

2024-02-01

Answer to the for RFSL most relevant questions in questionnaire from the Council of Europe GREVIO-group on the implementation of the Istanbul convention

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Article 20 – General support services

Question: Are all women victims of violence, irrespective of any of the grounds listed in Article 4 paragraph 3 of the Istanbul Convention, in particular asylum-seeking women, refugee women, migrant women, women from national or ethnic minorities, women with irregular residence status, women with disabilities and LGBTI women, able to benefit on an equal footing from existing healthcare services? Please describe any measure taken to reduce legal or practical barriers to their accessing regular healthcare services.

Answer: Sweden's work around gender-based violence is almost solely focused on men's violence against women. Which means that the gender-based violence LGBTIQI-people, of all genders, face is often forgotten and not getting the focus needed. A great risk is that, even though the Swedish government's intention is to include violence in LGBTIQI-people's relationships, the needs of this group are overseen and forgotten when interventions and projects are budgeted and planned. The result of this is that the general support services and shelters for victims of partner violence are usually modified to women subjected to violence from a man, which means for instance that gay and bisexual men and transwomen subjected to violence falls into obscurity.

Article 22 – Specialist support services

Question: Please describe the type of specialist support services dedicated to women victims of the forms of gender-based violence covered by the Istanbul Convention (e.g., stalking, sexual harassment and domestic violence, including their digital dimension, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced sterilisation, forced abortion), including those specialist support services providing:

- a. shelters and/or other forms of safe accommodation
- b. medical support

- c. short- and long-term psychological counselling
- d. trauma care
- e. legal counselling
- f. outreach services
- g. telephone helpline
- h. other forms of support (e.g. socio-economic empowerment programmes, online assistance platforms etc.)

Answer: RFSL, the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights, has run a support service since 1998. The target group is LGBTQI people who have been subject to harassment, threat, and violence and is still one of the few services in the country specifically focusing on LGBTQI-people. Sexual violence, honor-related violence and violence in close relationships are one of the most common reasons for seeking support. The staff at the support service is employed, trained and experienced in issues regarding LGBTQI people and violence.

The RFSL support service offers:

- Crisis counselling sessions or a series of sessions to process emotional reactions.
- Information about your rights, accompanying support and support in the contact with healthcare and authorities.
- Support when reporting a crime to the police and during a trial.
- Sheltered living. (It is especially apparent that transwomen face serious difficulties in accessing other shelters or support centers due to their gender identity and/or expression)

Article 25 – Support to victims of sexual violence

Question: Please indicate if any of the below services are available in your territory:

- a. sexual violence referral centres (e.g. specialist support services offering immediate medical care, forensic examination and crisis intervention to victims of sexual violence);
- b. rape crisis centres (e.g. specialist support services offering long-term counselling, therapy and support to victims of sexual violence regardless of whether the sexual violence occurred recently or in the past);
- c. any other specialised services offering short-term and/or long-term medical, forensic and psycho-social support to victims of sexual violence.

Answer: Yes, here are examples of support services in Sweden for victims of sexual violence.

Kvinnofridslinjen – Sweden’s national women helpline support
- <https://kvinnofridslinjen.se/>

Stöddlinjen för transpersoner -The national support line for transgender and nonbinary adult who’ve been subjected for sexual violence - <https://stodlinjenfortranspersoner.se/>

Brottsofferjouren - Victim support Sweden - <https://www.brottsofferjouren.se/>

Roks - The national organization for women's shelters - <https://www.roks.se/>

Unizon - Support and protection - <https://www.unizonjourer.se/om-unizon/>

Terrafem - Organization working for women who have been exposed to sexual violence. Shelter, legal and psychosocial support in several languages - <https://terrafem.org/>

Storasyster - Supports people who've been subjected to sexual violence - <https://storasyster.org>

Article 49 and 50 – General obligations and immediate response, prevention and protection

Question: Are any measures taken to encourage women and girls who experience any of the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention to report incidents of violence to the authorities? Please provide examples of any measures taken to instill confidence in law-enforcement officials, including those aimed at addressing any language or procedural difficulties they encounter when lodging complaints, in particular those of migrant women, asylum-seeking women, women with disabilities, women with addiction issues and other women and girls at risk of intersectional discrimination.

Answer: Even if there's been some measures taken we can still see there is a need to continue strengthening knowledge about sexual violence and the treatment of victims within the law-enforcement officials, as well as providing better information about where the victim can turn to for support after being subjected to sexual violence. We can unfortunately still see that the trust in the justice system decreases after police reports, due to long and emotionally draining procedures. The underreporting of sexual crimes is still very high