

Transnational Training Report



Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV

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Transnational Report

1. Introduction

This Transnational Report is prepared in the framework of the Erasmus+ KA2 project RoW POWER - Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV. Desk research was carried out between March and June 2024 on literature and scientific references as well as online references using mainly the data and information from the last three years (2021-2024). The Online Survey and field research was conducted between March and July 2024. The National Report highlights the transnational framework—existing policies and mechanisms, for addressing gender-based violence affecting Roma women across all six implementing countries. It also provides insights into the challenges and knowledge gaps faced by both Roma Mediators and GBV professionals in supporting Roma women at risk of gender-based violence. At the same time, this report hopes to summarise if there are good practices, training programmes or training seminars for Roma Mediators & GBV professionals to specialise in serving Roma GBV survivors as well as training programmes for cooperation between them.

2.1 Desk Research: Policies and Structures to Address Gender-based Violence - Current Situation in the Different Partner Countries

Based on desk research, the basic policy and framework governing the prevention and combating of gender-based violence in Europe, both in the EU and in the accession countries, is the Istanbul Convention. All project countries Germany, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Romania, North Macedonia have signed and ratified the Convention, with the exception of Slovakia, which has signed but not ratified the Convention.

A Brief Analysis of the Istanbul Convention:

The Istanbul Convention, also known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, is an international treaty adopted in 2011 by the Council of Europe. It is the first legally binding instrument in Europe focusing on violence against women and domestic violence.

➤ The main objectives of the Convention:

- 1) **Prevention of violence against women:** Convention promotes measures to prevent violence through educational programmes, awareness-raising and strengthening women's rights.
- 2) **Protection of survivors:** It provides guidelines for the establishment of support structures such as shelters, helplines and counselling services.
- 3) **Prosecution of perpetrators:** Establishes violence against women and domestic violence as criminal offenses and promotes strict enforcement of the law.
- 4) **Policy co-ordination:** Encourages Member States to adopt comprehensive and coordinated policies to address violence against women.

➤ **Member States Commitments:** States that sign and ratify the Convention undertake various commitments, including:

- 1) **Legislative measures:** They are obliged to harmonise their national legislation with the requirements of the Convention by criminalising various forms of violence against women (e.g., physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence).
- 2) **Prevention and education:** They are obliged to promote awareness and education of professionals and the public on the prevention of violence against women.
- 3) **Protection and support for those affected:** They are obliged to provide protection and support to individuals affected through services such as shelters, helplines and counselling.
- 4) **Data collection and research:** They are required to collect data and conduct research to better understand and address violence against women.
- 5) **International cooperation:** Cooperation between States to combat violence against women is encouraged, as is the exchange of good practice.
- 6) **Implementation of the Convention:** Monitoring of the implementation of the Convention is carried out by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). GREVIO assesses the implementation of the Convention by Member States and provides recommendations for improvements.

From the participating countries of the RoW Power project the only state that hasn't signed and ratified the Convention is Slovakia.

2.2 Policy Protocols and Identified Policy Gaps

Based on the participation of the Member States that have signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, (except for Slovakia for the partner countries of the programme), the commitment of the European countries to implement the Convention at national level is clear:

- National Level: Existence and implementation of an organised National system to combat and record gender and domestic violence in the partner countries.
- All participating partner countries have drawn up an organised system to combat and record gender and domestic violence on national level through the auspices of the competent ministries or their general secretariats in cooperation with the various competent actors.
- The effectiveness and implementation of national strategies on this issue is not measurable since the data is insufficient, as stressed by the GREVIO committee.
- At the same time (with the exception of Spain and Ireland) none of the National Strategies or the existing national legislation, protocols or practices is focused on the group of Roma woman which faces multiple, different and more intense GBV violence and exclusion.

3.1 Field Research

The field research was carried out during the months of March-July 2024 using online questionnaires and focus groups, which were conducted with the presence of experts either online or in person. At least one hundred and seventy-five (175) individuals in total participated in the mapping of needs conducted in all six (6) countries including Germany, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Slovakia, North Macedonia.

Key target groups addressed in the field mapping were:

- GBV professionals as a general category serving in reporting, support and counselling services for women survivors of gender-based violence, thus social workers, counsellors on gender-based violence, psychologists and psychotherapists, legal advisors and social scientists working on gender-based violence issues. This general group responded to the online questionnaires.
- Roma mediators as a general category serving in Roma community centres and various NGOs as mediators for Social Inclusion, or as mediators Education, or as mediators for Health or mediators with general duties. This general group responded to the online questionnaires.
- Expert GBV professionals who have worked an average of more than 5 years in reporting, support and counselling services for women survivors of gender-based violence. This group participated in the focus groups for Expert GBV professionals.
- Expert Roma mediators who have worked for over 6 years in community centres and NGOs and have relevant experience serving Roma women and populations on multiple issues of psychosocial support and social inclusion. This group participated in the focus groups for Roma mediators.

3.2 Summary of Results from Focus Groups & Interviews with GBV Professionals

The Focus Groups took place in all six (6) implementing countries (Germany, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain) The meeting/interview with the GBV Professionals in the context of the focus group, was conducted through face-to-face meetings or via Zoom/Online meetings in the period of March to July 2024. In total at least fifty (30) GBV Professionals (women and men) participated in the meetings which aimed to identify their training needs and skills gaps in order to collaborate effectively with Roma Mediators to support and counsel effectively Roma women survivors of Gender Based Violence.

Working experience in supporting women survivors of GBV:

- Most of the participants have been working for more than 7 years in services and support structures for survivors of gender-based violence.

Working experience in supporting Roma women survivors of GBV:

- Almost all the GBV professionals answered that they do not offer their services to Roma women survivors at all often since the number of cases reported or requesting help in services, structures and support centres for GBV survivors in all partner countries from the side of Roma women are very few.

According to them the reasons why there are a few cases are:

- Roma women survivors of GBV first face significant difficulties in reaching GBV services and this is perhaps the biggest of the challenges. They often lack information on where to seek support and may face barriers in recognising the abuse they experience.
- They have language and cultural communication difficulties with GBV professionals and need support to communicate properly.
- Lack of trust towards GBV professionals and government agencies, especially the police. There is hesitancy about issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

- Lack of legal documentation for some members of the Roma community, such as ID cards or health coverage.
- They often downplay the violence they receive or normalise and silence it. While a large proportion of violence may be experienced by children, and they may have no means of support.
- Lack of a supportive environment.
- Difficulties in accommodation and integration in shelters due to the large number of children, usually dependent children.
- Limited access to education and formal employment for some Roma women, highlighting the need for targeted support to enhance social integration and empowerment.

According to the participating GBV Professionals, they are also facing barriers & challenges when trying to support Roma women survivors of GBV. Some of those barriers are:

- Language problems from the outset understanding with survivors is often regime addressing language problems and understanding.
- Lack of knowledge and skills to work with a very vulnerable group such as Roma survivors of GBV with a concomitant lack of cultural training and information about the population.
- Lack of knowledge and skills to work with Roma mediators.
- No referral pathway system organised for women affected by GBV and especially for Roma women GBV survivors.
- It is very difficult for GBV professionals to encourage Roma women affected by GBV to take legal action against their abuser.

Concerning the skills they lack almost all the participants stated:

- Communication and case management skills for working with Roma women (a group facing intersecting structural challenges).



- Skills in working with Roma mediators in the complaint process and in referring them to support services.
- Knowledge about cultural differences and how to deal with it in the context of GBV.
- There is a significant lack of a protocol for cooperation and consultation with Roma mediators that defines steps and where the role and jurisdiction of the participants stops.
- The majority of the GBV professionals have either never cooperated with Roma Mediators/NGOs or have cooperated with them very rarely.
- They also emphasised on the importance of systematic best practices and specific methodologies to assist Roma women affected by gender-based violence, that they do not possess until now.
- All of the participants consider that Roma mediators can and must be involved in the process, especially at the first contact with the survivor but also on the next steps if it is needed.
- All the above indicate the necessity of establishment of a protocol for collaboration with clear step roles and jurisdictions on which Roma mediators and themselves should be trained which would include a code of ethics for issues of intervention in the process to avoid secondary victimisation and abuse of the individual affected by GBV in any way. This is exactly what all the GBV experts claimed to be the biggest deficiency in effectively supporting Roma women affected by GBV and in the future can be proved as one of the best practices.

3.3 Summary of Results from Focus Groups & Interviews with Roma Mediators

The Focus Groups took place in all six (6) implementing countries (Germany, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain) The meeting/interview with the Roma mediators in the context of the focus group, was conducted through face-to-face or/and hybrid meetings in the period of March to July 2024. In total at least fifty (50) Roma Mediators (women and men) participated in the meetings which aimed to identify the training needs and skills gaps of Roma mediators in order to work effectively with Roma women affected by Gender Based Violence and GBV Professionals in order to direct them to appropriate services for reporting, supporting and counselling survivors of Gender Based Violence.

Concerning their experience as Roma Mediators (in general):

- Most of the participants have been working as Roma Mediators for more than 5 years. Most of them are employees of the municipality or the regional authorities or working as Roma mediators through NGO's programmes.

Concerning their working experience as Roma Mediators working with Roma women who are affected by gender-based violence:

- Most of the respondents, as they stated from their own experience and involvement with the Roma community, do not often support and guide Roma women affected by gender-based violence or at risk of GBV to access appropriate services for psychosocial support, help, and counselling because:
 - Some Roma women may not immediately recognise that they are experiencing gender-based violence. The exception are women with higher educational and living standards or those who reside in areas with higher degree of social integration.

Concerning the challenges and barriers faced by Roma women who are survivors of gender-based violence or at risk of gender-based violence incidents to reach

appropriate support and counselling services (or during the procedure), Roma mediators mentioned the following:

- Financial dependence on family members or partners.
- Perceived prejudice in the Roma community around women who react to their husbands' behaviour.
- Their stigmatisation by the community and their family.
- Psychological and physical violence.
- The indifference, social exclusion and racist attitudes they suffer when attempting to contact such services.
- Threats and psychological violence from their husband and family.
- The inexperience and inadequate training of these services with the Roma community.
- In the shelter centres there is a short period of care for the survivors, usually from 3-6 months or at most up to 1 year, and then they do not provide additional help.
- All Roma mediators stated that they lack basic skills and governmental support system in their efforts to bring such vulnerable social groups in contact with appropriate services, as they have not received sufficient training or institutional support to perform their roles effectively:
 - Ways of approaching services and their ways of functioning.
 - Ways in which they could support individuals affected by GBV throughout their support from these services.
 - Legislative measures that ensure their rights and access to support services.



- Institutionalisation of the profession of Roma mediator, as their involvement for a long period of time in the respective support services for women affected by violence would significantly contribute to the combating of such incidents.
- All Roma Mediators indicated the grave need for adequate training not only for them but also for GBV Professionals/ support centres for individual affected by GBV, and the need for better collaboration between them and the professionals.
- The Roma mediators stated also that they could support professionals offering support, care and counselling to survivors in the following ways:
 - In reaching out to the community and supporting the individual affected by GBV in general throughout the process, Acting as a bridge of communication and consultation between the survivor and the respective services.
 - To act as positive role models (especially Roma women mediators).
 - By assisting in the implementation and organisation of awareness-raising programmes/campaigns against violence against women aimed at Roma women, which they consider necessary.

3.4 Summary of Results from Online questionnaires for GBV professionals

The online survey in all six (6) implementing countries (Germany, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain) was conducted using an online questionnaire in the period of March to June of 2024. In total at least fifty (50) Roma Mediators participated in the survey which aimed to identify the training needs and skills gaps of Roma mediators in order to work effectively with Roma women affected by Gender Based Violence and direct them to appropriate services for reporting, supporting and counselling survivors of gender-based violence.

Concerning previous participation in trainings:

- At this point no differences have been identified between the partner countries. Namely, all Roma Mediators participated in the questionnaire, had already participated in trainings relevant to the field of the RoW Power project, such as: woman rights, gender-based violence, social and cultural support, psychology etc.

Concerning their working experience as Roma mediators:

- Half of the participants have been working as Roma Mediators for more than 5 years.
- All participants agreed that a training programme to enhance the skills of Roma mediators to be able to help Roma women who are affected by GBV or at risk of experiencing GBV, to reach appropriate GBV support and counselling services and help them to be served, would be valuable and useful and is needed.
- Indicative factors in which the participants' shortcomings are apparent and prompted their personal need for additional training to support more effectively Roma women survivors of GBV are:
 - **Proficiency in relevant training:** More than half of the participants are not feeling sufficiently trained and educated to help and support Roma women survivors of GBV. All of them believe that programmes and training such as RoW Power will help them enhance their mediation skills on that issue.



- **Knowledge of organisations and support structures for women survivors of GBV:** Less than half of the participants were able to name a small list of those kind of organisations.
 - **Previous collaboration with those organisations/support structures and GBV professionals for women survivors of GBV and frequency:** From the above percentage of Roma Mediators had already cooperated with those organisations only a few times and as consequence the frequency of collaboration is rare but when this happened, as the Roma Mediators spotted, the results were better.
 - **Knowledge of organisations/agencies that offering training on gender-based violence and how Roma mediators should deal with it:** More than half of the participants are not aware of programmes/trainings that combat gender-based violence.
 - **Mediation skills on psychosocial support and counselling of Roma women GBV survivors:** Less than half of the Roma mediators have acquired the necessary mediation skills in order to support sufficiently GBV survivors. Some of the skills that they referred were ability and knowledge to identify incidents, ability to create trusting relationships in order to open up and trust to refer or set boundaries (depending on the incident), empathy, skill in creating balance and counselling to family members, active listening.
 - **Familiarity with all kinds of support that is offered by the corresponding structures to GBV survivors:** Only around three (3) out of ten (10) Roma mediators in all partner countries were in position to mention all the different kinds of support that can be offered to those affected by GBV by organisations and structures dealing with those kinds of issues.
 - **Frequency of information and participation in relevant training programmes:** Only half of the participants are participating casually enough to this kind of trainings or enrich their knowledge/ enhance their skills.
- According to the answers of the participants, there is a great relevance in the main barriers that Roma women are facing when trying to access support and care services for GBV survivors. In particular they all mentioned:
- Lack of information of the relevant structures.



- Lack of education.
- Racist attitudes they suffer when attempting to contact public services.
- Stigmatisation, social exclusion.

➤ Some also mentioned:

- Language barriers.
- Financial dependence on their husband.
- Fear that they will not get the adequate attention and support because they are Roma women.
- Incapability to perceive the act as gender-based violence.

4.1 Conclusions, Recommendations & The Proposed Learning Objectives Matrixes for Roma Mediators and GBV professionals

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above survey and the data collected from the six (6) participating countries (Germany, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain):

- The fragmentation of the implementation of any policy to combat gender-based violence is a result of the particular structural and social barriers that Roma women face in accessing support for gender-based violence and deserves special attention and care. Causes of all the above are:
 - Rare or no cooperation between the two main actors, GBV Professionals and Roma Mediators that can effectively support Roma women survivors of GBV violence.
 - Their lack of cooperation is a result of their insufficient knowledge, skills and contact with the Roma community (for GBV Professionals) and their ignorance of gender-based violence issues and approach of the survivors (for Roma Mediators). Also, the fact that GBV Professionals do not exactly know the scope of action and the services that Roma Mediators are providing, and Roma Mediators do not fully understand what the GBV structures can provide to a survivor of GBV.

Recommendations

- From all the above it is clear that both GBV Professionals and Roma Mediators should be trained in order to cooperate effectively with each other. Also, the strengthening of knowledge and skills at the points where they emerge.
- The effectiveness of their cooperation can be achieved by drawing up a cooperation protocol on which they will rely to offer their services to Roma women survivors of GBV.

- The empowerment of Roma women themselves and the awareness of the wider Roma community, and not only women, on issues of gender-based violence is also of great importance.

Matrix of Learning Objectives for GBV Professionals

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
Knowledge of how to work with Roma Mediators in the process of i) receiving and recording a GBV case	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with Roma Mediators in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (i) receiving and recording a GBV incident	Openness to cooperation and coordination with Roma Mediators and respect for their role
Knowledge regarding their cooperation with Roma Mediators in the processes of (ii) providing psychological support to survivors	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with Roma mediators in overcoming language, comprehension and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (ii) providing psychological support to survivors	Openness to cooperation and coordination with Roma Mediators and respect for their role
Knowledge regarding their cooperation with Roma Mediators in the processes of (iii) providing GBV counselling	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with Roma Mediators in overcoming language, understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (iii) counselling on GBV issues	Openness to cooperation and coordination with Roma Mediators and respect for their role

Knowledge regarding their cooperation with Roma Mediators in the processes of (iv) providing legal advice to survivors of GBV	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with Roma Mediators in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of iv) providing legal counselling to survivors of GBV	Openness to cooperation and coordination with Roma Mediators and respect for their role
Knowledge around issues of intersectionality and multiple vulnerabilities, exclusionary challenges and socio-economic conditions affecting Roma women in Roma communities (housing, unemployment, poverty & low rates of economic independence, lack of education)	Skills to address or alleviate multiple vulnerabilities related to socio-economic exclusions and challenges that allow these conditions to be considered when considering Roma survivors, providing counselling to Roma survivors and putting together plans and solutions with survivors	Raising awareness of vulnerability issues of Roma women survivors, demonstrating patience, care and focus to best serve them, bearing in mind their specific characteristics

Knowledge of cultural training on issues related to intersectionality and the position of Roma women in their communities, traditions, unwritten laws and social conditions in which they live (women's position, unwritten laws, punishments, normalisation of violence, fear & peer pressure from family and communities, taboos and lack of trust in authorities, institutions and police, marginalisation within the community, common psychological barriers)	Skills to address or alleviate multiple vulnerabilities related to socio-economic exclusions and challenges that allow for these conditions to be taken into account when examining Roma survivors, counselling Roma survivors and putting together plans and solutions together with survivors	Increased awareness of the barriers and exclusions faced by Roma women and readiness to serve them in the best possible way
Knowledge of adapted communication in GBV contexts with Roma women experiencing socio-economic and structural challenges.	Communication skills with Roma women and case management of Roma women	Openness to communication tailored to the needs of a group experiencing marginalisation
Knowledge regarding an organised protocol for cooperation between GBV professionals and Roma Mediators, defined roles and jurisdictions	Skills to adapt to their role and to act together in a respectful and responsive manner in the role of the Mediator	Openness and sensitivity towards the observance of a cooperation protocol

Matrix of Learning Objectives for Roma Mediators

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
Basic knowledge of the different types of GBV provided for by the Istanbul Convention	Be able to identify, speak clearly and ask questions or discuss clarifications related to specific types of GBV	Awareness and increased interest around the main types of GBV and their consequences for survivors.
Basic knowledge of the operation and services offered by a women's counselling centre of a GBV survivor care centre	Be able to clearly and simply describe the departments and what services are offered to those impacted by GBV by a women's counselling centre/ a GBV survivor care centre	Raising awareness and increased interest around the services offered by GBV centres and better & clearer communication to survivors
Fundamentals of vocabulary of definitions and concepts related to the basic procedures for preventing and responding to GBV incidents as well as vocabulary used in the process by GBV professionals to survivors themselves	Be able to use and explain to the survivor specific definitions and information required in the processes of responding to a GBV incident and providing care and assistance to survivors if needed/asked	Become aware of and familiar with specialised GBV vocabulary and definitions to best use and explain them to survivors if needed/asked



Key issues of code of conduct, ethics, confidentiality and discretion in dealing with incidents of gender-based violence and in their cooperation and communication (verbal and non-verbal) with survivors	Be able to adhere to the code of ethics, and confidentiality to confidentially handle sensitive information regarding survivors and to communicate with survivors respectfully without unintentionally traumatising or abusing them. Give or ask for accurate information not to infer or add info that the survivor has not said, not to judge the survivor, not to try to substitute other roles, not to influence the survivor's decisions.	Openness deeper understanding and commitment to the need to adhere to the code of ethics, ethics, confidentiality and discretion that exists within the addressing GBV sector.
Specific knowledge of how to work with GBV professionals in the process of i) receiving and recording a GBV case	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with GBV professionals in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (i) receiving and recording a GBV incident	Openness to cooperation and coordination with GBV professionals and respect for their role

Specific knowledge of how to work with GBV professionals in the process of (ii) providing psychological support to survivors	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with GBV professionals in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (ii) providing psychological support to survivors	Openness to cooperation and coordination with GBV professionals and respect for their role
Specific knowledge of how to work with GBV professionals in the process of (iii) providing GBV counselling	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with GBV professionals in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of survivors in the process of (iii) providing GBV counselling	Openness to cooperation and coordination with GBV professionals and respect for their role
Specific knowledge of how to work with GBV professionals in the process of (iv) providing legal advice to survivors of GBV	Skills of joint cooperation, discussion and coordination with GBV professionals in overcoming language problems and problems of understanding and cultural differences of individuals affected by GBV in the process of (iv) providing legal advice to survivors of GBV	Openness to cooperation and coordination with GBV professionals and respect for their role



Knowledge regarding an organised protocol for cooperation between GBV professionals and Roma Mediators, defined roles and jurisdictions	Skills to adapt to their role and to act together in a respectful and responsive manner in the role of the GBV professionals	Openness and sensitivity towards the observance of a cooperation protocol
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ROW-POWER

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