making decisions for the survivor or influencing their choice. It is extremely important to remember that we only know what the survivor chooses to share with us, not the entire background or context. Therefore, we should not assume the survivor's needs, desires, or motivations. Certain actions, even if well-intentioned, could place a survivor at further risk of stigma, retaliation, or harm—risks that GBV professionals may not always be aware of or fully understand. Integrity, honesty, and humility are essential in ensuring the survivor's safety and trust.

21. Managing Community Involvement and External Pressures

In the case of Roma survivors, if there is any information leak or suspicion of a complaint and formal proceedings, third parties from the Roma community to which the survivor belongs may attempt to become involved in the process. These may include relatives of the survivor, prominent members of the community, or even the community leader. In some cases, such individuals may accompany the survivor discreetly to the GBV centre, believing they can mediate or resolve the case. As GBV professionals, it is your responsibility to follow proper protocol and maintain a survivor-centred approach. **Do not** allow anyone other than the survivor to be present during recording sessions (except for language support by an authorised Roma mediator). **Do not** attempt to reconcile the survivor with the perpetrator or resolve the matter through community-based mediation. The focus must remain solely on the survivor's safety, wellbeing, and right to justice and support.

22. As a GBV professional, seek help and expert advice for yourself when needed.

If, at any point during the recording or counselling process, you feel uncertain about the best way to support a Roma survivor, ask for the survivor's permission to seek advice from an expert or colleague. Inform the survivor that no personal information will be disclosed and that their identity will remain protected. Once consent is given, you may proceed to seek guidance while maintaining the survivor's confidentiality. Seeking professional supervision or advice is a responsible practice that ensures ethical and effective support.

23. In cases and situations that require more specialised support beyond your role as a GBV professional, such as:

- (i) situations involving Roma children, adolescent minors and their gender-based abuse, or
- (ii) cases where there is an imminent danger to the survivor or a risk that the survivor may harm themselves or others, seek expert assistance and involve specialised counsellors or professionals trained in child protection, juvenile cases, or crisis intervention. Prioritising the survivor's safety is paramount, and collaboration with relevant specialists ensures that the survivor receives the most appropriate and comprehensive care possible.

24. Listening Without Judgement or Contradiction

Both GBV professionals and Roma mediators, when involved in a counselling process (psychosocial support, GBV counselling, or legal counselling), must never question or contradict what the Roma survivor tells you. Remember that your role is to listen without judgement, to provide accurate information on available services, and, in the case of the Roma mediator, to clearly convey this information while filling in any cultural or linguistic gaps for the survivor. Always maintain empathy and avoid displaying scepticism, disbelief, or frustration, as this can undermine the survivor's trust and sense of safety.

25. Discretion as GBV professionals and Roma mediators when participating in the incident or complaint recording or counselling processes of a Roma survivor.

Always follow standard procedures and the existing national referral pathways. Be aware that if information about the survivor's experience becomes known to others, it may lead to serious consequences such as stigmatisation, expulsion from their home or community, or further violence. There is also a significant risk that perpetrators could discover that others know about the incident, which might lead to retaliation, endangering the survivor's safety or even their life. For these reasons, discretion and confidentiality are critical at every stage.

26. Protecting Confidentiality to Safeguard Everyone's Safety

Remember that lack of discretion can also create risks for GBV professionals and Roma mediators involved in supporting Roma survivors. If your role in the process becomes known, you may face threats or acts of violence from perpetrators, their families, or other members of the community who may oppose external involvement. Some community members may perceive those who collaborate with state institutions, legal authorities, or external professionals as betraying or harming the community. It is therefore essential to maintain confidentiality not only to protect the survivor but also for your own personal safety and professional security.

27. Readiness, detection and meeting the needs of Roma survivors.

As GBV professionals, when receiving or recording an incident, after introducing yourself and explaining that you are there to support the survivor, assess whether there are any urgent or basic needs that must be addressed immediately. Each individual may have different immediate needs, which could include medical attention, drinking water, locating a loved one, or replacing clothing or blankets that have been lost, damaged, or removed. Meeting these basic needs promptly helps the survivor regain a sense of comfort, dignity, and safety, which is essential for beginning the process of recovery.

28. Do not lead, do not push the survivor to talk; instead, listen and provide comfort through both verbal and non-verbal communication.

As a GBV professional during counselling sessions, allow the Roma survivor to express their emotions freely and lead the conversation at their own pace, even if this involves periods of silence. Many survivors are not ready to talk about their experiences immediately, and opening up may take time. Sit at eye level, maintain open and relaxed body language, and show through your demeanour that you are present and supportive. Avoid asking direct questions about what happened, who was involved, or why. Instead, use gentle, comforting statements and speak in a way that the survivor can easily understand.

29. Respecting Personal Space and Boundaries

GBV professionals and Roma mediators involved in the recording of incidents and counselling processes are strongly advised not to touch, hug, or make physical contact with survivors. Physical contact, even if intended as comfort, may be distressing, triggering, or re-traumatising for the survivor. Respecting personal space is crucial, as survivors of GBV often have heightened sensitivity to touch and boundaries. Emotional support should always be provided through words, tone, and presence rather than physical gestures.

30. Using Supportive and Affirming Language

For GBV professionals involved in the recording of incidents or counselling and support processes, as well as for Roma mediators who assist with translation and communication, it is recommended to encourage the Roma survivor to speak by using supportive and affirming expressions. Examples include:

- “I believe you.”
- “I am glad that you told me.”
- “Thank you for sharing your experience.”
- “I am really sorry this happened to you.”
- “None of this is your fault; please remember that.”
- “You are doing something positive for yourself.”
- “I cannot speak to anyone on your behalf or try to resolve the situation, but I can support you during our conversation and listen to your concerns.”
- “It sounds like you have a plan for what you would like to do next. That is a positive step.”

Using such expressions helps build trust between you and the survivor and demonstrates empathy and respect, creating a safe space for honest communication.

31. Reflection and self-care for both GBV professionals and Roma mediators

It is important to recognise that exposure to trauma, pain, stress, and the negative experiences of others can affect your own wellbeing. Listening to the stories and emotions of survivors can lead to **secondary trauma**, compassion fatigue, or burnout. Therefore, it is vital to take care of your own mental health. Reach out to your professional support networks, including colleagues, supervisors, psychologists, or GBV specialists. Seek opportunities for debriefing, counselling, and stress relief. Practising self-care ensures that you remain emotionally resilient and capable of continuing to provide compassionate and effective support to survivors.



Methodologies - Practical Protocol of Action & Cooperation between Roma Mediators and GBV Professionals in the Context of Serving Roma Women Survivors of GBV

Regarding the issue of appropriate methodologies for the best possible service of Roma women survivors of GBV, it was considered necessary not only to collect and present methodologies for the cooperation of the various professionals dealing with the issue, but also to compile and combine these methodologies into a single Practical Protocol of Action & Cooperation for Roma Mediators and GBV Professionals in the context of serving Roma women survivors of GBV. This document is therefore an attempt to combine good practices, existing tools, ways, and methods of operation for gender-based violence incident management at the national level, gathered by the participating organisations of the Roma Mediators and GBV Professionals Collaboration project. The aforementioned tools and practices are specifically related to the service and care of Roma women survivors of GBV. These data were collected during the "Cooperation Workshops" organised in all project participating countries [Germany, Greece, Spain, North Macedonia, Ireland, Slovakia, Spain].

3.1 Steps and Procedures in the Management of Gender-Based Violence Incidents Involving Roma Women Survivors

As a general principle, it is worth stressing that the main points do not change the steps and procedures followed in each partner country of the project regarding the management of gender-based violence and the provision of services to survivors. Although Roma women are potential survivors of GBV with a high degree of vulnerability and have social and cultural differences compared to the general population or the non-Roma population of female survivors, the process of treatment in GBV structures remains the same. In essence, some of the approaches, tools, and professionals

involved in gender-based violence incident management processes change to better serve and support Roma women survivors.

The key change and innovation lies in the involvement of Roma Mediators [men & women] and the use of basic tools and principles of cooperation between them in some of the different steps and procedures in place under the National Gender-Based Violence Response Mechanisms in the RoW POWER project participating countries. The ultimate purpose of this cooperation protocol is not to alter the procedures and applicable steps included in the National Gender-Based Violence Response Mechanisms, but to enrich them by aligning the roles and responsibilities of the different professionals in the GBV sector [social workers, counsellors, psychologists/therapists, legal advisers, etc.] with those of the Roma Mediators.

From the RoW POWER implemented Cooperative Workshops between Roma Mediators & GBV Professionals, i.e., the 18 total workshop sessions organised in the six (6) participating countries of the project, the focus and reference to the following procedures provided by the National Mechanisms for Responding to Gender-Based Violence emerged and can be roughly described as follows:

- Reporting/Recording the Incident Procedures
- Offering Psychosocial Support to the Survivor of GBV Procedure
- Offering Counselling Support to the Survivor of GBV Procedure [Counselling on Addressing/Tackling GBV]
- Offering Support to the Survivor of GBV Procedure [Legal Counselling]
- Referring the Survivor to a Service Procedure [to a GBV survivors' shelter, to the police, or to lawyers, etc.]

3.2 The General Procedures, the Professionals Involved in Them, Roles and Objectives

The results of the RoW POWER implemented Cooperation Workshops show that in each country under the National Mechanisms for Responding to Gender-Based Violence, the general procedures mentioned in the previous subsection may include different steps, activities, and sub-procedures. Nevertheless, the results of the Workshops provide useful insights into the general procedures, the professionals involved in them, and their roles and objectives. All of these are important parts of a practical protocol of cooperation between different kinds of GBV professionals and Roma Mediators involved in the processes of a GBV centre.

1. Reporting/Recording the Incident Procedures

In all project countries, there is a procedure for receiving and recording the GBV case in detail.

Objective of the Procedure: In all participating countries, the main objective of this procedure is to create a climate of trust and safety for the survivor, to calm the survivor, and to enable them to provide detailed information about the incident that occurred and their personal history.

Professionals Involved: GBV Professionals [Social workers, counsellors, etc.] and Roma Mediators

Participation and Role of GBV Professionals: All countries foresee the participation of qualified and experienced GBV professionals in this procedure [mainly Social Workers specialised in GBV issues or GBV Counsellors]. GBV professionals should create a supportive and safe environment, record the incident, respect the survivor's privacy, and guide them to the next steps (other services).

Participation and Role of Roma Mediators: All countries agree on the participation of Roma Mediators in this procedure and their supportive role, providing assistance not only to the survivor but also to the GBV Professionals in all different steps. Roma Mediators are considered necessary to build trust in external services and facilitate the process. Furthermore, Roma Mediators can facilitate communication/interpretation and cultural bridging where needed.

2. Offering Psychosocial Support to the Survivor of GBV Procedure

In all participating countries, there is a continuous process for providing psychosocial support to the survivor.

Objective of the Procedure: The main objective of this procedure is to provide psychological support, assistance, and relief to the survivor.

Professionals Involved: Psychologists/psychotherapists or professionals in the field of OVC, and Roma Mediators [NOT MANDATORY in all countries]

Participation and Role of OVC Professionals:
The role of the psychologist is to stabilise the survivor psychologically, provide active listening, and support them in calming down and overcoming the initial shock. The role of the social worker and the psychologist is to advise and provide the correct information to the survivor to jointly create a plan of action to help them overcome psychological trauma and regain stability.

Participation and Role of Roma Mediators:

Greece, Germany, and Ireland agreed that the participation of a Roma Mediator is not mandatory. RMs can participate only if requested by the survivor and the experts (psychologist or GBV professional), usually in cases where the survivor has language or understanding barriers.

North Macedonia and Spain agreed that the Roma Mediator should be present mainly for confidence building and interpretation/cultural mediation if needed.

3. Offering Counselling to the Survivor of GBV Procedure [Counselling for Addressing GBV]

In all project participating countries, there is an ongoing process for providing counselling to address GBV issues.

Objective of the Procedure: The main aim of this process is to provide the survivor with information on procedures, services, and actions appropriate for addressing the violence they are experiencing, and in some cases, to create an action plan.

Professionals Involved: GBV Professionals [NOT MANDATORY in all countries]

Participation and Role of GBV Professionals:

The role of the GBV social worker/counsellor is to advise the survivor about the violence they are facing, considering the risks to their health, physical integrity, and life, and to inform the survivor about various services available. In some countries, GBV professionals help the survivor develop an action plan for counselling and referral to other support services [e.g., legal support, shelter accommodation, education provision], depending on availability within the GBV Centre or via external referral.

Participation and Role of Roma Mediators:

Greece, Germany, Ireland, and North Macedonia agreed that the participation of a Roma Mediator is not mandatory. The RM can participate only if requested by the survivor and the expert, usually in cases where the survivor has language/understanding barriers. Spain indicated that the Roma Mediator should be present mainly for confidence building and interpretation/cultural mediation if needed.

4. Offering Support to the Survivor of GBV Procedure [Legal Counselling]

In all participating countries, there is a procedure for providing legal counselling to the survivor. This does not mean that GBV centres undertake legal representation, legal actions, or defence of the survivor.

Objective of the Procedure: The aim of this procedure is to inform and provide legal counselling to the survivor about what they can do legally to protect themselves and their rights, the possible options in each case, and the potential outcomes of these options.

Professionals Involved: Legal Counsellors/Advisers, Social Workers, and Roma Mediators

Participation and Role of GBV Professionals:
The role of Legal Counsellors/Advisers & Social Workers is to:

- Make the survivor feel comfortable and confident in seeking legal advice.
- Help the survivor understand all legal options available to protect themselves and the potential outcomes.
- Explain the steps required for each chosen course of action and the responsible agency handling the process.

Participation and Role of Roma Mediators:
Roma Mediators may be involved if language barriers arise [interpretation/cultural mediation].

5. Referring the Survivor to a Service Procedure

In all participating countries, there is a procedure for referring survivors to services outside the GBV Centre (e.g., a GBV survivors' shelter, hospitals, the police, lawyers, educational facilities). As a rule, these services are not provided within GBV Centres; therefore, GBV professionals must refer survivors according to the circumstances of the incident and with the survivor's consent.

Objective of the Procedure: The objective is to provide comprehensive and successful information and ensure the smooth referral of survivors to services and structures outside the GBV Centre.

Professionals Involved: GBV Professionals [Social Workers, Counsellors, etc.] and Roma Mediators [NOT MANDATORY in all countries]

Participation and Role of GBV Professionals:
GBV Professionals, in cooperation with Social Workers, provide all additional information and connections to external services.

Participation and Role of Roma Mediators:
Different strategies are applied in different countries. The Roma Mediator's presence is not always necessary at this stage.

3.3 The General Principles — Steps of Cooperation and Good Practice that Characterise the Cooperation between GBV Professionals and Roma Mediators in All General Procedures

This section elaborates on the cooperation protocol, providing examples of key steps to clearly describe the cooperation and its principles, the various key actions in the processes, and the distinct professional roles of the various GBV Professionals and Roma Mediators.

The general principles governing cooperation between GBV Professionals & Roma Mediators are as follows:

1. Respect for tasks, their importance to the process, and the specific needs of each professional sector.
2. Adherence by both sectors to the survivor-centred approach.
3. Adherence to principles of confidentiality, discretion of information, and protection of Roma survivor identity.
4. Priority adherence to the Code of Conduct for both professional sectors, as provided for GBV workers in the National Mechanisms for Responding to Gender-Based Violence in each country.
5. Delimitation: Non-involvement of Roma Mediators in duties of GBV professionals, as Roma Mediators do not conduct recording procedures independently, provide counselling, perform specialised social work, or act as mental health or legal counsellors.
6. Delimitation: Non-involvement of GBV professionals in tasks of Roma Mediators, as GBV professionals are not familiar with Romani language, culture, rules, or customs. If unsure, the GBV professional may request further explanations.

7. The safety and integrity of Roma survivors and the improvement of their service is the most important aspect of cooperation between the two sectors.

A. GBV Reception and Recording Phase

A1. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Introduce yourself to the Roma survivor and assure them that they are in a safe and protected environment, and that confidentiality and discretion will be maintained throughout the process.

A2. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Listen to the Roma survivor's language and expression. Determine if they can understand you clearly. If it becomes apparent that the survivor does not fully understand the language used, or expresses themselves in Romani or with strong Romani linguistic elements, ask for permission to involve a Roma Mediator. If the survivor consents, call the mediator.

A3. Roma Mediator:

Introduce yourself to the Roma survivor and assure them that they are safe and that their words will be accurately translated and conveyed to the GBV professional. Emphasise that anything shared will remain confidential.

A4. Roma Mediator:

From this point, only listen to both sides and translate or transmit information accurately and neutrally. Mediate explanatory information when requested because the Roma survivor does not fully understand certain information. Do **not** judge, take a position, give advice, or influence the survivor's decisions. Speak calmly, maintain eye contact, and follow the survivor's pace in responding to questions.

A5. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Always speak directly to the Roma survivor, maintaining eye contact and not addressing the mediator. Begin by securing the survivor's consent (written if possible) to cooperate and inform them of your actions. Inspire calm and trust, listen attentively, and follow the survivor's rhythm when recording the incident on the designated forms.

A6. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Assess the initial information and decide whether to manage the incident internally or refer it to another service, agency, or professional, always with the survivor's consent.

B. Assessment of the Survivor's Situation

B1. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Obtain a comprehensive history of the Roma survivor using the appropriate agency form. Review:

- Why the survivor has come to you or been referred
- What has happened
- Investigate the exact facts while limiting questions to those directly relevant to the incident, without pressuring the survivor

If the survivor does not understand certain questions, request intervention by the Roma Mediator.

B2. Roma Mediator:

From this point, only listen and translate/mediate accurately and neutrally. Do **not** judge, take a position, advise, or influence the survivor's decisions. Speak calmly, maintain eye contact, and follow the survivor's pace.

B3. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Respect the survivor's right to provide information at their own pace. Investigate if multiple forms of violence exist without embarrassing the survivor, using the relevant guidelines and agency-provided forms.

B4. GBV Professional [Social Worker]:

Investigate from the survivor's account:

- Immediate needs
- Current situation and living conditions
- Possible support networks (friends, relatives, etc.)

- How the survivor perceives and manages the situation they experienced

C. Designing an Intervention Plan for the Survivor

Formulate a step-by-step intervention plan in collaboration with the survivor that focuses on their safety, protection, and safeguarding of their rights.

C1. GBV Professional (Social Worker or GBV Counsellor):

Inform the Roma survivor of their rights and the short-term actions to follow. Confirm that they fully understand the information provided. If they do not understand, request the assistance of a Roma Mediator.

C2. Roma Mediator:

Listen and translate/mediate accurately and neutrally. Do **not** judge, advise, or influence decisions. Maintain eye contact and follow the survivor's pace.

C3. GBV Professional (Social Worker or GBV Counsellor):

Ensure the survivor knows what to do if their life is in danger, including who to contact and where to go. If immediate relocation to a shelter is required, arrange temporary accommodation until a permanent solution is available. Ensure the survivor fully understands the intervention plan, using the Roma Mediator for translation or clarification if necessary.

C4. Roma Mediator:

Same role and approach as C2.

C5. GBV Professional (Social Worker or GBV Counsellor):

Understand the survivor's feelings toward their partner, even if you do not agree with their perspective.

D. Psychosocial Counselling and Support

Counselling and psychosocial support aim to help survivors of GBV feel safe, understand their experience, regain awareness of their rights, and reduce feelings of shame or guilt. Crisis counselling is short-term and can be provided in person or remotely, depending on available resources.

D1. GBV Professional (Psychologist, Mental Health Professional):

Introduce yourself to the Roma survivor and assure them of a safe and confidential environment.

D2. GBV Professional (Psychologist, Mental Health Professional):

Assess whether the survivor has unmet basic needs (hunger, thirst, rest). If the survivor does not understand you, request permission to involve a Roma Mediator.

D3. Roma Mediator:

Introduce yourself to the survivor and remind them that shared information remains confidential. Only listen and translate/mediate accurately and neutrally. Do **not** judge, advise, or influence decisions. Maintain eye contact and follow the survivor's pace.

D4. GBV Professional (Psychologist, Mental Health Professional):

Follow the standard crisis mental health support process, assisting with:

- Psychological support, calming, and immediate stress relief (mental health first aid)
- Helping the survivor understand and express their experience
- Exploring coping strategies and available resources

If necessary, request the survivor's permission to involve a Roma Mediator for translation.

D5. Roma Mediator:

Same role and approach as D3.

D6. GBV Professional (Psychologist, Mental Health Professional):

If the survivor requires additional support (risk of self-harm, harm to others, or imminent danger from a perpetrator):

- Inform the survivor of referral to a mental health/support unit, following the national GBV response protocols
- Explore temporary shelter arrangements if required
- Discuss legal measures and protection planning
- Jointly explore all available options for referral to GBV counsellors or services, consulting any existing intervention plan

D7. Roma Mediator:

Same role and approach as D3 and D5.

ROW-POWER

Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV



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