



**Comments submitted by Malta  
on GREVIO's first thematic evaluation report:**

**Building trust by delivering  
support, protection and justice**

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evaluation report: Building trust by delivering support, protection  
and justice**

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## Abbreviations

|         |                                                                   |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACTS    | Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services                     |
| AFM     | Armed Forces of Malta                                             |
| AG      | Office of the Attorney General                                    |
| AWAS    | Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers                          |
| CFC     | Office of the Commissioner for Children                           |
| CGBVDV  | Commission on Gender-Based Violence & Domestic Violence           |
| COPE    | Community of Professional Educators                               |
| CRPD    | Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)       |
| CSA     | Court Services Agency                                             |
| DAC     | Directorate for Alternative Care                                  |
| DV      | Domestic violence                                                 |
| DVS     | Domestic Violence Services                                        |
| EEA     | European Economic Area                                            |
| ERA     | Environment and Resources Authority                               |
| EU      | European Union                                                    |
| EUAA    | European Union Agency for Asylum                                  |
| FGM     | Female genital mutilation                                         |
| FSWS    | Foundation for Social Welfare Services                            |
| GBV     | Gender-based violence                                             |
| GBDVU   | Gender-Based Domestic Violence Unit                               |
| GGH     | Gozo General Hospital                                             |
| GREVIO  | Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women         |
| HA      | Housing Authority                                                 |
| HRD     | Human Rights Directorate                                          |
| IMC     | Inter-Ministerial Committee                                       |
| IMCMHR  | Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Mainstreaming of Human Rights |
| LA      | Lands Authority                                                   |
| LAM     | Legal Aid Malta                                                   |
| LESA    | Local Enforcement Systems Agency                                  |
| LGBTIQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer                    |
| MARAM   | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meetings                             |
| MBR     | Malta Business Registry                                           |
| MCAST   | Malta Council of Science and Technology                           |

|        |                                                                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MDH    | Mater Dei Hospital                                                                   |
| MER    | Ministry for Equality and Civil Rights                                               |
| MES    | Ministry for Education and Sports                                                    |
| MFT    | Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism |
| MHS    | Ministry for Home Affairs and Security                                               |
| MIV    | Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector                                      |
| MJRI   | Ministry for Justice, Research and Innovation                                        |
| MPF    | Malta Police Force                                                                   |
| MSF    | Ministry for Social Policy and the Family                                            |
| NCPE   | National Commission for the Promotion of Equality                                    |
| NGO    | Non-governmental organisation                                                        |
| NSO    | National Statistics Office                                                           |
| NSWS   | National Students' Wellbeing Services                                                |
| OPDM   | Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health                          |
| OPM    | Office of the Prime Minister                                                         |
| PO     | Protection order                                                                     |
| PSCD   | Personal, Social and Career Development                                              |
| PSPs   | Public Social Partnerships                                                           |
| Q&A    | Questions and answers                                                                |
| SART   | Sexual Assault Response Team                                                         |
| SAVs   | Supervised Access Visits                                                             |
| SCSA   | Social Care Standards Authority                                                      |
| SfCE   | Secretariat for Catholic Education                                                   |
| TFVAWG | Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls                              |
| TPO    | Temporary protection order                                                           |
| UNCRPD | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities                 |
| UNHCR  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                                        |
| VSA    | Victim Support Agency                                                                |
| VSM    | Victim Support Malta                                                                 |
| WRF    | Women's Rights Foundation                                                            |

## **I. Introduction**

Malta has submitted its state report addressed to GREVIO on 9 September 2024 under the First Thematic Evaluation Round, ‘Building Trust by Delivering Support, Protection and Justice’ as part of the monitoring on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on violence against women and girls and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).

Compiled by the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, which is the national coordinating body in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, this report was formulated through cooperation and collaboration with government stakeholders.

Following the submission of the Malta’s State Report in 2024 and the presentation of the Shadow Report containing feedback from civil society in 2025, the GREVIO delegation conducted its evaluation visit in Malta between 20 October and 24 October 2025. During this visit, GREVIO held high-level meetings with all national stakeholders that contributed to the state report, including entities tasked with policy coordination and monitoring, Ministries and Agencies involved in service provision and prosecution, the judiciary, NGOs and the Parliamentary Secretary for Equality & Reforms. Moreover, the GREVIO delegation carried out visits to one of the Gender-Based & Domestic Violence Hubs operated by the Malta Police Force and to Mater Dei Hospital to obtain further details related to the operating procedures and to gain a better understanding of the existing referral pathway system.

In light of the information which was gathered from Malta’s state report, the NGO’s shadow report and the evaluation visit by the GREVIO delegation, GREVIO drafted a report with recommendations to which Malta presents this Report with comments and latest developments by the Maltese authorities. Since GREVIO’s evaluation visit, efforts and initiatives have continued to advance, and the information below reflects the latest developments undertaken by the Maltese authorities in this regard.

## Comments on the Executive Summary

*5th Paragraph (Page 5): Beyond the progress made in Malta to implement the convention, GREVIO has identified areas which require urgent action by the authorities to comply fully with the convention's provisions. More specifically, despite the rise in financial resources allocated to shelters and specialist support services, the financial viability and the very existence of certain shelters appear to be at serious risk. Financial allocations are in fact inadequate and do not reflect the real expenses incurred by shelters, including those related to the victim's or her children's medical or other basic needs or expenses incurred to respond to new structural requirements imposed on shelters. Overall, such funding is not sufficient to cover shelters' running costs and does not allow to offer competitive salaries to staff, leading to the inability to retain qualified personnel. In the area of data collection, since the baseline evaluation report, little progress has been made, as the data collected continues to primarily pertain to domestic violence and fails to provide a comprehensive picture of the incidence of all forms of violence against women or how they are being responded to by service providers and criminal justice. In particular, data on the number of prosecutions and convictions for acts of violence against women and domestic violence continues to be lacking. Moreover, no system is currently in place to adequately track such cases across the criminal justice system and identify attrition rates.*

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) respectfully disagrees with this assessment. Funding provided through the Public Social Partnership (PSP) framework is calculated on the basis of audited expenditure submitted by the NGO providers. This indicates that funding levels are informed by the documented operational costs of the shelters. FSWS would welcome the opportunity to clarify the methodology used.

*6th Paragraph (Page 5): With regard to support services for victims of sexual violence and rape, there is an urgent need to establish dedicated rape crisis and/or sexual violence referral centres in Malta and Gozo. These centres should be staffed by trained specialists and provide a victim-centred response in dedicated premises, on a one-stop-shop basis. They should also be supported by a protocol setting out the standardised pathway. Furthermore, the lack of a standardised procedure for collecting forensic evidence, including the absence of a standardised rape kit, was identified as a matter requiring urgent attention due to its potential negative impact on the quality of evidence used in court proceedings. Another important limitation is that the collection and storage of such evidence hinge on victims reporting violence to the police.*

Malta wishes to clarify that since the 2025 GREVIO evaluation visit, in the second quarter of 2026 rape kits were procured for use at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH) and guidance for staff on their use has been drawn up and is at an advanced draft stage.

In addition, with regard to the collection and storage of evidence, in May 2026, the Ministry for Health signed a Letter of Intent as a stakeholder partner in an EEA and Norway Grants predefined project in collaboration with the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV). The project aims include updating of the Sexual Assault Pathway at MDH to come in line with the requirements of the Istanbul convention regarding the collection of evidence. The finalisation of Malta's Concept Note is still underway.

Further discussions are also currently underway in both Malta and Gozo to improve access to crisis support and establish the first National dedicated Rape Crisis Centre.

## **II. Changes in definitions, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies, funding and data collection in the areas of violence against women and domestic violence**

### **A. Definitions (Article 3)**

*Paragraph 13: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to ensure a clear gendered approach in their legislation and policies that fully acknowledges the gendered nature of domestic violence and violence against women, including by introducing a statutory definition of violence against women, which acknowledges that it is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women because it affects them disproportionately.*

Whilst Malta continues to uphold the gender-neutral framework established under the [Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act](#) (Chapter 581), its national legislation and policy measures are specifically designed to prevent and combat gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV) committed against women. Legislative amendments aimed at strengthening the protection of women and girls are highlighted in paragraph 21. In addition, a number of legislative measures are currently being proposed through an Omnibus Bill and a Legal Notice to further align Malta's legal framework with Directive (EU) 2024/1385. As lead beneficiary of a predefined project under the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism, CGBVDV will establish a Task Force with donor countries to explore good practices in the areas of policy development and implementation. The project also includes a foresight exercise on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG). This exercise will generate recommendations for policy, protection and support measures in response to this emerging form of violence, which will be incorporated into Malta's next National Strategy.

In this context, the authorities recognise that violence against women affects women disproportionately, while also acknowledges that other groups may experience violence, including queer and non-binary individuals, boys and men, persons within the LGBTIQ+ community, and other vulnerable groups.

### **B. Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies (Article 7)**

*Paragraph 21: While acknowledging the progress made in the area of integrated policies, GREVIO invites the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. enhance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and of policies on violence against women in relation to all forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence;*
- b. hold regular consultations with civil society, including with NGOs dealing with migrant women's rights, with a view to ensuring their participation in the design of policies and legislation;*
- c. ensure, on a regular basis, the independent evaluation of policies on violence against women on the basis of standardised methodology and predefined indicators with a view to achieving the comprehensive and co-ordinated policy approach required by the Istanbul Convention.*

CGBVDV continuously monitors the implementation of Malta's [Third National Strategy on GBV and DV \(2023-2028\)](#) which is based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention. This is achieved through regular meetings with the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) composed of high-level representatives from the ministries, departments, entities and agencies responsible for the measures within the National Action Plan. Additionally, CGBVDV requests periodic written feedback from the stakeholders to monitor progress of actions under their remit vis-à-vis their respective timeframes. This information is analysed and individual meetings as well as bi-lateral meetings are coordinated as required to enhance communication and address any challenges hindering the implementation of measures.

The below table reflects the progress achieved by April 2026. The next monitoring exercise is planned to be conducted in the third quarter of the year.

| April 2026                   |                   |             |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Status                       | Number of Actions | Percentage  |
| Completed                    | 38                | 46.9%       |
| Actively in Progress         | 26                | 32.1%       |
| Initiated (Limited Progress) | 10                | 12.3%       |
| Not Yet Started              | 7                 | 8.7%        |
| <b>Total Actions</b>         | <b>81</b>         | <b>100%</b> |

Meetings with the NGO Forum supports the monitoring work of CGBVDV through the provision of feedback from service users. Concerning issues are then raised with the relevant Government actors or during IMC meetings.

In line with the National Action Plan, CGBVDV organises meetings between the IMC and NGO Forum which have recently focused on the Family Court Reform. CGBVDV compiled a comprehensive report based on feedback discussed with the members of the IMC and NGOs which was submitted during the Family Court Reform's consultation period. In the last IMC-NGO meeting held in March 2026, the focal point from the Ministry for Justice, Research and Innovation (MJRI) gave a comprehensive overview of the legal reform of the Family Court.

The Third National Strategy on GBV and DV (2023-2028) addressed forms of violence beyond DV such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, sexual violence, sexual harassment and gender-based cyberviolence. These issues are discussed at IMC and NGO level, with ongoing monitoring of their implementation.

Moreover, several legal developments have been enacted including the criminalisation of FGM in 2018 and virginity testing in 2024. In 2024, Article 251F of the Criminal Code was amended to

comprehensively ban forced sterilisation in line with Article 39(b) of the Istanbul Convention, while also providing for compensation to victims.

Additionally, in 2025, a Working Group on child marriages was established between CGBVDV, the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) and the Office of the Commissioner for Children (CFC). Its work focused on strengthening the protection and safeguarding of children and minors, specifically in relation to child marriage. The Working Group coordinated meetings with the National Students Wellbeing Services (NSWS), the Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services (ACTS), the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism (MFT) to ensure comprehensive consultation with relevant stakeholders on the necessary legal amendments and enforcement of new legislation.

In July 2025, [Act No. XXII of 2025](#) introduced amendments to the Various Laws relating to Child Marriage and Forced Marriage (Amendment) Act aimed at enhancing protection of minors and vulnerable individuals. Incorporated into these amendments are clarified legal definitions of marriages, raising of the minimum age for marriage to 18 and addressing legal loopholes which proved problematic in the previous legislation.

While the draft evaluation report appropriately focuses on strategies addressing GBV and DV, CFC considers that broader strategies impacting violence against women should also be acknowledged. One such initiative is Malta's first Victims' Rights National Strategy, which is at an advanced stage of development and to which CFC has actively contributed.

NGOs directly working with migrants form part of the NGO Forum established by CGBVDV and are invited to participate in all meetings.

Moreover, CGBVDV participates in the roundtable meetings organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). During the last meeting, CGBVDV gave an update on actions within the National Strategy on GBV and DV (2023-2028) which address migrant communities.

### **C. Financial Resources (Article 8)**

*Paragraph 25: Third, as regards the funding of specialist shelters for victims of domestic violence and their children, GREVIO notes with grave concern that their financial viability and their very existence appears to be at serious risk. While funds allocated to NGOs providing sheltered accommodation and other specialist support services to victims has risen, according to indications provided by civil society, the financial allocations are inadequate and do not reflect the expenses incurred. More specifically, the funding for shelters is calculated on the basis of the number of nights for which they provide accommodation, regardless of the number of children accompanying the victim. Moreover, these sums do not account for expenses incurred by the shelter related to the victim's or her children's medical condition or economic circumstances nor for those incurred to respond to new structural requirements introduced by the authorities. On this point, civil society alerted GREVIO to the fact that because of the significant rise in the*

*cost of living in Malta in the last few years, victims often do not have the means for basic sustainment, including costs for medical expenses and for their children's schooling, which are, therefore, borne by the shelter. As a result, women's rights NGOs have drawn GREVIO's attention to the fact that the funding is hardly sufficient to cover shelters' running costs and does not allow for competitive salaries to be offered to the staff. Indeed, while GREVIO was informed that wages for social workers and employees in state-run domestic violence services have significantly increased – a development that GREVIO considers to be positive – no corresponding adjustments appear to have been made for NGO-run shelters. Consequently, shelters are unable to offer comparable salaries, which undermines their capacity to retain qualified staff and to fill vacant positions, due to a lack of applicants. GREVIO notes with grave concern that as a result of the above-mentioned cumulative circumstances one such shelter has had to temporarily close. GREVIO further notes that since the baseline evaluation report the procedure through which women's specialist support services can apply for state funding has remained unchanged. It is reliant on the proposal of a business plan to the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), entering into a public social partnership with FSWS and negotiating a sum for a three-year term. GREVIO reiterates its observations made in the baseline evaluation report that such a procedure does not qualify as a transparent and accountable procedure allowing specialist women's rights organisations to request and compete for sustainable, long-term funding.*

The information available to FSWS differs from that reflected in Paragraph 25 of the GREVIO's report. For example, PSP agreements are negotiated directly with the Ministry, and the temporary closure of the shelter was related to governance issues rather than funding. In this regard, Malta respectfully suggests that this context be reflected.

*Paragraph 26: While acknowledging the progress made in the funding of policies on violence against women, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. ensure sufficient public funding for policies aimed at preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, while earmarking funds for each foreseen measure;*
- b. take steps to identify the sums spent on addressing violence against women and domestic violence by all relevant institutions, in particular through gender budgeting.*

The authorities acknowledge the importance of ensuring adequate and clearly identifiable funding for policies addressing GBV and DV. At present, the structure of the national budgeting framework does not readily allow for the systematic ring-fencing of funds specifically dedicated to GBV and DV across all areas of expenditure, except in cases where such funding is linked to discrete, project-based initiatives. This is primarily due to the manner in which budget allocations are classified and administered across the various departments.

Similarly, while elements of gender-sensitive planning may be implicitly considered within certain programmes and initiatives, existing financial management and reporting systems are not currently configured to systematically capture and report expenditure through a gender budgeting lens. The introduction of such an approach would require a coordinated, centralised redesign of financial procedures, classifications, and reporting mechanisms across all Government.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the authorities recognise the value of enhanced financial tracking and transparency in this area and will explore opportunities to progressively strengthen mechanisms that allow for improved identification and monitoring of expenditure related to GBV and DV, including through potential future developments in budgeting and financial reporting frameworks.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is an equality body and is legally empowered to investigate cases of discrimination of sexual harassment in the spheres of employment, education, banks and financial institutions, and goods and services. In line with its remit, the NCPE also works to prevent and combat sexual harassment in the workplace through regular awareness-raising initiatives and the delivery of training to a wide range of professionals. The NCPE's budget covers ongoing projects and operations as per its annual programme and is shared accordingly among the grounds covered under its remit.

*Paragraph 27: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to put in place a dedicated, transparent and accountable public procedure under which all NGOs that provide specialist support services to victims of all forms of violence against women and their children, including shelters, can compete for and request sustainable and long-term funding which reflects the real costs incurred.*

PSPs between the Ministry for Social Policy and the Family (MSF) are already in place with NGOs providing specialist support services to victims. They are valid for a three-year period, with the possibility of renewal.

The present system of how PSPs are negotiated between the Ministry and NGOs is transparent and sustainable and all the women's groups have to do is apply just like other NGOs. In fact, PSPs with NGOs are already in place and close monitoring with Dar Merhba Bik is being done to support them financially, especially with the recent temporary official closure of Dar Santa Bakhita.

#### **D. Data collection (Article 11)**

*Paragraph 29: GREVIO notes with concern that data collected and published by the NSO as well as by the CGBVDV in its annual reports continue to pertain to domestic violence only, as was the case in the baseline evaluation report. The current system, therefore, fails to provide a comprehensive picture of the incidence of all forms of violence against women covered by the convention and how they are being responded to by service providers and criminal justice.*

On the state of the current system, the National Statistics Office (NSO) relies on the quality of data collected by the stakeholders. The lack of a centralised system hinders the production of a comprehensive picture. Nonetheless, the NSO is willing to provide assistance to the relevant stakeholders in developing or enhancing data collection systems for statistical purposes.

## **1. Law-enforcement and the justice sector**

*Paragraph 31: GREVIO notes with concern that, overall, the situation has remained unchanged. If, on the one hand, some data on domestic violence are now collected by dedicated staff in the new gender-based violence and domestic violence unit within the police force, data publicly available and statistics made available to GREVIO are disaggregated only on the basis of the sex of the victim and by the age. Data are, therefore, not disaggregated by the sex of the perpetrator and geographical location, nor by the victim–perpetrator relationship. Moreover, data on other equally harmful forms of violence against women, including rape, stalking, sexual harassment outside of an intimate partner context, FGM, forced marriage and forced sterilisation, cannot easily be extracted. When it comes to the court system, according to the authorities, courts are now collecting some disaggregated data related to domestic violence cases and a tendering process is underway for a new case-management system that will collect data from the courts and the Attorney General’s Office. The aim being, inter alia, to ensure more co-ordination and interoperability of data between these institutions. While welcoming this development, GREVIO notes that the implementation of the new case-management system is not immediate and is foreseen for 2028. Moreover, the information provided was not conclusive as to whether the co-ordination and comparability of data would be ensured also with law enforcement authorities. GREVIO thus notes with concern that currently no data are available on the number of prosecutions and convictions for acts of violence against women and domestic violence and that a system that allows cases to be adequately tracked across the criminal justice system is not yet in place. GREVIO underscores the importance of compliance with such a requirement in order to assess whether perpetrators are being prosecuted and punished as required by the convention and whether progress is being made in combating impunity.*

The Malta Police Force (MPF) clarify that data collected by the Gender-Based Domestic Violence Unit (GBDVU) is additionally disaggregated by sex of the perpetrator, geographical location and victim-perpetrator relationship.

*Paragraph 33: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. Swiftly ensure the comprehensive collection of disaggregated data in relation to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention at all stages of the criminal justice system (notably, reporting, investigation, prosecution and their outcome, including the sanctions imposed), disaggregated by sex, age, type of violence and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. Such data should be co-ordinated and comparable so that cases can be tracked across all stages of the law-enforcement and judicial proceedings.*
- b. collect disaggregated data on the number of temporary protection orders and protection orders issued, as well as on their violation and the sanctions imposed for all cases of violence against women.*

Offences are recorded by law-enforcement authorities within existing statutory crime classifications. The limitation concerns the current reporting and extraction format, which does not automatically produce the specific disaggregation referenced in GREVIO's report.

By way of clarification, relevant offences are recorded as follows under the current classification structure:

- Rape is recorded under sexual offences.
- Stalking is recorded under DV and/or other relevant categories such as threats/private violence, depending on the facts of the case.
- Harassment is generally recorded under threats and public violence; there is currently no single standalone label exclusively identifying sexual harassment outside an intimate-partner context.
- FGM, forced marriage and forced sterilisation are recorded under broader categories such as threats and public violence, in line with applicable legal categorisation.

Accordingly, these offences are not absent from the system; rather, they are recorded under broader legal headings and are not consistently "tagged" as violence against women for statistical extraction purposes. Producing the level of disaggregation referenced by GREVIO (including, for example, victim-perpetrator relationship or perpetrator sex across all relevant offence categories) would therefore require additional data-processing steps and, where necessary, case-level verification based on information contained in the underlying records.

Nonetheless, action on this recommendation has already been initiated by the Office of the Attorney General (AG) to strengthen prosecution-related data collection, which includes the introduction of online forms. The AG regularly updates its database on sexual offences convictions and is in the process of issuing a tender for its case management system, which will contribute to further improving the collection and collation of prosecution-related data.

In this context, data has been compiled for a number of concluded sexual offence cases. The data reviewed involves 20 concluded cases, 16 of which resulted in sentencing and four which were discontinued, reflecting an 80% conviction rate and a 20% attrition rate. The data includes information on the nature of the offence, the sex of the perpetrator and victim, nationality, the victim-perpetrator relationship, whether the victim was an adult or a minor, the outcome of proceedings and the sanctions imposed.

For the majority of cases which were discontinued, the reason was linked to victim withdrawal. Three out of four cases were discontinued on this basis while one case was discontinued on evidential grounds. Sentenced cases generally concluded within approximately seven to twelve months, while discontinued cases generally concluded earlier, within one to five months.

The sanctions recorded included imprisonment, probation, community work, suspended sentences, treatment orders, restraining orders and compensation, depending on the circumstances of the case.

The Maltese authorities remain committed to strengthening the analytic and data management capabilities across justice entities, including through the set-up and roll-out of dedicated case management systems. An ongoing tendering process for such systems is currently underway across different justice entities which are at different stages of development. These systems are intended to support more structured, reliable and interoperable data collection and analysis, thereby enabling justice entities to honour the data collection obligations outlined in the Istanbul Convention across the different stages of the criminal justice process.

These efforts build on the initial steps already taken towards digitalisation within the justice sector and are pursued in line with the strategic objectives and implementation framework of the Malta Digital Justice Strategy 2022-2027.

## **2. Healthcare sector**

*Paragraph 34: In the area of healthcare, GREVIO regrets that there have been no significant developments since the baseline evaluation report. Data on access to primary healthcare and emergency services continue to be collected only in respect of domestic violence, including the type of injury, the sex of the victim, victim–perpetrator relationship and the number of minor dependants present in the household of the victim. As is mentioned earlier in this section, no data on rape committed outside a domestic violence context, FGM, forced abortion or forced sterilisation are therefore collected, a gap that requires urgent attention.*

While data is available on the number of persons presenting to MDH, the national referral centre for cases of sexual assault, this information is not routinely analysed or published. This data is compiled from emergency department triage records and is therefore likely an underestimate, as not all individuals presenting after a sexual assault disclose the nature of the incident during the initial triage assessment.

*Paragraph 35: Recalling the findings issued in the GREVIO baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to ensure that public and private healthcare services collect data on contacts made for all forms of violence against women beyond domestic violence, disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim and perpetrator, the type of violence and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim.*

The current remit for the data collection related to GBV and DV occurs by the NSO through agreements with public health services. Inter-agency coordination between national health authorities, the NSO and CGBVDV could work with private providers to collect the same violence-related indicators as collected through public health services.

### **3. Social services**

*Paragraph 37: Recalling the findings issued in the GREVIO baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to ensure the collection of data on access to social services with respect to other forms of violence against women under the Istanbul Convention, beyond domestic violence, disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim and perpetrator, the type of violence and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim.*

The case management system utilised by FSWS records data other than just “domestic violence”. Data is also collected on whether the violence is “gender-based” and/or “honour-based”.

Where the information is provided by the service user, all information in the data can be “disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim and perpetrator, the type of violence and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim.”

## **III. Analysis on the implementation of selected provisions in priority areas in the fields of prevention, protection and prosecution**

### **A. Prevention**

#### **1. General obligations (Article 12)**

*Paragraph 42: GREVIO commends the Maltese authorities’ efforts for turning the aforementioned policy objectives into tangible action on the ground. GREVIO notes with satisfaction the increasing number of innovative awareness-raising campaigns and preventive initiatives that have been spearheaded by the CGBVDV, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), the Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms and Equality and the Commission on the Rights of People with Disability since the baseline evaluation report, frequently with the involvement of women’s rights organisations. These campaigns were carried out not only in conjunction with the 16 Days of Activism but also throughout the year and increased society’s awareness of domestic violence, gender equality, gender stereotypes, the digital dimension of violence against women, sexual violence and the importance of consent, stalking, sexual harassment, FGM and, to a lesser extent, early marriage/forced marriage. Preventive efforts equally targeted the role of men and boys in countering gender-based violence, an approach that is particularly valued by GREVIO. For example, in 2022 a broad campaign was carried out, in co-operation with NGOs, on the contribution of men and boys to challenging gender stereotypes and toxic masculinity and preventing gender-based violence among their peers by not perpetrating themselves. This aim was achieved through the broadcasting of video clips involving public figures and the publishing of posters challenging gender stereotypes on social media and on official state websites. These efforts were further supported by the holding of a conference in which best practices from other countries were discussed and were followed by a round-table discussion aimed at formulating policy recommendations on this issue.*

CGBVDV remains committed to delivering ongoing awareness-raising campaigns. Since the submission of the state report, CGBVDV participated in initiatives organised by post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions during Fresher's Week in collaboration with other entities falling under the Equality Portfolio. Through interactive activities about healthy relationships, students were invited to engage in discussions pertaining to their perceptions of green and red flags.

Moreover, the Commissioner visited the Institute of Tourism Studies to raise awareness amongst students on campus. The Commissioner engaged in various conversations with students to listen to the students' wishes and dreams for a future without violence. In collaboration with a local media platform, a voxpop was held with students to hear their ideas and opinions on what constitutes a healthy relationship.

In collaboration with the Victim Support Agency (VSA) and the Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Directorate and Sexual Health Malta within ODPM, a social media campaign was implemented consisting of weekly social media posts during the month of April, which is the Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The posts focused on what sexual violence is, providing information about pathways for victims experiencing any form of sexual violence, and the principles of consent and how one may ask for consent.

During the fourth edition of Love Island Malta, which aired between 17 May and 28 June 2026, CGBVDV collaborated with the production team to promote healthy relationships with both viewers and the participants themselves. The campaign consisted of TV adverts during the commercial breaks and a social media reel where the Islanders reflected on abuse within intimate relationships, encouraging persons experiencing violence to seek help and the importance of consent and communication in intimate relationships.

In addition, CGBVDV implemented a nation-wide campaign during the FIFA World Cup tournament, which was informed by research which indicates that rates of DV increase during major sporting events. This campaign involved thematic TV, YouTube and radio adverts, out of home advertising (digital billboards in prominent locations), and social media presence through collaboration with the platforms, Gwida and Lovin Malta. Moreover, CGBVDV invited restaurants, stadiums, pubs and bars, and world cup fan zone villages where the football matches were being screened to display posters with helplines in bathroom cubicles so that individuals would have the privacy to take note of the helpline services for persons experiencing abuse and for persons engaging in abusive behaviours.

To commemorate the United Nations International Days, CGBVDV shared posts on its social media platforms on Women's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day.

In addition to the campaigns mentioned, professionals from DV services participate in media interventions throughout the year on different media platforms to raise awareness about DV and GBV and the services provided to women experiencing different forms of violence and abuse.

*Paragraph 48: GREVIO invites the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. Increase their primary prevention measures in relation to all forms of violence against women, including on forced abortion and forced sterilisation, while maintaining a strong focus on the role of men and boys in prevention efforts and an intersectional approach in awareness raising activities.*
- b. systematically carry out impact assessments of any awareness-raising campaigns and primary prevention measures taken.*
- c. identify, through such impact assessments, any undesirable or adverse effects of the awareness raising campaigns and adjust them accordingly.*

In preparation for the 16 Days of Activism 2025 campaign, CGBVDV collaborated with a popular local boyband who wrote and produced a song which inspired the theme of the campaign ‘We Have a Dream: A Future Without Violence’. The music video was showcased during the campaign’s launch event and two band members also participated in an on-stage interview to discuss the song’s message and the involvement of men and boys in GBV and DV prevention. The music video was adapted into TV and radio adverts aired throughout the campaign, promoting the campaign’s theme.

Furthermore, CGBVDV adapted short theatrical productions that were part of the community roadshow initiative for the 16 Days of Activism 2024 into a series of short educational videos to be used during Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) lessons with students from Year 6 to Year 11. The six videos focus on multiple themes including gender stereotypes, consent and various forms of GBV including technology-facilitated violence, coercive control, economic violence, and the intersectional dimension of GBV by showcasing scenarios of violence within LGBTIQ+ relationships and violence against the elderly among others. CGBVDV gathered feedback from PSCD teachers to ensure that the videos facilitate effective discussions during PSCD lessons. Launched in February 2026, these videos were aligned with the learning outcomes of the respective year groups. Moreover, CGBVDV prepared and disseminated lesson plans for PSCD educators to support the integration of this initiative in the PSCD curriculum.

In 2025, CGBVDV commissioned a quantitative study to evaluate the impact of its awareness-raising initiatives implemented between November 2024 and March 2025. The study was based on an online questionnaire completed by 425 respondents aged 16 and over and examined recall of the campaign’s visuals, slogans, and media channels.

Overall, 61.7% of respondents said they recalled seeing campaign visuals or hearing taglines related to GBV and DV during that period. Recall was reported by 69% of female respondents and 64.6% of male respondents. Social media emerged as the most effective channel, with 50.9% recalling viewing campaign content there, followed by television adverts at 41.5%.

CGBVDV has taken note of the findings to inform future awareness-raising efforts on GBV and DV.

*Paragraph 49: GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to ensure that prevention efforts adopt a gendered approach that explicitly recognises and addresses the disproportionate*

*impact of violence on women and girls, including by using terminology that accurately reflects violence against women as a gendered phenomenon, in line with the Istanbul Convention.*

A gendered approach recognising that violence disproportionately impacts women and girls underpins CGBVDV's awareness-raising campaigns. The 16 Days of Activism campaign implemented in 2025, themed "*We Have a Dream: A Future Without Violence*", focused on women victims of violence while also incorporating the perspective of child witnesses and promoting perpetrator accountability to break the cycle of violence.

During the campaign, CGBVDV launched a creative competition inviting students from primary, middle and secondary schools across Malta and Gozo to share their thoughts and reflections through an array of creative mediums such as visual arts, writing and projects involving media, design and technology. This initiative, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Sports (MES), sought to raise awareness amongst students on healthy and safe relationships within the family, with friends, online or in intimate relationships. Moreover, the initiative tied to PSCD lessons (mentioned in paragraph 48) highlights the disproportionate impact of violence against women and girls through multiple scenarios including harmful gender stereotypes and gender inequalities in sports, and violence in intimate relationships.

The multi-agency training programme on GBV and DV coordinated by CGBVDV incorporates a range of topics that directly address how violence disproportionately impacts women and girls. These include sessions on TFVAWG, the provisions of the Istanbul Convention as well as the intersection of violence against women with other forms of discrimination.

## **2. Education (Article 14)**

*Paragraph 57: Noting the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO encourages the Maltese authorities to strengthen the teaching about all of the different forms of gender-based violence against women and girls and the specific vulnerability of women at the intersection of discrimination, through the mandatory school curriculum, at all levels of education, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners.*

### **School Curriculum**

*Catholic Religious Education (CRE), Ethics and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) in schools:*

**Catholic Religious Education (CRE)** in Malta already contributes significantly to addressing many of the issues highlighted in the GREVIO report through the aims, learning outcomes, and values embedded within the Maltese Religious Education Curriculum. The curriculum promotes the holistic development of the learner by emphasising human dignity, equality, respect, responsibility, inclusion, empathy, solidarity, and peaceful relationships. These principles are rooted both in the Gospel values and in Catholic Social Teaching.

(By way of clarification, Church schools in Malta follow the Catholic ethos directly under the authority of the Catholic Church and the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE). CRE is therefore, a core part of the school identity and is closely aligned with Gospel values, Catholic Social Teaching, and the national Religious Education curriculum framework; whereas

independent schools as Catholic or Christian-founded schools integrate the same CRE principles and values very strongly into school life. On the other hand, in secular independent schools Religious Education still follows the national curriculum outcomes if CRE is offered, but the emphasis on Catholic identity and ecclesial mission may not be as explicit as in Church schools).

The Maltese Religious Education Curriculum encourages learners to understand that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore possesses inherent dignity and equal worth. This fundamental principle directly challenges all forms of violence, discrimination, abuse, exploitation, exclusion, and degrading treatment, including violence against women and girls.

Within the curriculum, students engage with themes related to: healthy and respectful relationships; emotional and social development; empathy and compassion; personal responsibility and moral decision-making; justice, equality, and human rights; inclusion and respect for diversity; peaceful conflict resolution; safeguarding and care for vulnerable persons; digital responsibility and ethical online behaviour. At primary level, the curriculum introduces children to values such as kindness, respect, friendship, fairness, inclusion, and care for others. Through Bible stories, class discussions, role play, reflection, and collaborative activities, learners begin to understand the importance of treating others with dignity and rejecting bullying, exclusion, and aggressive behaviour. At secondary level, the Maltese Religious Education Curriculum develops these themes further by addressing: identity and self-worth; relationships and sexuality within the framework of Christian values; peer pressure and emotional wellbeing; responsible freedom and conscience formation; social justice and equality; media literacy and online ethics; abuse of power, exploitation, and violence; solidarity with vulnerable individuals and groups.

The curriculum also encourages critical thinking and reflective dialogue on contemporary social issues affecting young people. In this context, Religious Education can support students in recognising unhealthy or abusive behaviours, understanding the importance of consent, respecting personal boundaries, and appreciating the value of safe and respectful relationships.

In Church schools and Catholic educational settings, Religious Education is further complemented by pastoral care structures, safeguarding policies, chaplaincy services, youth formation programmes, and collaborations with counsellors and support professionals. These structures help create safe educational environments where students can seek guidance, support, and protection. Catholic Education also contributes to informal education supported by youth ministries and youth workers through retreats, youth groups, pastoral activities, community projects, and collaborations with organisations such as the Malta Girl Guides and Caritas. These activities often promote empowerment, inclusion, resilience, self-esteem, mutual respect, consent and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Nevertheless, in line with GREVIO's recommendations, there are areas where education in Church schools can continue to strengthen its contribution. These include: addressing more explicitly all forms of GBV against women and girls; providing deeper discussion on DV, coercive control, emotional abuse, online abuse, and harmful gender stereotypes; helping learners

understand the dynamics and warning signs of abusive relationships; discussing more directly the impact of pornography, toxic online cultures, and digital exploitation; promoting greater awareness of intersectional vulnerability and discrimination; strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration with PSCD, safeguarding teams, counsellors, and external agencies; continuing professional development for educators in Church schools on safeguarding, equality, trauma-informed approaches, and inclusive pedagogy.

**The Ethics** curriculum (Year 1 to Year 11) is fundamentally committed to equality and social justice. Using Philosophy for Children (P4C) as the core pedagogy, classrooms are transformed into Communities of Inquiry where students explore gender norms, mutual respect, and personal integrity through critical dialogue. Resource learning materials are freely accessible to educators and parents via the public Trello board. Resources are designed to be gender-neutral and actively challenge stereotypes. Topics such as workplace equality and the gender pay gap are used as specific discussion points in ethics lessons and assessments.

While 'Ethics' as a subject remains a mandatory alternative for those who opt out of Catholic Religious Education (CRE), its scope has been significantly increased. Under the [National Education Strategy \(2024-2030\)](#), Ethics is now also provided as a subject option in Years 9 to 11 (Ages 13-16). This allows students who study CRE to also choose Ethics as an elective, broadening the engagement with these critical topics among a wider, more diverse student population.

To address the identified gaps regarding the "characteristics and dynamics of domestic violence" and the "different forms of violence against women," the curriculum has been reinforced with the following:

- GBV as a Distinct Topic: GBV is now tackled as a distinct topic within our student resources, providing the in-depth focus GREVIO noted was previously lacking.
- Case Studies on Autonomy and Harmful Practices: Specific case studies are included on Honour Killings and the complexities of women's autonomy within different cultures. This helps students understand the structural and cultural roots of violence. The ethics of healthy relationships in terms of care, respect, power dynamics and consent are also addressed through case-studies and dilemma-based learning.
- Reproductive Rights: Women's reproductive rights are openly discussed, utilising a multi-perspective framework to foster critical thinking and respect for personal integrity.
- Digital Violence: The curriculum explicitly covers "slut-shaming," revenge porn, and the harmful effects of pornography, framing these as violations of dignity and criminal acts.
- Power Dynamics: Through the collaboration between the Ethics Education Department and the UNODC (GRACE Initiative), students are taught to recognise coercion and the abuse of power, which are central to the dynamics of domestic abuse.
- Where to find help: the learning resources dealing with the topics mentioned above include information on local campaigns and entities that can directly help with such issues.

A proactive approach is being taken to the specific vulnerability of women at the intersection of discrimination. This includes by means of intersectional protection. Curriculum explicitly defines and discusses human trafficking and online recruitment, highlighting that girls, migrants, and individuals with disabilities face heightened risks.

In addition, a mandatory professional development session for teachers was held. Entitled "Teaching resilience to radicalisation and misogyny in the ethics classroom" involving academia and civil society, this session was aimed at empowering teachers to dismantle misogynistic narratives in online echo chambers and 'manospheres' that normalise violence and discrimination.

Gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, non-violent conflict resolution, sexual education, including the notion of freely given consent and, to a certain extent, DV have also included in the mandatory national curriculum through the course of PSCD. These notions were adapted to the evolving capacity of learners. Apart from the PSCD learning outcomes and workbooks already in place, during PSCD the topics mentioned can also be tackled as an immediacy issue where it is given preference over what is planned in particular lessons with any class and year group. If the small group discussion leads to the need to tackle such issues as immediacy ones of concern to the pupils, following disclosure, comments or any other form of bringing up the issue themselves is supported in the safe environment offered by the PSCD setting.

Furthermore, it needs noting that through the visuals used in the PSCD workbooks themselves, the topics covered and the related learning outcomes together with the keywords linked to the mentioned learning outcomes, different forms of violence are being covered, not just in regard to girls and women but all possible victims.

With regard to the GREVIO report, the PSCD Department notes with pleasure that at the policy level, GREVIO welcomes the inclusion in the Gender Equality Strategy and in the Third National Strategy on GBV and DV the objective to mainstream the principle of equality in the education system and to challenge gender stereotypes, while at the same time taking an intersectional approach to violence, highlighting that PSCD 'now' also covers the harmful effect that violent pornography has on children and youth, the digital dimension of GBV and online safety, which GREVIO commends. However, the PSCD Department would like to point out that, even during the previous GREVIO report, all this was already in place so "now also" should read "still" to be exact.

It also noted that GREVIO's report gives importance to a number of ad hoc, non-mandatory educational projects which have addressed some of the topics under Article 14 of the Convention in the period following the adoption of the baseline evaluation report. The Safe Dates Programme was run in four secondary schools thanks to PSCD teachers, with a view to, tackling violence online committed in the context of dates, including its digital dimension, and promoting safe and healthy relationships. The Be Smart project run by the FSWS, of which the Education Officers of PSCD are major stakeholders, also aims to teach children how to protect themselves from cyber-bullying and online violence and foresees an exchange on these subjects with parents. GREVIO rightly also mentions a toolkit that has been developed for PSCD teachers which touches upon the impact of pornography and that a three-hour seminar has been delivered to secondary school

students on sexuality education, the notion of consent and gender stereotypes, among other issues. It is positive to note that the PSCD work in the field is recognized by GREVIO.

The above feedback shows that the present PSCD syllabus and that of Religion and Ethics already address this recommendation in an age-appropriate way. However, one needs to realistically keep in mind the limited time allotted to the teaching of these subjects. Subjects such as PSCD place importance on what can be done to help both others and oneself, how to prevent and avoid violence and how to seek help, if necessary, developing attitudes, knowledge and skills that might unfortunately be needed in the present or future lives of the pupils.

### ***Cooperation & Other Efforts***

The NCPE, since 2021 has delivered 19 training sessions to 516 educators, including teachers and career guidance teachers, on issues related to equality, gender mainstreaming, discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment. These training sessions aimed to enhance educators' understanding of equality principles, gender stereotypes and gender roles while also increasing awareness of how to recognise, prevent, and address discriminatory and harassing behaviour within schools and professional environments. Informative leaflets and posters in both English and Maltese were distributed.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned in paragraph 48, in 2025, CGBVDV collaborated with MES on the development of six educational videos for students from Year to Year 11 for use during PSCD lessons, each aligned with the learning outcomes of these year groups. Prior to initiating production, CGBVDV participated in COPE sessions organised for PSCD teachers where the short plays were presented and feedback was gathered on the relevance of the themes and how the materials could be further adapted to meet the students' needs. The videos address various forms of GBV and DV including family violence, elderly abuse, coercive control, stalking and online harassment, the importance of consent, and the intersectional element of violence.

In parallel to the video production process, CGBVDV developed lessons plans to support teachers in integrating the material into the PSCD curriculum. The videos and corresponding lessons plans were disseminated to educators in March 2026.

In the first quarter of 2025, CGVBDV delivered four interactive workshops in schools aimed at enhancing students' understanding of TFVAWG, consent and the impact and consequences of non-consensual behaviours. An anonymous interactive quiz revealed that 30.42% of the 249 participating students reported having been asked to share an intimate photo of themselves online.

Specific actions addressing education on consent within sexual education and education concerning sexuality are also included in the [National Disability Strategy \(2021-2030\)](#).

CFC also plays a key frontline role in educating and empowering children to access their rights through ongoing awareness-raising activities, outreach sessions and dissemination of

resources. As part of its work, CFC has developed material in collaboration with Legal Aid Malta (LAM) to enhance awareness among both children and professionals of children's rights within the justice system.

Moving forward, as part of the predefined project funded by the EEA and Norway Grants, HRD and NCPE shall develop a training programme aimed at integrating gender equality, human rights and GBV and DV prevention into formal education. The training will target Kindergarten and Year 1 educators and will focus on gender biases, self-reflection and the impact of gendered socialisation of young children. The initiative also includes the creation of classroom materials to support awareness-raising among young learners.

### **3. Training of professionals (Article 15)**

*Paragraph 59: In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had observed that all relevant professionals in contact with victims of violence against women had received minimal initial training as regards domestic violence but no initial training on other forms of violence against women. Furthermore, in-service training was primarily carried out on a voluntary and sporadic basis for all professions. Since then, important steps have been taken with a view to bridging this gap, including from a policy perspective. GREVIO welcomes the inclusion in the third GBVDV strategy of a number of objectives, including the carrying out of a training needs assessment on an annual basis in co-operation with NGOs; the provision, together with civil society, of interprofessional training and the evaluation of its impact; and the development and provision of dedicated training for different categories of professionals. These policy objectives have been operationalised by the CGBVDV, notably by carrying out various needs assessments and organising and delivering, in co-operation with civil society, around 12 rounds of multi-agency training between 2022 and 2025. The subjects broached included, among others, the Istanbul Convention, domestic violence, certain forms of violence against women, including its digital dimension, FGM, referrals to support services, the accrued vulnerability of persons subject to intersectional discrimination, gender stereotypes and victims' responses to trauma. In 2026 two additional topics were included based on feed-back received from the participants, notably, on children who witness violence and on the national legal framework on domestic violence. The training targeted a wide range of professionals who were either new recruits or staff with limited training on violence against women. Dedicated interprofessional training was also provided on the topic of risk-assessment tools and for a range of professionals operating in Gozo. Dedicated training sessions were equally carried out by the NCPE on sexual harassment for a range of professionals, including the Armed Forces of Malta. Moreover, other training initiatives were provided for specific categories of professionals, as is outlined below.*

While GREVIO observed that professionals receive limited initial training on DV and little or no initial training on other forms of violence against women, it is important to highlight the continuous professional development is undertaken within Domestic Violence Services (DVS). The DVS management team actively ensures that workers receive relevant in-service training throughout the year, based on emerging needs, developments in practice and available learning opportunities.

In addition to internally organised training, management proactively identifies and facilitates participation in specialised training, seminars and conferences delivered by external national and international entities, including UNHCR, the Women's Rights Foundation (WRF), WPS, Work

With Perpetrators European Network (WWP EN), and other relevant organisations. These opportunities cover DV and wider forms of violence against women, including intersectionality, trauma-informed practice, migration-related vulnerabilities, risk assessment and work with perpetrators.

Although further strengthening of structured initial training remains important, the ongoing efforts of DVS management demonstrate a sustained commitment to developing professionals' knowledge and competencies beyond the minimum initial training identified in GREVIO's evaluation. For completeness, the report may wish to acknowledge the continuous in-service training initiatives provided throughout the year, as well as the proactive measures taken by DVS management to support the professional development of its staff.

*Paragraph 63: While welcoming the broadening of the provision of training, including mandatory training, for police officers, civil society has alerted GREVIO to persistent problems in the handling of reports, particularly by district police officers, with victims being at times disbelieved and/or dissuaded from reporting. GREVIO underscores the importance of ensuring that initial and in-service training and the relevant supporting guidelines address all forms of violence against women and that training on violence against women is mandatory for all police officers, not only those operating in the DV hub.*

In this context, the authorities underline that training on DV, violence against women, victim support and the handling of reports form an integral part of continuous professional development and career progression within the MPF. Such training is not limited to specialised units, but is delivered across the service, including through dedicated modules for recruits as part of their initial formation.

In addition, the MPF note that accredited training programmes are in place, ensuring that police officers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to cases of violence against women, including at the point of first contact with victims.

*Paragraph 69: While acknowledging the progress made in the area of training, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to take legislative and other measures to ensure the mandatory provision of initial and in-service training on all forms of violence against women beyond domestic violence, to all professionals that are in contact with victims and perpetrators. This includes, in particular, police officers, prosecutors, lawyers, court appointed experts, medical doctors, nurses, midwives, healthcare staff, teachers, educators and social workers. Such training must be accompanied by standardised protocols addressing all forms of violence against women, aimed at identifying, providing support to and further referring victims to other services.*

The MPF underline that training on GBV and DV forms part of both initial and ongoing training within the Police Force, including mandatory modules for recruits. This is further supported through continuous professional development and accredited programmes, ensuring that officers are equipped to identify, respond to and refer victims appropriately across different forms of violence.

Specialised training to prosecutors dealing with crimes against persons and on advocacy are already provided, both locally and abroad. Prosecutors are also supported through access to specialised criminal law resources, including a dedicated criminal law library, research material and online subscriptions, which assist them in the performance of their prosecutorial functions.

Further efforts are also being undertaken to make training more accessible to legal professionals through active collaboration with the Academy of European Law, the development of the homegrown TEMI online training platform and increased training opportunities for legal aid lawyers. TEMI is intended to provide access to a range of relevant courses thereby supporting wider and more structured access to training for practitioners.

LAM is committed to providing the opportunity for legal aid lawyers to participate in training on the topic of violence against women. In March 2023, two lawyers attended training that was delivered by the Academy of European Law on violence against women. A total of eight legal aid lawyers attended the multi-agency training programme coordinated by CGBVDV in April and May 2024. In March 2025, LAM sponsored the participation of two lawyers in training provided by the Academy of European Law on Protecting Women and other Victims of Violence. More recently, all 17 legal aid lawyers completed training provided by WRF which was delivered in April 2026.

The National School Support Services (NSSS) provides mandatory training for all professionals who join the services within NSW.

FSWS is committed to providing mandatory and in-service training to all workers within the DVS and service delivery to other entities and stakeholders.

AWAS ensures the provision of initial and in-service training to workers particularly the professional workers i.e. social workers, vulnerability assessors, Assistant Psychology Officers, Counsellors, cultural mediators, their unit leaders (line managers) and other professional frontline workers due to their sensitive role and nature of work. This training is organised by the Agency and provided by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), which is an accredited training institution, and other stakeholders such as the NCPE.

Moreover, CGBVDV assisted AWAS in the coordination of a training programme for professionals engaged with AWAS. Five repeat sessions were held during May and June 2026. The training addressed the following topics: recognising silent victims through a trauma-informed approach, risk factors, responding to disclosures of violence and the role of culture in GBV and DV. The trainers were identified by CGBVDV in accordance with its internal database of trainers based on the annual issuance of an Expression of Interest inviting NGOs, experts and academics to submit their areas of expertise in the area. A total of 134 professionals participated in the training programme.

Jobsplus is committed to participate in training programmes, however, it goes beyond Jobsplus' remit to introduce legislative measures related to provision of mandatory training. Additionally,

it is important to note that such training was already organised and relevant Jobsplus staff attended this training.

The training delivered by the NCPE is optional, however, the stakeholders mentioned, including healthcare staff and educators, received training as per below:

- Between 2021 and 2026, the NCPE delivered 52 training sessions to 2,737 employees working within the healthcare sector, including doctors, nurses, carers, midwives and physiotherapists, focusing on equality principles within the healthcare setting.
- The NCPE also delivered six training sessions to 109 employees working at the Court Services Agency (CSA), focusing on equality principles and unconscious bias, and one training session to 20 employees working within the MPF, focusing on equality principles.
- In 2026, the NCPE also delivered a structured training session to police officers in stations, community officers and those on patrol on equality in policing, focusing on addressing discrimination and delivering responsive services.
- Informative leaflets and posters in both English and Maltese were distributed.

In addition, between 2021 and 2026, the NCPE delivered 89 training sessions on sexual harassment, reaching a total of 4,237 participants. Of these, 2,585 participants were members of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM), while 912 were employees of the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), 41 were employees of the Lands Authority (LA), 125 were employees of the Malta Business Registry (MBR), 110 were employed by the Malta Council of Science and Technology (MCAST) and 37 were employees of the Coordination and Implementation Division in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

During these training sessions, the NCPE trainers explained the definitions of sexual harassment, how it can be prevented and addressed, and provided practical examples and case scenarios. Informative leaflets and posters in both English and Maltese were distributed.

Furthermore, since the commencement of the multi-agency training programme on GBV and DV, which is coordinated by CGBVDV, 664 professionals received training on working with victims, an overview of the Istanbul Convention, the psychological impact of violence, and experiences of persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons and migrants. From 2025 onwards, the programme was extended to include training sessions on TFVAWG and an overview of the National Strategy on GBV and DV (2023-2028). Based on the feedback from participants in their evaluation of the training, in 2026, two additional topics were included to provide training on children witnessing violence and on the national legislative framework on DV.

CGBVDV also plans to explore the accreditation of its multi-agency training programme under the EEA & Norway Grants predefined project.

*Paragraph 70: GREVIO further urges the Maltese authorities to ensure the mandatory initial and in-service training of judges, accompanied by guidelines for judicial proceedings in cases of gender-based violence against women, and that it specifically addresses:*

- a. for those presiding over cases involving custody and visitation rights, the devastating effects that witnessing violence against women has on children, the importance that victims' safety has on children's ability to recover from trauma and the need to take such circumstances into account when reaching a decision; the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, including the unequal power relations between the parties, as opposed to a mere conflictual relationship between spouses; and the inappropriateness of the use of the so-called parental alienation syndrome in a context of domestic violence and other notions that position women victims of violence as hostile or unco-operative;*
- b. for those presiding over criminal cases, gender stereotypes and bias, trauma-induced victim behaviour, the "freeze, flop and befriend" reactions of victims of rape and in-depth knowledge on the standards of the Istanbul Convention.*

Training for the judiciary shall be addressed through the EEA and Norway Grants predefined project. Whilst CGBVDV shall be the lead beneficiary of the project, this activity shall be led by MJRI. This component targets the strengthening of capacity of legal professionals, including members of the judiciary, and aims to address key gaps identified at national level.

The specialised training curriculum shall be developed in collaboration with project partners from the donor countries of the Grants and international experts to ensure justice responses are effective, survivor-centred and fully aligned with the standards of the Istanbul Convention on victim protection, perpetrator accountability and timely access to justice.

#### **4. Preventive interventions and treatment programmes (Article 16)**

##### **a. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence**

*Paragraph 78: While acknowledging the progress made with regard to the running of programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to use all available means to ensure that perpetrator programmes are widely attended. This includes integrating them into the criminal justice system as a tool to reduce recidivism, ensuring that they are attended and providing for mandatory court referrals.*

The DVS within Aġenzija Appoġġ is working on addressing this recommendation.

In parallel, the STOP! Service promotes the perpetrator programme amongst professionals working in the social field as well as those who work within the criminal justice system.

## **B. Protection and support**

### **1. General obligations (Article 18)**

*Paragraph 89: While acknowledging the progress made in Malta with regard to its general obligations in the area of protection, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. develop formal protocols or institutionalised structures detailing co-ordination measures to be taken by all agencies, entities and non-governmental organisations providing support to victims of domestic violence and all forms of violence against women;*
- b. ensure that protection and support services for women victims of violence are made available as far as possible on the same premises, on a one-stop-shop basis;*
- c. take legislative or other measures to ensure that a multidisciplinary risk assessment is carried out in co-ordination with key stakeholders such as judges, prosecutors, and women's rights organisations in the context of the multi-agency risk-assessment and management framework (MARAM) and that the victim's perspective is taken into account when drafting and executing the safety plan.*

The Ministry for Equality and Civil Rights (MER) is coordinating the transposition process of the Directive (EU) 2024/1385 and has drafted an Omnibus Bill which includes new provisions under the GBV & DV Act (Chapter 581) to ensure the competent authorities draw the required Guidelines concerning criminal proceedings and that the necessary safeguards during referral of GBV and DV victims to support services are undertaken by the responsible authorities.

As per Article 22 (Role of national bodies, including equality bodies) of the Directive, a new Legal Notice been drafted to establish the role of the designated authorities and the National Point of Contact for Victims of GBV and DV and Coordinator of the Referral of Victims and their dependents. The Legal Notice proposes new Subsidiary Legislation under the GBV and DV Act, addressing matters related to Article 19 to improve its effectiveness.

The Ministry for Home Affairs and Security (MHS) wants to underline that effective coordination mechanisms are already in place across relevant entities, including the MPF, VSA and other stakeholders. This is supported by structured inter-agency cooperation, notably through Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meetings (MARAM), which facilitate joint risk assessment and coordinated responses.

Moreover, DV pathways and/or protocols for MDH and Gozo General Hospital (GGH) are being developed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health (ODPM).

CGBVDV is a member of the IMC for the Mainstreaming of Human Rights (IMCMHR) established by HRD. This Committee aims to strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation in upholding Malta's human rights commitments in line with adopted national strategies and action plans which promote human rights and the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

CGBVDV has also participated in the drafting of the [Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security](#) (2025-2030) and is responsible for specific measures within this action plan to continue reaffirming the importance of gender equality, the protection of women and girls, and the participation of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution.

[Act No. XIV of 2026](#) amends the Protection of Adults in Situations of Vulnerability Act to introduce a specific gender perspective in safeguarding adults in situations of vulnerability against abuse, harm and neglect. The Act also bars persons accused of GBV/DV-related offences from obtaining the Clearance Certificate required to work or volunteer with such adults and establishes an Offenders' Register.

[Act No. XIII of 2026](#) mandates a gender perspective and gender-sensitive support when adopting measures that allow for supported decision-making and co-decision-making, replacing interdiction, incapacitation or guardianship.

Malta has strengthened a one-stop-shop mechanism, particularly through VSA, acting as a central point of contact for victims and working closely with other stakeholders in the field of victim support. This is complemented by specialised police units and regional GBDV hubs, which further enhance coordinated service delivery.

Overall, the current framework reflects a comprehensive and integrated system of victim support, which continues to be strengthened in practice.

As clarified during the evaluation visit, the prosecutor's role is limited to presenting the case before the Court and is not exercised for all offences concerning violence against women. The prosecutorial remit of the AG only applies to offences falling within the relevant schedule of [Subsidiary Legislation 90.01](#).

Accordingly, in the context of multi-disciplinary risk assessment and MARAM-related operational arrangements, MPF is the appropriate competent operational authority rather than prosecutors.

## **2. General support services (Article 20)**

### ***a. Social services***

*Paragraph 91: In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had observed that social housing and subsidised rent in the private market were allocated according to "a points system" and victims of domestic violence were given, in principle, precedence. Nevertheless, GREVIO had found that no schemes prioritising victims of violence against women in securing long-term accommodation were in place. Moreover, GREVIO had observed that social housing did not meet the demand and that married victims could not benefit from social housing unless they could prove that separation proceedings had been finalised. As regards financial assistance, GREVIO*

*had observed that no dedicated social benefits were made available to victims of violence against women and had remarked that those available to the general population implied a lengthy procedure. Regarding reintegration into the labour market, while no dedicated training schemes and employment opportunities were available for victims of violence against women, GREVIO had observed that victims of domestic violence could benefit from various programmes offered to vulnerable individuals by Jobsplus, Malta's public employment service.*

Regarding the observation that married victims of DV cannot benefit from social housing unless separation proceedings have been finalised, the Housing Authority (HA) wishes to clarify that, whilst eligibility for social housing is currently regulated by the applicable legal framework, measures have been introduced in practice to address this gap through alternative support mechanisms. Specifically, a dedicated Housing Benefit Scheme for victims of DV has been introduced, providing enhanced rental assistance to facilitate immediate access to safe accommodation and to bridge the period between leaving an abusive environment and accessing longer-term housing solutions. This scheme offers a more generous rent subsidy specifically targeted towards victims of DV.

*Paragraph 92: Since the baseline evaluation report, no dedicated schemes for victims of domestic violence or for victims of violence against women have been developed with regard to social housing. Proof of separation is still required under the law for married victims who wish to access such housing. According to the authorities, efforts are being made to develop a scheme that can remedy this gap and that, in the interim, documents attesting the initiation of separation proceedings may be accepted. However civil society organisations have brought to GREVIO's attention that this does not happen in practice. Concerning subsidised rent, since the baseline evaluation report, a new benefit has been introduced for individuals in a vulnerable situation whereby the authorities provide the deposit and the first rent of the lease, which GREVIO welcomes. The Housing Authority is also developing schemes that foresee the lease property at a subsidised rate to NGOs, which in turn will sub-let it to vulnerable individuals, including victims of domestic violence. Moreover, the authorities aim to increase the amount of rent that is subsidised, particularly for victims of domestic violence. GREVIO welcomes these developments and points to the need to bring them to fruition. On a general note, however, very few victims have submitted requests for subsidised rent since the baseline evaluation report. This suggests that the provision of information on this type of support should be enhanced and referrals to the Housing Authority should be strengthened.*

With regard to the statement in the GREVIO report indicating that the authorities aim to increase the amount of rent subsidised for victims of DV, the HA clarifies that this measure has already been implemented. In fact, a more favourable rent subsidy specifically for victims of DV is already in force under the current Housing Benefit Scheme conditions.

*Paragraph 93: In the area of employment, the situation observed in the baseline evaluation report has remained largely unchanged. According to indications provided by the authorities, Jobsplus has received few requests from victims of domestic violence to benefit from its programmes, suggesting also in this case the need to enhance the provision of information and the referral system in this area.*

Jobsplus does not keep data on whether clients are victims of DV. Nonetheless, victims of DV may have approached Jobsplus without declaring that they are victims. Additionally, they may have been referred to Jobsplus by other agencies, but the clients did not specify this information.

*Paragraph 94: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to set up dedicated programmes that cater to the specific needs of victims of violence against women in the areas of financial assistance, training, employment and housing, thus ensuring their recovery as well as their economic independence and empowerment. GREVIO further strongly encourage the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. remove the requirement of proof of separation to access social housing;*
- b. ensure the systematic provision of information to victims on dedicated programmes in the area of social services and strengthen referrals to the relevant agencies.*

Jobsplus guidance services are tailored to the needs of jobseekers through the personalised action plan. Clients are also followed through their journey of change towards employment through an outcomes star approach which goes beyond helping clients by identifying and tackling additional barriers to employment.

#### *b. Healthcare services*

*Paragraph 97: While GREVIO welcomes these positive developments, GREVIO regrets that a recent audit carried out at the emergency department of Mater Dei Hospital and information brought to GREVIO's attention point to an inadequate pathway of support for victims of domestic violence. First, as also acknowledged by the authorities, Mater Dei Hospital does not actively screen patients to identify potential victims of domestic violence. Moreover, healthcare personnel consider that there is insufficient training on how to identify domestic violence victims, preserve evidence and how to refer the victim to other support services. Closely related to the inability to identify victims and the absence of an adequate pathway is the excessive waiting times spent by victims in the emergency department. Additional gaps highlighted by the audit include a lack of dedicated spaces/rooms to ensure the victim's privacy when disclosing the violence suffered and lack of support provided by a psychologist or a social worker on call. Finally, the audit highlights the need to streamline the number of times the victim is required to retell her experience of violence to the various professionals she encounters. GREVIO furthermore notes with grave concern that victims of domestic violence and violence against women who are breastfeeding are not allowed to be admitted to the hospital with their baby, a practice that clearly hinders victims' access to much needed healthcare. As reports show that in Malta women victims of intimate partner violence are more likely to seek healthcare support than contact law-enforcement authorities. GREVIO notes that it is all the more essential to provide a clear and exhaustive pathway in healthcare for victims of domestic violence and other victims of violence against women.*

On the inability to identify victims and absence of adequate pathways, Malta wishes to clarify that there is an active Working Group at MDH working on drafting a hospital policy, patient pathways and guidance regarding the clinical assessment of DV victims. The Working Group has been in contact with various support services to ensure that information regarding availability of and referral to these services is included in these documents.

With reference to victims of DV and violence against women who are breastfeeding, Malta wishes to inform that this will be addressed upon the issuance of MDH's breastfeeding policy which is awaiting legal review prior to its release. The policy prioritizes keeping breastfeeding mothers and their infants under 6 months of age together during hospitalization whenever safely possible to promote successful breastfeeding, maternal-infant bonding, and infant health protection.

*Paragraph 99: GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to introduce adequate protocols and standards in the area of healthcare that provide professionals with a clear and exhaustive pathway for victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, including female genital mutilation (FGM), taking into account in the case of FGM both the victim and any female member who may be at risk. Such protocols should in particular ensure that:*

- a. patients are actively screened with a view to identifying potential victims of domestic violence and violence against women;*
- b. healthcare personnel are sufficiently trained on how to identify such victims, preserve evidence and refer them to other support services;*
- c. victims are received without undue delay in dedicated spaces/rooms to ensure their privacy when disclosing the violence they have suffered;*
- d. a psychologist or a social worker is available on call to support the victim;*
- e. support and care are provided as much as possible without the victim having to retell the violence suffered multiple times,*
- f. Identify and reduce obstacles for victims of domestic violence and violence against women seeking healthcare, such as the inadmissibility of babies who are breastfed.*

OPDM takes note of this recommendation. With specific reference to point e, avoidance of retraumatisation and repeated history-taking is emphasised in 'A Policy and Pathway of Care for Cases of Sexual Assault presenting to Mater Dei Hospital'. This document (which was mentioned during the October evaluation visit) has been finalised and preparations underway for its launch in tandem with the commencement of the use of rape kits at MDH.

Reducing obstacles for victims of domestic violence and violence against women who are breastfeeding will be addressed through MDH's breastfeeding policy as outlined in paragraph 97.

### **3. Specialist support services (Article 22)**

*Paragraph 103: As regards the provision of adequate legal services for victims of domestic violence, GREVIO had observed in the baseline evaluation report that they were not readily available. This was due to the employment of only one lawyer by domestic violence services and the fact that referrals to Legal Aid Malta could not be considered as satisfactory given the lack of training of these lawyers on domestic violence and violence against women. Moreover, referrals to women's rights NGOs with long-standing experience in the area of violence against women, providing free legal counselling, was not always ensured. Since the baseline evaluation report, in addition to referrals to Legal Aid Malta for legal services, victims are also referred to the Victim Support Agency and are provided contacts to relevant NGOs that offer legal counselling. This notwithstanding, it does not appear that mandatory training on domestic violence and violence against women is offered to lawyers working in these two agencies, despite the fact that victims are frequently referred to them. In terms of psychological counselling, as described in the baseline evaluation report, victims can be referred to dedicated services provided by the FSWS, however, women's rights organisations have alerted GREVIO to persistent long waiting time. The provision of language and cultural mediators to assist migrant women in obtaining specialist support is also an area which women's rights organisations have identified as requiring reinforcement.*

LAM would like to clarify that the Agency has five lawyers dedicated to the provision of victim advice and seven other lawyers who offer court representation to victims in Malta. In Gozo, there

is one legal aid lawyer for victim advice and one other lawyer for court representation. Thus, a total of 14 lawyers provide legal services to victims across the Maltese islands.

*Paragraph 104: In the area of shelter provision, the authorities are planning to expand the services provided by the state-run shelter (Ghabex), so that it includes longer-term support for women and their children and facilitates their transition to independent living. Moreover, GREVIO notes that there has been an increase in the number of victims supported by this specific shelter, which GREVIO welcomes. This notwithstanding, GREVIO notes with concern that data provided by the authorities show that since the baseline evaluation report there has been a consistent number of victims and children whose accommodation could not be ensured because of the specialist shelters being at full capacity. Indeed, since the baseline evaluation report, the number of specialist shelters for women has not risen (four in total) and several shortcomings are yet to be addressed. First, a specialist women's shelter has not been set up in Gozo. Second, while some shelters do their utmost to accommodate women with specific needs, both the authorities and civil society have acknowledged the necessity to ensure accommodation for women with more serious disabilities and to introduce a low-threshold shelter for women with addiction issues. Third, as regards the accommodation of migrant women in an irregular situation, this is generally ensured by shelters; nevertheless, civil society has drawn GREVIO's attention to a policy introduced by the authorities requiring specialist shelters to report migrant women who do not have a permit to stay in the country. This requirement exposes them to a risk of deportation and thus contravenes the convention's requirement to ensure the implementation of its provisions without discrimination on any ground as set out in Article 4, paragraph 3. Finally, mandatory referrals from Agenzija Appogg to shelters are still required. This requirement might prevent some women from coming forward to seek help due to a possible lack of trust in the authorities and, at the same time, stands in the way of self-referrals by victims themselves. The financial hardship incurred by shelters since the baseline evaluation report is addressed earlier in this report.*

The issue of the inaccessibility of DV shelters is noted. The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) is currently undertaking a holistic audit of DV shelters, the recommendations of which will address not only physical accessibility but also training requirements.

In addition, the National Disability Strategy (2021-2030) sets out measures to improve access to services for victims and survivors of GBV and DV, including the accessibility to the premises where services are delivered.

The Supportline 179, the national helpline, now has a chat feature which can be accessed through the FSWS website.

*Paragraph 107: Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to ensure the provision of immediate short- and long-term specialist support services to victims of all forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence, supported by a sufficient number of cultural mediators. Provision of prompt psychological support and legal counselling should be particularly increased, with systematic referrals, where necessary, to specialist women's organisations with in-depth knowledge of violence against women.*

A comprehensive framework of support services is already in place, providing both immediate and longer-term assistance to victims of violence against women.

In particular, VSA operates as a central point of contact, offering psychological support, legal assistance and guidance, while ensuring that victims are systematically referred to the appropriate services where needed. This is complemented by close collaboration with MPF and other stakeholders, ensuring a coordinated and victim-centred approach.

In parallel, social workers within Agenzija Appoġġ play a key role in the immediate referral of victims to specialist support services, ensuring timely access to emotional and psychological support following experiences of violence.

From an operational perspective, AWAS provides targeted support to vulnerable groups, including migrant and asylum-seeking women, through advisory services and referrals to specialised providers and NGOs, ensuring access to culturally sensitive support where required. The Agency has dedicated and specialised units (Services, Vulnerability and Psychosocial Service Unit) for providing professional support to any victim of violence including that against women. The primary function of these units is to provide professional initial, immediate (including on-call services for emergency and urgent situations), short-term as well as long-term social and specialised support to the service users, which includes systemic referrals to external mainstream services including legal counselling, psychological support and referrals to other entities specialising in knowledge of violence against women, depending on the nature and assessment of needs of the case. It comprises of mostly qualified professional roles, such as warranted social workers, counsellors, psychologist, assistance psychology officers, qualified in psychology studies and other social well-being academia, vulnerability assessors with academic background in social well-being sectors, a diverse group of cultural mediators, mostly experienced in the field of migration.

*Paragraph 108: GREVIO further strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. to remove mandatory referrals from Agenzija Appoġġ to domestic violence shelters, including by offering women victims of domestic violence the opportunity to self-refer;*
- b. ensure that the number and capacity of specialist women's shelters meet the growing demand, including in Gozo, and comply with the minimum standard of one family place per 10 000 head of population as set out in the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention;*
- c. ensure that specialist women's shelters are equipped to welcome women with different needs, including women with disabilities and women with addiction issues;*
- d. ensure that shelters are not required to make a report to the authorities when they provide accommodation to women in an irregular situation.*
- e. set up a round-the-clock helpline dedicated to all forms of violence against women, staffed with professionals duly trained on all such forms of violence against women and capable of providing crisis counselling to victims, with due respect for the confidentiality and anonymity of all callers and operated by trained staff;*

- f. ensure that the provision of support services to children exposed to or victims of domestic violence or any other form of violence against women and/or any other important decision is not subject to the approval of both parents.*

While the intention to allow self-referral is understood, mandatory referrals through Aġenzija Appoġġ remain important to ensure accountability and transparency, particularly in view of the Personalised Support Plans in place. These mechanisms allow for proper tracking of admissions, monitoring of service provision and clarity on termination of shelter stays.

Additionally, structured referrals ensure continuity of care and, in their absence, it is unclear who would assume responsibility for ongoing support and aftercare once a GBV victim leaves the shelter, and whether shelters, including those run by NGOs, would be held accountable for this follow-up.

FSWS is currently working towards establishing a second-stage shelter, which will help increase capacity and respond to growing demand.

It is acknowledged that shelters should be adequately designed and resourced to accommodate women with diverse needs, including those with disabilities and those experiencing substance misuse, ensuring accessibility and appropriate support.

With reference to this recommendation, the CRPD's approach is to ensure that existing shelters are mainstreamed to provide services to women with disabilities. That said, it is acknowledged that specialised shelters may be beneficial for women with complex impairments. As mentioned in paragraph 104, the CRPD is conducting a holistic audit of DV shelters.

Shelters do not notify authorities when accommodating women in an irregular situation, unless doing so is expressly requested by the woman concerned, for instances where she seeks assistance to return to her country of origin.

Supportline 179, the national helpline, operates 24/7 to provide assistance on all cases of violence, abuse and related concerns, and it is staffed by trained professionals.

As the National Contact Point for victims of crime, VSA launched the EU-wide Victim Supportline 116 006 which is available on a 24/7 basis.

This issue outlined in point f is being addressed through ongoing reforms within the Family Court, which seek to enhance the safeguarding of support services to children while minimising procedural barriers. In addition, in schools, to date guidance teachers and Child Safety Services personnel do not require consent of both parents to offer support services to children attending state schools.

#### **4. Support for victims of sexual violence (Article 25)**

*Paragraph 112: Another significant development since the baseline evaluation report has been the ongoing revision of the protocol for cases of sexual violence at Mater Dei Hospital. The draft protocol aims to establish a clear pathway of care for victims of sexual violence, reduce waiting times for victims, ensure co-ordination between specialists to minimise the number of times victims are asked to recount the violence suffered, and ensure that visits take place in a dedicated, suitably equipped room. GREVIO notes with regret that the finalisation and adoption of this draft policy has been stalled and that, pending its adoption, the procedure on how to proceed in such cases is not standardised or clear.*

As mentioned in paragraph 99, 'A Policy and Pathway of Care for Cases of Sexual Assault presenting to Mater Dei Hospital' addresses avoidance of retraumatisation and repeated history-taking. This document has been finalised and preparations are underway for its launch in tandem with the introduction of the use of standardised rape kits at MDH.

*Paragraph 114: Additionally, GREVIO notes with grave concern the absence of a standardised procedure for the taking of forensic evidence, which GREVIO considers may strongly impact on the quality of the evidence obtained and used in court. Indeed, GREVIO's attention was drawn to the fact that the procedure for the taking of forensic evidence varies depending on the magistrate in charge and her/his instructions. Accordingly, in some cases medical personnel may be instructed to lift evidence from the victim, whereas other magistrates may send court experts to carry out this delicate task. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the absence of a standardised rape kit, with some cases brought to GREVIO's attention involving the use of improvised kits by healthcare personnel, raising doubts as to whether the evidence that is secured meets the required standards for criminal justice purposes. In this regard, GREVIO points to the importance of ensuring that forensic examinations are carried out in line with internationally recognised standards, according to a standardised procedure and with the use of standardised rape kits. Moreover, the victim's free and timely access to medical documentation, including medical certificates and forensic reports documenting their injuries, are of central importance to enabling victims to make informed decisions about seeking justice and support. With a view to empowering victims, such documentation should be made available directly to them irrespective of their willingness to report to the authorities.*

Since GREVIO's evaluation visit in October 2025, significant progress has been made in strengthening Malta's response to sexual violence. In the second quarter of 2026, rape kits were procured for use at MDH and guidance for staff on their use has been drawn up and is currently at an advanced draft stage.

Additionally, as part of the discussions required to finalise MDH's sexual assault policy mentioned in previous comments, agreement was reached with the inquiring magistrates regarding the approach towards nomination of court experts in sexual assault cases and the role of doctors on duty at MDH in the magisterial inquiry. This is duly reflected in the Sexual Assault Policy and is expected to help address these issues.

*Paragraph 115: Recalling the findings issued in its baseline evaluation report, and while welcoming a number of improvements, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to set up dedicated rape crisis and/or sexual violence referral centres in Malta and Gozo equipped with trained*

*specialist staff, providing a response to sexual violence and rape with a victim-centred approach, in dedicated premises, on a one-stop-shop basis and supported by a protocol setting out the standardised pathway. Such a protocol should ensure that:*

- a. forensic examinations are carried out in line with internationally recognised standards, according to a standardised procedure and with the use of standardised rape-kits;*
- b. samples are stored with the consent of the victims, regardless of whether the matter has been reported to the police.*

The NGO Victim Support Malta (VSM) initiated efforts in 2018 to explore the establishment of a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) service in 2018, aimed at providing a more coordinated and trauma-informed pathway for victims. Over time, various ministries and institutions were engaged in discussions on the structure and hosting of the service, each bringing perspectives aligned with their respective mandates and responsibilities. These consultations eventually led to MDH being identified as the designated site for the initial implementation of the services.

As mentioned in paragraphs 99 and 114, OPDM has procured standardised rape kits for use at MDH and policy discussions are underway to identify the legal, procedural, structural barriers which would allow for the storing of forensic evidence in the absence of a police report. These developments are expected to be further supported through the implementation of a predefined project under the EEA and Norway Grants, led by CGBVDV. OPDM will be partners in an activity focusing on strengthening the public health response to sexual violence, encompassing the implementation of sexual assault care pathways, expansion of survivor-centred services, and delivery of professional training to ensure trauma-informed forensic and care approaches.

In May 2026, ODPM signed a Letter of Intent as a stakeholder in the project application in collaboration with CGBVDV. A key objective of the proposed project is the updating of the sexual assault pathway at MDH to align with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, particularly in relation to the collection of forensic evidence.

*Paragraph 116: In the interim, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to finalise and implement the draft protocol for cases of sexual violence at Mater Dei Hospital with a view to establishing a clear pathway of care for victims of sexual violence, reducing waiting times for victims, ensuring co-ordination between specialists to minimise the number of times victims are asked to recount the violence suffered, and ensuring that visits take place in a dedicated, suitably equipped room.*

Through ongoing collaboration, a referral pathway has been established whereby victims are first triaged at MDH and subsequently met by crisis workers from VSM prior to the collection of forensic evidence. This approach enables the provision of consistent emotional support as well as therapeutic follow-up, psychiatric care, social work assistance and legal representation.

At present, the space designated for the Rape Crisis Centre within the emergency department of MDH is functional but limited and does not fully meet the intended standard of care. In response, discussions have recently resumed on the establishment of a dedicated centre better equipped to address the needs of victims of sexual violence.

These efforts include continued engagement with the MSF regarding potential support for the service, alongside an application for EU funding to expand the number to trained forensic doctors, addressing current capacity constraints. Further clarification is expected in the coming weeks on allocation of this funding, ministerial support and the formalisation of agreements with MPF and MDH to strengthen referral pathways as part of the development of Malta's first fully operational Rape Crisis Centre.

Moreover, the publication of the Sexual Assault Pathway at MDH is planned to take place within the coming weeks.

## **A. Substantive law**

### **1. Custody, visitation rights and safety (Article 31)**

*Paragraph 119: In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had observed a number of serious shortcomings with regard to custody, visitation rights and the safety of victims and their children. Despite judges' ability to exempt parties from the required mediation in separation proceedings where domestic violence is alleged, victims in practice often faced difficulties obtaining such exemptions. Moreover, despite mediators' obligation to inform the court if they suspect domestic violence, this had not happened in practice because of a lack of training on domestic violence. GREVIO had found this to be particularly concerning in light of the power imbalance that is typical in cases of domestic violence, which is likely to impair the ability of the victim to negotiate an agreement that ensures her and her children's safety. Where mediation was indeed dispensed with and the case proceeded to court, GREVIO had noted concerns that judges, court-appointed experts and the child advocate, where appointed, all lacked essential training on domestic violence. Moreover in terms of legislation, while the legal framework allowed the judge to declare sole custody for grave reasons, including in cases of domestic violence, there was no specific provision providing for the need to take into account incidents of domestic violence in the determination of visitation rights when separation is pronounced, in breach of the convention. Turning to court practice, GREVIO had been informed that in cases of domestic violence, shared custody prevailed, with supervised visitation being granted almost systematically to perpetrators. This situation equally stemmed from the absence of policies or guidelines providing guidance to judges on what tests should be applied in reaching a decision on custody and visitation in cases of domestic violence. A lack of communication channels between civil and criminal courts, necessary to enable courts to take into account any pending or finalized criminal proceeding against the perpetrator, equally contributed to this outcome. Finally, as regards supervised visitation, GREVIO had observed that Aġenzija Appoġġ which was responsible at the time of the baseline evaluation report for supervised visitation lacked sufficient trained staff, with often inadequate premises, allowing the re-victimisation of the victim by the perpetrator.*

While the draft report highlights qualitative gaps in the training of court professionals, including Child Advocates, CFC considers it important to also acknowledge the quantitative improvements achieved, particularly the increase in the number of Child Advocates.

FSWS clarifies that Supervised Access Visits (SAVs) fall under the Directorate for Alternative Care (DAC) and not Aġenzija Appoġġ.

The DAC has addressed the concerns previously associated with supervised access by relocating its services to purpose-designed premises that provide a safe, secure, and child-centred environment. The new facilities have significantly enhanced the quality of supervised access arrangements and strengthened the safeguarding measures in place to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of all parties involved during the supervised access process.

SAVs are conducted in dedicated, child-friendly counselling rooms specifically designed to facilitate safe interaction between the minor and the non-custodial parent under the continuous supervision of trained professionals. Each room is fully equipped to support the effective delivery of supervised access while ensuring the minor's wellbeing and emotional security.

To further reinforce accountability and oversight, the premises are fitted with two-way observation mirrors, enabling authorised professionals following individual cases to observe visits in real time, where appropriate, without disrupting the access. In addition, CCTV coverage, including within the supervised access rooms, provides an additional layer of safeguarding, ensuring transparency, supporting professional practice, and protecting the wellbeing of all parties involved.

Security arrangements have also been substantially strengthened through the constant presence of police officers on site, ensuring an immediate response should any safety concerns arise.

These operational improvements demonstrate the Directorate's commitment to providing supervised access that prioritises the safety and best interests of children and victims of DV, while minimising opportunities for intimidation, or any form of re-victimisation during contact sessions.

The DAC has made significant investments in strengthening the capacity and competence of staff delivering supervised access service. All supervisors participate in a structured programme of continuous professional development to ensure that practice remains aligned with the requirements asked from the Social Care Standards Authority (SCSA), evidence-based approaches, and the complex needs of minors and families accessing the service.

Management has invested in trauma-informed practice as a core competency for all the supervised access team. Specialised training is delivered on a quarterly basis by experienced professionals within the FSWs, ensuring that both existing staff and newly recruited personnel receive consistent and comprehensive induction. To maintain high professional standards and reinforce learning, all mandatory training programmes are repeated annually.

Recognising the complexities associated with cases involving DV, supervisors also receive specialised training to strengthen their ability to identify risks, manage high-conflict situations, and safeguard the wellbeing of minors and all parties involved during supervised access. While scheduled training sessions were temporarily deferred to facilitate the Directorate's relocation to its new premises and ensure operational continuity during the transition, the full training

programme will resume at the earliest opportunity. The Directorate remains committed to maintaining a strong programme of continuous professional development, with all postponed training now integrated into the annual training schedule to ensure uninterrupted staff competency and service quality.

In addition to mandatory and specialist training, all members of the supervised access team have successfully completed Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training. This equips staff with recognised skills in de-escalation, crisis management, and the safe management of challenging situations, further reinforcing the Directorate's commitment to delivering supervised access services within a safe, professional, and child-centred environment.

*Paragraph 125: GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to take the following priority action in the area of custody and visitation rights:*

- a. ensure that the devastating impact that violence against women has on children is reflected in legislation and that incidents of violence against women are a mandatory legal criterion to be taken into account when deciding on custody and visitation rights; to this effect, all decisions should be duly reasoned;*
- b. systematically screen all cases on custody and visitation for possible instances of domestic violence, using a standard questionnaire or other appropriate means, and, in parallel, consult all relevant bodies to ascertain whether criminal proceedings are pending or have been initiated in the past against the alleged perpetrator;*
- c. ensure that all relevant professionals, including social workers, lawyers, judges, court experts, child psychologists and the Children's Advocate are trained on domestic violence and understand the very harmful impact of allegations of parental alienation and similar concepts that portray women victims of abuse as alienating, hostile or unco-operative and ensure that the use of such concepts in/by courts is prohibited and is not promoted in policies;*
- d. ensure an adequate number of judges in family courts that are trained in the area of domestic violence and provide them with guidelines for deciding on custody and visitation rights in cases with a history of domestic violence;*
- e. take measures to ensure that in the context of supervised visitation and during meetings with the Child Advocate, the mother of the child does not have to meet face to face with the perpetrator and that supervised visits are carried out under the supervision of a professional with expertise in the dynamics of coercive control and the impact of trauma.*

This matter is already clearly set out in national legislation. The Family Court Proceedings Regulations 2025 (S.L. 12.35) strengthen the procedural framework applicable to family proceedings, including proceedings concerning care and custody, residence and access to minors.

In particular, where evidence substantiating DV is brought to the attention of the Court, the Regulations provide for the suspension of mediation and allow the Court to intervene. This ensures that cases involving DV are not treated as ordinary family disputes and that protective measures may be considered at an early stage.

In proceedings concerning minors, the Court is required to determine matters in accordance with the best interest of the child, considering the particular circumstances of the family. Within this framework, incidents of DV may be considered by the Court when determining custody, residence and access arrangements, including where protective or special measures are required.

The Regulations also provide for child-focused mechanisms, including the appointment of a Children's Advocate and persons of support acting as court experts or therapists, to assist the Court in assessing the needs and best interests of the child in a structured manner.

The objective of ensuring that DV is identified in custody and visitation proceedings is recognised. The Family Court Proceedings Regulations of 2025 outline mechanisms through which DV may be brought to the Court's attention, including at the mediation stage or during proceedings, whereby the Court is empowered to take appropriate protective measures.

The introduction of systematic screening tools in all custody and visitation cases would, however, require further careful evaluation, including its practical operation, safeguards for victims and risk of re-traumatisation together with the need to avoid placing unnecessary procedural burdens on parties where no allegations or indication of abuse arises.

National legislation, particularly the Family Court Proceedings Regulations of 2025, already places emphasis on the involvement of specialised professionals in family proceedings, including mediators, Children's Advocates and persons of support acting as court experts or therapists. Their functions are linked to the protection of the best interests of the child and the well-being of vulnerable parties, including in cases involving DV.

The reform also envisages further training for professionals involved in family proceedings, with a view to ensuring that DV, its impact on children and the risks of secondary victimisation are properly understood and addressed in practice.

Where concerns arise regarding family dynamics, parental conduct or the emotional well-being of the child, the Court may rely on professional assessment and support mechanism to inform its decision-making. This is intended to ensure that decisions are based on the circumstances of the case and on the best interests of the child, while limiting the risk that harmful stereotypes or concepts are used in a manner which may re-victimise women or children.

It is acknowledged that adequate judicial capacity is required in view of the projected increase in Family Court workload. This is being addressed as part of the wider family justice reform. The reform also places emphasis on strengthening the professional capacity of justice actors involved in family proceedings, including through training on DV and its impact on children.

With respect to guidelines, due regard must be given to judicial independence. Continuous training and specialised support mechanisms are expected to assist the Court in assessing each case on its own facts and in accordance with the best interests of the child.

Measures are in place to ensure that interactions relating to children are managed in a manner that prioritises the safety and well-being of victims of DV. Children's Advocates will receive targeted training to handle cases involving DV on a case-by-case basis, enabling them to adopt victim-sensitive approaches and minimise the risk of re-victimisation during their engagement with children and parents.

*Paragraph 127: In its baseline evaluation report, GREVIO had observed that while mandatory alternative dispute resolution was not applicable to criminal proceedings, there was an ongoing worrying practice whereby, in concurrent civil/family proceedings, the lawyer for the perpetrator would attempt to negotiate a "deal" with the victim to refuse to testify in criminal proceedings in exchange for a favourable civil settlement. GREVIO had noted that that was made possible, on the one hand, by the de facto mandatory nature of mediation in relation to separation and custody/visitation issues, and, on the other hand, because criminal proceedings relied heavily on the victim's testimony and failed to properly look into other types of evidence.*

VSA provides pre-court sessions and advises victims as much as possible in these cases.

## **2. Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution or sentencing (Article 48)**

*Paragraph 129: GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to address and end the practice by lawyers whereby victims are discouraged from testifying in criminal proceedings in exchange for a favourable civil settlement (where there are concurrent civil/family proceedings). This could be achieved through training or protocols, underscoring how this practice interferes with and prevents the dissuasive effect of criminal punishment, leading ultimately to repeated violence, and the impunity of perpetrators.*

The specialised training curriculum that will be developed under the predefined project funded by the EEA and Norway Grants described in paragraph 70 targets various legal professionals, including lawyers. The training will be delivered through in person sessions and uploaded onto the TEMI digital training platform by MJRI to promote accessibility and sustainability of the material.

This activity seeks to address key gaps identified at the national level, specifically, the limited specialised training on the substantive and procedural provisions of the Istanbul Convention to address undue delays, inconsistencies and reduced trust in the judicial system. Furthermore, this modality seeks to strengthen professional knowledge on perpetrator accountability, including effective use of protective measures and coordinated responses to prevent repeat offending and femicide.

*Paragraph 130: GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. take measures to ensure that the exemption from mediation in proceedings dealing with separation, custody and visitation rights in cases of violence, including domestic violence, is implemented in practice;*
- b. ensure that mediators receive robust training on violence against women and issue guidelines on their obligations with respect to cases of domestic violence.*

As outlined under paragraph 125, where evidence of DV is brought before the Court, the Family Court Proceedings Regulations provide for the suspension of mediation, thereby empowering the Court to intervene. This ensures that such cases are not treated as ordinary family disputes and that protective measures can be considered at an early stage.

Following the revision of Subsidiary Legislation 12.20 on mediation, there are plans to integrate mediators into the Mediation Centre to support ongoing training and continuous professional development.

*Paragraph 136: While specialist hubs primarily investigate cases of domestic violence, district police officers are, nevertheless, the first to respond to most reports and are competent to investigate certain cases of domestic violence considered less grave. GREVIO notes with concern that reports from civil society point to district police officers' insufficient training on violence against women and domestic violence, as well as persistent harmful attitudes leading to secondary victimisation of victims. GREVIO has accordingly been alerted that some of the shortcomings identified in the baseline evaluation report persist, such as the dismissal of some reports of domestic violence, including in particular, those from women in prostitution. Moreover, victims continue to be charged for trivial offences such as insults when lodging a complaint to the police, due to the prosecuting role of the police. Moreover, lawyers working in the area of violence against women have drawn GREVIO's attention to instances in which police officers warn victims, particularly migrant victims, that they may be prosecuted for false reporting. Harmful attitudes also seem to persist among some police officers working in the specialist hubs. While GREVIO acknowledges strides made in improving reporting to the police, but emphasises that further efforts are required to eliminate persistent stereotypes and to ensure that all police officers receive training that promotes a gender-sensitive understanding of violence against women. It is also essential to strengthen victims' trust in the system, including by reconsidering the prosecutorial role of the police or adopting alternative measures, so that victims no longer fear being accused of filing a false report or of being accused of insulting their abusive partner or former partner.*

The authorities further indicate that, to address the role of first responders, training on DV, victim support and receiving of reports is delivered through continuous professional development and career progression courses for police officers, including dedicated modules for recruits, and provision of accredited courses.

## **B. Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures**

### **1. General obligations (Article 49) and immediate response, prevention and protection (Article 50)**

#### *a. Reporting to, immediate response and investigations by law-enforcement agencies*

*Paragraph 138: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. explore the possibility of extending the remit of specialist gender-based and domestic violence hubs to deal with all forms of violence against women, supported by standard operating procedures covering all such forms of violence and/or otherwise ensure that all grave forms of violence against women are dealt with and investigated by trained professionals, supported by dedicated standard operating procedures;*
- b. remind police officers of their due diligence obligation to immediately respond to, prevent and protect women and their children from all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and apply the related sanctions for failure to do so;*
- c. take measures to ensure that the prosecutorial competence of the police does not represent, in practice, a barrier to reporting for victims;*
- d. ensure that reports to local police stations can be made at any time of day or night;*
- e. ensure that police premises are accessible for women with disabilities and special assistance is provided for women who are speech impaired.*

MPF wish to clarify that full access to reporting mechanisms is ensured at all times. All police stations operate on a 24/7 basis, enabling individuals to lodge reports at any time, day or night.

In addition, measures are in place to facilitate reporting beyond the physical station setting. In appropriate circumstances, police officers may attend the victim's residence to take a report, thereby ensuring access for individuals who may face practical or personal barriers to reporting in person. Furthermore, complainants are able to submit reports through online channels, providing an additional accessible pathway.

Furthermore, MPF wish to underline that appropriate measures are in place to ensure accessibility and the provision of assistance where required. In cases involving women with disabilities, including those with speech impairments, the police systematically seek the support of relevant specialised services and professionals to facilitate communication and ensure that reports are taken in a manner that fully respects the needs and rights of the victim.

### **2. Risk assessment and risk management (Article 51)**

*Paragraph 155: In light of the above, while the Maltese authorities have taken significant steps to improve risk-assessment procedures and co-ordinated safety planning, the initial risk assessment is still carried out on the basis of information originating primarily only from two sources, the police and social services, in addition to the victim, as was already the case at the*

*time of the baseline evaluation report. The convention and best practice require, however, that information is channelled also from other sources such as schools and healthcare facilities. Indeed, while the MARAM ensures co-ordinated action across different institutions, its work pertains to safety planning and only concerns high-risk cases. GREVIO considers it important to also ensure such multidisciplinary, co-ordinated action at the time when the risk of the victim is first assessed and in cases that have not yet reached the high-risk threshold. This is particularly important in situations involving coercive control, where the dynamics of abuse may remain hidden but still pose serious risks to victims. GREVIO further notes that it would be equally important for other relevant stakeholders such as hospitals or healthcare establishments and women's rights organisations, which may serve as a first points of contact for domestic violence victims, to also administer the risk-assessment tool and to ensure that risk-management procedures are also carried out for cases that are not classified as high risk, as this would help ensure that no victim is overlooked. Moreover, as was the case at the time of the baseline evaluation report, an unintended consequence of the police's prosecutorial competence can be the stopping of a risk assessment interview when there is a risk of self-incrimination– including for trivial offences. Finally, no risk-assessment tool has been developed for other forms of violence against women other than domestic violence.*

The authorities clarify that risk-management procedures are applied also in cases that are not classified as high risk and that the police's prosecutorial competence does not, in practice, preclude the completion of risk assessment procedures. The authorities take note of GREVIO's observation to continue strengthening the multidisciplinary risk assessment and information-sharing arrangements.

*Paragraph 157: GREVIO strongly encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. ensure that in cases of domestic violence, an assessment of the victim's risk is carried out systematically and speedily in a multidisciplinary manner by all relevant authorities in co-operation, providing co-ordinated protection and support, and that risk-management procedures are also carried out for cases that are not classified as high risk;*
- b. ensure that the prosecuting role of the police does not stand in the way of the completion of a victim's risk assessment;*
- c. ensure that a risk assessment is created and used for all forms of violence against women;*
- d. set up a system of retrospective analysis of all cases of gender-related killings, attempted killings of women and suicides of women with a view to identifying any possible failure of protection, preventing them in the future, ensuring the safety of women and holding to account both the perpetrator and the multiple agencies that come into contact with the victim.*

The DV risk assessment is conducted systematically for every case reported to the police, with the woman's consent. Safety planning and risk management procedures are implemented in all cases, including those not classified as high risk.

The introduction of panic alarms enhances immediate protection and response mechanisms. Moreover, the [Domestic Violence Prevention Act \(Chapter 636\)](#) further strengthens the legal framework aimed at safeguarding victims and preventing re-offending.

MPF wishes to clarify that the prosecutorial function carried out by the police does not impede the completion of a victim's risk assessment. While the initiation of court proceedings may, in certain circumstances, proceed independently of a victim's decision to undergo or complete a risk assessment, the assessment process itself remains an integral part of case handling and victim support.

Efforts are made to ensure that risk assessments are conducted wherever possible and are not prejudiced by parallel investigative or prosecutorial steps, thereby safeguarding a structured and comprehensive response to victims of violence.

One of the outputs under the predefined project supported by the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism involves the establishment of a Task Force on GBV and DV bringing together representatives from beneficiary and donor countries. This cross-border co-operation aims to promote structured, time-bound peer learning and exchange of good practices between participating countries. A key activity will be exploring how a Partner Homicide Commission could be effectively introduced and operationalised in Malta.

### **3. Emergency barring orders (Article 52)**

*Paragraph 163: Recalling the findings issued in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to take the legislative and or policy measures needed to bring the Maltese legal framework and practice in line with Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention, notably by ensuring that:*

- a. temporary protection orders can be issued quickly in situations of immediate danger without lengthy proceedings and that the police are encouraged to apply for such measures in practice;*
- b. the alleged perpetrator is removed from the residence, rather than the victim;*
- c. temporary protection orders automatically include the children of the victim.*

MPF wishes to clarify that, in situations of immediate danger, law-enforcement action is guided by the urgency of ensuring immediate victim protection and risk mitigation. In accordance with established internal procedures, high-risk cases are addressed through prompt investigative measures and, where appropriate, the initiation of arrest procedures, ensuring an immediate response to the level of threat identified.

### **4. Restraining or protection orders (Article 53)**

*Paragraph 168: GREVIO urges the Maltese authorities to take the necessary legislative and or policy measures to bring the Maltese legal framework and practice in line with Article 53 of the Istanbul Convention, notably by:*

- a. ensuring that protection orders are available under civil law for women victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, irrespective of or in addition to other legal proceedings;*
- b. stepping up efforts to monitor and enforce protection orders, including through technical means such as electronic monitoring;*

- c. *ensuring that sanctions for breaching protection orders are effectively applied in practice and all breaches recorded in a centralised database.*

The recommendation to make protection orders (POs) available within a civil law framework would require further evaluation. Under the current Maltese legal framework, such orders operate within the criminal justice framework. Any possible extension, parallel mechanism or adjustment would therefore need to be carefully assessed, particularly in terms of legal basis, interaction with existing proceedings, enforceability and practical implementation.

Concrete steps have already been taken to strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The [Electronic Monitoring Act \(Chapter 651\)](#), in force since January 2026, enables the use of electronic tagging to enforce court-imposed conditions, including in relevant protection contexts.

Monitoring is carried out on a 24/7 basis by the Local Enforcement Systems Agency (LESA) through a central control system, ensuring continuous supervision and the prompt identification of breaches. This framework represents a significant strengthening of enforcement capacity through technical means.

Ongoing digitisation efforts within the justice sector are expected to support more structure and centralised data collection, including improved collation and visibility of court-related information on POs, breaches and related outcomes.

*a. Measures of protection (Article 56)*

*Paragraph 172: While welcoming the progress made in the area of the protection of victims of violence against women, GREVIO encourages the Maltese authorities to:*

- a. *ensure that courts have separate waiting areas for victims and perpetrators and systematically give victims and their children the option to testify through the use of video-conferencing material, including outside of the court setting;*
- b. *ensure that police stations and courts are equipped sufficiently to cater for the special needs of women with disabilities, whether these are physical or developmental.*

MPF wish to underline that police premises are equipped to respond to the specific needs of women with disabilities, whether physical or developmental.

The importance of accessibility and the need for court officials to provide appropriate levels of support has also been highlighted through the MJRI Person-Centred Justice project, in which the CRPD is involved.

The National Disability Strategy (2021-2030) also includes measures aimed at improving accessibility of services for victims and survivors of GBV and DV, including the accessibility of the premises from which such services are offered.