



# **ISTANBUL CONVENTION ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

1<sup>st</sup> thematic evaluation round “building trust by delivering support, protection and justice”

CONTRIBUTION OF BAFÖ

BUND AUTONOME FRAUENBERATUNGSSTELLEN  
BEI SEXUELLER GEWALT ÖSTERREICH  
FEDERATION OF AUTONOMOUS WOMEN'S  
COUNSELLING CENTRES AGAINST SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE AUSTRIA

**Publisher:**

**BAFÖ**

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Gewalt Österreich**

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## Introduction

Founded in 2010, BAFÖ (Bund Autonome Frauenberatungsstellen bei sexueller Gewalt Österreich - Federation of Autonomous Women's Counselling Centres Against Sexual Violence Austria) now represents nine member institutions, each of which offers specialised support for female victims of sexualised violence (aged 14, respectively 16 and older) in each of Austria's federal provinces. Together with the BAFÖ, these nine specialised NGOs also carry out prevention work and awareness raising and take a socio-political stand against sexism and sexualised violence.

In the following contribution, we refer to the GREVIO Questionnaire and the State report of the Austrian Authorities.

## II Implementation in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution

### Article 12: General obligations

We note that the nine member institutions of BAFÖ as NGOs make an essential contribution to public relations and prevention work around the issue of sexualised violence with their actions and campaigns. There is no Austria-wide campaign against sexualised violence initiated and financed by the Austrian authorities. The following actions and campaigns are selected examples of the activism of BAFÖ as specialist counselling centres for victims of sexual violence<sup>1</sup> (SCSV) in Austria. They are (co-)financed by different funding agencies on local and national levels.

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<sup>1</sup> The direct translation of "Frauenberatungsstellen bei sexueller Gewalt" is "Women's Counselling Centres Against Sexual Violence", but we here use the term introduced in the State report as *specialist counselling centres for victims of sexual violence* (SCSV).

Federal Province (State)	Name of agency (SCVS)	Name of campaign / direct action	Duration	Short description
Burgenland	Der Lichtblick	#redenwirdarüber (let's talk about it)	2022	Campaign to increase awareness of the specialist counselling centre with focus on raising awareness of sexualised violence against women with hashtag "let's talk about it" (#redenwirdarüber)
Lower Austria	wendepunkt	„It´s a dress, not a yes“	2021, 2022	Advanced training seminars for multipliers; direct action against sexualised violence against women by making visible structural social forces and addressing specific conditions of this form of violence from a social, psychological, and legal perspective
Upper Austria	afz autonomes Frauzentrum	„NO GO - Schau nicht weg bei sexueller Belästigung im Schwimmbad“ (NO GO - Do not look away when spotting sexual harassment at the pool)	since 2021, ongoing	Awareness-raising campaign to prevent sexual assaults in public swimming pools throughout Upper Austria, strengthening of self-efficacy and courage through public relations and media work on the subject of sexual assaults
Salzburg	Frauennotruf Salzburg	Kunst trotzt Gewalt (Art defies violence)	2021, 2022	Artistic works in public space (open-air events, projections on house walls, etc.) on the subject of violence against women and FLINTA* people. In cooperation with Fotohof Salzburg, Gendup - PLUS (University of Salzburg). *Explanation of FLINTA: This German acronym stands for women, lesbians, inter, non-binary, trans and agender people

Styria	Beratungsstelle TARA	LUIA: "Luisa ist da", "Luisa geht schwimmen", "Luisa am Campus" ( <i>Luisa is here, Luisa goes for a swim, Luisa on campus</i> )	since 2020, ongoing	Prevention campaign with instant help for female victims of sexual harassment; Is carried out in catering establishments, recreational facilities in Graz, and on the campus of the Karl-Franzens-University of Graz. In cooperation with the city of Graz
Tyrol	Frauen gegen Vergewaltigung	"Konsens ist Sexy" ( <i>Consent is sexy</i> )	2020	Poster campaign at 40 rail stations of the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) throughout the state of Tyrol
Vorarlberg	ifs Frauenberatung bei sexueller Gewalt	"Die ROTE LINIE" ( <i>The red line</i> )	Start 2021	Exhibition on the theme of sexualised violence: numbers, facts, myths, and effects on the mental and physical health of those affected. In cooperation with the Hittisau Women's Museum
Vienna	Frauen*beratung Notruf bei sexueller Gewalt	Umsetzung eines österreichweiten Versorgungsmodells für von sexueller Gewalt betroffene Frauen und Mädchen ( <i>Implementation of an Austria-wide care model for women and girls affected by sexual violence</i> )	2019-2021 (Total duration 18 months)	Development and establishment of women's counselling centres against sexual violence in the federal provinces of Burgenland, Lower Austria, Carinthia and Vorarlberg, networking, and inclusion with the BAFÖ, including website creation

## **Article 16: Preventive intervention and treatment programs**

We note that the anti-violence counselling mentioned in the State report is not intended for sex offenders. There are no comprehensive treatment programmes for sex offenders in Austria.

## **Article 25: Support for victims of sexual violence**

**28.**

**a.**

Specialist support service offering crisis intervention to victims of sexual violence:

All nine SCSVs offer this service.

Specialist support service offering immediate medical care and forensic examination for victims of sexual violence:

Theoretically, female victims of sexual violence can be examined in gynaecology departments of hospitals. Court-adjacent forensic medicine departments carry out forensic evidence collection. To our knowledge, the establishment of outpatient clinics specialising in violent victimisation is currently under development. Independent medical examination centres uniquely specialising in sexual offences do not exist in Austria.

**b. & c.**

We nine SCSVs offer long-term counselling, crisis intervention, and legal and psychosocial court assistance for female victims of sexualised violence starting at age 16 (sometimes at age 14). Two of our member institutions (Lower Austria and Styria) also offer psychotherapy. These services can be used at any time, i.e., for current incidents as well as for incidents that occurred in a more distant past.

## 29.

Since the end of 2019, there has been an SCSV in each of the nine provinces.

Number of women and girls (aged 14, respectively 16 and older) supported annually in the nine SCSVs, BAFÖ statistics:

Year	Clients total	Clients supported face-to-face in facility total
2020*	1675	546
2021	2183	1062
2022	2273	1080

\*Note: Since the four new SCSVs Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, and Vorarlberg were still under development in 2020, the number of women and girls supported in 2020 only includes the five already established SCSVs Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol, and Vienna for this year.

In the following, we refer to the information and statistics of the 24/7 women's emergency helpline of the City of Vienna mentioned in the State report: It is unclear whether the published figures represent only female victims of sexualised violence. As stated in the State report, this helpline offers support for girls and women affected by various forms of violence and - in contrast to the nine SCSVs - is therefore not specialised in sexualised violence. Furthermore, we take the liberty of noting that the Vienna-based helpline can hardly support victims from the provinces in a face-to-face setting (i.e., in a facility).

For comparison, we present here the counselling statistics of the BAFÖ with its nine member SCSVs:

Year	Infocontacts total	Indiv. Consultation total	Indiv. Consultation in facility total
2020*	4060	5344	2264
2021	5890	8691	4080
2022	6860	9279	3688

\*Note: The 2020 statistics also include only the figures for the five established SCSVs at that time - Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol, and Vienna.



### **31.**

With the exception of the age of the target group (women and girls aged 14 and 16), there are no limiting access criteria for the nine SCSVs. The services are low-threshold, free of charge and anonymous if desired. No legal charges need to be filed for any psychosocial support, except - by definition - for legal and psychosocial court assistance. Almost all facilities are barrier-free. It is possible to use the services in any language, and an interpreter is consulted if necessary. Following the feminist principles of gender-homogeneous counselling and the notion of safe spaces, only women work in the nine SCSVs.

### **Articles 49 and 50: General obligations and immediate response, prevention, and protection**

Here we would like to make a statement of principle: In our counselling work, we notice that our clients, as female victims of sexualised violence, have little trust in the police and law enforcement per se. The way the authorities deal with the victims is still characterised by mistrust and sometimes victim blaming. In addition, the rate of convictions for crimes against sexual integrity and self-determination is extremely low<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See also [http://www.frauenberatung.at/images/ZAHLEN\\_und\\_FAKTEN-SexuelleGewalt\\_01-2023.pdf](http://www.frauenberatung.at/images/ZAHLEN_und_FAKTEN-SexuelleGewalt_01-2023.pdf) S. 6 ff