

SHADOW REPORT
ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE ISTANBUL
CONVENTION BY
ROMANIA

COORDINATOR :
ANAIIS Association

INTRODUCTION

ANAIIS Association is a non-governmental organisation located in Bucharest, Romania. It specialises in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence by carrying out activities in the following areas: (1) providing and developing social services for victims of domestic violence; (2) education and information; (3) advocacy and raising awareness; and (4) active involvement in amending and improving legislation on violence against women.

Since its foundation in late 2011, ANAIIS Association has been committed to promoting, respecting, and defending the rights of women, children, and young people. The Association's work focuses on changing policies and legislation to benefit women and protect them against all forms of violence. The Association's main objectives are to support victims of domestic violence and engage in public policy in this area by developing services.

In line with this, ANAIIS Association prioritises *a victim-rights-based approach* when exercising its mandate. Through its Counselling Centre, it provides services to support victims of violence, such as free counselling and guidance, and legal advice and representation/assistance in courts of justice with the scope of obtaining (temporary) protection orders.

ANAIIS is dedicated to respecting and promoting the values set out in the Council of Europe's *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (also known as the 'Istanbul Convention'), and is committed to supporting GREVIO by providing information on grassroots developments in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence at a national level. Supporting the work of GREVIO is a natural extension of the association's international concerns. In this vein, ANAIIS Association is a member of WAVE Network (Women Against Violence Europe. Feminist Network Promoting Human Rights of Women and Children), and of the Francophone Network for Equality between Women and Men.

As coordinator of the Shadow Report within the national NGOs coalition (presented in the sections concerning contributors/authors and endorsement), ANAIIS Association reached out to numerous partners who contributed significantly to the final version of the Report. Contributors to the Report include experts from non-governmental organisations, public authorities, institutions, and universities, all of whom are dedicated to preventing and combating violence against women. **ANAIIS Association is very grateful for the support provided by the contributors and acknowledges their dedication, hard work and passion for this noble cause.**

The information in the Shadow Report is organised as responses to the questions set out in the Questionnaire adopted by GREVIO on 13 October 2022. **These responses combine observations on the actions undertaken by the Romanian authorities since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report, alongside the contributors' own findings. Recommendations for improving national efforts in regard to a specific issue are included at the end of each section.**

Although the tone of the paper may be perceived as critical in places, the purpose of the Shadow Report coordinated by ANAIIS Association is not to dismiss the state's efforts. Rather, **it aims to highlight existing issues in addressing violence against women and domestic violence at a national level, with the ultimate goal of optimising the state's response to the needs of victims of violence.**

Finally, we would like to reiterate our sincere gratitude to all our partners and collaborators whose contribution made this final version of the GREVIO Shadow Report possible:

I.Contributors/authors

I.1. Non-governmental organisations:

- **AN AIS Association** : was founded at the end of 2011 with the aim of promoting, respecting, and defending the rights of women, children, and young people. ANAIS Association works to change policies and legislation for the benefit of women. Also, ANAIS Association focuses on supporting victims of domestic violence by developing services and engaging in public policy in this area.
Contributor(s) : **Carmen Nemeş, Lawyer specializing in civil rights, President and Founding member; Mihaela Mangu Darvariu, Sociologist, Gender Based Violence Expert and Co-founder of the ANAIS Association; Vladimir Ignat, Lawyer specializing in criminal law at ANAIS Association.**
Shadow Report Coordinator: **Maria-Beatrice Berna, Lecturer phd. in International Human Rights Protection, Human Rights Expert, Program Coordinator at ANAIS Association.**
- **A.L.E.G. Association** : is a non-governmental organisation that has been active since 2004 in combating and preventing violence against women and in promoting gender equality. Based in Sibiu, the Association focuses its activities on the following services and actions at the national level: counselling and psychological support, including support through survivors' led communities around the country; information and awareness-raising (eg. the yearly Gender Equality Festival - a participatory creative campaign involving youth); advocacy for improved prevention of Gender Based Violence (eg. Employers for Respect advocacy campaign that led to the ratification by Romanian Parliament of the ILO C190 Convention) and training and education.
Contributor: **Camelia Proca, Founding member and Director.**
- **eLiberare Association** : is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the prevention of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Founded in 2013, eLiberare operates across four key areas: education, victim identification, survivor support, and strengthening ecosystems by contributing to the improvement of the legal framework. Since 2024, the organization holds special consultative status within the United Nations' ECOSOC.
- **ProTECT Federation** : is a coalition of specialized organizations working to prevent and combat human trafficking and protect the rights of victims and survivors. It currently brings together twenty of the most active non-governmental organizations in the field.
- **Feminism Romania Association:** is made up of young feminists who campaign for equal opportunities for women and men, and for the elimination of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, social class, property ownership, religion, or other social status. The Association's main projects focus on public demonstrations, lobbying, advocacy and education and research. Targeted issues include violence against women (including domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking), reproductive and sexual rights, sex education in schools, unequal partnerships within families, urban discrimination and gender stereotypes in education.

Contributor: Carmen Radu, Gender Equality Specialist.

- **Plural Association** is a non-governmental organization established in 2012 that is committed to promoting gender equality. The organization focuses on non-formal education, research, and advocacy. Plural implements educational initiatives for teachers, youth, and youth workers, and develops resources related to gender equality, human rights, and democratic values. The organization is actively involved in advocacy and research to support inclusive policies, combat gender-based discrimination, and enhance the professionalization of gender equality expertise in Romania. Plural is a member of the Coalition for Gender Equality in Romania and participates in various international initiatives.

Contributor: Irina Ilisei, President and Gender Equality Expert

- **Romanian Midwives Association (Asociația Moașelor din România)** : brings together dedicated and experienced midwives who are fighting for the development of the midwifery profession and the recognition of midwives' essential role in the health of girls and women of all ages, families, and young people in Romania. With a clear vision and firm commitment, the Association strengthens the position of midwives in the healthcare system by promoting professionalism, empathy, and equitable access to quality care. It plays an active role in safeguarding women's reproductive health rights, and in preventing and combatting sexual and gender-based violence. The Association views these issues as fundamental to a healthy society.

Contributor: Irina Mateescu, President of the Romanian Midwives Association, Licensed midwife, Reproductive Health Expert, Activist for the rights of adolescents, girls, and women.

- **Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR):** CNRR has been recognised as a public utility NGO since 2003 and has been a member of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) since 2000, as well as being the coordinator of the European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA) in Romania. For over 20 years, CNRR has been dedicated to developing projects that support and defend the rights of people in need of international protection.
- **TransCore Association:** The Association began as an initiative group formed in 2020 by trans and non-binary individuals who are active members of the LGBTQ+ community in Bucharest. Motivated by the lack of a dedicated organisation to support trans people during a challenging year characterised by unemployment, homelessness and poor social and medical conditions, the Association was established. Today, TransCore is not just an organisation; it is also an information and support platform for trans people in Romania. The website of the Association presents essential medical resources, including the first informed consent forms for hormone treatment in Romanian, as well as useful guides for medical and administrative transition. The Association also publishes articles relevant to the community. In 2022, the Association moved its headquarters to Brașov and opened the LGBTQIA+ Community Centre. Since then, the Association has focused on maintaining the Centre and developing a national support system. TransCore responds daily to the questions and needs of trans people, offering friendly and professional advice on all aspects of transition, including finding trans-friendly doctors and ways to approach sensitive topics with families.

Contributors: Valentina Biru, Representative of TransCore, **Ioana Fotache**, Executive Director.

- **Necuvinte Association** is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that specializes in preventing and combating discrimination, abuse, and domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence. It is a member of three specialized national and European networks: Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), the VOLUM Federation, and the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS). The organization has taken important steps to pave the way for others. These steps include forming solid partnerships with public institutions responsible for preventing and combating gender-based violence; implementing the first national campaign and caravan, "Broken Wings," in partnership with the Romanian Police; amending Law No. 217/2003; and proposing an amendment to the Criminal Code. Through these efforts, the organization continues to drive profound change in Romanian society. Its activity focuses on five major areas: 1. Intervention and assistance in cases of domestic and gender-based violence. All services are free of charge; 2. Lobbying and advocacy actions; 3. Information and awareness campaigns and preventive education projects; 4. Training of specialists in the justice system and beyond; 5. Humanitarian intervention for refugees.

Contributors: **Simona Voicescu**, Executive Director of Necuvinte Association, Gender-based violence expert, activist and trainer.

I.2.University research centers:

Center for Equal Opportunity Policies, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest (Centrul pentru politicile egalității de șanse, Facultatea de Științe Politice, Universitatea din București, <https://cpes.unibuc.ro/cpes>). The Center for Equal Opportunity Policies (CPES) is the first research center at the University of Bucharest dedicated to a field of research that is less developed in Romanian academia: equal opportunity policies.

The Center aims to develop interdisciplinary research on equal opportunity policies, stimulate high-quality research by its members, and disseminate research through study programs, joint research projects, publications, conferences, and policy consulting activities.

Contributors: **Ionela Băluță**, professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Bucharest and director of the Centre for Equal Opportunity Policies. Her research focuses on gender and feminism in relation to political regimes and ideologies. Her work covers women's political representation, the history of feminism, gender equality policies, violence against women, and anti-gender campaigns.

Bianca Bălănescu is a graduate of Equal Opportunity Policies and an education activist. Her main interests within the broader field of gender equality include women's political representation, gender mainstreaming, intersectionality, gender-based violence and reproductive justice.

I.3.Independent experts:

Cătălina Olteanu, Anti-discrimination and Human Rights Expert, Steering Board Member of the Equality Body (CNCD), Romania.

Crina Marina Mureșanu, Professional Trainer in Social Work, Intersectionality Practitioner and Expert - focused on violence against girls, lecturer phd. at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest and to the Department of Public Health at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania.

Fatma Ruxandra Yilmaz, Politics, Gender and Minorities Expert.

Oana Băluță, Associate professor at the Department of Political Science and European Studies at the Faculty of Political Science of the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA).

Her academic work focuses on gender politics, feminist movements, violence against women with research interests including anti-gender campaigns and democratic resilience, far-right mobilization, gendered political representation, violence against women in politics.

Beyond the academic environment, she has over 20 years of experience in civic activism; for eight years, until 2013, she served as the president of the Center for Curricular Development and Gender Studies: FILIA. She is engaged in initiatives supporting women's rights and gender equality, in preventing and combating gender-based violence, as well as in resisting anti-gender campaigns and policies.

II. Endorsements :

-Coalition for Gender Equality established in 2014 at the initiative of five non-governmental organisations working in the field of women's rights to organise feminist actions in the public sphere on topics such as gender equality and violence against women. Currently, the Coalition consists of 15 member organizations¹.

- The Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS) initially established in the North-East region of Romania, the Federation has expanded its activities nationwide to be a voice for those who provide social services in the private sector. FONSS has taken on the mission of getting involved in policy change and the sustainable development of social services. The Federation currently consists of 44 non-governmental organizations², legal entities under Romanian law, involved in providing social services to vulnerable groups, with recognized activity in their field.

-Center for Human Rights (CEDROM) (<https://www.utm.ro/cedrom/>) is an informal joint project of Titu Maiorescu University in partnership with relevant institutions and organizations (e.g. Romanian Institute for Human Rights -IRDO, Juridice.ro, Universul Juridic Publishing House, National Council for Combating Discrimination, Save the Children Romania) that aims to conduct researches, organize in person and online conferences, as well as reflection groups with the goal of disseminating information on international standards and domestic regulations on human rights issues as widely as possible. CEDROM addresses pressing issues facing Romanian society and international community, while promoting closer ties between academia and relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions.

¹ For further reference, please see: <https://ongen.ro/despre-noi/>.

² For further reference please see : <https://fonss.ro/membrii-fonss/>.

At the same time, it facilitates the widest possible access to international human rights legislation and case law and explains and clarifies their approaches.

-Pas Alternativ Association : with over 25 years of professional expertise and a specialized human resources team that responds to cases of domestic and gender-based violence, the organization is well-equipped to handle responsibilities related to responding to and preventing domestic violence, including psychosocial intervention and psychotherapy. This expertise has enabled the organization to expand its activities to related areas of competence. The organization's mission is to: (1) Support disadvantaged people at risk of marginalization by providing comprehensive social services, such as psychological counseling, social assistance, legal advice, information, support groups, and psychotherapy; (2) Raise community awareness of the usefulness of psychological services that directly address target groups; (3) Developing a professional development system for the organization's members and designing a training program for community professionals.

-Lecturer phd. Beldianu Iolanda Felicia at Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Transylvania University of Braşov.

OVERVIEW: THE SITUATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Violence against women is a pressing social problem in Romania that concerns the authorities, public institutions, civil society and the community as a whole.

Despite having a rigorous legal framework in place to prevent and combat violence against women (which has grown rapidly in recent years), the statistics in this area remain alarming.

Recent statistics show that intimate partner violence is the most widespread form of violence against women, affecting victims regardless of their level of education or background.

Among **EU Member States, Romania ranks fourth (48.9%)** in terms of the percentage of women who have experienced at least one form of violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) from a partner. **Romania also ranks fourth in terms of psychological violence from intimate partners (45.5%)**. Nevertheless, in regard to physical violence against women, **Romania ranks first** among EU Member States with a rate of 23.8%.³

As highlighted in the report *'Barometrul Violenței de Gen 2022. Violența împotriva femeilor în România: reprezentări și percepții'*⁴, mapping the phenomenon of violence against women and domestic violence at a national level is difficult in the absence of an integrated national data collection system on the subject. Without an accurate diagnosis of the extent and manifestation of violence against women, relevant policies and laws are often flawed as they do not reflect reality nor do they address the complexity of the issue.

Before discussing the various forms of domestic violence and how they manifest at a national level, it is important to note that, according to domestic legislation (Article 3 of Law No. 217/2003), domestic violence is defined as any intentional act or omission involving physical, sexual, psychological, economic, social, spiritual or cyber violence that occurs within a family or domestic setting, or between spouses or former spouses, regardless of whether the perpetrator lives or has lived with the victim⁵.

³ According to recent statistics developed by Monitorul Social, a project of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania, available only in Romanian, accessible at: https://romania.fes.de/ro/e/romania-se-afla-in-randul-tarilor-ue-cu-cea-mai-mare-rata-a-violentei-asupra-femeilor-in-cuplu.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawK-E5dleHRuA2FlbQlXMAbicmlkETB5UnlHaWJEazBDbkRhVU9IAR6nSgNlfgqD7958gvrK-ULnHdkFTVc1ZnoHrL3ddaNE-fbJrqRpNXqi0GrgMA_aem_2CeCk_lp3xwzYZgSc4R2aw.

⁴ Ionela Băluță, Claudiu Tufiş, *'Barometrul Violenței de Gen 2022. Violența împotriva femeilor în România: reprezentări și percepții'*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Editura Dota, 2022, pp.12 and 13, available (only in Romanian) at: <https://gep.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Barometrul-Violenta-de-Gen.-Romania-2022.pdf>.

⁵ In addition to Article 3, Article 4 of Law No. 217/2003 defines domestic violence as follows:

a) Verbal violence: the use of offensive or brutal language, such as insults, threats or words and expressions that are degrading or humiliating.

(b) Psychological violence: the imposition of one's will or personal control; the infliction of mental distress or suffering by any means, including verbal threats, blackmail, demonstrative violence towards objects or animals, ostentatious displays of weapons, neglect, control of one's personal life, jealousy-related acts, coercion of any kind, unlawful stalking, surveillance of one's home, workplace or other places frequently visited by the victim, and telephone calls or other types of communication via remote transmission that, due to their frequency, content or timing, create fear, or other actions with a similar effect.

(c) Physical violence: bodily or health injury caused by kicking, pushing, shoving, pulling hair, pricking, cutting, burning, strangulation or biting in any form or intensity. This includes masquerading as the result of accidents, poisoning, intoxication, and other actions with a similar effect. It also includes being subjected to strenuous physical exertion or activities posing a high risk to life, health or bodily integrity, other than those referred to in point (e).

Regarding *sexual violence*, recent national studies show that it remains an under-reported form of violence, despite being a significant social phenomenon.⁶

In terms of *economic violence*, this can include financial restrictions such as the deprivation of essential economic means, forced access to victims' money, being made responsible for all financial expenses, and the sabotaging of employment opportunities. According to research conducted by ANAIS on economic violence, involving a sample of 98 ANAIS beneficiaries between 21 May and 10 June 2024, more than half (60.4%) of participants reported facing restrictions when accessing their money or bank accounts. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents (68.8%) were unable to leave a domestic violence relationship due to economic control by their partner.⁷

Meanwhile, a recent study conducted in Romania and Moldova examined *psychological* and *spiritual violence*. Psychological violence is defined as a series of behaviours that aim to exert control over the victim by manipulating and degrading their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Spiritual violence involves prohibiting victims from practising aspects of their cultural identity, such as a particular religion, religious cult or mother tongue.⁸

Femicide is widespread. At the beginning of June 2025, public opinion in Romania was significantly affected by the case of T.M., a young woman who was married with a child and pregnant at the time of the crime. She was killed in the street by her former partner, who had

(d) Sexual violence: sexual assault; infliction of degrading acts; harassment; intimidation; manipulation; brutality; forced sexual intercourse; marital rape.

(e) Economic violence: prohibiting professional activity; depriving economic means, including basic necessities such as food and medicine; intentionally taking property; prohibiting the right to possess, use or dispose of common property; unfairly controlling common property and resources; refusing to support the family; imposing hard and harmful work that harms health, including that of minor family members; and other actions with a similar effect.

(f) Social violence: forcing isolation from family, community and friends; prohibiting attendance at school or work; prohibiting or limiting professional fulfilment; forcing isolation, including in shared accommodation; depriving access to living space; depriving identity documents; intentionally depriving access to information; and other actions with a similar effect.

(g) Spiritual violence: underestimating or diminishing the importance of satisfying moral and spiritual needs; prohibiting, limiting or ridiculing family members' aspirations; limiting access to cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious values; denying the right to speak or teach children the mother tongue; imposing unacceptable spiritual or religious beliefs and practices; and other actions with a similar effect or repercussion.

(h) Cyber-violence: online harassment; gender-based hate messages; online stalking; online threats; non-consensual publication of intimate information and graphic content; illegal interception of private communications and data; and any other form of misuse of information and communication technology through computers, smartphones or other similar devices that use telecommunications and can connect to the internet and social media or email platforms with the purpose of shaming, humiliating, frightening or threatening the victim.

(2) No form of custom, culture, religion, tradition or honour may be used to justify any of the acts of violence defined in this Law.

⁶ Filia Association, *Violența sexuală: între stigmă și justiție, Raport de Monitorizare 2025*, p.3. The document is available only in Romanian, at: <https://centrulfilia.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Violenta-sexuala-intre-stigma-si-justitie.-Raport-monitorizare-2025.pdf>.

⁷ ANAIS Association, *Cercetare despre violență economică împotriva femeilor*, researcher phd.Elena Trifan, p. 5. The document is available only in Romanian, at: https://asociatia-anais.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/raport_anais_violenta_financiara-final-final-1.pdf.

⁸ *Dezvăluirea părții ascunse a aisbergului, Violența psihologică în Republica Moldova și România*, January 2025, document available only in Romanian, p. 15-16, accessible at: https://arcromania.ro/arc/documente/CercetareViolentaPsihologica.pdf?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR4QS_wovZwaTn_caLNrF6t_LGdigD4qcbH68oemvShl1-au7i7GIHdONI7La2Q_aem_LeXtkZuKdquZ9ycrmuZ7w.

previously abused her from adolescence onwards. She had made countless complaints to the police about her former partner over time.⁹

According to data from the public prosecutor's offices, 413 women and girls were killed in Romania between 2020 and 2023. Of these, at least 166 were killed by an intimate partner, including husbands, ex-husbands, cohabitants and former cohabitants. In the first 22 weeks of 2025 alone, 27 women and girls were killed in Romania, including a Ukrainian woman and a four-year-old girl. In 15 of these cases, women were killed by their intimate partner, and in four cases, the perpetrator committed suicide.¹⁰

Although awareness of this issue has increased among the population in light of recent femicide crimes, the attitude of public authorities and institutions remains indifferent. No institutional stance has been expressed on recent cases of femicide. Femicide is still not defined as a specific criminal act in Romanian legal framework. Furthermore, national authorities have not taken action to identify effective solutions to prevent and combat femicide. No relevant national consultations have been held with non-governmental organisations to identify such solutions. In the same vein, the Judicial Inspection¹¹ has also drawn up a Report titled¹² "identifying the practice of prosecution units and courts in investigating and, respectively, prosecuting homicide offenses under Articles 188-189 of the Criminal Code, with application of Article 199 of the Criminal Code committed against the wife/partner ("femicide)". The wording of the report's title makes it clear that the national authorities consider femicide to be either a specific type of murder (Article 188 of the Penal Code) or an act of aggravated murder (Article 189 of the Penal Code) committed against a family member, as defined in Article 199 of the Penal Code with regard to domestic violence. However, the title and content of the report also suggest that national authorities do not treat femicide seriously enough, as they fail to recognise it as a distinct crime. The distinct, separate regulation of femicide in the Criminal Code is a legal necessity, particularly in light of the current situation in Romania (see the information presented above).

The main reasons why femicide should be autonomously regulated in the Criminal Code are:

- The fact that femicide is not legally recognised in Romania leads to lighter penalties for extreme acts of violence against women.

⁹ See the information (available only in Romanian) presented on the websites: <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/cazul-teodorei-marcu-femeia-ucisa-cum-a-fost-posibil/33431914.html>; <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/protest-in-piata-victoriei-dupa-al-26-lea-caz-de-femicid-din-romania-in-doar-sase-luni-/33448187.html>; <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/protest-violenta-teodora-ucidere/33433083.html>.

¹⁰ Ecaterina Balica, Corina Voicu, Giulia Crișan, Andreea Voicu, „Mică” violență, mari consecințe: despre responsabilitatea penală și socială. Câteva măsuri urgente pentru prevenirea femicidelor comise de către partenerii intimi, article available only in Romanian, at : <https://www.juridice.ro/785886/mica-violenta-mari-consecinte-despre-responsabilitatea-penala-si-sociala-cateva-masuri-urgente-pentru-prevenirea-femicidelor-comise-de-catre-partenerii-intimi.html>.

¹¹ Judicial Inspection is a national institution that acts according to the principle of operational independence in relation to the Superior Council of Magistracy, the courts, the public prosecutor's offices and in relation to other public authorities, exercising its analysis, verification and control powers in specific areas of activity, on the basis of the law.

¹² Please see the document (available only in Romanian) *Raport având ca obiect „identificarea practicii unităților de parchet și a instanțelor de judecată în instrumentarea și, respectiv, judecarea infracțiunilor de omor prevăzute de art.188-189 Cod penal, cu aplicarea art.199 Cod penal săvârșite asupra soției/concubinei ("femicid")*”, accesible at : <https://www.inspectiajudiciara.ro/siteweb/service/Resources/Rapoarte-de-control-2020/24-JT-femicid.pdf>.

- In the Romanian Criminal Code, extreme violence against women is classified as either 'murder' or 'aggravated murder'. However, these definitions do not consider the specific context of femicide, such as control, possessiveness, previous domestic violence and refusal to separate. Consequently, the legal definition of femicide differs from that of the crimes of 'murder' and 'aggravated murder'.¹³

The Recent report on domestic violence ¹⁴ prepared by the Romanian Ombudsman, recognizes the multidimensional nature of violence (an aspect which is also supported by the applicable legal provisions, particularly Article 3 of Law No. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence). However, the Report focuses on physical violence and does not analyse other forms of violence in detail. Similarly, the Report does not mention femicide, which is largely recognized as the extreme form of physical violence inflicted on women simply for being women and in the context of a patriarchal system that promotes the oppression of women and unequal power relations between men and women.

Taken together, these aspects lead to the following preliminary observations:

- (1) Firstly, although violence against women remains a pressing problem in Romanian society, the authorities have a narrow perspective on this issue. They concentrate on physical violence and neglect the multidimensional nature of violence in their research, including economic, sexual and spiritual forms of domestic violence that are expressly regulated in articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 217/2003.
- (2) Secondly, femicide is neither recognised nor accepted by public authorities/institutions as an extreme form of violence against women.
- (3) Thirdly, the lack of concrete data hinders accurate diagnosis of the problem and formulation of appropriate policies and legislation concerning violence against women.

Although Romanian authorities have developed national legislation to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, its implementation remains inadequate. The drafting of the legislation seems to focus more on fulfilling the Romanian State's formal obligations than on addressing the actual needs and rights of victims. Consequently, violence against women and domestic violence remains a constant reality, driven by two main factors: (1) the state's lack of responsiveness to the real problems posed by violence and to the needs of victims; and (2) the general public's lack of empathy and awareness of the negative effects of violence against women and domestic violence.

¹³ For further details, please see information available (only in Romanian) at: Femicidul trebuie introdus în Codul Penal ca infracțiune distinctă și pedepsit cu închisoarea pe viață. Pedepsele pentru criminali sunt prea blânde în România.

¹⁴ Avocatul Poporului, *Raport special privind fenomenul violenței domestice în România*, București 2025, pp. 1-57; the document is available only in Romanian and can be accessed at: <https://avp.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Raport-special-violenta-domestica.pdf>.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, OBJECTIVES AND FINAL AIM OF THE SHADOW REPORT

This Shadow Report contains information and data on national developments and challenges in preventing and combating violence against women, in the period: March 2022– March 2025.

The methodology used to obtain the data and information covered in this Shadow Report is hybrid in nature and includes:

- (1) **desk review research methodology** (for this purpose, we consulted relevant national and international legal instruments, public policy documents, official reports of public authorities/institutions, studies undertaken by state entities, media articles and research papers published on specialised websites);
- (2) **qualitative research methodology** (short description of cases) which includes the analysis of data and facts; the practical aspects resulting from the work of ANAIS Association, as the coordinating entity of the Shadow Report, and also from the work of other non-governmental organisations that were partners in the Shadow Report coalition or endorsed the final form of the Shadow Report;
- (3) **analytical research methodology** (along the lines of an objective research, the Shadow Report also includes the analysis/views of ANAIS Association- as the coordinating organization of the coalition of NGOs as well as of the non-governmental organizations that were partners in the Shadow Report drafting coalition or that supported the final version of the Report);
- (4) **information presented within the First Thematic State Evaluation Report on Romania**¹⁵ (sent to GREVIO at 16 May 2025) and GREVIO's recommendations contained in the GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania adopted by GREVIO on 4 March 2022, published on 16 June 2022).¹⁶

The information contained in the Shadow Report has been structured according to the questions contained in the GREVIO Questionnaire, addressing in particular the issues that remained un-debated or under-debated but also those that are problematic or have become more acute during the reporting period.

Objectives

The Shadow Report aims to achieve the following objectives, starting from the questions set out in the Questionnaire:

-to present the steps taken by non-governmental organizations in the directions of action captured in the Questionnaire and dedicated to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;

¹⁵ Report submitted by Romania pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (First thematic evaluation round) received by GREVIO on 16 May 2025, published on 16 May 2025, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-inf-2025-6-first-thematic-evaluation-state-report-romania/1680b5dde8>.

¹⁶ GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) ROMANIA, adopted by GREVIO on 4 March 2022, published on 16 June 2022, accessible at: <https://rm.coe.int/final-report-on-romania/1680a6e439>.

- to identify the structural deficiencies at the national level that prevent victims from enjoying, in all areas, the highest level of protection, against domestic violence and violence against women;
- to carry out a critical evaluation of State actions in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women;
- to bring changes in State conduct in relation to the management of cases of violence against women and domestic violence while implementing a victim-centered approach;
- to express the views of experts in the field of gender-based violence related to the existing situation at the national level in the matter;
- to formulate recommendations for improving the protection of victims of violence at the national level while implementing a *victim's rights approach*.

Similarly, the Shadow Report will consider the victim's rights approach when conducting analyses and determining the outcomes of practical actions undertaken by State agents and non-governmental organisations.

The victim's rights approach is a conceptual framework that puts the needs and rights of victims at its core. In principle, it aims to: restore violated rights; guarantee victims' access to appropriate remedies; consolidate victims' trust in the community and state agents; and promote social change.¹⁷

¹⁷ Please see more reference in this regard at: <https://www.un.org/en/victims-rights-first>.

PART I: CHANGES IN COMPREHENSIVE AND CO-ORDINATED POLICIES, FUNDING AND DATA COLLECTION IN THE AREA OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Article 7: Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies

1. Please provide information on any new policy development since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on your country to ensure comprehensive policies covering the areas of prevention, protection, and prosecution in relation to stalking, sexual harassment and domestic violence, including their digital dimension, rape and sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, thereby demonstrating further implementation of the convention. Please specify the measures taken particularly in relation to those forms of violence against women that have not been addressed in past policies, programmes and services encompassing the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention.

As mentioned by **Carmen Nemeş- president of ANAIS Association**, since the GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania was published, Romanian authorities have reported several legislative and strategic developments. **However, the actual implementation on the ground remains fragmented, formalistic and insufficiently aligned with the holistic spirit of the Istanbul Convention.**

From the perspective of **ANAIS Association**, one of the few NGOs in Romania that continuously provides legal, psychological, and social services for survivors, **the gap between national strategies and local realities has widened in the last three years.**

Since the publishing of GREVIO Baseline Report (16 June, 2022), Romania has adopted two policy documents that refer to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence:

(1) the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027¹⁸;

(2) the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence "SYNERGY" 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence "SYNERGY" 2021-2030¹⁹.

The following analysis will focus on specific aspects related to each of the two strategies.

1.1.The relationship between the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027 and National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence "SYNERGY" 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence "SYNERGY" 2021-2030

Although the adoption of these two distinct strategies dedicated to preventing and combating violence shows an increased concern of the state to support victims of violence, **there**

¹⁸ Adopted by means of Government Ordinance no. 1.547/2022, available online only in Romanian at: <https://anes.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-nr.-1239Bis.pdf>.

¹⁹ Adopted means of Government Ordinance no. 592/2021, available online only in Romanian at: https://pcabucuresti.mpublic.ro/violenta_sexuala.htm.

is a risk of fragmentation of protection, due to the fact that the state formulated a distinct Strategy in regard to sexual violence thus leaving unattended other forms of domestic violence that are expressly stated in articles 3 and 4 of Law no.217/2003 such as economic, spiritual, digital (cyber), psychological violence.

We suggest an over-arching Strategy that will address *all forms of violence against women* covered by the Istanbul Convention. The main problem with the policy documents adopted up to this point in the field of domestic violence and violence against women is that other forms of violence, apart from sexual violence, are marginalized/neglected in the strategic documents adopted by the Romanian Government.

It is a practical necessity to develop an overarching strategy tailored to each type of violence, especially since all forms of violence are interconnected. For instance, physical violence frequently occurs alongside sexual, economic or psychological violence. Physical violence and femicide (an extreme form of violence) usually occur only after the victim has experienced other forms of violence, such as economic, social, verbal, cyber or psychological violence.

According to **Necuvinte Association**, the National Emergency **Line 112** introduced a new index in August 2025 that categorizes all incidents and crimes related to domestic violence. This index is named "domestic violence," which helps first responders (police, fire department, gendarmerie, and ambulance services) get a clearer picture of the national situation.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 7 :

-Developing a sole and well coordinated National Strategy that will equally address each form of domestic violence recognized by Law No. 217/2003: verbal violence, psychological violence, physical violence, economic violence, social violence, spiritual violence, digital violence.

1.2. The structure of the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027

As the title suggests, the National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men, and for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, is structured around two pillars: (1) equal opportunities and treatment for women and men; and (2) the prevention and combating of domestic violence.

In the opinion of **Carmen Nemeş, president of ANAIS Association**, despite the adoption of the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities and Domestic Violence (2022–2027) and the drafting of secondary legislation, there **has been no significant shift towards coordinated, survivor-centred, gender-sensitive policies. The focus remains on individual measures rather than addressing the systemic causes and consequences of gender-based violence, such as unequal power relations, institutional re-traumatisation, and the digital dimension of violence.**

Thus, as underlined by **Carmen Nemeş**, the following key observations from practice and monitoring undertaken by **ANAIS Association** remain valid:

- No consistent institutional responsibility is being taken for implementing the digital dimension of **gender based violence (GBV)**, despite an increase in cyber-harassment, cyberstalking and technology-facilitated abuse. Civil society initiatives on online safety remain unsupported.

-There is no policy in place regarding obstetric violence or comprehensive sexual violence response protocols, despite an increasing number of reports from survivors.

-National policies mention intersectionality, but there is no mainstreamed approach and funding for services aimed at migrant women, women facing multiple vulnerabilities or women with disabilities is often lacking.

-Service provision remains institution-centred rather than survivor-centred. Access to shelters and legal aid continues to depend on formal referrals, fragmented procedures and local politics.

Although Romania has adopted several legal amendments to Law No. 217/2003, to the Criminal Code and to the Code of Criminal Procedure, **the absence of inter-agency protocols, local coordination mechanisms and integrated case management systems severely undermines the impact of these amendments.**

For example, **despite stalking being a criminal offence, there are no operational protocols for such cases. Survivors often have to file repeated complaints and risk assessments are either not conducted or not acted upon.**

AN AIS Association has actively contributed to the amendment process of Law No. 217/2003, advocating for:

- stronger protection measures for women and girls;
- proper regulation of private service providers;
- recognition of digital violence and abuse of power as systemic;
- inclusion of education measures on consent and sexism in the school curriculum.

Despite these efforts, the NGO sector was not meaningfully involved in the final decisions. ANES²⁰-led working groups remained largely closed and politically controlled.

According to **Ionela Băluță, professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu**, the adoption of the Strategy only fulfills a formal requirement. However, the implementation process is monitored rather vaguely, and the reports for 2023 and 2024 are disorganized, making it impossible to accurately assess the achievement of the indicators. One of the weaknesses of the Strategy is the Action Plan, which does not always have quantifiable metrics for the proposed measures. In the 2024 Report, for example, the last column reports various activities undertaken, some of which are related to the measure, but none of which meet the metrics in the second column. Strictly speaking, none of the measurable metrics set out in the Action Plan were achieved in 2024. Unfortunately, instead of objectively identifying what has and has not been done, in order to then identify the factors that have hindered or prevented the achievement of the indicators and the adoption of recalibration and replanning measures, the monitoring report merely covers up the failure to meet the metrics with disorganized, descriptive, and redundant information. These institutional practices lead to what we call "policies on paper," which remain ineffective because they are not implemented.

Moreover, **professor Ionela Băluță** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu** underline that the Action Plan does not have very clear quantifiable indicators, and the monitoring reports remain descriptive and without clear conclusions on the degree of implementation of each measure. Most activities are financed by European funds, which raises two major questions regarding the sustainability of actions and programs:

²⁰ The acronym stands for "National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men". Throughout this paper, we will use this acronym to refer to the Agency. Interchangeably, we will also use the acronym in English NAEOWM.

1. In the case of specialist training programs, these projects do not cover all the staff at national level who should be trained. Therefore, the intervention is limited and cannot achieve systemic change. Furthermore, no changes have been made to the contents of initial training programs (high schools, post-secondary schools, universities).

2. In the case of projects that create centers or services, it is not very clear whether local authorities will be required to finance these programs at the necessary level, so there is a risk that after the projects end, the activities financed by the projects will cease.

Furthermore, by comparing the information contained in the two pillars we observe that :the first pillar of the Strategy, which deals with gender equality issues, contains a definition of gender-based violence against women and addresses specific forms of such violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and sterilisation, sexual harassment, human trafficking and forced prostitution.

However, these issues are not addressed nor developed in the second pillar, which deals with violence against women and domestic violence.

This fragmentation results in an incomplete legal approach to female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation.

Law no.202/2002 on equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men lists in Article 4, point 1, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced abortion, forced sterilization, etc. **These are recognized as forms of gender-based violence but are not defined nor developed in the legislation. Consequently, there are no recent developments in the policy documents (National Strategies) on female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced abortion, forced sterilization, etc.**

It is worth noting that those issues were not addressed directly in the State Report. In response to Question 7 of the Questionnaire, the state provided information on strategies that only indirectly address issues of domestic violence and violence against women, and which do not consider types of violence such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. Such strategies are, for example : National Strategy for Criminal Asset Recovery for 2021-2025 or National Strategy for the protection and promotion of child rights 2023-2027 approved by Government Decision no. 969/2023.

Information was also provided on legislative developments that do not, however, touch on the key issue of the fragmentation of policy documents on domestic violence and violence against women and the lack of coordination in addressing issues such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced sterilization, etc.

1.3. Other relevant strategic documents

In February 2024, Camelia Proca from A.L.E.G. requested ANES the introduction of a focus on gender-based violence in labour settings in the **National Action Plan for Economic and Political Empowerment of Women (Planul Național pentru împuternicirea economică și politică a femeilor perioada 2024-2028/2025-2029²¹)** during the public consultation period. Specifically, A.L.E.G. pointed out the need to emphasize the negative impact of harassment and other forms of GBV on safety and wellbeing at work, ultimately affecting the economic status and autonomy of women when no redress was granted to victims, often leading to instability of

²¹ Planul Național pentru împuternicirea economică și politică a femeilor perioada 2024-2028/2025-2029, document realizat în cadrul Proiectului „Integrarea perspectivei de gen în politicile publice și procesele bugetare.

employment, lower incomes (eg. unpaid leaves of absence) or even loss of income through resignations. The adopted form of the Action Plan included a distinct priority on reducing gender-based violence in work settings, with reference to ILO convention and the introduction of the paid leave of absence for situations of domestic violence.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 7 :

Adoption of measures to improve the coordination of national policies in addressing issues related to domestic violence and violence against women by:

-Development of a stand-alone Strategy dedicated to the subject of violence against women and domestic violence (currently, there is only one national Strategy that has 2 pillars: a pillar on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and a second pillar on preventing and combating domestic violence).

- Move the provisions on gender-based violence and its forms, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, from Pillar I, which deals with gender equality and non-discrimination to Pillar II, which covers domestic violence and violence against women.

-Improve practices for monitoring and evaluating strategies and action plans and increase the effective implementation of legislation and policies. Otherwise, as in the State Report to GREVIO, we fill dozens of pages with strategies, objectives, plans, interministerial committees, the establishment of teams and working groups, but we have no actual data on their implementation and impact.

-Detailed regulation of female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced abortion and forced sterilization through criminal law norms that would benefit from substantial sanctions, intended to deter the criminal activity of perpetrators. This recommendation is in line with GREVIO's observations contained in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania, page 20, paragraph 44²² and also reiterates GREVIO's recommendation contained in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania, page 20, paragraph 45²³.

1.4. The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence “SYNERGY” 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence “SYNERGY” 2021-2030

The adoption of the Strategy is a positive point. Hence, **several legislative acts were adopted with the aim of strengthening the protection of victims of sexual violence.** In this regard, we note the following:

- "Revenge Porn Law": Law No. 171/2023 amended the Criminal Code to establish a punishment for the violation of privacy through the disclosure, dissemination, or transmission of intimate images without consent. The law focuses on the lack of consent and the harm caused to the victim. It also provides a definition of "intimate

²² GREVIO is concerned by the absence of comprehensive policies on other forms of violence, notably sexual harassment, stalking, forced marriage and FGM.

²³ GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to ensure a state-wide effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated set of policies to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, in particular by fostering increased co-ordination and greater consistency in the policies and measures at the various levels of authority.

images."

- **Amendment to the Criminal Code on sexual consent:** From 1st of January 2024, the legal age of consent has been changed to 16 years (previously it was 15 years old).

According to the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Violence 'SINERGIE' (2021-2030), forms of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) rape; b) revenge pornography; c) sexual slavery; d) sexual harassment, including requests for sexual favours in exchange for a promotion at work or in a higher education institution; e) human trafficking for the purpose of forced prostitution; f) forced exposure to pornography; (g) forced pregnancy; (h) forced sterilisation; (i) forced abortion; (j) forced marriage; (k) female genital mutilation; (l) forced virginity testing.

Nevertheless, the Strategy does not define them, does not indicate their legal nature (whether they are crimes or misdemeanors) and does not indicate the correlative sanction (fine, imprisonment, etc.). Also, *Chapter III-Strategic Directions of Action* and *Chapter IV-Specific Objectives* do not directly address the issue of forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, forced abortion, forced marriage, female genital mutilation.

Also, the Strategy does not extensively address the 'lover boy' method, whereby an intimate partner lures the victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexually exploiting them. This method is often encountered in the work of non-governmental organisations and constitutes a complex form of domestic violence that requires an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 7 :

- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Violence 'SINERGIE' (2021-2030) does not provide a definition for the forms of sexual violence it identifies (sexual slavery; sexual harassment, including requests for sexual favours in exchange for promotion at work or in higher education institutions; human trafficking for the purpose of forced prostitution; forced exposure to pornography; forced pregnancy; forced sterilisation; forced abortion; forced marriage; and female genital mutilation/forced virginity testing). **This lack of definition makes it difficult to apply legislation in this area, as it is hard to identify and sanction an act as sexual violence if it is not properly defined in the Strategy.**

We recommend that the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence explicitly defines the prohibited acts set out in the Istanbul Convention, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced sterilisation and forced abortion. The aim is to prevent such acts and ensure that they are appropriately punished if they occur.

-Further develop on the „lover boy” method in order to achieve a higher protection of victims of sexual violence that are trafficked by their intimate partners with the scope of forced prostitution.

1.5.Criticism and recommendations concerning the (new) legislative framework on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The State's Thematic Report presents under the section *Comprehensive and coordinated policies* information on legislative changes made in the field of domestic violence and violence against women. We will dedicate the following subsection to positive aspects as well as criticism

and recommendations/proposals related to the (new) legislative framework on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

-in regard to Law no. 1/2025 that amends Law no. 217/2003

At national level, Law No.217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence is the main legal framework for regulating the phenomenon of domestic violence and violence against women.

Page 5 of the State Report refers to the most recent amendment of Law No. 217/2003 brought by Law No. 1/2025²⁴. However, Law No. 1/2025 is presented briefly within the State Report and its shortcomings as a regulation are not highlighted.

The improvements made by Law No. 1/2025 to Law 217/2003 regarding the prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence are negligible and do not address the root of the issues.

The following are worth mentioning among the **shortcomings** of substance and the elements left unaddressed by the new regulation contained in Law No. 1/2025:

-even after the adoption of Law No.1/2025 and the subsequent amendment of Law No. 217/2003, - the latter continues to be called the *Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence*, although numerous studies and reports have highlighted the need to change both the name of the law and its content **to explicitly cover violence against girls and women, gender-based violence, and domestic violence;**

-thus, Law No.1/2025 does not expand the conceptual framework used by Law no. 217/2003 by introducing and clarifying the concept of "gender-based violence against women"-explicitly mentioned in Article 3 letter "d" of the Istanbul Convention;

-Law No.1/2025 does not provide methodological rules for implementation (e.g., how many materials should be produced, who should produce them, to whom they should be disseminated, with what indicators), who should verify the implementation of the law, or sanctions. Under these circumstances, compliance with the law is difficult to monitor and, in fact, is not enforced. It is still a good law on paper, used extensively in reports by ANES and institutions involved in combating violence against women;

-it does not introduce the notion of "intersectional discrimination" and does not define it.

Justification concerning the need to introduce the concept of „intersectional discrimination”:

As previously stated, GREVIO's recommendations contained in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania referred to addressing the phenomenon of violence against women and domestic violence from an intersectional point of view. Moreover, in the context of the adoption of EU Directive 1385/2024, the victim's rights-based approach has been updated, being recognized the increased vulnerability of victims subjected to intersectional discrimination. As it follows from the provisions of recitals 6 and 71 of the Preamble to Directive 1385/2024 : *Violence against women and domestic violence can be exacerbated where it intersects with discrimination based on a combination of sex and any other ground or grounds of discrimination as referred to in Article 21 of the Charter, namely race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation ('intersectional discrimination'). Member States should therefore pay due regard to victims affected by such intersectional*

²⁴ Law No. 1 of 10 January 2025 amending and supplementing Law No. 217/2003 on the prevention and combating of domestic violence was published in Official Gazette No. 26 on 14 January 2025. The law is available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/293549>.

*discrimination by taking specific measures.*²⁵ Victims experiencing intersectional discrimination are at a heightened risk of violence. They could include women with disabilities, women with dependant residence status or a dependant residence permit, undocumented migrant women, women applicants for international protection, women fleeing armed conflict, women affected by homelessness, women with a minority racial or ethnic background, women living in rural areas, women in prostitution, women with low income, women detainees, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex persons, older women or women with alcohol and drug use disorders. Victims experiencing intersectional discrimination should consequently receive specific protection and support;

- Likewise, Law No. 1/2025 did not make any additions to take into account the specific needs of victims of violence if they are women in vulnerable situations (Roma women, women with disabilities, elderly women, women living with HIV-AIDS, etc.);

- Law No. 1/2025 does not address the issue of ensuring mandatory state budgetary support for NGOs working with victims of domestic violence. This has implications for the state's responsibility towards NGOs working to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. Without legislation obliging the state to fund NGOs, state provided services (which victims often do not trust) are maintained while services provided by NGOs are at risk of remaining underfunded or being abolished. **The issue of providing mandatory state funding to NGOs requires urgent consideration.**

-in regard to Order no. 20.266/50/2023²⁶ for the approval of the Methodology on measures to prevent domestic violence. According to **professor Ionela Băluță and activist Bianca Bălănescu** this Order's adopted methodology is a useful tool for determining the responsibilities and actions of the professionals involved in cases of domestic violence and violence against women. However, it does not establish any monitoring or sanctioning mechanisms. Thus, despite being adopted in 2023, no report on the status of its implementation has yet been produced. For example, Article 3 provides:

(3) Actions to inform and educate community members for the purpose of preventing domestic violence may be carried out by supporting education at all levels, organising information events, developing community initiatives, facilitating information through innovative means (including electronic means) and using media resources.

(4) Representatives of central and local public administrations shall ensure the preparation and training of individuals responsible for preventing and combatting domestic violence, with a view to strengthening institutional and intervention capacities for preventing domestic violence, and for supporting and protecting victims of domestic violence.

(5) Local public administration authorities responsible for the prevention and combating of domestic violence shall be required to include the training and education of individuals responsible for these tasks in regional, county and local development strategies and programmes.

There is no centralised information on the establishment of community groups. Similarly, there is no centralised national information on the number of public authorities that have provided training to staff, apart from training within the framework of European projects, which does not constitute systemic intervention by the state. There is no centralised public information on point (5).

²⁵ Recital 6 of the Preamble to the Directive 1385/2024.

²⁶ Published in the Official Gazette, no. 332 of 20 April 2023.

-in regard to Order no. 20.840/2022 of the Minister of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities for the approval of the minimum mandatory standards for the application of case management in social services for victims of domestic violence²⁷, as observed by professor Ionela Băluță and activist Bianca Bălănescu, the case management standard is very well developed—it takes into account all the elements necessary for the proper management of domestic violence cases. However, once again, if we read what is written in the standard and look at the situation on the ground, we find that:

1. There is no centralized data on the degree of implementation and monitoring of compliance with the standard.

2. Some provisions are clearly not being complied with. For example, the standard stipulates that "The social service provider shall ensure that the case manager meets the following conditions of education and professional experience: (...) immediately after appointment, undergoes at least 10 hours of continuous training in the field of risk assessment and protective factors, as well as assistance to victims of domestic violence. The courses shall be organized in accordance with the legislation in force on adult vocational training; (...) receive continuous training, training (training workshops, exchange of experience, conferences, seminars, training courses, research, etc.) and professional supervision of at least 40 hours per year in the field of domestic violence and case management, completed with a certificate of participation specifying the topics and number of hours, no less than 15 hours/year for one of the categories."

With the exception of projects financed by European funds or projects financed by international organizations and foundations, **the public system does not offer either the initial 10-hour training or continuing training, in accordance with the professional training standards in force.**

-in regard to the proposed amendments on Law No.217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence

Drawing on 14 years of practical experience in the field of preventing and combating violence against women, ANAIS Association highlighted the existing limitations of the proposed amendments of Law No. 217/2003, elaborating a well-grounded point of view in this regard. The respective point of view aimed to highlight the positive aspects of the proposals for amending of Law No.217/2003, as well as the backward-looking regulations that perpetuate violence against women. **Although ANAIS Association's view on the proposals to amend Law No. 217/2003 was balanced and based on practical experience, the authorities involved in amending the law did not take it into account.**

ANAIS Association recognised and supported the following **positive aspects resulting from the proposals for amending Law No.217/2003:**

-The recognition of child witnesses as victims of domestic violence (Articles 5) is a positive change brought to Law No.217/2003. GREVIO supports legislative changes that recognize the rights of child witnesses. In the Baseline Report on Romania, GREVIO stated that it welcomes in particular that the legal definition of „family members” (Article 5) became more detailed, including, for instance, children from previous relationships and **child witnesses to domestic violence who are explicitly acknowledged as victims.**

²⁷ Published in the Official Gazette, no. 973 of 6 October 2022.

- The introduction of the principle of a gender-sensitive approach; in this regard, Law No.217/2003 is built around recognizing victims of domestic violence and ensuring their rights (articles 5 and 6); also, the corresponding obligations of public authorities towards victims of domestic violence are expressly regulated (articles 7 and the following);
- Introducing services (in the sense of Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention including housing services) for most perpetrators, not just for the perpetrators who are in the probation system;
- Guaranteeing the possibility of accessing services without identity documents or proof of residence within the territorial unit.

ANAIIS Association made the following **criticisms** of the authorities' **proposed amendments to Law 217/2003**:

-although Law No. 217/2003 acknowledges the status of child victims of domestic violence in line with the Istanbul Convention, it does not aim to comprehensively regulate this status. Specifically, it is not focused on domains such as compensation, taxation, education, housing, social investigation, direct intervention; the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPCs) are responsible for these areas. For a more holistic approach, these interconnected issues should be addressed under Law No. 272/2004 on the Rights of the Child. Including extensive provisions on children's status within Law No. 217/2003 would risk diluting its primary objective: ensuring protection against violence. Any complementary measures relating to the protection of children exposed to the consequences of domestic violence should be provided for in specific legislation dedicated to them, in order to ensure regulatory consistency and effectiveness.

Justification of this criticism: Even if Directive 1385/2024 currently addresses issues relating to domestic violence, it does not provide a direct legal basis for incorporating all matters concerning child victims of domestic violence into Law No. 217/2003. The Directive imposes a result-based obligation on EU Member States, rather than a means-based obligation.

Therefore, each Member State has the discretion to determine how to ensure the protection of children who witness domestic violence.

Romania can fulfil its obligation to provide guarantees for children who are victims of domestic violence by: (1) expressly recognising them as victims of domestic violence in Law No. 217/2003, and (2) establishing additional safeguards and regulating their status in full in Law No. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights.

-the proposals for amending Law No.217/2003 may lead to excessive bureaucratisation and legislative redundancy;

Justification of this criticism: Many articles duplicate or complicate existing regulations, for example the obligation to train specialists (Art. 8, para. 51), which, although welcome, is burdened with unnecessary detail. Multiple reporting to ANES (Arts. 8(61–63)) creates the risk of institutional overlaps and administrative bottlenecks.

-the proposals for amending Law No.217/2003 made the subject matter of the law to be artificially inflated and gave room to legislative overlap.

Dozens of new articles on topics such as child survivors of domestic violence (CSVD), survivors' pensions, compensation and professional mentoring are introduced by the proposals for amending Law No.217/2003. These newly proposed regulations relate to Law No. 272/2004 on child protection or to Law No. 211/2004 on compensation for victims of crime, rather than to Law No. 217/2003, which aims to protect women against domestic violence.

This risks diverting budgets and creating confusing legislation in which the protection of female victims of violence becomes a 'means', not an end in itself.

- the legislative proposal does not provide the legal means necessary to subject perpetrators to programs as defined by Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention, including effective and practical psychological counselling.

- in regard to the obligation that perpetrators undergo psychological counselling, even when courts order this measure, the absence of an immediate sanction for non-compliance means the obligation is effectively ineffective. Refusal to undergo counselling is not treated as a breach of the protection order, which negates the preventive role of this measure entirely.

Furthermore, there is no immediate legal or institutional framework for involuntary admission or mandatory referral to treatment for alcohol or drug addiction, despite the fact that many perpetrators have mental or behavioural disorders.

During the official consultations on the proposals for the amendment of Law No. 217/2003, ANAIS Association put forward the following **recommendations/analysis for enhancing the effectiveness of Law No. 217/2003:**

- creating a national fund for supporting victims accessible in real time;
- automatic suspension of parental rights in case of proven and repeated violence, not as a violation of human rights but as a sanction of the perpetrator with the aim of reducing recidivism;

- eliminating mediation from any procedure related to domestic violence** (at present, mediation is optional; according to Article 27, paragraph 2 of Law No.217/2003: *Cases of domestic violence may be subject to mediation at the request of the parties, in accordance with the law*). Although the possibility of mediation under Law No. 217/2003 is in line with the Istanbul Convention, it disproportionately affects victims of domestic violence in practice. Abusive relationships involve a profound imbalance of power. **Mediation ignores this and treats the parties as equals, which can perpetuate the abuse.** The mediation process may force victims to confront their abusers directly, which can lead to retraumatization or the resumption of the cycle of violence. Mediation offers no real guarantees of protection for the victim. Unlike a protection order, which imposes clear restrictions, mediation relies on voluntary agreements that are easily violated. Mediation may delay or compromise the objectives set out in Law No. 217/2003 such as: protecting the victim's life and safety, ensuring a speedy intervention, and preventing violence.

- establishing a mandatory monitoring period for perpetrators, after the expiry of the protection order;

- introducing a legal obligation for local authorities to finance services provided by NGOs;

- reforming the composition of the working group for Strengthening the Legal Framework in the Field of Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence – by including practitioners: social workers, practicing lawyers, psychologists, sociologists.

-in regard to the current state of Law No.217/2003

ANAIS Association view of the current state of regulations contained in Law no.217/2003

In its current form, Law No.217/2003 **does not promote a the victims-centered approach thus contributing to the fact that the rights of the perpetrators are put above the rights of the victims.** In the lines below we will present the clear disproportion between the protection that the law offers to the victim and the protection that the law offers to the perpetrator.

Currently, women are often discouraged — sometimes subtly, sometimes explicitly — from seeking protection or requesting an electronic monitoring device (the bracelet) for the perpetrator. If the victim violates the protection order (for example, by contacting the perpetrator), she is immediately fined, regardless of the dynamics of trauma and abusive relationships, where returning to the perpetrator is common and can happen several times.

Conversely, if the perpetrator violates the protection order, this constitutes a criminal offence. However, in practice, the criminal case can take years to be solved and is often finally settled with a no prosecution decision (*"neînceperea urmăririi penale"*).

The difference in the speed with which the victim is punished compared to the slowness or ineffectiveness with which the perpetrator is punished reflects clear discrimination between the two. Sanctions should be applied fairly and proportionately, taking into account the victim's vulnerability and with the aim to deter the perpetrator.

Additionally, the lengthy time victims spend at the police station monitoring and activating the electronic bracelet acts as a deterrent in itself. In the event of a relapse, many women choose not to apply for the bracelet.

Moreover, there is currently no form of direct, rapid, dedicated financial support for victims of domestic violence, such as social housing, rent support, food vouchers or genuine retraining measures.

Existing legislation is general and difficult to apply in practice, with no urgent intervention mechanisms or accessible specialist support.

These systemic shortcomings directly contribute to an increased risk of recidivism on behalf of the perpetrator. Also, all of these shortcomings basically force the victims to go back to their perpetrators.

In order to improve national regulations with a view to ensuring an approach based on the rights of victims of domestic violence at the national level, ANAIS Association puts forward the following recommendations:

-Application of the bracelet device *ex officio*, regardless of the victim's consent, in situations where the risk to the life and physical or mental integrity of the victim and children is increased, both through the temporary/provisional protection order and through the protection order²⁸.

-Eliminating the sanctioning of the victim for violating the protection order, given the fact that it is usual for the victim to go back to the perpetrator; experts recognize that is usual for the victim to return to the perpetrator between 5–10 times. The reasons for violating the order are different: in the case of the victim, many victims want to believe in the perpetrator's ability to change and sincerely wants to resume the relationship. In contrast, the perpetrator's violation of

²⁸ Article 31, paragraph 3, letter b of Law no. 217/2003 provides that the measure of imposing to the perpetrator to permanently wear an electronic surveillance device is feasible if 2 conditions are cumulatively met: (1) the perpetrator was obliged to keep a minimum distance from the victim and (2) the expression of the protected persons' consent to wear an electronic surveillance device that allows monitoring of the perpetrator's compliance with the obligation.

the protection order is motivated by violent intentions, with the aim of punishing or killing the victim. **Violation of protection order often represents a risk factor of severe violence, even femicide.** Nevertheless, in the case in which the victim returns to the perpetrator this situation does not endanger the perpetrator's life.

- Eliminating the possibility for the perpetrator to blackmail and expose the victim through various agreements regarding children, during the extended monitoring period;** this aspect should be seen as a sanction, not as a loss or restriction of rights in regards to the perpetrator.

- Recognizing (by means of specific regulation) that during the postpartum period, women are particularly vulnerable, which makes managing cases of violence more difficult. Additionally, women who have children with the perpetrator often cite this fact as a reason to return to the perpetrator.** Also, it is important to ensure the protection of the bond between mother and child, with measures appropriate to the situation (e.g.: in a specific case from the practice of the ANAIS Association, a victim was killed by her partner when she returned to him due to the fact that the child was left with her partner).

- Expanding the forms of violence expressly regulated by Law No. 217/2003 to include obstetric violence** (this being amply documented in the practice of specialized non-governmental organizations; please see the research *The Experience of Birth in Hospitals in Romania. Research Report on Obstetric Violence* authored by Diana-Elena Neaga Laura Grünberg Crina Radu²⁹.)

- Priority protection of children from families with a history of violence, as a preventive measure against bullying, substance abuse, school dropout.**

- Clear regulation of custody and the child's visitation schedule, so that the child's rights and safety prevail over the perpetrator's formal rights even after the expiration of the protection order/temporary protection order.**

- **Correlating the amount of alimony with the real needs of the child and sanctioning delays or intentionally underreporting income in order to take revenge on the victim and perpetuate gender stereotypes** (e.g. when establishing the alimony, the perpetrator usually says to the victim "you don't deserve more", the perpetrator takes revenge on the victim, does not take into account the needs of the children, etc.).

- Treating femicide as a specific criminal offence.

- Expressly stating in the legislation the need to quickly resolve criminal cases related to domestic violence.**

- Legal acknowledgement of the right of victims to choose between public services and services provided by NGOs with fair settlement from public funds.** Services can be social, psychological, legal, etc. By underfunding licensed services provided by NGOs, they will disappear or will not expand at the national level.

- **Regulating clear and explicit provisions on the role of licensed NGOs services providers in all stages of the intervention:** identification, monitoring, assistance, evaluation and financing.

- Creating a national fund for victim support, accessible in real time through licensed social service providers, public or private,** including the elimination of stamp duties (*"taxe de timbru"*) and court costs (*"cheltuieli de judecată"*) related to main legal application and/or related applications for domestic violence cases. As of September 2025, victims of domestic violence in Romania do **not automatically** receive exemptions from judicial stamp duties for court proceedings such as divorce or partition. However, there is a legislative project underway

²⁹ The research is available only in Romanian and is accesible at: https://moasele.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Raport-privind-violenta-obstetrica_AMI_septembrie_2024.pdf.

that aims to provide these exemptions. The project supports victims of domestic violence, who are often economically dependent on the perpetrators. Its direct goal is to facilitate access to justice.³⁰

- Amendment of Law No. 217/2003, of the Criminal Code, and of the Code of Criminal Procedure **to establish a national jurisdiction for domestic violence and violence against women, including:**

-specialized courts dealing with domestic violence/violence against women.

-correlatively, the establishment of a legal obligation for professionals (judges and prosecutors) to undergo training on the issue of domestic violence/gender-based violence.

-the establishment of a specialized gender sensitive procedure to be followed in the investigation/trial of domestic violence.

- amending legislation and strategic documents in the field of preventing and combating violence so that **the principle of reversing the burden of proof should be applied properly. The victim's mere statement that she has been subjected to a violent act should amount to a prima facie sufficient case to initiate victim protection proceedings.**

Justification:

Traditionally, the Romanian legal system is based on the principle of *onus probandi incumbit actori* (the burden of proof is on the plaintiff).

However, in cases concerning discrimination, in view of their particularities (i.e. the subordinate position of the victim and her particularly sensitive physical and mental state as a result of being subjected to discrimination), at the level of European Union law, was recognized the reversion of the *principle that the burden of proof lies with the plaintiff*. By way of example, Article 19 of Directive 2006/54³¹ states: Member States shall take such measures as are necessary, in accordance with their national judicial systems, to ensure that, *when persons who consider themselves wronged because the principle of equal treatment has not been applied to them establish, before a court or other competent authority, facts from which it may be presumed that there has been direct or indirect discrimination, it shall be for the respondent to prove that there has been no breach of the principle of equal treatment*.

In the same sense, Article 35 (1) of Law No.202/2002³² on equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men transposes the principle contained in Directive 2006/54 :

The burden of proof lies with the person against whom the complaint or, as the case may be, the application has been lodged, in respect of facts from which it may be presumed that there has been direct or indirect discrimination, which must establish that there has been a breach of the principle of equal treatment between women and men.

When dealing with violence (as a specific form of discrimination), in the practice of non-governmental organizations it has been concluded that it is particularly difficult for victims to obtain evidence of the physical violence to which they are subjected, especially because during the violent act the victim is usually more concerned with saving her own life than with gathering evidence incriminating the perpetrator.

³⁰ For further information, please see: Proiect legislativ în sprijinul victimelor violenței domestice - Radio Romania Cluj (available only in Romanian).

³¹ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).

³² Available (only in Romanian) at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/35778>.

It is true that, in cases of physical and/or sexual violence, the period immediately following the violent act is essential for gathering evidence, but most cases, victims are too traumatized to carry out a coordinated evidence-gathering operation.

On the other hand, certain forms of violence (such as psychological and spiritual violence) are very difficult to prove.

-in regard to the Criminal Code

- In order to eliminate the impunity of perpetrators, in cases of violence against a family member, regulated by Article 199, it is necessary to repeal the provisions contained in article 199, paragraph 2, second sentence,³³ according to which in the case of committing the crimes of beatings or other violence-”lovirea sau alte violențe” (article 193 Criminal Code) and bodily harm due to negligence-”vătămare corporală din culpă” (article 196 Criminal Code) against family members, reconciliation of the parties removes criminal liability. **The amendment should aim to eliminate the exemption from criminal liability resulting from the reconciliation of the parties.**

Often, the victim of domestic violence is threatened, blackmailed by the perpetrator in order to formally reconcile so that the perpetrator escapes criminal liability. In many cases, victims give in and accept reconciliation with the perpetrator out of a desire to save the relationship/family. Reconciliation between the perpetrator and the victim is in practice a prerequisite for the perpetrator to resume criminal activity.

-in regard to labour laws

As a result of the four-year long advocacy campaign “Employers for Respect”, conducted by **A.L.E.G. Association** and supported by over 40 civil society organisations and unions, the Romanian Parliament voted last year the ratification of the ILO C190 for the elimination of harassment in the world of work, so several legal amendments have been adopted or are in process of adopting that also support implementation of the Istanbul Convention. **Government Decision no. 27/2025 amended the Methodology for prevention and combating sex-based harassment and moral harassment³⁴ in the workplace introduced under Government**

³³ Article 199, paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code: In the case of offenses provided for in art. 193 and art. 196 committed against a family member, criminal proceedings may also be initiated ex officio. **Reconciliation removes criminal liability.**

³⁴ According to Article 5.1 of the Annex to the Methodology for Preventing and Combating Harassment Based on Sex and Moral Harassment at Workplace: Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct, including conduct of a sexual nature, that offends, humiliates, or intimidates a person. This includes situations in which a person is asked to engage in sexual activities as a condition of their employment, as well as situations that create a hostile, intimidating, or humiliating environment. Harassment involves multiple incidents and/or repetitive actions, which constitute physical, verbal, or nonverbal harassment. According to Article 5.2 of the Annex to the Methodology: Examples of conduct or behaviors that constitute harassment at work include, but are not limited to, the following: 1. Physical conduct: unwanted, repeated physical contact (e.g., inappropriate touching of the body), physical violence (e.g., sexual assault), and the use of threats or workplace-related rewards to request sexual favors. According to Article 5.3 of the Annex to the Methodology, workplace moral harassment is: Any behavior toward an employee by a hierarchical superior, subordinate, or hierarchically comparable employee in an employment relationship that has the purpose or effect of violating the employee's rights or dignity, affecting their physical or mental health, or compromising their professional future. This behavior can manifest in the following forms: a) Hostile or unwanted conduct; b) Verbal comments; c) Actions or gestures. Any behavior that, by its systematic nature, may harm the dignity or physical or mental integrity of an employee or group of employees, endangering their work or degrading

Decision no. 970/2023. Before this legal amendment, there were little provisions for monitoring how harassment is being combated and Labor Inspection failed to effectively include this theme in their reviews, as indicated by the study and the policy brief undertaken by **A.L.E.G.** in 2021. Also effects of harassment on employees' health and vulnerability of interns, volunteers and other informal workers was being ignored.

The new methodology places more emphasis on prevention measures to be actively taken by employers from both public and private institutions, including military and education units: establishing procedures and responsibilities for reviewing complaints and providing victim support, guidance and counselling, followed by annual reports to be submitted to ANES on this topic. **For the first time, the possibility to submit anonymous complaints was introduced, provided that the submission contains information describing an act of harassment.** These provisions contribute to a better implementation of the pillars of the Istanbul Convention, particularly Article 40 related to Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment has been one of the major forms of violence against women for which very few sanctions were being taken in Romania, although prevalence could be presumed to be quite high, as illustrated by the many journalism investigations culminating with Snoop article published in July 2024, as well as by many testimonials **A.L.E.G.** collected from survivors during the campaign.

General observation concerning the section of public policies

According to **professor Ionela Băluță** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu**, the section on public policies in the State Report primarily presents various adopted strategies and regulations, without providing any evidence-based analysis of their implementation status. The large number of legislative and policy changes adopted, coupled with the almost total lack of monitoring and evaluation reports based on indicators and outcomes, suggests a systemic weakness in the public policy framework: a focus on appearance and tick-box exercises. Many of these procedures and methodologies are generally drafted within the framework of European projects, with legislation mainly being adopted as a result of the implementation of international provisions, such as those of the Istanbul Convention, or European provisions. This ensures that the project's indicators and legal obligations are met. However, implementation of this legislative and public policy framework is insufficient, and it can be difficult to navigate due to successive changes.

Evidence of this can be seen in Romania's consistent ranking at the bottom of all European countries; conversely, international rankings show that we are at the top when it comes to underage mothers and human trafficking. Furthermore, the fact that, by 20 August 2025, there were already 35 cases of femicide, and that many of the victims had filed complaints with the police and sometimes had restraining orders in place, shows the inefficiency of the intervention system in cases of violence against women. **Prevention efforts are completely lacking.**

2. Where relevant, please provide information on any measures taken to ensure the alignment of any definitions of domestic violence and of violence against women in national legislation or policy documents with those set out under Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention and provide the relevant applicable provisions in English or French.

the working environment. For the purposes of this law, stress and physical exhaustion are considered forms of workplace harassment.

For further details, please see : <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/275396> (available only in Romanian).

The lack of alignment of the definitions of violence against women and domestic violence with the definitions included in the Istanbul Convention persists. The situation remains the same as described by GREVIO in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania. We refer to GREVIO's Recommendations 12 and 13 according to which: **12. GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to enhance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in relation to all the forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence, that are currently less addressed by policies, programmes and services, such as sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, forced abortion, forced sterilisation and stalking. 13. GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to take all legislative measures to harmonise its definition of “family members” in the Criminal Code with the definition of domestic violence contained in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention and to ensure the effective application of such a harmonised definition in practice.**

In regard to GREVIO's recommendation 12, please see our recommendations made at the previous points.

In regard to GREVIO's recommendation 13, we will analyse two aspects: the definition of “domestic violence” and the definition of “family members”.

Firstly, we have to mention the fact that we agree with the observations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania according to which : *GREVIO notes with concern that the definitions of domestic violence offered by the Domestic Violence Law treat intergenerational domestic violence and intimate partner violence alike and do not take into account the gendered dynamics and issues of power and control that are manifest in the latter form of domestic violence.*

The definition of domestic violence (Article 3 of Law No. 217/2003) and the definitions of its forms (Article 4 of Law No. 217/2003) do not distinguish between intergenerational violence and violence between intimate partners.

Consequently, these definitions fail to emphasise the unique characteristics of intergenerational domestic violence and domestic violence between intimate partners. This leads to the conclusion that the definition of domestic violence in Law No. 217/2003 is merely a literal transposition of the definition in Article 3(b) of the Istanbul Convention.

The definition of domestic violence and its forms should be amended to highlight the particularities of intergenerational violence and violence between intimate partners.

Paragraph 42 of the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention outlines the features that distinguish intergenerational domestic violence from domestic violence between intimate partners and are ought to be taken into account when amending the aforementioned articles:

Domestic violence as intimate-partner violence includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence between current or former spouses as well as current or former partners. It constitutes a form of violence which affects women disproportionately and which is therefore distinctly gendered. Although the term “domestic” may appear to limit the context of where such violence can occur, the drafters recognised that the violence often continues after a relationship has ended and therefore agreed that a joint residence of the victim and perpetrator is not required. Inter-generational domestic violence includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence by a person against her or his child or parent (elderly abuse) or such violence between any other two or more family members of different generations. Again, a joint residence of the victim and perpetrator is not required.

Secondly, in regard to the definition of “domestic violence”, **the main obstacle to establishing a unified conceptual framework for violence against women and domestic**

violence is the lack of a coherent link between the provisions of Law No. 202/2002 and Law No. 217/2003.

Law No. 217/2003 only defines domestic violence in Article 3, without introducing the concept of *gender-based violence*. The latter is defined in Article 4, letter 'I' of Law No. 202/2002. Although the amendments to Law 202/2002 align with the definitions found in the Istanbul Convention and other international legal provisions, the issue is that this law has no effect on police activity or the work of the courts. Police intervention, data collection and reporting are based on Law No. 217/2003, and the relevant legal procedures are based on Law no. 217/2003, the Criminal Code and, where applicable, the Labour Code (for cases of harassment or violence in the workplace). Apart from Law No. 202/2002, the term and framework used is 'domestic violence', which renders the gender perspective invisible and eliminates it.³⁵

In our view, **this fragmentation of the special legislation on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women, as represented by Law No. 217/2003, is misleading, as it suggests that gender-based violence is solely a specific form of discrimination that should fall within the scope of Law No. 202/2002.** From the correlation of these legal provisions does not clearly result the fact that gender-based violence is an autonomous problem that needs addressing in a specific manner.

Thus, the definition of gender-based violence must fall within the scope of Law No. 217/2003 for the following reasons:

- the definition of gender-based violence contained in Law No. 202/2002 was inspired by the definition of gender-based violence against women contained in Article 3, letter "d" of the Istanbul Convention. Secondly, the Istanbul Convention, as its title suggests, is aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- the definition of gender-based violence contained in Article 4, letter "I" of Law no. 202/2002 expressly states that it includes domestic violence;
- domestic violence - regulated by Law No. 217/2003 - disproportionately affects women, with gender stereotyping being the main factor in the perpetration of domestic violence against women.

Conversely, there is no coherent link between the concepts employed in Law No. 217/2003 and those in the Criminal Code. **The issue of harmonizing the definition of "family members" in the Criminal Code with the definition of domestic violence contained in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention is still pending; there isn't any progress from the last GREVIO evaluation.**

Law No. 217/2003 defines domestic violence as any violent act or omission between spouses or ex-spouses, as well as between current or former partners, *regardless of whether the perpetrator is living with the victim at the time of the offence: for the purposes of this law, domestic violence means any intentional inaction or action of physical, sexual, psychological, economic, social, spiritual or cyber violence, which occurs in the family or domestic environment or between spouses or former spouses, as well as between current or former partners, regardless of whether the perpetrator lives or has lived with the victim (article 3, Law*

³⁵ For further details, please see Băluță Ionela & Claudiu Tufiş, *Barometer of Gender-Based Violence 2022. Violence Against Women in Romania: Representations, Perceptions*, <https://centrulfilia.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Barometer-of-Gender-Based-Violence-2022-Romania->

*no.217/2003). In addition, article 5, paragraph 1, letter "c" of Law No. 217/2003 includes in the category of "family members" persons who have established relationships similar to those between spouses or between parents and children, current or former partners, **regardless of whether they lived with the perpetrator or not**, the ascendants and descendants of the partner, as well as their brothers and sisters.*

The Criminal Code, however, *links family membership to cohabitation between individuals in the following relationships: c) persons who have established relationships similar to those between spouses or between parents and children, **if they live together** (article 177, paragraph 1, letter "c").*

Of the two legal frameworks for dealing with domestic violence, Law No. 217/2003 comes closest to the Istanbul Convention. According to Article 3(b) of the Istanbul Convention, domestic violence exists between former or current spouses or partners, *regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or has shared a home with the victim.*

Therefore, Article 177, paragraph 1, letter "c" of the Criminal Code must be amended to *include in the category of 'family member' persons who have established relationships similar to those between spouses or between parents and children, regardless of whether they live together.* (we reiterate GREVIO's Recommendation no.13 from the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania).

Our main argument in favor of this proposal lies in the critical observations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania according to which the definition of "family member" in the Law on Domestic Violence and the definition in the Criminal Code differ. In contrast to the Law on Domestic Violence, the Criminal Code contains a restrictive definition of "family members" (Article 199) and only covers current – but not former – spouses and partners. Moreover, *under the Criminal Code, the definition of family members is restricted to those persons that share the same residence, hence limiting criminal liability under this offence to those who fall within the definition of family or share a residence. As such, it is not in line with the definition set out in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention and differs from the definition of domestic violence put forward by the Law on Domestic Violence. **GREVIO thus points to the need to align all definitions in use to those of the Istanbul Convention.***

In the State Report delivered by Romania at 16 May 2025 the inconsistencies between the regulations of the Criminal Code in relation to the definition of "family members" and the Istanbul Convention are not highlighted. The inconsistencies between national law (Criminal Code) and the Istanbul Convention are presented in the following manner : *While the Criminal Code provides a narrower definition of "family member" compared to Law No. 217/2003, it still offers legal protection for individuals who may not fall under this category, such as former spouses or cohabiting partners (see page 15 of the State Report). **Nevertheless, the manner in which the Criminal Code effectively offers legal protection to the family members that do not live together is not expressly clarified in the State Report.***

According to Carmen Nemeş, president of ANAIS Association, although Romanian legislation has progressively expanded the definitions of domestic violence and violence against women, important discrepancies remain between the national legal framework and the definitions set out in the Istanbul Convention, particularly in terms of practical implementation.

While Law No. 217/2003 now includes multiple forms of violence (physical, psychological, economic, sexual and social), it does not fully align with Article 3. However, the Criminal Code still only **treats domestic violence as an aggravating circumstance rather than a standalone criminal offence. This undermines the visibility and seriousness of the crime.**

Example: There is not regulated the offence of 'domestic abuse' that covers patterns of coercive control or cumulative harm. Instead, each act must be prosecuted individually (e.g. bodily harm or threats), which leaves psychological and economic abuse largely unpunished.

Additionally, stalking is criminalised, but not its legal approach is not operationalised. There are no risk assessment protocols nor protection measures tailored to stalking victims.

The definition of 'family member' in the Criminal Code (Art. 199) is narrower than that in Law No. 217/2003, excluding unmarried former partners and those in informal relationships.

Terms such as gender-based violence, femicide and digital violence are either undefined or underdefined in legislation.

ANAIIS Association has consistently called for:

- the introduction of a standalone offence of domestic abuse modelled on coercive control legislation;

- the recognition of femicide in criminal law as both a term and a specific aggravating factor;

- the harmonisation of definitions across civil, social and criminal law frameworks.

The current fragmentation of legal definitions leads to inconsistent responses – survivors face different thresholds and levels of recognition depending on whether they are in the criminal, social or civil system.

In respect to the essential definitions framework in the field of violence against women, some notable aspects of the definition of 'victim' have emerged from practice. **According to Article 5, paragraph 2 of Law No. 217/2003, a victim is defined as a natural person subjected to one or more forms of violence as defined in Article 4, including children who witness such violence.** While this definition aligns with that presented in Article 3, letter "e" of the Istanbul Convention, which defines "victim" as any natural person subjected to violence against women and domestic violence, there are practical dynamics related to the definition of victim that must be taken into account. In accordance with those reported by the **Feminism Romania Association**, while in the feminist discourse in Romania there is a gradual shift from "victim" to "survivor" terminology, the Romanian legislation refers to people who experience gender-based violence/sexual/domestic violence only as "victims". The legislation shapes the language that is also used by the staff working in public institutions, including health care professionals, which all use the term "victim". Legislation in Romania has been recognizing domestic violence and violence against women for a long time. The term "gender-based violence" was introduced only after the Istanbul Convention ratification and implementation and is not yet well integrated neither in the legislation nor in the institutional discourse.

In practice, the **ANAIIS Association** has observed that **public authorities interpret the notion of 'victim' by adding requirements to the legal definition** so that a person can be recognised as a 'victim' and benefit from the rights and benefits granted by law.

For example, in order to access state services, **individuals subjected to violence** (who are therefore victims under Law No. 217/2003 and the Istanbul Convention) **have often been required to present a protection order.** This results in the victim being discriminated against and being forced to appeal to the authorities (the temporary protection order is issued by the police and the protection order by the court), as well as having to undergo difficult and time-consuming procedures in order to benefit from support services.

Furthermore, state authorities have sometimes instructed NGOs providing services to victims of domestic violence and violence against women not to provide these services unless victims present a protection order.

As highlighted by **professor Ionela Băluță** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu**, without the introduction of a distinct approach to violence against women and gender-based violence, with clear definitions and legal frameworks, Romania cannot effectively implement the Istanbul Convention's provisions related to recognising stereotypes and gender roles as historical and structural factors that perpetuate violence against women.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 7 :

- Harmonise the definition of 'family members' in the Criminal Code with the definition of domestic violence contained in Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention.**
- Apply the definition of 'victim' as set out in the Istanbul Convention without introducing additional requirements that are not legally mandated and that, in practice, prevent women from exercising their rights.**

3. Please provide information on how your authorities ensure that policies on violence against women and domestic violence put women's rights and their empowerment at the centre and on any measure taken to enhance the intersectionality of such policies, in line with Articles 4 paragraph 3 of the convention

Although we are currently witnessing a development of the legal framework and policies applicable in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women, unfortunately, **during the reporting period there were no notable developments that would allow the shaping of a real approach based on the rights of victims of domestic violence and violence against women.**

Empowering women does not only mean having laws and policies regarding violence against women and domestic violence but also means:

- perceiving violence against women as a national problem with a transversal character (as acts of violence against women and domestic violence are present in all areas of social life, at all levels of action, against all victims, regardless their race, colour, age, etc.);
- awareness (at the level of state decision-makers and at the level of society as a whole) of the risks and social costs brought by violence against women;
- effective prevention and combating of gender stereotypes with the aim of creating at the national level a climate conducive to the support, healing and social reintegration of victims of domestic violence.

Given that surveys³⁶ show a constant increase in the phenomenon of domestic violence and violence against women, as well as the manifestation of recent cases of femicide, we cannot say that the above-mentioned goals are being met.

The Romanian authorities fail to put women's rights and their empowerment at the centre of intersectional policies in many ways:

³⁶ In Romania, according to information presented at : Tragedii în lant: 26 de femei ucise de parteneri doar în primele 6 luni ale anului » Monitorul de Neam; 39 de femei ucise în 2025. Parlamentul reacționează, the evolution of domestic violence and violence against women may be illustrated as follows: Thirty-nine women were killed in the first 35 weeks of 2025 — more than one per week; 26 of these women were killed by their partners in the first six months of 2025 alone; Over 61,000 cases of domestic violence were officially reported during the same period. Romania has the highest rate of domestic violence in rural areas in the EU, with over 50% of women reporting that they have been assaulted by their partner.

-first of all, according to **A.L.E.G. Association**, the national coordinating body – National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES/NAEOMW)- by using in the very name of the institution the concept of *equal opportunities between women and men* indicates an evasive and partial commitment towards gender equality and further towards intersectionality considerations. In the context of the anti-gender propaganda³⁷ of the last years in Romania, even central authorities mandated to lead on gender equality policy are making compromises that reflect how the Agency has to struggle for fulfilling its mandate in the unfriendly political landscape. According to **A.L.E.G. Association** "anti-gender propaganda" is a concept often used in relation to "gender-backlash" (the concept basically refers to the regression of women's rights and gender equality), which was even the subject of a European Parliament Resolution in 2019. But since then things have gotten much worse with the momentum gained by extremist political movements after the pandemic. Concretely, the concept refers to the public discourse of some political, religious, etc. leaders against gender equality (which they call *gender ideology*), as well as related legislative initiatives, for example to obstruct gender equality education in schools, promoting the myth that gender equality and women's fight against violence would destroy the family. This is the example from Romania with the 2020 attempt to include in the Education Law a provision prohibiting any reference to gender identity, ultimately declared unconstitutional.³⁸

-secondly, responsibility for implementation of integrated policies is placed at county level with the general directorates for social assistance and child protection (DGASPC), which do not represent specialised structures dedicated to violence against women (VAW) that have women at the center of their approach. Child protection sector has been historically pushed into fitting in women's protection in the Romanian system, which can be interpreted as implying that women have a similar lack of agency as children and do not deserve a distinct institutional response.

-thirdly, the great majority of the survivors who reach out to **A.L.E.G. Association** counseling center or other women's rights organizations complain about facing severe victim-blaming attitudes as well as attempts at minimizing or denying the violence when they report to police or when they call on the support of public social services: *Why didn't you not come earlier? Why didn't you try to be less provoking and get back together? Where are your proofs - it is your word against his...* These are examples of responses women reporting violence get from those who should be helping them. During the training programs provided to professionals working with survivors, the training staff of **A.L.E.G. Association** has often heard police officers and social workers make comments like: *"but victims often withdraw their complaints and we work for nothing"* *"this is not violence, he was just jealous because she cheated on him"*.

In many of the femicide cases recently described in Romanian media, **one can also track back failures of various officials to recognize controlling behaviour as a sign of violence, failure to identify the risks of domestic violence and prevent escalation.** In many cases, sexism and other types of bias are at the core of these failures.

It is not uncommon for social services to meet jointly with the victim and perpetrator, especially for solving conflicts related to child custody or visitation rights, as domestic violence has not been correctly identified, and to facilitate revictimization or secondary victimization of women.

³⁷ Details at : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019IP0111>.

³⁸ Details here <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/justitie/ccr-legea-care-interzice-referirea-la-identitatea-de-gen-in-scoli-e-neconstitutionala-1419118>).

During a recent meeting with local intervention team on domestic violence, **A.L.E.G. Association** psychologist witnessed a situation in which a man was shouting at both his partner and the social workers, claiming that he was the victim, while slamming doors and behaving aggressively, and none of the public service staff identified this as a major problem placing the victim at risk. When confronted, they explained that "such quarrels are often part of our daily jobs".

According to **Simona Voicescu, Executive Director of the Necuvinte Association**, the organization collaborated closely with the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (IGPR) this summer to finalize a course module focusing on trauma-informed intervention and victim-centered approaches. The module has been available in their online library since July for all police officers.

Specific intersectional issues

In addressing cases of violence against women, the State's response did not take into account intersectionality issues. Apart from providing some information on trafficked women, the State Report did not provide details on how Roma women, women with disabilities, women belonging to the LGBTI community, etc. are empowered through policies and/or laws adopted at national level.

Even if, in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania, GREVIO adopted a specific recommendation (Recommendation 29, page 16: GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to continue to address the multiple forms of discrimination that women and girls from Roma communities in particular face and to take measures to ensure that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention are implemented without discrimination on any of the other grounds listed in Article 4, paragraph 3), **the situation regarding the intersectional approach to the needs of the victim remains a pending issue at national level, which has not been adequately addressed.**

As a result of studying the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022—2027, it follows that issues related to intersectional discrimination have been addressed very narrowly under Pillar I on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and not under Pillar II on violence. Hence the lack of information in the State Report on the integration of intersectional perspective into the issue of violence against women and domestic violence.

Intersectionality is not developed in any of the 2 Pillars of the Strategy (Pillar I on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and Pillar II on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women). References to intersectionality contained in the Strategy are found in a very small proportion in the part relating to Pillar I (equal treatment) but without being focused on the issue of violence. The part corresponding to Pillar I rather collects and presents provisions from the Strategies that include intersectionality components: Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027; National Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities 2022-2027; National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Romania 2030. **However, the National Strategy on equal treatment and opportunities between Women and Men and the prevention and combating of violence 2022-2027 does not introduce issues related to intersectionality in addressing the phenomenon of violence.** Moreover, even if Pillar I of the National Strategy on equal treatment and opportunities between Women and Men and the prevention and combating of violence 2022-

2027 mentions Strategies that have elements of intersectionality, they do not specifically address issues of violence against women (Roma, disabled, migrant, trafficked, LGBTI or national minority).

Law No. 202/2002 does not use the term 'intersectionality' at all. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be approached from an intersectional perspective: there is no mention of Roma women or women from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, not to mention people with different sexual orientations and gender identities. The same observation applies to Law No. 217/2003.

In practice, the legislative framework continues to ignore the intersectional dimension, which is virtually absent. Yet existing statistics and research clearly demonstrate the necessity of developing special policies for Roma women, women in precarious economic situations and those in rural areas. According to **lecturer Crina Mureșanu, professional trainer in social work, intersectionality practitioner and expert**, in accessing different public services, Roma women were mentioned in the Council of Europe (2022) Report as having felt discriminated against due to their residence in Roma neighborhoods³⁹.

In regard to victims of sexual violence, even if we have a National Strategy that addressed this issue, Romania lacks services tailored for trafficking victims with disabilities, especially those with mental disabilities.

There are very few services accessible to trafficking victims who are also caregivers. These women often face heightened vulnerability to re-trafficking due to financial instability.

The lack of a legal approach to intersectionality issues leads to a vulnerable position of Roma women. As noted by **Cătălina Olteanu, anti-discrimination and human rights expert, the National Council for Combating Discrimination** reports that the number of complaints submitted on grounds of ethnicity and gender remains low compared to the majority population. For instance, out of 907 petitions received in the last reporting period, only 50 concerned ethnicities, with very few addressing the situation of Roma women specifically. **This low number of complaints reflects significant underreporting rather than a lower existence of discrimination. The factors that undermine the power or reporting are, as examples, the lack of legal literacy, fear for victimization, lack of trust in state institutions' capacity to provide justice, and socio-economic barriers. As a result, the discrimination faced by Roma women remains insufficiently reported in official data and case law.**

Similarly, women belonging to national minorities do not benefit from an intersectional approach to their rights. This is particularly true for Muslim women. As mentioned by **Fatma Ruxandra Yilmaz-** politics, gender and minorities expert, the unique circumstances of Muslim women have yet to be explicitly reflected in public policies. **They may face additional barriers due to language, cultural norms, socioeconomic disadvantage, migrant status, or exposure to radicalization, which can hinder their access to protection and support services. Additionally, Muslim women are rarely consulted or involved in decision-making processes, which contributes to the invisibility of their specific needs and gaps in service provision.**

³⁹ Research on the barriers of Roma Women's access to justice in four Countries. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania; Council of Europe, 2022. Author of Final Research Report: Bojana Netkova. Authors of National Reports: Maria Metodieva (Bulgaria), Christos Iliadis (Greece), Tiziana Barrucci (Italy), and Crina Marina Muresanu (Romania). Available in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/research-on-the-barriers-of-roma-women-s-access-to-justice-in-four-cou/1680a7cd27>.

According to **TRANSCORE Association**, the current legal framework is inadequate in recognising the needs of LGBTI women, particularly transgender women. National legislation and strategies on domestic violence do not explicitly consider gender from an intersectional perspective. Lesbian, bisexual and transgender women are more vulnerable to domestic violence due to systemic factors. These vulnerabilities are often overlooked or inadequately addressed by the authorities and service providers. **For example, same-sex couples are not legally recognised, meaning that many cases of domestic violence concerning same-sex couples are not treated as such. Without legal recognition of their relationship, the assault may be misclassified as a simple conflict between individuals, meaning that victims are excluded from legal protection.**

Also, many LGBTI women avoid reporting abuse for fear of being outed (i.e. exposed in a hostile social or professional environment) or because they are justified in fearing that they will be ridiculed, invalidated or even re-victimised by the police or other institutional actors. Furthermore, professionals such as social workers, police officers and psychologists lack adequate training on the specific realities and needs of LGBTI victims, which fuels a vicious cycle of silence and mistrust within the system.

Most shelters and services for victims of gender-based violence are neither equipped nor willing to receive trans women or LGBTI people. A lack of resources and support lines that take into account the sexual orientation and gender identity of victims significantly reduces their access to protection.

Furthermore, discrimination in the labour market, which particularly affects transgender people, can lead to economic dependence on an abusive partner. The constant social pressure to hide one's sexual or gender identity can affect people's ability to seek help. Some NGOs or religious institutions that offer support may have homophobic or transphobic attitudes, which can further compromise access to safe services.

In the same vein, the state does not truly assume responsibility for funding dedicated services for LGBTI victims. Although there are funds allocated generally for domestic violence, they do not reach initiatives that are dedicated to or inclusive of trans women.

ANAIIS Association summarises the concerns raised by women's organisations affected by intersectionality. According to **Carmen Nemeş, president of ANAIIS Association**, although Romanian strategies formally endorse gender equality and non-discrimination, **intersectionality is not applied in practice**. Vulnerable groups, such as Roma women, migrant women, women with disabilities, elderly women and LGBTQ+ individuals, continue to be severely underserved, particularly in rural areas.

There is no national policy or budget line that ensures access to:

- interpretation/translation services for non-Romanian speakers;
- culturally sensitive services for Roma women and migrant survivors;
- shelters accessible to women with disabilities;
- sexual violence response units with trained forensic and psychological staff.

At the grass roots level, **ANAIIS Association** observes that:

- Public institutions often treat gender-based violence as a private family matter, particularly when it involves marginalised women.
- Women with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities are rarely identified as victims and are often institutionalised without informed consent procedures.
- Roma women face institutional racism and are often discouraged from filing complaints.

According to lecturer **Crina Mureșanu**, at the same time, a Council of Europe Report indicated that Roma women do not easily identify gender discrimination and tend to refer more to ethnic discrimination and inequality than to gender discrimination (or other criteria). The Report also shows that 80% of the interviewed Roma women firmly condemned domestic violence (eight out of ten), and all of them pointed out that the number of complaints against violence in Roma families is increasing.⁴⁰

These intersectional issues are exacerbated by the underfunding of independent women's organisations. Services like those provided by **AN AIS Association** are often the only ones addressing these intersectional vulnerabilities, yet they remain excluded from funding decisions, strategic consultations and national monitoring systems.

AN AIS Association recommends creating a national intersectionality framework and including independent NGOs in its design and implementation.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 7 :

- **Ensure that the legal framework recognizes intersectional discrimination as a distinct form of discrimination.**
- **Establish systematic data collection disaggregated by gender and ethnicity, including on complaints.**
- **Domestic anti-violence strategies and laws must clearly include LGBTI women, and a legal framework must be created to protect marginalised gender identities and sexual orientations.**
- **It is also essential that the state explicitly recognises the reality of domestic violence in same-sex couples and expands the legal definition of gender-based violence to include the experiences of LGBTI women. Ongoing training is also needed for professionals in the fields of justice, social protection and health on the intersectional dimension of violence. Funding is also required for specialised services that take into account the sexual orientation and gender identity of victims.**
- **In regard to Muslim women:**
 - Develop culturally and linguistically adapted awareness-raising campaigns (including in Arabic and Turkish) on women's rights, protection mechanisms and available services.
 - Integrate educational programmes in schools attended by children from Muslim communities, promoting gender equality and rejecting stereotypes.
 - Provide continuous training for professionals (teachers, health staff, police officers, social workers) to prevent secondary victimisation and ensure culturally sensitive responses.
 - Include targeted prevention programmes addressing **risks of radicalisation** and harmful practices justified by cultural or religious customs, in cooperation with community leaders and women's organisations.
 - Ensure access to specialised counselling services with intercultural expertise and interpretation when needed.
 - Expand multilingual helplines and actively promote them within Muslim communities.

⁴⁰ Research on the barriers of Roma Women's access to justice in four Countries. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania; Council of Europe, 2022. Author of Final Research Report: Bojana Netkova. Authors of National Reports: Maria Metodieva (Bulgaria), Christos Iliadis (Greece), Tiziana Barrucci (Italy), and Crina Marina Muresanu (Romania). Available in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/research-on-the-barriers-of-roma-women-s-access-to-justice-in-four-cou/1680a7cd27>.

- Guarantee the availability of safe accommodation facilities that respect cultural and religious needs (e.g. privacy, dietary requirements).
- Issue specific guidance for law enforcement and judiciary on cases involving Muslim women, including **forced marriage, female genital mutilation and harmful traditional practices**, ensuring a victim-centred approach without cultural relativism.
- Establish **specialised training modules for judges, prosecutors and lawyers** on Islamic family law and cultural practices, in order to better understand the context of such cases while upholding Romanian and international human rights standards.
- Introduce elective courses in faculties of law** on comparative perspectives of family law and Islamic law, enabling future legal professionals to acquire knowledge of the background of Muslim women and thus provide more informed and culturally aware legal assistance.
- Strengthen cooperation with Muslim community leaders to encourage reporting and to counteract patriarchal norms that may discourage women from seeking protection.
- Explicitly include Muslim women as a vulnerable target group in national strategies on gender equality and on preventing and combating domestic violence.
- Provide sustainable funding for NGOs offering specialised services to Muslim and migrant women, ensuring their role as partners in service provision.
- Collect disaggregated data (with full respect of privacy and non-stigmatisation) to monitor access to protection and services by Muslim women and to identify gaps.
- Ensure that Muslim women are systematically consulted and represented** in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes that affect them.
- **Developing prevention programs specifically designed for women and children with disabilities.** These programs should also provide support to caregivers, including family members, educators, teachers, and foster carers, ensuring a protective environment against trafficking and exploitation.
- **Many of the trafficked women who are also caregivers are forced into prostitution to support their children, who grow up in vulnerable conditions with limited educational access.** Targeted measures are needed to support single-parent families, especially where fathers work abroad, and families affected by domestic violence or dysfunctional adult-child relationships. Particular attention should be paid to children burdened with adult responsibilities and academic pressures. *Recommended interventions* by the ProTECT Federation *include comprehensive support systems offering psychosocial support, educational assistance, and measures to prevent further exploitation.*
- In view of all the information expressed in the lines above, Romania must achieve the previously mentioned recommendations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Evaluation Report on Romania, recommendations 29 and 30 on page 16, namely: (1) to continue to address the multiple forms of discrimination that women and girls from Roma communities in particular face and to take measures to ensure that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention are implemented without discrimination; (2) to integrate the perspective of respective women into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies for preventing and combating violence against women.**

Article 8: Funding

4. Please provide information on any new development since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on your country concerning the allocation of appropriate and sustainable financial and human resources for the implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, there has been no substantial improvement in the level of funding allocated to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. **Unfortunately, the concerns expressed by GREVIO in paragraphs 46–54⁴¹ of the Baseline Report remain relevant.**

In this sense, please see paragraph 48 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania according to which : *resources dedicated to addressing domestic violence and for the provision of specialist services seem to be heavily dependent on restricted project funding from external sources, rather than from the state budget.* We also want to reiterate paragraph 50 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: *Moreover, research recently conducted by a civil society association (...) into how the budget of the mayor's office is allocated across all the cities and villages for providing social services for violence against women revealed that the majority (90%) do not finance any social, health or protection services for victims of domestic violence. Concerns were expressed about the scarcity of the financial resources allocated from the local budgets for victim support services, often on the mistaken assumption that these are not necessary given the low level of reporting to the police.*

Notably, the state's lack of financial responsibility towards services provided by NGOs aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women persists, with the gender perspective yet to be integrated into budget preparation for financing dedicated actions.

In response to Question 4 under Article 8 of the Questionnaire, the State Report highlights two documents that the authorities believe would facilitate the implementation of gender-based financing in response to issues of violence against women and domestic violence:

(1) The National Strategy for the Recovery of Claims Arising from Crimes for the Period 2021–2025⁴²; and

(2) Law No. 230 of 19 July 2022, amending and supplementing Law no. 318/2015⁴³ on the establishment, organisation and operation of the National Agency for the Administration of

⁴¹ See especially paragraph 48 according to which : *resources dedicated to addressing domestic violence and for the provision of specialist services seem to be heavily dependent on restricted project funding from external sources, rather than from the state budget.* See also paragraph 50: *Moreover, research recently conducted by a civil society association²⁶ in one of the 42 counties into how the budget of the mayor's office is allocated across all the cities and villages for providing social services for violence against women revealed that the majority (90%) do not finance any social, health or protection services for victims of domestic violence. Concerns were expressed about the scarcity of the financial resources allocated from the local budgets for victim support services, often on the mistaken assumption that these are not necessary given the low level of reporting to the police.*

⁴² Available only in Romanian at: <https://anabi.just.ro/storage/uploads/pagini/43/Strategie%202021%20-%202025.pdf>.

⁴³ Law No. 318 of 11 December 2015 On the Establishment, Organisation and Operation of the National Agency for the Administration of Seized Assets, and on the Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Legislative Acts, was published in Official Gazette No. 961 on 24 December 2015, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/174284>.

Seized Assets, and amending and supplementing certain normative acts, as well as amending and supplementing Law no. 135/2010 on the Criminal Procedure Code⁴⁴.

In the opinion of **Carmen Nemeș, president of ANAIS Association**, the National Mechanism for Sustaining Crime Prevention, mentioned in the State Report (Law no. 318/2015), remains underdeveloped and insufficient in scope and accessibility. The 15% share allocated to **NGOs is insufficient, not guaranteed annually, and the competitive, project-based structure disadvantages smaller organisations and those without technical staff to write proposals.**

Grant periods are short, and organisations such as ANAIS Associations, which runs community centers, provides legal representation, and coordinates training for professionals, **do not receive predictable institutional support from the state.**

In summary, regarding the issue of funds, from the perspective of **ANAIS Association**, the Romanian state:

- does not provide core funding to ensure the continuity of essential services such as legal aid, psychological counselling and emergency housing;
- does not integrate independent service providers (NGOs) into national financing frameworks;
- relies heavily on temporary projects or EU-funded grants, providing no structural support for survivor- or women-led organisations.

Also, despite strategic documents such as the National Strategy on Equal Opportunities and Domestic Violence (2022–2027) and the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Violence (SINERGIE), **there is no dedicated, sustainable funding mechanism to ensure their full implementation.**

As noted by **professor Ionela Băluță** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu**, the legislative changes presented in the State Report are welcomed. However, to assess their implementation and real impact, there is an urgent need to analyse the budget allocated for 2024 as a result of these provisions in order to see how were these funds used. There are no information about the amounts involved. Repeating a legislative text without any analysis or additional data is insufficient for assessing a real and sustainable increase in prevention and support for survivors of violence.

Although the two acts mentioned above (the Strategy and the Law) have improved the protection of victims, neither of them adopts a gender-sensitive approach for the following reasons:

-Neither the Strategy nor the Law mentions “domestic violence”, “gender-based violence” or “violence against women” in their content.

- The references to 'victims of crime' are insufficient to demonstrate that the objective of both documents is to support victims of gender-based violence in particular.

Thus, neither the Strategy nor the Law expressly mention supporting victims of domestic violence or violence against women when describing the objectives they set out to achieve.

From all the provisions contained within, it is clear that both the Strategy and the Law are primarily dedicated to preventing and combating corruption and organised crime. For example, the *Introduction* section of the Strategy mentions that: *The phenomena of corruption and organised crime have seen worrying developments in recent years, both nationally and internationally, and constitute threats to national security and respect for fundamental human rights.* Also, the section on the vision states: *The vision of this Strategy is a Romania in which organised criminal groups are efficiently deprived of all assets acquired through crime, with*

⁴⁴ Available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/257704>.

respect for all constitutional guarantees and human rights'. However, the Strategy's guidelines for transposing the vision into practice do not expressly mention supporting victims of violence against women and/or domestic violence, as an approach based on the rights of victims. Additionally, there are no specific provisions addressing the legal status of victims of domestic violence in this context.

The Strategy seems to be more oriented towards sanctioning perpetrators of corruption crimes than towards supporting victims.

The National Mechanism for Supporting Crime prevention, introduced by Law No. 230/2022, does not specifically mention victims of domestic violence and/or violence against women. Article 37²(f) of Law No. 230/2022 allocates 15% of the Mechanism's funds to non-reimbursable financing of projects proposed by associations and foundations whose activities focus on assisting and protecting victims and providing social assistance. However, this provision has two shortcomings: (1) only 15% of the funding is granted as non-reimbursable financing, which is conditional upon the submission of projects by associations and foundations, and (2) it does not expressly specify victims of domestic violence as beneficiaries (as we have already emphasised). **It is problematic that NGOs should write a project in order to benefit of non-reimbursable financing and as a result they will receive only 15% of the funding. This percent is insufficient for the long-term, comprehensive support of associations and foundations that combat violence against women and domestic violence.** The work of these associations and foundations is **continuous** and not limited to the implementation of a project. In any case, if a project is implemented, the association's or foundation's activity is intensified. **Therefore, there should be a larger amount granted to NGOs than 15% funding from the Mechanism.**

In regard to the situation of funding at the local level, the responsibility for implementation of integrated policies is placed at county level with the **General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), which are not authorities/structures dedicated to violence against women (VAW).** Furthermore, there is no specific funding allocation from either national or county budget for the task of coordinating the integrated response to VAW and for specific multiagency structures. DGASPC signs protocols with multiple institutions to establish an inter-institutional team, but for example in the case of Sibiu County (where A.L.E.G. has been a member of this team), there are no regular meetings dealing with specific caseload based on an agreed methodology. **Without proper allocation of human and financial resources, the protocols remain on paper, only formally meeting the requirements of establishing integrated policy response structures, but not in real practice.** **Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 8 :**

- Introduce the gender perspective in newly adopted national-level documents to strengthen the principle of gender responsive budgeting.

- Establish a structure and mechanism for longer-term funding of specialist services run by NGOs and prioritize criteria like years of experience in providing specialised assistance and addressing violence from a human rights and gender-based perspective as core in selection for funding .

- Applying the principle of budgetary responsibility to activities aimed at preventing and combatting domestic violence and violence against women at the level of local authorities and budgets, particularly in relation to the DGASPC.

-Reiterate the importance of Romania implementing recommendations 55 and 56 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania⁴⁵.

5. Please provide information on any development concerning the provision of appropriate and sustainable financial and human resources for women's rights organisations that provide specialist support services to victims, including those supporting migrant women and girls.

Concerning this point, in the opinion of ANAIS Association, although state documents refer to 'support for vulnerable groups', there is no dedicated, ongoing funding for women's rights organisations working with migrant, Roma or disabled women.

ANAIS Association runs a dedicated center for migrant and refugee women and girls, and its legal and psychological services are funded exclusively by international donors (e.g. HIAS and UNICEF). Despite benefiting from such efforts in practice and referencing them in international reporting, the Romanian state does not allocate any resources to them.

The absence of direct public funding for initiatives targeting migrant and refugee women runs counter to the spirit of Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention and the principle of intersectionality. Additionally:

- Voucher systems, although promising in theory, are bureaucratic and difficult to access for survivors.
- NGOs must apply to be 'eligible distributors', a status that is not systematically granted and often lacks clarity.
- There is no operational funding to accompany such measures (e.g. for staff, infrastructure and case management), which makes them inaccessible in real time.

ANAIS Association calls for:

- direct institutional funding for NGOs delivering essential services aligned with the Istanbul Convention.
- a transparent, annual call for grants for women-led NGOs, with priority given to those offering specialised support for vulnerable groups;
- the recognition of NGOs as equal partners and contributors to public policy, strategy and monitoring, not only as service providers.

Furthermore, the state budget has never included a dedicated budget line or a fund for civil society active in combating violence against women (VAW). The Romanian authorities do not consider funding of women's rights organizations as part of their duty, thus failing to value and integrate significant amounts of expertise in the field. **The only way the state is willing to capitalize on this expertise is in the form of volunteer work: NGOs are expected to work on policy improvements, training and public awareness free of charge.** In the meantime, the state duties in relation to service-provision at local level are considered to be fulfilled by the General Social Assistance Services under County Councils and local authorities, **which are not competent structures/institutions concerning domestic violence or violence against and thus are not in line with the provisions of the Convention.**

⁴⁵ GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to pursue their efforts to: a. increase the budget allocated by central and decentralised levels for preventing and combating violence against women, while strengthening the assessment of the financial resources needed for this purpose; b. intensify efforts to monitor actual expenditure and assess progress, including through gender budgeting. GREVIO furthermore invites the Romanian authorities to gradually reduce the dependency on external funding for activities to combat violence against women and ensure a wider share of funding from the Romanian state budget to demonstrate their financial responsibility for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, there has been no major improvement in the funding of non-governmental organizations working in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

On page 21 of the State Report, national authorities interpret point 111 of Law No. 100/2024 on amending and supplementing certain normative acts in the field of social assistance as assigning both the state and local budgets the responsibility to finance all social services, whether provided by public bodies or NGOs.

While this normative amendment is positive, we must read it in light of article 132, paragraph 4 that expressly states the circumstances under which responsibility for financing social services provided by NGOs is allocated: *the amount allocated for the financing of social services is granted to individuals who have been granted the right to social services as a measure of social assistance. Nevertheless, the legal provisions must expressly state the state's obligation to fund NGOs that prevent and combat violence.* Likewise, the voucher system described in the State Report (page 20) and regulated by Government Decision no. 541/2023, establishing the methodological norms for the implementation of the new voucher-based advance system recognizes the victim's right to receive vouchers and does not state a specific obligation to founding NGOs. **Although these vouchers can be distributed to victims through NGOs, this does not constitute funding for the NGOs themselves.** According to the Government Decision provisions, the voucher system is not intended to finance NGO activities, but rather to support victims of crime.⁴⁶ As noted by **professor Ionela Băluța** and activist **Bianca Bălănescu**, while there are undoubtedly many positive aspects to the text, the State Report fails to provide a critical assessment of implementation. There is no data on amounts allocated or spent, nor any information on results achieved. This type of bureaucratic response, which strings together pages of copied-and-pasted legislation and strategies, shows an institutional culture in which monitoring, evaluation and critical analysis are lacking. Without

⁴⁶ For further details, we reiterate the explanations presented in the State Report on the issue.: In June 2023, the Romanian government approved Government Decision No. 541/2023, which establishes the methodological norms for implementing the new voucher-based advance system. The methodology provides specific details on the issuance, distribution and settlement of vouchers for victims of crime, how their value is determined, and the criteria for selecting public and private entities involved in the grant scheme. The voucher covers the urgent needs of victims of crime and represents advance payment of financial compensation approved by the Commission (the court of domicile commission), according to art. 30 of Law No. 211/2004 on measures to ensure the information, support and protection of victims of crime, as amended.

Victims who have filed a criminal complaint may request financial compensation or advance payment in the form of a voucher to cover urgent needs from the court in whose jurisdiction they reside. This request is resolved by two judges from the Commission for Granting Financial Compensation to Victims of Crimes, which is established in each court. This advance will be granted up to a maximum amount equivalent to five minimum gross basic salaries in the country in question, i.e. 18,500 lei. According to art. 10, the following apply:

Public entities and authorities registered in the list of public and private entities enrolled in the voucher distribution mechanism are authorised to distribute vouchers.

- a) the general directorates of social assistance and child protection;
- (b) the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- c) the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men;
- (d) Any other public entity that, according to the law or its constitutive act, has as its object: the assistance and protection of victims and/or social assistance;
- (e) Any other state institution that comes into contact with persons who are potential victims of crimes in the exercise of its duties.

Associations and foundations whose activities include the assistance and protection of victims and/or social assistance, and which are registered in the list of public and private entities enrolled in the voucher distribution mechanism, are authorised to distribute vouchers.

available data on the budget, services, people supported, etc., and without any monitoring reports, the legislative framework is merely a facade.

Non-governmental organizations working in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence do not benefit, according to the law, from state financial support to ensure their survival in the medium and long term.

Neither Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence nor Law no. 292/2011 on social assistance expressly regulate the obligation of state authorities (central or local public administration structures) to financially support non-governmental organizations involved in preventing and combating violence against women. **The possibility for the state to fund non-governmental organizations exists, but it depends on the discretion of the state and does not follow from a clearly established legal obligation.**

The financial burden imposed on non-governmental organizations is all the more pressing given that **Law No. 217/2003 indiscriminately requires services provided by state and NGOs to be accredited and licensed in order to be legal.**

It is important to note that accreditation and licensing requirements are mandatory for NGOs that provide services. NGOs cannot provide social or specialized services to victims of violence unless they are accredited and licensed according to the law.

According to Law No. 197/2012⁴⁷ on Quality Assurance in the Field of Social Services, any organization that wishes to provide social services in Romania must: (1) Obtain accreditation as a social service provider from the Ministry of Labor, Family, Youth, and Social Solidarity. Accreditation is a mandatory condition for legal operation in this field; (2) Obtain a license for each social service (e.g., psychological counseling, temporary shelter, legal assistance). The license certifies that the service complies with minimum quality standards and has qualified personnel. Non-accredited NGOs can carry out informational, advocacy, and prevention activities but cannot provide services to victims of violence.

Conversely, there is no support for licensed NGOs to receive funding (from the national or county budget) on the same terms as public services dedicated to preventing and combatting violence against women.

Despite the obligation to obtain license and accreditation for the services provided and demonstrate regularly to Social Inspection how they meet quality standards, the women's rights organizations who provide specialist support to victims who do meet all conditions and standards have no financial mechanism to access and no priority to receiving state funding, although the state authorities refer victims to them. **NGO providers need to self-fundraise, often relying on private funding and international grants or limited project funding, facing every year huge difficulties in ensuring consistency and sustainability, which is so important for a long term and trust-based availability to survivors and the wider community.**

Hence, non-governmental organizations are put in the following situation: they are subject to the same requirements as public services for accreditation and licensing of the services they provide to victims. However, public services are automatically funded from the state budget, while services provided by non-governmental organizations do not enjoy automatic state funding.

This reality highlights *the discriminatory situation to which non-governmental organizations are subjected in terms of state funding.* The difference in financial treatment

⁴⁷ Law No. 197/2012 of 1 November 2012 on quality assurance in the field of social services, published in the Official Gazette No. 754 of 9 November 2012, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/142677>.

applied by the state between public and NGOs services does not pass the test of objective and reasonable justification: NGOs services are in a state of obvious vulnerability, always liable to be closed in the context of lack of reliable state funding.

In regard to the manner in which funding is reflected in *policy documents* we will mainly refer to the *National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027*.

From this point of view, Article 2 of the Decision approving the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027 states: *The funding required to achieve the objectives set out in the National Strategy on the promotion of equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and the prevention and combating of domestic violence for the period 2022-2027 shall be provided within the limits of the approved annual budgets of the public authorities/institutions involved, as well as from other legally established sources.*

Also, on page 69 of the National Strategy it is mentioned that:

The financing of the measures foreseen in the Strategy will be ensured within the expenditure ceilings set for 2022 and beyond. At the same time, the Strategy outlines a series of obligations for the responsible authorities/institutions which, after the approval of the Strategy, will analyze in detail the financial implications and will allocate the amounts related to the realization of different actions, within the limits of the budgets approved annually.

It follows from these provisions that issues related to the achievement of national objectives in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence are circumscribed by an annual budget allocation.

This budgetary approach is misguided for the following reason: the annual budget is a fixed amount which is established following the identification of needs in the field of preventing and combating violence, but it may be insufficient to cover the real needs of victims of violence, given the dynamics of the phenomenon.

It is therefore inappropriate to budget annually for a phenomenon as complex and dynamic as violence against women and domestic violence, and funding needs to be made more flexible by allocating the budget according to the real needs of society in relation to the realities on the ground.

However, the provisions of the Strategy do not require express mention of the state's obligation to provide funding to non-governmental organizations or to grant any form of financial support to women's specialist services.

This puts non-governmental organizations working in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in a vulnerable position, having to survive financially through donations, sponsorship or access of international grants.

The financial vulnerability of NGOs active in preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence often leads to outcomes that undermine the effective protection of victims' rights. For example, CASA Invicta (Emergency Housing Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence) was closed due to lack of funding, as reported in the media and in the National Strategy on the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and the prevention and combating of domestic violence for the period 2021-2027 (page 59).

In July 2017, ANAIS Association opened the 'Emergency Housing Center for Victims of Domestic Violence - Casa INVICTA', a crisis Center for women who are victims of domestic

violence. Social workers were on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Services have been provided to women living in Bucharest who were victims of domestic violence.

The Center's specific role was to respond to urgent situations in which the reception of victims is paramount; for this reason, the accommodation period was short, being proportional to the period of time required to resolve the emergency.

The Center had a capacity of 16 places (eight adults and eight children), and offered accommodation for a fixed period, food, hygiene products, social counselling and guidance, and medical consultations with a general practitioner and a psychologist.

Legal counselling, assistance in preparing the file and assistance in court to obtain a protection order, vocational counselling, and bearing the expenses related to retraining/re-education (depending on financial availability and course costs) were provided within the Counselling Centre for the Prevention and Fight Against Domestic Violence of the ANAIS Association.

The project was supported by the Municipality of Bucharest through the General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Municipality of Bucharest, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, and AVON Romania.

Also, CASA INVICTA project was nationally recognized as a model of good practice, distinguished as the only shelter for victims of domestic violence offering round-the-clock support, 24 hours a day.

Civil society protested against the closure of CASA INVICTA, highlighting the negative effects on combating violence against women at national level.⁴⁸

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 8:

- **Ensure appropriate funds through suitable funding opportunities such as long-term grants based on transparent procurement procedures to ensure sustainable funding levels for women's NGOs that run specialist support services for women victims of all forms of violence.**
- **Reiterate the importance of Romania implementing recommendations 55 and 56 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania (see also previous recommendation).**

Article 11: Data collection and research

6. Please provide information on any new development since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on your country on the introduction of data collection categories such as type of violence, sex and age of the victim and the perpetrator, the relationship between the two and where it took place, for administrative data of relevance to the field of violence against women and domestic violence emanating from law enforcement agencies, the justice sector, social services and the public health care sector.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, **little progress** has been made in collecting statistical data on domestic violence and violence against women.

In the State Report submitted on 16 May 2025, the State expressly replied⁴⁹ to question 6 of the Questionnaire **that there is no system for directly collecting statistical data on violence against women.**

⁴⁸ For further analysis of CASA INVICTA project and the social effects of its closing, please see information available only in Romanian at: <https://inquamphotos.com/photos/bucuresti-protest-casa-invicta-protectie-victime-violenta-110298>; <https://adevarul.ro/tag/casa%20invicta>.

Regarding the issue identified by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania — namely, the Prosecutor's Office's progress in disaggregating data over the last three years, which now includes the age and gender of the aggressor and victim — **we note that little progress has been made.**

There is still no official, public report from the Prosecutor's Office, which is attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, that includes disaggregated data on domestic violence cases broken down by age and gender. Data is collected inconsistently at the local prosecutor's office level, without a unified methodology.

Data on violence against women and domestic violence can only be collected to the extent that the perpetrator's actions are classified as a hate crime under the provisions of Article 77, letter h, of the Criminal Code⁵⁰.

Regarding the monitoring of the phenomenon of violence against women and domestic violence through the ECRIS system⁵¹ (the improved ECRIS V version⁵²), **the State Report does not expressly highlight the contribution that this system makes to the collection of data on domestic violence and violence against women** (in this regard, please check page 24 of the State Report: We believe that the development of the ECRIS V system, (...), will be useful for monitoring all forms of domestic violence).

Moreover, in the presentation provided in the State Report of the ECRIS system, only the characteristics related to the victim are highlighted (in this regard, please check page 24: The system also allows, however, the identification of those files that correspond to broad search criteria, such as age, gender, nationality or marital status of the victim, possible psycho-social disability), without providing the necessary details highlighted by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania.

⁴⁹ Please see, at large, the following paragraph at page 23 of the State Thematic Report on Romania: Statistical data on crimes of violence against women **are collected indirectly**, to the extent that the crime is motivated by "gender hatred", the aggravating circumstance provided for in Article 77 letter h) of the Criminal Code being taken into account, by filling in the statistical form in Annex 19 on hate crimes, provided for by Order of the Prosecutor General of the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice No. 213 of 15.07.2014 on the organization and functioning of the information system of the Prosecutor's Office, as amended and supplemented.

⁵⁰ According to Article 77, letter "h" of the Criminal Code, the following constitute aggravating circumstances:
- committing the crime for reasons related to race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political opinion or affiliation, wealth, social origin, age, disability, chronic non-contagious disease, HIV/AIDS infection, or other similar circumstances considered by the perpetrator to be causes of a person's inferiority in relation to others.

⁵¹ The Electronic Case Management System (ECRIS) is a digital platform used by courts and prosecutors' offices in Romania to manage judicial files. It is an essential tool for digitizing the judicial system, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and quick access to information. Each file is electronically registered within the system with a unique number. The file's progress is tracked from registration to random assignment, deadlines, solutions, appeals, and so on. Judges, prosecutors, and auxiliary staff can access files, documents, and case histories. Statistical reports can be generated, and performance indicators can be tracked. The system also enables the electronic transfer of data between courts, prosecutors' offices, and other judicial institutions. Through the digital platform, the Courts' Portal, litigants can check the status of files, deadlines, and offered solutions in cases that interest them.

⁵² From December 2024 to March 2026, Romania will implement ECRIS V, a modernized version of the system, as part of a project funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

ECRIS V aims to ensure complete digitalization, modern IT infrastructure, and enhanced interoperability. The new platform will benefit courts, prosecutors, magistrates, clerks, and litigants. Please see further details at: Comunicat de presă privind începerea proiectului „Sprijinirea operaționalizării sistemului electronic de management al cauzelor ECRIS V” – Ministerul Justiției; UMP PNRR - proiect 7 | Parchetul de pe langa Inalta Curte de Casatie si Justitie (available only in Romanian).

In this regard, in paragraph 81 of the GREVIO Baseline Report is highlighted: *No other disaggregated criteria are available in the databases managed by the ministry. In order to obtain information on the number of convictions per type of offence, there would need to be an offence-based collection of data on court proceedings, disaggregated by age and sex of the perpetrator and victim as well as indicating the relationship of the perpetrator with the victim.*

The recommendations provided by GREVIO are not fully implemented, so there is still a need to improve data collection.

Likewise, there is no significant progress in the last 3 years regarding implementation of the following recommendation of GREVIO contained in paragraph 85 of the GREVIO Baseline Report according to which: **GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to introduce a system for the collection of administrative data by law-enforcement agencies and judicial bodies based on harmonized categories which make it possible to trace the progress of cases throughout the criminal process, covering all the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention and broken down by sex, age, type of offense and type of relationship of the perpetrator with the victim.**

As underlined by **professor Ionela Băluță** and **activist Bianca Bălănescu**, as long as Law no. 217/2003 and the Criminal Code use exclusively the term "domestic violence", **neither the police nor the judiciary collect disaggregated data that would allow for correlation between acts of violence against women, the perpetrator, the perpetrator's age, the place of the assault, etc.** ANES should advocate for a legislative change, which is the only way to remedy the inadequate collection of data on violence against women.

Furthermore, as stated by **ANAIIS Association**, although recent legislation (e.g. Order no. 1040/2024⁵³) has attempted to formalise inter-institutional cooperation in the collection of statistical data on domestic violence, **the systems in place remain fragmented and uncoordinated, and are often unusable for real-time monitoring.**

From the experience of ANAIIS Association, the following are of utmost importance:

- **There is no unified national database that allows survivors to be tracked through the police, social services, health and justice systems.**

- **Institutions often collect data independently with inconsistent indicators and many do not disaggregate data by sex, age, type of violence or relationship.**

- **Most importantly, NGO service providers are excluded from national data collection mechanisms entirely, despite being the primary point of contact for many survivors.**

- **ANAIIS Association has requested anonymized data from local and central authorities multiple times, either being denied access or receiving incomplete or incompatible formats.**

Furthermore, cyberviolence, digital stalking and coercive control are not coded as separate categories, which renders the growing number of such cases invisible.

Some clarifications on Order no.1040/21/5505/2024 are necessary. Regarding this aspect, there is **a certain improvement since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania.** By the Order of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities

⁵³ Available only in Romanian at : <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/ge2tsobtga4dq/ordinul-nr-1040-21-5505-2024-pentru-aprobarea-procedurii-comune-de-lucru-la-nivel-interinstitutional-privind-colectarea-raportarea-si-monitorizarea-datelor-statistice-in-domeniul-prevenirii-si-combate>.

no.1040/21/5505/2024 of 2 February 2024⁵⁴, was adopted the inter-institutional common working procedure on the collection, reporting, monitoring of statistical data in the field of prevention and combating domestic violence. **This, of course, is a positive aspect.**

Article 2 of the Order identifies the institutions responsible for collecting, managing and centralising relevant data for the reporting process at the national, European and international levels, in light of the conventions and treaties to which Romania is a party:

- National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (ANES/NAEOWM)
- General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (GIRP/IGPR)
- Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM/CSM)
- Superior Council of Forensic Medicine (SCFM/INML)
- National Institute of Forensic Medicine Mina Minovici (NIFMMM/CSML)
- Ministry of Health (MH).

All relevant statistical data at the level of the responsible institutions will be transmitted to the ANES/NAEOWM which ensures the protection of personal data within an IT platform/system.

A careful reading of the provisions of the Order leads to the conclusion that the data collection procedure established at the inter-institutional level is not subject to the principle of transparency in relation to the civil society.

The exclusion of non-governmental organizations from the data collection process by not legally establishing the obligation to consult non-governmental organizations negatively affects this process. **It will be useful and beneficial to victims to include women's NGOs in a process of consultations related to developing data collection systems, because women's NGOs possess knowledge on the reality on the ground (women victims turn to NGOs).**

Also, a few comments are required regarding the obligation of NGOs to report to the state data on cases of violence they have managed.

Non-governmental organizations are legally obliged to transmit the data collected from victims of domestic violence regarding the cases of domestic violence to which services have been provided to the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC). **This violates the victim's right to maintain the confidentiality of the data collected about her in relations with public authorities/institutions in which she does not trust.**

Also, According to point 14.3. of the newly adopted **Order No. 1.126 of 9 May 2025 approving the framework model for social services contracts, the information provided by social service providers to the public social assistance service, the procedure for establishing the necessary budget, and the indicators for monitoring social services provided as social assistance measures**⁵⁵, the data on the conclusion of the contract shall be recorded in the Single National Register of Social Service Beneficiaries, by the social service provider, within 24 hours of its conclusion. Under this provision, NGOs providing services in the field of domestic violence and violence against women would be required to communicate the personal data of the beneficiaries (victims) to the Single National Register of Social Service Beneficiaries: surname, first name, date of signature, personal identification number. The Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity

⁵⁴ Order no. 1.040/21/5.505/2024 for the approval of the Common Working Procedure at inter-institutional level regarding the collection, reporting and monitoring of statistical data in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 1137 of November 14, 2024, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/290877>.

⁵⁵ Published in the Official Gazette no. 480 of 23 May 2025, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/DetaliiDocument/298260>.

manages this Register. This obligation imposed on NGOs is likely to cause multiple shortcomings:

- it makes NGOs vulnerable, as they have to communicate their identification data, which is likely to be discovered by the perpetrator

- it violates the victim's right to confidentiality and the victim's right to have the details of their case and also the details collected about her not accessible to state structures that they did not wish to turn to in the first instance, based on their right of choice.

While the obligation to transmit sensitive data related to domestic violence and violence against women to the state can be imposed on other institutions based on good inter-institutional collaboration, we consider that the same obligation cannot be imposed on non-governmental organisations. To do otherwise would violate the victim's freedom to choose NGOs services over state-provided ones and the victim's right to confidentiality when contacting a non-governmental organisation. Also, given that the DGASPC is not a specialised mechanism for preventing and combating domestic violence, as we previously emphasised in the Report, there is no practical reason for NGOs to report to the DGASPC. Another inconvenience resulting from the obligation of NGOs to report to the DGASPC, and from the DGASPC's responsibility for organising a database, is that the DGASPC often provides perpetrators with information about victims, thereby putting the victim in a vulnerable position.

Moreover, women's specialist services run by NGOs are not funded by the State, so a question can be raised why the State institutions impose an obligation on NGOs to provide data about victims in regular intervals (having in mind that this job requires additional work on the part of NGOs).

Furthermore the victims' situation is even more vulnerable due to the fact that the DGASPCs will transmit the data collected from NGOs to the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men/ANES.⁵⁶

In conclusion, very little has changed in the system of data collection on violence against women.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 11:

- Comply with the previous GREVIO Recommendation, stated above, including by streamlining the ECRIS system.

- Developing a mechanism for consultations between state institutions responsible for data collection and women's NGOs that provide specialist services to victims in order to ensure transparent and unified data collection protocols.

- To repeal the provisions of point 14.3. of the newly adopted Order No. 1.126 of 9 May, 2025 that imposes an obligation on NGOs to report sensitive data regarding victims of violence who benefit from their services. This violates two fundamental rights of the victims: the right of victims to have their data kept confidential and their right to choose NGOs services, with all the consequences arising from this choice, including the right to data privacy.

⁵⁶ For further details regarding the attributions of the DGASPC in the field of domestic violence, please refer to the 2023 DGASPC Activity Report, which is only available in Romanian at: https://www.dgasp-sectorull.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Raport_activitate_DGASPC_Sector_1_2023.pdf.

7. Where relevant, please provide information on any new development since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on your country to enable disaggregated data collection:

a. on the number of emergency barring and protection orders and the number of breaches and the resulting sanctions;

According to ANAIS Association, although Romania collects data on the number of protection orders issued, there is no national system in place to track breaches and the resulting sanctions. ANAIS has documented cases in which:

- breaches of protection orders were not recorded or sanctioned;

- survivors had to file repetitive complaints to prompt action;

There is also no follow-up mechanism or proactive monitoring of protection orders beyond the initial issuance. This severely compromises the safety of survivors, as there is no case-by-case follow-up or risk assessment documentation.

As shown by **professor Ionela Băluță** and activist **Bianca Bălănescu**, the data reported by the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (IGPR) does not allow for a correlation between assaults against women and male perpetrators. The categories specified in the Order no. 1040/21/5505/2024 are the same ones already used by the IGPR in data collection, which have been criticized in analyses conducted by academia and civil society. The data collected shows us the total number of female victims and the total number of male perpetrators, but the correlation between violence against women committed by men is not at all clear.

The same applies to the Superior Council of Magistracy (CSM).

From the information above results that changing the definition of domestic violence and introducing the terms *violence against girls and women* and *gender-based violence* are mandatory in order to provide specific data and establish procedures for these forms of violence.

To date, there is no information on the ANES website about the platform where the data provided for in this order should be published.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 11:

- To implement the GREVIO recommendation specified in paragraph 85 of the GREVIO Baseline Report according to which: GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to introduce a system for the collection of administrative data by law-enforcement agencies and judicial bodies based on harmonized categories which make it possible to trace the progress of cases throughout the criminal process, covering all the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention and broken down by sex, age, type of offense and type of relationship of the perpetrator with the victim.

b. on the number of times custody decisions have resulted in the restriction and withdrawal of parental rights because of violence perpetrated by one parent against the other.

As underlined in the State Report, the issues referring to the number of times custody decisions have resulted in the restriction and withdrawal of parental rights because of violence perpetrated by one of the parents against another **is still pending.**

According to ANAIS Association, there is no publicly available disaggregated data on how often custody or visitation rights are restricted due to domestic violence.

In practice, family courts continue to favour shared custody, even in cases involving prior protection orders or documented violence.

The presumption of the 'best interests of the child' is often interpreted without reference to the safety of the non-violent parent or the risk of re-traumatisation.

AN AIS Association has represented numerous survivors in court cases where judges have ignored risk indicators and granted visitation rights to abusive fathers despite the existence of psychological evaluations and police records.

This lack of data not only obstructs accountability, but also contributes to the institutional secondary victimisation of children and mothers.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 11:

- To implement the GREVIO recommendation specified in paragraph 85 of the GREVIO Baseline Report (see previous recommendation).

8. Please provide information on measures taken to allow cases of violence against women and domestic violence to be tracked from reporting to conviction, at all stages of the law-enforcement and judicial proceedings.

As underlined in the State Report, this issue is still pending. At present, the national data collection system is limited to data resulting from the activity of the courts and refers to final convictions. There is little progress regarding the collection of data on domestic violence from reporting to conviction at all stages of the law enforcement and judicial proceedings levels.

As stated by **AN AIS Association**, Romania lacks an operational tracking mechanism for violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence (DV) cases, from the initial report to the final court decision.

Although the ECRIS court database and the SIME social services database exist, they are not interoperable and not adapted for real-time tracking or survivor safety alerts.

They are also not transparent for civil society analysis or public accountability.

Thus, AN AIS Association has repeatedly advocated for:

- case monitoring dashboards accessible to authorised professionals;
- inclusion of NGOs in risk assessment protocols and case conferences;
- the creation of a national victim support pathway which follows survivors across systems.

Until these mechanisms exist, Romania will not be able to properly evaluate the performance of its institutions in protecting women and ensuring justice.

Recommendation concerning the implementation of Article 11:

- To implement the GREVIO recommendation specified in paragraph 85 of the GREVIO Baseline Report (see previous recommendation).

Part II: Information on the implementation of selected provisions in priority areas in the field of prevention, protection and prosecution

Article 12: General obligations

9. Please provide information on any primary prevention measures aiming to change mentalities and attitudes in relation to violence against women and to reduce women's exposure to gender-based violence by:

a. addressing harmful gender stereotypes and prejudices, customs and traditions based on the idea of the inferiority of women;

According to **ANAIS Association**, the Romanian state has failed to implement a comprehensive strategy to combat sexist attitudes, toxic masculinity and gender inequality within family and educational systems. Public discourse often permits domestic violence, with women still being blamed for 'provoking' abuse or for failing to leave violent relationships.

In relation to this issue, **ANAIS Association** has observed:

- persistent stereotypes in the media, schools, courts and even in police responses;
- a lack of public condemnation from authorities regarding high-profile femicide or repeated gender-based violence (GBV) cases;
- weak sanctions for hate speech, online misogyny or public incitement to violence against women.

Efforts to define and sanction sexist speech under draft amendments to Law no. 202/2002 are still pending and are not being enforced in public institutions or education.

As shown by **Feminism Romania Association**, starting from December 2022, Romania has a new National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022—2027. One of the Strategy's objectives is *Combating gender stereotypes in education by revising the school curriculum, through activities during the "School Differently (Școala Altfel)" week, by appointing equal opportunities experts at the level of inspectorates and schools and providing them with appropriate training, as well as through national campaigns addressed to the general public and students*. To meet this objective, the Strategy states that in the period 2022-2027, an Interministerial Working Group will be created, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, ANES and the National Centre for Education Policies and Evaluation, which will aim to integrate the notions of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in school curricula, and subsequently the Ministry of Education will issue an Order for the inclusion in school curricula of notions about equal opportunities and treatment between women and men. **There is no information that the working group is active.**

The Strategy lacks explicit references to policies for the prevention and management of gender-based violence in the education system. Therefore, the objective of combating gender stereotypes and discrimination by revising the school curriculum may include, although not specified, the objective of preventing gender-based violence. **What is not addressed in any way in the Strategy is the management of gender-based violence in the education system, including sexual abuse and sexual harassment (including cases of cyberbullying).**

Also, **Feminism Romania Association** underlined that, during a study carried by NGOs⁵⁷, the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Education Policies and Evaluation, were asked to summarize their actions carried out between January 2021 and August 2023 in the field of promoting gender equality in education. The responses received were extremely succinct, revealing the poor development of educational policies aimed at promoting gender equality, despite the above-mentioned legal provisions and the commitments in the National Strategy on equal opportunities between women and men and the prevention and combating of domestic violence. In the response received by NGOs, the Ministry of Education stated that in order to promote gender equality, it signed, in 2020, a collaboration protocol with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and sent, in 2022, an information to the school inspectorates regarding the campaign initiated by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men dedicated to Equal Opportunities Week. At the same time, the Ministry indicated to us a series of sexual education elements included in the optional subject "Health Education". **There are no systematic actions carried by the Ministry of Education to address gender inequality and gender-based violence.**

The National Center for Educational Policies and Evaluation replied that it does not have a designated person with responsibilities for promoting equal opportunities and gender in education, although the institution is obliged, according to the National Strategy, to be part of the inter-ministerial group on the integration of equal opportunities and gender concepts in school curricula.

The Ministry of Education stated that at each school level, a person responsible for equal opportunities and treatment was designated in 2021. The school officials are responsible for organizing "specific activities", without specifying what they consist of, on which school subjects they are organized, or whether they are included in the curriculum or extra-curricular. The Ministry did not specify whether the officials have specific training or what resources they have at their disposal to promote gender equality in schools (guides, brochures, etc.). It can be mentioned that there is also a lack of training for teachers in the field in order to be able to assume responsibilities in the field. **The pedagogical module for professional training of teachers does not include notions on the topic of gender equality.**

According to **Oana Băluță**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Faculty of Political Science, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), despite the obligations stemming from the Istanbul Convention, Romanian authorities have failed to implement any systematic or consistent primary prevention policies to address the root causes of violence against women. Educational curricula, media content, and public and political discourse continue to reproduce traditional gender roles, and women's rights NGOs' efforts to introduce gender-sensitive education have met with political and societal resistance, particularly from anti-gender movements and far-right actors.

b. addressing the heightened exposure to gender-based violence by women and girls at risk of intersectional discrimination;

AN AIS Association observed the fact that there is no national prevention policy targeting women who are vulnerable: Roma women; women with disabilities; LGBTQ+ persons; migrant and refugee women; and girls in institutional care or from rural areas.

⁵⁷ Available at : <https://ongen.ro/2023/11/11/egalitatea-de-gen-in-educatie-raport-de-monitorizare/>

ANAIIS Association has repeatedly drawn attention to the following issues:

- the lack of outreach services in underserved communities;
- language and cultural barriers concerning refugee women;
- lack of accessible prevention materials for women with disabilities or low literacy.

Although intersectionality is mentioned in strategies, it is not reflected in prevention practice or budgeting.

According to **Oana Băluță**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Faculty of Political Science, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), no comprehensive initiatives have been undertaken to mobilize all members of society, including men and boys, in the prevention of gender-based violence. Gender equality is often framed as a "women's issue," and public policies rarely incorporate an inclusive approach that actively engages men and boys as allies in dismantling patriarchal norms and preventing violence. Similarly, the state does not promote or support programs that encourage men's positive involvement in care work, emotional literacy, or non-violent masculinities. At the same time, the empowerment of women and girls remains limited, particularly in terms of their participation in politics, leadership, and the labor market. Structural inequalities continue to restrict their access to decision-making positions, and there are no significant public campaigns or institutional mechanisms designed to enhance women's representation or economic autonomy. Also, the Romanian government has failed to address the specific risks faced by women and girls who experience intersectional discrimination, such as Roma women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ women, migrant or refugee women, and those in rural or economically marginalized communities.

According to **lecturer Crina Mureșanu, professional trainer in social work**, since 2012, the Government's strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority has aimed to ensure their social and economic inclusion. The integrated policies cover the following areas: education, employment, health, housing, culture, and social infrastructure. At the same time, the Strategy is based on the principles of equal opportunity, gender awareness, non-discrimination, and respect for human dignity. Considering this principle, the strategy proposed measures to increase the Roma's level of education, qualifications, and employment rate. It involved them in the education of children and other activities to improve family welfare, family cohesion, and the development of future generations. Law No. 2/2021, which addresses measures for preventing and combating antigypsyism, recognizes hate against Roma as a specific form of racism.

c. encouraging all members of society, including men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence against women covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention, and promoting the empowerment of women and girls in all areas of life, notably their participation in politics at all levels and in the labour market.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, public policies in Romania still fail to actively engage men and boys in prevention efforts. There are no nationwide campaigns in schools or workplaces addressing masculinity, consent or responsibility. Meanwhile, women's empowerment is primarily viewed in terms of employment and entrepreneurship, rather than as a means of ensuring their safety, autonomy, and agency.

In the opinion of the **A.L.E.G. Association**, primary prevention overall is not a clearly-identifiable priority action with budget allocations and visible measures implemented.

The National Action Plan for the Political and Economic Empowerment of Romanian Women (PNA) for 2025-2029 mentioned in the State Report⁵⁸ has not been widely promoted and, despite being a good document, like many other strategies, runs the risk of low implementation.

State supported campaigns and awareness raising events tend to be focused on "pressuring" victims to say no to violence, often without providing the necessary short term and long term support to do so. Few state-supported campaigns targeted men and boys as allies in discouraging other men to perpetrate violence (a positive example refers to some Ministry of Internal Affairs campaigns in cooperation with civil society organizations).

Another major problem related to awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing violence against women is the lack of campaigns dedicated to young children (pre-school and school age). Changing mentalities is a continuous process, and it is particularly challenging when applied to adults or young people. For prevention to be successful, it is necessary to raise the general public's awareness from a very young age, so that gender equality becomes the norm in interpersonal relationships.

These campaigns should have national coverage and be initiated by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men, as the responsible institution for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

According to **Oana Băluță**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Faculty of Political Science, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), there are no widespread campaigns or formal education programs targeting high schools or public institutions to promote gender equality or to challenge discriminatory customs and traditions.

In conclusion, Romanian authorities in the last 4 years have been placing far too little focus on addressing gender stereotypes, the risk of intersectional discrimination or on encouraging members of society including men and boys to take action to prevent violence. Primary prevention measures in Romania remain underdeveloped, fragmented, and largely delegated to underfunded NGOs, without a coherent state-led framework. The absence of political will and the growing influence of anti-gender discourse have further undermined efforts to address the systemic roots of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Non-governmental organizations address issues related to fighting harmful gender stereotypes and prejudices, customs and traditions based on the idea of women's inferiority and also approach aspects connected the intersectional discrimination in order to encourage all members of society to prevent all forms of violence against women by means of dedicated campaigns and projects. Examples of such activities are described below :

In regard of ANAIS Association, the following campaigns and projects were organized:

-#DeNetestat campaign: in 2022, the ANAIS Association together with the Network for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (V.I.F.) drew an alarm signal on the existence of a type of abusive and traumatic forensic testing to which young women in Romania could be subjected, namely the virginity testing exam. Through a parallel carried out between the maturity exam (the bacalaureate exam) and the examination for verifying

⁵⁸ Please see page 26 of the State Report.

the virginity that was still practiced in the forensic medicine units in the country, the #DeNetestat campaign was launched, a campaign that aimed to eliminate from the legislation these tests⁵⁹, considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) a violation of human rights. It was chosen to launch this campaign during the baccalaureate exam, in order to draw the parallel with an unnecessary exam that some girls were still going through in Romania: the virginity exam. Virginity is a social construct, and virginity tests are an outdated and medically irrelevant practice by which parents or future spouses want to control the sexuality of women. Virginity tests were still being practiced in some INML units in the country and were a form of obstetric violence. The initiative was also supported by the launch of a petition available on Declic - [#DeNetestat](https://campaniamea.decllic.ro/p/denetestat). More information about the campaign can be found here: <https://asociatia-anaais.ro/denetestat/>

- "Some masks remain" campaign: on 8 March 2022, on International Women's Day, the state of alert ended and a number of restrictions were lifted, including the obligation to wear a mask outside. However, thousands of Romanian women have their noses and mouths covered by the mask of domestic violence. The pandemic of domestic violence continues in many forms, from physical violence to psychological, economic, social, sexual or spiritual violence. That's why ANAIS Association launched the campaign "Some masks remain", based on situations inspired by real cases. The "Some masks remain" campaign was launched both to draw attention to this scourge of domestic violence, but also to encourage people to donate to support the cause we are fighting for. More information about the campaign can be found here: <https://asociatia-anaais.ro/cheilcentrade-lanseaza-campania-unele-masti-raman-impreuna-cu-asociatia-anaais-contextul/>.

- "Captive radio" campaign : in 2023 two radio stations shared their frequencies to support the "Captive Radio" project, a campaign carried out by Cheil | Centrade for the ANAIS Association. The campaign was aimed at offering an answer to the question: "Why didn't you leave?" through a premiere in Romania, namely a media stunt involving two of the most well-known and popular radio stations, KISS FM and MAGIC FM. Thus, on 30 May from 10 to 11 PM, the "Captive Radio" campaign was launched in the KISS FM studio, where members of the ANAIS Association as well as a survivor of domestic violence were present alongside the show's host. Thus, for two hours, instead of the usual programs and topics, there was exclusive discussion about the phenomenon of domestic violence and its extent in Romania and listeners sent in questions to which experts from ANAIS Association briefly responded. The campaign was nominated and won awards at important festivals and events in

⁵⁹ Currently, there is no legislation in Romania that permits the testing of women's virginity at the request of individuals. In May 2023, this practice was officially eliminated by a joint Order of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, Order no. 1.434/687/C/2023 for amending and supplementing the Procedural Norms regarding the performance of expert opinions, findings and other forensic work, approved by Order of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health no. 1.134/C/255/2000, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 370 of 2 May, 2023. Prior to the adoption of the Order, virginity testing was usually requested by parents to prove the moral integrity of adolescent girls. The relevant article of Order No. 1.434/687/C/2023 establishes that forensic examinations and findings can only be carried out at the request of judicial bodies, such as the police or a court. Thus, the possibility of carrying out forensic examinations on the state of virginity at the request of individuals is eliminated. The order also prohibits examining hymenal integrity or issuing forensic certificates on the "state of virginity." According to the Order, tests can only be performed within official procedures at the request of authorities (e.g., criminal investigations) for certain determined reasons such as: establishing sexual capacity, assessing obstetric status (pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, etc.).

the advertising and marketing industry, such as:- Internetics Gala where the campaign was awarded the Silver prize.- Webstock Awards 2023, where the ANAIS Association together with Kiss FM, Magic FM Romania, and Cheil Centrade won 3 medals for #CaptiveRadio. More information about the campaign can be found here: [Radioul Captiv - O inițiativă a Asociației ANAIS](#).

- “Women’s night” campaign: in March 2023, ANAIS Association launched the #WomensNight campaign, an initiative where we shed light on the phenomenon of gaslighting, through which women in Romania are kept in the dark. On 8 March, at 18:12, the exact moment when the sun set, #WomensNight was launched. The campaign left behind Women's Day, where flowers and wishes came naturally, and brought attention to the darkness of lies in which women are trapped. #WomensNight materialized through a social dialogue with a series of 8 of the most common gaslighting phrases that women in Romania hear at work, at home, in friend groups, or within the family. The verbatims used in the campaign were prompted by the therapists with who ANAIS Association collaborates and have been frequently heard in therapy sessions with victims of psychological abuse. Each social media post was associated with a common context of gaslighting and encouraged women to comment with their own lies that were addressed to them. Our cause was joined by online influencers, ANAIS survivors, activists and many other supporters who wish to turn gaslighting into a behavior of the past. The purpose of this campaign was to draw attention to this phenomenon, to help victims recognize emotional abuse, the mechanisms, and the main techniques abusers use, so they can seek help. Not coincidentally, *gaslighting* was the word of the year 2022 in the Merriam - Webster dictionary and the most common strategy used by abusers. More information about the campaign can be found here - <https://www.asociatia-anais.ro/gaslighting>

- “Red is for courage” campaign: in April 2023, together with AVON Romania, ANAIS Association launched the #RedIsForCourage Campaign (#RoșuEPentruCuraj), urging all women who know someone in an abusive relationship to join the manifesto and post a photo or video on Social Media wearing red lipstick, with the hashtag #RedIsForCourage. The idea stemmed from the fact that wearing red lipstick captures up to 5 seconds more attention from those around you. In the case of domestic violence victims, every second of attention from loved ones can make a difference. Through this campaign, we also communicated the ways in which a woman facing domestic abuse or anyone interested can seek help and information.

-"Gender stereotypes and violence against women" : an event organized by the ANAIS Association in partnership with the Faculty of Law at the Academy of Economic Studies, with the participation of lawyer and vicepresident Giulia Crișan, along with Mihai Venea, a police representative, and judge Corina Voicu. The event was dedicated to students from the Faculty of Law.

- "I Love You But I Keep The Money": A campaign realized with the financial support of Raiffeisen Bank Romania that aimed to explain the nature and extent of economic violence, identify the financial needs and financial literacy gaps among affected women and propose actionable recommendations for support and intervention. As part of the project, a study investigating the prevalence and impact of economic violence against women in the

Bucharest-Ilfov region was conducted. The research aimed to understand the nature and extent of economic violence, identify the financial needs and financial literacy gaps among affected women and propose actionable recommendations for support and intervention. In parallel with this study, an online campaign entitled "I love you but I keep the Money" was also conducted to educate the target audience on economic violence in couples. This study, although small in scale, represents a first step in understanding economic violence against women in Romania and contributes to correctly identifying and raising awareness of this phenomenon. The study also provides recommendations to non governmental organizations and authorities, highlighting the need to develop educational and counselling programmes to support those directly affected. The campaign also included: • financial education workshops for women from vulnerable backgrounds; • a press conference presenting the research data; • a media and social media component with awareness-raising messages; • direct support and counselling; • involving public figures and institutional partners. The campaign was run under the message #ILoveYouButMoneyRemainOnMe, drawing attention to financial manipulation as a form of control and the need for economic autonomy to exit abusive relationships. Read more here: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/proiect/cercetare-despre-violenta-economica-impotriva-femeilor/>.

-The project "Community Center for Women and Girls" was funded by Care through the SERA Foundation, Care France and FONPC. ANAIS Association developed an informal safe space for girls and women from Ukraine, where they can benefit from: socialization and cultural accommodation, social support and information, individual and group psychological support, recreational activities, information sessions on women's health, legislation in the field of sexual and gender based violence, specialized support services, accompanying to the institutions empowered to solve problems, practical workshops, specific activities for children. Also, was provided information on sexual abuse, domestic violence or other forms of abuse and exploitation of women and girls, referral to specialized services and assistance for those who report various forms of abuse and exploitation. Project duration was from 18 April 2022 - 17 April 2023.

- The project "Provide integrated support to refugees from Ukraine to prevent and actively respond to all forms of gender-based violence" was implemented with UNICEF support. Through this project, over 1500 Ukrainian refugees, women and adolescents (boys and girls) in Bucharest and Ilfov County had access to quality information on how to prevent, recognise and respond to gender-based violence. In addition, through the project Ukrainian women, girls and boys who are victims of gender based violence were provided with access to quality integrated services, including legal counseling/assistance/representation before the court, psychological support (individual and group support), socio-medical support, access to health and referral to responsible institutions in Romania. Project duration: August 2022 - June 2023.

In regard of A.L.E.G. Association, as part of the EU project no. 101095737 StoP - Community Matters, this organization has trained 4 professionals in the StoP methodology based on community interventions, contributed to the StoP EU Toolkit (link: <https://stop-toolbox.eu/>) and disseminated the methodology of community intervention to domestic violence through events in Sibiu and Bucharest. So far, no central or local authority has agreed to allocate funding for

setting up StoP communities focused on violence prevention based on addressing harmful gender stereotypes and traditions and organizing neighbourhood groups for violence prevention.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 12 :

- Encourage the state to organise sustained and continuous primary prevention activities, such as campaigns and projects, aimed at promoting an approach based on the rights of the victim in a close cooperation with women's NGOs which provide specialist services to victims.**
- Set up a follow-up mechanism to highlight the medium and long-term effects at community level (both in regard to victims and perpetrators). ⁶⁰**
- Introducing the intersectional element in the organization and implementation of campaigns/projects dedicated to preventing violence against women.**
- Organizing campaigns and projects dedicated to children (boys and girls) in order to raise awareness of the issue on violence.**
- Integrate gender equality, consent, and non-violent conflict resolution into the national school curriculum at all levels (from primary to higher education), ensuring that teaching materials challenge rather than reinforce harmful gender stereotypes (Art. 12 para. 1 and 4).**
- Mandate the training of educators and school staff on gender equality, gender-based violence prevention, and intersectionality to ensure that schools become safe spaces for all students and change.**
- Establish mechanisms for the collection of disaggregated data on gender-based violence and intersecting forms of discrimination, to inform the design and monitoring of prevention policies and ensure accountability.**
- Actively involve men and boys in prevention efforts by supporting educational and community-based initiatives that promote positive masculinities, gender-transformative attitudes, and shared responsibility in preventing violence.**
- Promote the political, economic, and social empowerment of women and girls by introducing temporary special measures to increase women's participation in politics, leadership, and the labor market, and by ensuring their access to resources, services, and representation.**
- Strengthen cooperation with women's rights and gender equality NGOs, including through multi-annual core funding, participatory mechanisms in policy-making, and protection against smear campaigns and anti-gender backlash.**

Article 14: Education

Overview

The shortcomings related to education highlighted by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraphs 113-122) remain relevant at the national level. Paragraphs 113-122 of the GREVIO Baseline report on Romania highlight the following concerns :

⁶⁰ The first two recommendations were formulated in accordance with GREVIO's observations in the Baseline Report on Romania (see paragraphs 137 and 139).

- gender studies remain underdeveloped in Romania and topics related to equality between men and women are often marginalised and approached fragmentally;
- the need to step up efforts to address misrepresentations and false assumptions about the aims of and the obligations contained in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention;
- the need to fulfill the obligation established by Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention in relation to states parties to develop, for the age groups that they deem suitable, teaching materials on aspects that help address the root causes of violence against women and domestic violence;
- the need to address the situation of teachers training in the field of gender equality (which is not mandatory and not subject to any quality evaluation);
- the need to update teaching guides; the lack of mandatory comprehensive sexual education at the national level.

All of the above leads to the GREVIO recommendation that was not yet implemented by the Romanian state:

GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to step up their efforts to promote, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, the principles of equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and the right to personal integrity, and to ensure information on the different forms of gender-based violence against women, in formal curriculums and at all levels of education. This includes the need to address in particular forced marriage and sexual violence by focusing on the right to personal integrity and unequal power relations between women and men.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, despite formal support for gender equality in the Romanian curriculum, there is no compulsory subject or module that comprehensively and age-appropriately addresses gender-based violence, sexism, and consent. Instead, the government relies on ad hoc partnerships with NGOs, failing to ensure national reach or sustainability.

According to **Oana Băluță**⁶¹ (2025), the domain of education in Romania has not functioned as a meaningful partner in the prevention of gender-based violence. On the contrary, it has been a battleground where anti-gender mobilizations have been particularly aggressive and effective. Efforts to introduce gender-sensitive education, promote equality, or integrate basic knowledge on gender-based violence have been consistently met with political resistance and public backlash. These oppositional campaigns have been spearheaded by a broad coalition of anti-gender actors, including members of Parliament, conservative NGOs, church representatives, and media figures.

The most visible examples include the attempt to ban gender studies in Romanian universities in 2020, a move widely criticized nationally and internationally for violating academic freedom and gender equality standards⁶². Opposition to sex education has likewise intensified, particularly in the Romanian Parliament, where attempts to mandate comprehensive sex education have been blocked or diluted, often replaced by moralizing “life education”

⁶¹ Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Faculty of Political Science, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA).

⁶² Băluță, Oana, and Ionela Băluță. 2025. “Where to? Gender studies, epistemic injustice and the politics of de-democratization in Romania.” *European Journal of Politics and Gender* (published online ahead of print 2025) : 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2025D000000081>; Brodeală, Elena and Epure, Georgiana. 2021. Nature versus nurture: ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ before the Romanian Constitutional Court: a critical analysis of Decision 907/2020 on the unconstitutionality of banning gender perspectives in education and research, *European Constitutional Law Review*, 17(4): 724–52, doi: 10.1017/s1574019622000013.

versions lacking scientific content⁶³. Similarly, the public dissemination of a Gender Equality Textbook, co-authored by academics and NGOs, was met with a coordinated disinformation campaign that accused the initiative of promoting “gender ideology” and corrupting youth⁶⁴. **Anti-gender actors have also mobilized against the Istanbul Convention itself**⁶⁵.

These shortcomings, as outlined above by experienced academics, are reflected in the Report prepared by the State.

Although the State Report presents several initiatives aimed at modernising and updating the state's approach to education-related issues as set out in Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention (e.g. the project "Safe Education - Peer to Peer", the “VioGen – RoJust” project) they are not capable of bringing about concrete changes in line with the findings indicated by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania and in line with the GREVIO Recommendation specified in paragraph 122⁶⁶ of the Baseline Report on Romania. **These state initiatives do not directly address issues previously identified by GREVIO**, such as the lack of compulsory educational programmes dedicated to comprehensive sexuality education, adapted to the level of understanding and maturity of pupils/students. In this sense, **campaigns and projects are carried out formally without addressing the deficiencies in education previously indicated by GREVIO**.

Analysis of policies and laws adopted since the Baseline Report on Romania in the field of education

The gender perspective is still not included in policies and laws relating to educational issues. Similarly, in educational programs/curricula, the gender perspective is missing (starting from the level of preschool or primary education and up to the level of secondary and university education).

Furthermore, the Educated Romania Project⁶⁷, launched by the Presidential Administration in 2016, was aimed at developing the educational environment at multiple levels, nevertheless, without specifically addressing gender differences or inequalities.

⁶³ Băluță, Oana, 2025a forthcoming, Polarized Parliamentary Debates on Sex Education in Romania: Between Necessity and Apocalypse (2012–2024) in Katalin Fábián (editor), *The War on Gender in Central and Eastern Europe: International Conventions and Transnational Platforms*, Lexington Books.

⁶⁴ <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/ghid-controversat-egalitate-de-gen/32130570.html> s

⁶⁵ Dragolea, Alina. 2022. Illiberal discourse in Romania: a ‘golden’ new beginning?, *Politics and Governance*, 10(4): 84–94, doi: 10.17645/pag.v10i4.5515 Ergas, Y., Kochkorova, J., Pető, A. and Trujillo, N. (2022) Disputing; Băluță, Oana. 2020a. ”Egalitatea de gen. Politici publice sau un câmp de luptă discursiv și politico-religios? (Gender Equality: Public Policy or a Discursive and Politico-Religious Battleground?)”. *Transilvania* 11-12: 18-33. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2020.12.03>. Băluță, Ionela. 2020b. ”Studiile de gen: un turnesol al democrației românești (Gender Studies: A Litmus Test for Romanian Democracy)”. *Transilvania* 11-12: 34-41. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2020.12.04>.

⁶⁶ GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to step up their efforts to promote, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, the principles of equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and the right to personal integrity, and to ensure information on the different forms of gender-based violence against women, in formal curriculums and at all levels of education. This includes the need to address in particular forced marriage and sexual violence by focusing on the right to personal integrity and unequal power relations between women and men.

⁶⁷Please see further details available (in English) at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurypedia/romania/ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments>.

Building on this initiative, education laws were developed to reform the pre-university (Law no. 198/2023⁶⁸) and university (Law no. 199/2023⁶⁹) systems. **While it is positive that both laws address violence in the school environment, they do not specifically consider or address the gendered dimensions of such violence**, as it does not consider the circumstances, situations and factors that may disproportionately affect women and girls. Furthermore, the management of violence cases does not take into account the particular needs of women and girls who are victims of violence.

Acts of verbal, physical, psychological (bullying), emotional, sexual, social, cultural, cyber violence, as well as any other activities or behaviors that may endanger the health or integrity of primary beneficiaries and educational staff, **are managed at the level of pre-university educational institutions in accordance with the Procedure for managing cases of violence against preschoolers or students and educational institution staff, as well as other related situations in the school environment and suspected violence against children outside the school environment** (approved by Order of the Minister of Education No. 6.235 of 6 September 2023, published in the Official Gazette No. 856 of 22 September 2023).⁷⁰

According to the procedure for managing cases of violence, **case management is a method of coordinating all intervention**, social assistance, support, and protection activities carried out in the best interests of the child and respecting the needs and safety of the victim by professionals from various public and private services or institutions. This is a method that involves a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional team going through interdependent stages of work, such as identifying, reporting, and investigating the situation of violence/related situations, planning support measures and sanctions, planning secondary prevention measures, providing specialized services, monitoring and periodically reassessing progress, measures, and sanctions, as well as closing the case. However, teachers and other pre-university education professionals do not have appropriate training, qualification or capacity in managing cases of (gender-based violence).

According to **Irina Ilisei, gender equality expert**, in the elaboration process of the above-mentioned procedure initially no women's rights organization was invited to the consultation meetings. Despite the procedure being put into transparency process for only three days the Network for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women sent a letter⁷¹ to the Ministry of Education with comprehensive recommendations in addressing gender-based violence in schools. Only a few recommendations were included in the final procedure, such as (1) recognizing gender-based violence and sexual harassment as possible forms of violence addressed by the procedure (2) exempting victims of gender-based violence from mediation and (3) explicitly recognizes and addresses diverse forms of sexual harassment and abuse, from verbal remarks to unwanted physical contact and grooming. Most of other recommendations were: introducing a definition of gender-based violence in the procedure, addressing cyberbullying and bullying through a gender lens, introducing the possibility of pupils to report violence (other than in a verbal form to the teachers), creating mechanisms that ensure confidentiality of victims. Furthermore the procedure is not supported by budget allocation, monitoring, training programs or educational materials for teachers and decision makers or

⁶⁸ Available (only in Romanian) at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/DetaliiDocument/271896>.

⁶⁹ Available (only in Romanian) at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/271898>.

⁷⁰ Available (only in Romanian) at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/275117>.

⁷¹ https://violentaimpotrivafemeilor.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Recomandari-Procedura-management-cazuri-de-violenta_Reteaua-VIF.pdf.

preventative measures. Last but not least, the procedure is inconsistent with existing legislation. While according to the Law No. 272/2004 professionals working with minors are obliged to report to social services any suspicion of violence or negligence affecting a minor, the Procedure of Ministry of Education indicates different reporting mechanisms requiring the teachers to report first to the school director and the director to report to the police. In conclusion, **although the case management procedure is a positive development, it does not include a sufficient gender-based perspective.**

This is all the more worrying given that **violence disproportionately affects women and girls, requiring the education authorities to identify a response that considers the vulnerabilities of women and girls.** The mere mentioning of the general principle of equal opportunities (see article 4, letter "o" of Law no. 199/2023 or article 3, letter "i" of Law no. 198/2023) is not enough to ensure gender-specific issues are addressed, particularly in the context of violence.

In accordance with the provisions of Law no. 198/2023 on pre-university education and under the Educated Romania project, the first National Strategy regarding parents was adopted: **the National Strategy for Supporting Parents 2024–2030⁷²**. The Strategy addresses the issue of violence from a gender-neutral perspective and does not provide specific responses based on gender characteristics.

It is concerning that the Strategy addresses the issue of sexual violence against children in also in **neutral terms**, for example, 'protection of **children victims** of sexual abuse and violence' (page 67), '**minors trafficked** for sexual exploitation' (page 26) and '**minors victims** of human trafficking' (page 26). This is particularly challenging given that the phenomenon of teenage mothers is described in detail but under the neutral title 'Category of **minor parents**' (pages 24 and following). The same issue arises with regard to domestic violence (**children victims** of domestic violence, page 25).

Furthermore, the Strategy is gender neutral because it does not address the causes of systematic discrimination based on gender, **such as unequal power relations between men and women, stereotypical thinking, the oppressive patriarchal system, and how it has historically affected women's rights.**

The failure to apply a gender-based perspective to the phenomenon of violence in national education policies and laws leads to the absence of mandatory programmes and disciplines related to gender education, and perpetuates gender stereotypes — the main cause of violence against women. **In order to create an inclusive educational climate, teachers and support staff must undergo specialised training in gender equality and implement gender-sensitive educational policies. The strategy does not emphasize the need for training courses on gender issues or gender-based violence.**

Another Strategy adopted in the context of the reform of norms in the field of education is the **National Strategy for Adult Continuing Education 2024-2030⁷³** which **does not address issues related to violence against women or those regarding gender equality.** This shortcoming in the Strategy directly contributes to deficiencies in cultivating a culture of non-violence and gender equality at the national level. **Gender issues cannot be limited to formal education institutions (nurseries, kindergartens, schools, universities) but must be addressed at all levels of education regardless its forms (formal, informal) and its beneficiaries (adults, children).**

⁷² Available (only in Romanian) at: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Proiect_SNSP_2024_2030.pdf.

⁷³ Available (only in Romanian) at : <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/ANEXA-5.pdf>.

Legislative shortcomings in integrating a gender-based approach into the education system are also reflected in the lack of gender sensitive learning content. **At preschool and pre-university level, for example, there are no gender-sensitive programmes or subjects on gender equality.** This gap makes it difficult to raise and nurture a young generation that is sensitive to the problems arising from gender inequalities, including violence.

Also, **the training and continuous improvement plan for teachers' initial training in both the university and pre-university environments does not include courses on gender equality,** gender-based violence, or violence against women. This leads to a lack of accountability and response on the part of educational institutions when it comes to reporting acts of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, that take place in the school environment.

The lack of integration of the intersectional element in educational subjects and programmes at pre-university and university level results in a lack of age-appropriate learning content on subjects such as sex education and forced marriages. **An intersectional gender-based approach is required,** taking into account the experiences of Roma women and women belonging to other ethnic minorities, in order to create educational content and programmes that would comprehensively address sensitive topics such as sexual violence and forced marriages. According to **lecturer Crina Mureșanu, professional trainer in social work,** Roma women consider education to be one of the spheres in which they experience the most discrimination. They have had significant experiences with discrimination inside educational institutions, such as schools and universities, as well as from colleagues and educational professionals. Discrimination is most prevalent during secondary school, followed by university. The main reasons for the early dropout of Roma women from high school or university were identified as a lack of financial support for attending school, being in an early romantic relationship, or the absence of family support.⁷⁴

Despite the recommendation made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 122⁷⁵), in the last 3 years **there were no programmes, contents or subjects dedicated to sex education, forced marriages or other forms of sexual violence.**

In the view of NGOs contributing to this Shadow Report, shortcomings in policies and legislation are reflected in the education system's current situation. According to the analysis of **Feminism Romania Association,** in recent years, a series of academic and non-governmental reports and studies have indicated that the content of school textbooks and auxiliary materials used in pre-university education in Romania abounds in gender stereotypes and prejudices from an early age, and literary texts contain violence against women that is not critically analyzed in the classroom, perpetuating the vicious circle of gender based violence among young people. At the same time, in literature and history textbooks there is a poor representation of female

⁷⁴ Research on the barriers of Roma Women's access to justice in four Countries. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania; Council of Europe, 2022. Author of Final Research Report: Bojana Netkova. Authors of National Reports: Maria Metodieva (Bulgaria), Christos Iliadis (Greece), Tiziana Barrucci (Italy), and Crina Marina Muresanu (Romania). Available only in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/research-on-the-barriers-of-roma-women-s-access-to-justice-in-four-cou/1680a7cd27> .

⁷⁵ GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to step up their efforts to promote, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, the principles of equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and the right to personal integrity, and to ensure information on the different forms of gender-based violence against women, in formal curriculums and at all levels of education. This includes the need to address in particular forced marriage and sexual violence by focusing on the right to personal integrity and unequal power relations between women and men.

personalities and representative historical events from the perspective of gaining civil and political rights by women.

In February 2023, non-governmental organizations from the Coalition for Gender Equality called on the Ministry of Education, through an open letter⁷⁶, to publicly and unequivocally position itself in favor of gender equality, non-discrimination against women, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Such a position would have been important also because “attacks from ultra-conservative groups discourage teachers and schools from addressing issues related to equal opportunities and combating discrimination.” The lack of a public response from the Ministry showed a weak capacity to combat violent anti-gender actions from conservative groups and a weak involvement of the Ministry in the commitment to integrate gender equality in education, as regulated by Law No. 202/2002, the National Strategy in the field, and by European-level documents, including the Istanbul Convention.

In 2021, the Government approved the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Violence "SINERGIE" 2021-2030 and the related Action Plan 9⁷⁷. An objective of this strategy is "the development and approval of mandatory educational content for mass education at all levels, adapted according to age, on the topic of preventing and combating sexual abuse of any kind and in any environment, including online. Implementing this content within a new subject or by integrating it into existing subjects". The Action Plan of the SINERGIE Strategy specifies that the institutions involved in the development of this educational content are: the Ministry of Education, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, and the National Council of Magistrates, with the involvement of NGOs and prosecutors, police officers, judges practicing in the field. At the same time, the Strategy provides for informing students and parents in order to prevent and combat sexual abuse of any type and in any environment: educational unit, family/extended family, community, society. The Action Plan of this Strategy provides that, between 2021 and 2025, the Ministry of Education, the National College of Psychologists, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, the teaching staff houses ("Case ale corpului didactic") and NGOs will carry out “actions regarding the training/continuous training/informing/raising awareness of teachers in primary, secondary, high school and technical and vocational education regarding the approach to sexual violence and domestic violence”. **These planned activities did not take place**, to the knowledge of NGOs.

10. Please provide a few examples of promising teaching or prevention programmes, materials, or initiatives for use in formal education (from pre-school to higher education) that:

a. educate children and youth about equality between women and men, the right to personal integrity, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, including the notion of freely given consent;

According to **Associate Professor Oana Băluță**, there is no systematic national policy or curriculum ensuring that all students receive education on gender equality or non-violent conflict resolution.

⁷⁶ <https://ongen.ro/2023/02/03/ong-urile-solicita-ministerului-educatiei-sa-se-pozitioneze-pe-tema-egalitatii-de-gen-nediscriminarii-femeilor-si-prevenirii-si-combaterii-violentei-de-gen/>.

⁷⁷ Available only in Romanian at: https://pcabucuresti.mpublic.ro/violenta_sexuala.htm.

As mentioned by **ANAIIS Association** initiatives in private schools include educational sessions for children and young people on:

- gender equality;
- respect and boundaries.
- healthy relationships;
- identifying abusive dynamics.

However:

- These are local pilot initiatives that are not supported by the Ministry of Education nationally.
- Teachers lack the training and institutional support to implement such content in schools.
- There are still textbooks and teaching materials containing explicit gender stereotypes and victim-blaming narrative.

As underlined by **Irina Ilisei**, several NGOs part of the Coalition for Gender Equality developed materials for teachers and for youth promoting gender equality. Some representative examples are:

Egalitate de gen: Predarea și integrarea în Învățământul Peruniversitar [Gender Equality: Teaching and Integrating Gender Equality in the Classroom” by Columban, Alexandra; Ilisei, Irina; Dana Marțiș, Dana; Grünberg, Laura; Lincan, Georgiana and Voina, Andreea⁷⁸ – a handbook for teachers (from 5th to 12th grade)]. The material provides theoretical foundations in understanding gender equality, addressing toxic gender roles and prejudices that prevent equal opportunities for boys and girls. The handbook includes concrete class room activity suggestions, together with practical elements such as annexes, worksheets and exercises, illustrated with visuals, diagrams, videos, and references to additional resources – for example, (self-) evaluation questionnaires for teachers, exercises on stereotypes and prejudice, discrimination and intersectionality, as well as numerous project ideas on gender equality. Before publication, the manual was evaluated and tested by specialists and practitioners from the pre-university education system. It was developed within the the **EGALIS project: gender equality through social change and education**⁷⁹, project implemented by NGOs part of the Coalition for Gender Equality and founded through Active Citizens Fund Romania. After launching the handbook for teachers, the Ministry of Education acknowledged its value but clarified it could only gain official status as a “school manual” through the legal procedure for school textbooks. After several school inspectorates recommended its use, conservative and far-right actors, including member of Parliament mobilized against the initiative^{80,81,82}. Forty-eight NGOs and political representatives demanded the manual’s withdrawal, framing it as “gender ideology” and “homosexual propaganda.” This opposition was accompanied by intimidation of school inspectorates, harassment of the authors and contributing teachers, and disruption of public

⁷⁸ <https://ongen.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Manual-Egalitate-Gen-2022.pdf>

⁷⁹ <https://ongen.ro/egalis/>

⁸⁰ Alianța Părinților. „Ideologia de gen. Scrisoare deschisă” (01.011.2022) <https://aliantaparintilor.ro/2022/11/01/ideologia-de-gen-scrisoare-deschisa/>

⁸¹ Sorin Lavric (AUR), despre manualul Egalitate de gen: „O doctrină malefică globalistă, care vrea să distrugă familia”https://ziare.com/sorin-lavric/sorin-lavric-manual-egalitate-gen-doctrina-malefica-globalistadistruga-familia-1771145?utm_source=Ziare.com&utm_medium=copy-paste

⁸² Diana Șoșoacă, întrebarea nr. 1748/a din 26.10.2022 cu titlul „Educația de gen implementată pas cu pas în școli” <https://www.senat.ro/PDFIntrebare/b%201748a%20NF-intrebare1-Iovanovici%20Sosoaca-Min%20Ed.pdf>

events⁸³, illustrating the growing pressure and hostile environment faced by initiatives promoting gender equality in education.⁸⁴ Although the members of the Coalition to Gender Equality sent a letter⁸⁵ to the Ministry of Education to take a position, the only response received from the Ministry was that the material needs accreditation in order to be considered a school manual, however **as Irina Ilisei, gender equality expert** and co-author of the material notes, the material is a handbook for teachers, it was never meant as a school manual for pupils and it does not require any authorization. In Romanian education system, teachers have the freedom to choose their support materials. According to Tudorina Mihai, author of the *Gender Equality in Education. Monitoring Report on Public Policies Regarding Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence in the Romanian Education System* the Ministry's lack of a public response has highlighted its limited capacity to address anti-gender violence from conservative groups, as well as its weak commitment to integrating gender equality into education, as mandated by Law No. 202/2002, the National Strategy, and European-level frameworks, including the Istanbul Convention.⁸⁶

Future is equal – implemented by the ArtFusion Association and Asociaia FRONT/Feminism Romania undertaken workshops in 10 highschools in Bucharest on gender equality and gender based violence, having as beneficiaries a total of 900 students.

ABC-ul egalității de gen, a material dedicated to youth for understanding gender equality, gender based violence and what they can do when exposed to GBV.

b. address some or all the forms of gender-based violence against women and girls covered by the Istanbul Convention;

According to **Associate Professor Oana Băluță**, Romanian formal education lacks comprehensive content on gender-based violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence, as outlined in the Istanbul Convention. Prevention efforts are not institutionally embedded in the educational process. While a few NGOs have piloted activities addressing domestic violence and intimate partner violence, these remain underfunded, and largely disconnected from public policy.

Two Romanian universities host Master's programmes dedicated to Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities, both of which have been systematically targeted by conservative and anti-gender actors⁸⁷.

⁸³ Coaliția pentru Egalitate de Gen: Masă rotundă privind integrarea egalității de gen în învățământul preuniversitar (decembrie 2022) <https://ongen.ro/2022/12/07/masa-rotunda-privind-integrarea-egalitatii-de-genin-invatomantul-preuniversitar/>

⁸⁴ Mihai, Tudorina 2023. Egalitate de gen în educație. Raport de monitorizare a politicilor publice privind egalitatea de gen și violența de gen în sistemul de învățământ din România (2021-2023). Sonia. p.29. <https://artfusion.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Raport-TM-m.pdf>

⁸⁵ Coaliția pentru Egalitate de Gen „ONG-urile solicită Ministerului Educației să se poziționeze pe tema egalității de gen” <https://ongen.ro/2023/02/03/ong-urile-solicita-ministerului-educatiei-sa-se-pozitioneze-petema-egalitatii-de-gen-nediscriminarii-femeilor-si-prevenirii-si-combaterii-violentei-de-gen/>

⁸⁶ Mihai, Tudorina 2023. Egalitate de gen în educație. Raport de monitorizare a politicilor publice privind egalitatea de gen și violența de gen în sistemul de învățământ din România (2021-2023). Sonia. p.29. <https://artfusion.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Raport-TM-m.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Băluță, Oana, and Ionela Băluță. 2025. “Where to? Gender studies, epistemic injustice and the politics of de-democratization in Romania.” *European Journal of Politics and Gender* (published online ahead of print 2025) : 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2025D000000081>; Chiva, Cristina. 2023. “Gender and democratic resilience against autocratisation: the case of Romania’s ‘gender identity’ bill”. *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 6(3):

Furthermore, as mentioned by **TRANSCORE Association**, school education about domestic violence does not cover the LGBTI issues at all. At the same time, professionals such as social workers, police officers and medical staff are not properly trained to work with LGBTI victims.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, domestic violence, rape, harassment and coercion are not formally included in the national curriculum. When such topics are addressed, for example in civic education, they tend to be dealt with in a superficial or biological manner (e.g. reproduction) without addressing power dynamics or structural violence.

ANAIIS Association recommends:

- Mandatory inclusion of GBV-related content at all levels of education;
- Evaluation of existing materials for hidden stereotypes;
- Participation of feminist educators and NGOs in curriculum development.

c. promote the inclusion of digital literacy and online safety in formal curricula as foreseen under GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women

Romania has not made much progress regarding GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women. Although Romania's Strategy for the Digitisation of Education 2021-2027 was adopted (and the State Report expressly mentions this Strategy), **it lacks a gender perspective and fails to specifically address online violence against women and girls.**

According to **ANAIIS Association**, despite the increase in digital gender-based violence (GBV), such as revenge porn, sextortion and cyberstalking, the school system has not adapted its curricula or tools to equip students, particularly girls, with digital resilience.

ANAIIS Association has documented cases in which:

- girls were victims of digital abuse and schools failed to respond adequately;
- teachers lacked the tools to recognise or manage online violence;
- institutions blamed the victims or downplayed the incidents.

There is currently no coordinated national effort to prevent digital safety and gender-based cyberviolence.

d. ensure that teaching material used in school does not convey negative gender stereotypes of women and men of all ages;

According to **Associate Professor Oana Băluță**, there has been no comprehensive review or reform of teaching materials to remove harmful gender stereotypes. Textbooks continue to reinforce traditional gender roles, depicting men as active professionals and decision-

395-413. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16735398665628>; Băluță, Oana. 2023. "What is in a name? Alternative gender knowledge and the retrogressive worlding of radical right digital media". *Feminist Media Studies* 24(5): 1078–1094. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2023.2274280>; Băluță, Oana. 2020a. "Egalitatea de gen. Politici publice sau un câmp de luptă discursiv și politico-religios? (Gender Equality: Public Policy or a Discursive and Politico-Religious Battleground?)". *Transilvania* 11-12: 18-33. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2020.12.03>; Băluță, Ionela. 2020b. "Studiile de gen: un turnesol al democrației românești (Gender Studies: A Litmus Test for Romanian Democracy)". *Transilvania* 11-12: 34-41. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2020.12.04>.

makers, and women in domestic or caregiving roles⁸⁸. These narratives contribute to the normalization of gender inequality from an early age. While isolated textbook revisions have been proposed, they were either rejected or blocked due to anti-gender backlash, and no institutional mechanism currently exists to evaluate or revise educational content through a gender lens. In summary, Romania lacks a national, integrated educational strategy for the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of gender equality. **The education system is not only absent as a proactive actor in this area but is often the target of politicized resistance to gender equality initiatives.** Existing positive examples remain marginal and unsupported at the institutional level, reflecting a broader trend of reluctance, if not outright opposition, from public authorities to align education with the principles of the Istanbul Convention.

ANAIS Association underlines the fact that schoolbooks and teacher training are still heavily influenced by traditional gender roles. Representations of male authority and female passivity are dominant. **There are currently no efforts in place to audit or reform these materials in partnership with gender experts.**

e. offer tailored interventions aimed at preventing gender-based violence and empowering all girls, including those at risk of intersectional discrimination.

Girls from marginalised groups, such as Roma, rural and institutionalised girls, and girls with disabilities, are the least included in prevention efforts. Roma girls are prone to dropping out of school⁸⁹, and this issue has been addressed by NGOs through dedicated projects and programs.⁹⁰ **ANAIS Association** has targeted some of these groups in projects, but scaling up is not possible without national coordination and funding.

Most of initiatives aimed at implementing preventive or teaching programmes having the scope of promoting non-violence, equality between women and men, the right to personal integrity, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, or combating violence against women were implemented by NGOs, without support (including financial) by the Government.

Examples of promising educational and prevention programmes carried out by ANAIS Association

In 2023, a partnership between the **ANAIS Association** and Titu Maiorescu University was established, with the aim of empowering victims to report acts of sexual harassment in the academic environment and providing specialized services for victims. **ANAIS Association**, a partner of CEDROM (The Center for Human Rights) attached to Titu Maiorescu University, developed an online service for the benefit of students. **ANAIS Association** created a questionnaire for reporting cases of harassment in the academic environment with the purpose of identifying such cases and providing specialized services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. All reported information would be automatically and exclusively directed to **ANAIS Association** and is confidential. The responses would be drafted by experts within ANAIS (the project is pending implementation) .

⁸⁸ <https://hotnews.ro/document-lumea-manualelor-scolare-de-azi-un-univers-de-secol-xix-unde-femeile-gatesc-si-tatii-nu-exista-o-analiza-a-facultatii-de-sociologie-asupra-manualelor-514332>

⁸⁹ According to information provided at: [PROMA National-Report.pdf](#)

⁹⁰ [Reducerea abandonului școlar în rândul fetelor rome, printr-o abordare intersecțională - E-Romnija.](#)

In June 2024, ANAIS Association together with UNICEF Romania launched the research *Born in Ukraine, refugees in Romania. Perceptions, difficulties and expectations of adolescent girls* available in Romanian, English and Ukrainian.⁹¹

The research is dedicated to understanding the experiences and needs of Ukrainian refugee adolescent girls in Bucharest and Ilfov and was carried out by phd. Simona Mihaiu researcher at the Quality of Life Research Institute, Romanian Academy. The research focused on issues related to integration, safety, access to education and health services, mental health and relationship with the host community. The results highlighted the acute need for free psychological support, uncertainty about the future and administrative difficulties.

Examples of promising educational and prevention programmes carried out by ProTECT Federation

Over the past four years, ProTECT Federation member organizations have implemented targeted programs focused on education, life skills, media literacy, and online safety for at-risk children and youth:

-eLiberare Association developed the Educational Programme for the Prevention of Human Trafficking in Schools. Through the Ministry of Education, eLiberare has been running an educational program in schools every year since 2013. The 2023-2024 Educational Programme for the Prevention of Human Trafficking in Schools focuses on human trafficking and the trafficking of minors for sexual exploitation, as well as the main forms of abuse and sexual exploitation in the online environment. The programme includes the Teacher's Guide, lesson plans adapted for grades V–VIII and IX–XII, PowerPoint presentations, and supporting video materials that facilitate the effective communication of key messages and the development of critical thinking.

-Asociația FREE – “Mărțișor” Day Center: Supports around 50 vulnerable children with school supplies, tutoring, and language lessons, alongside weekly prevention sessions on trafficking, online safety, and identifying abuse. The center also hosts an annual children's camp and family retreat to build resilience and awareness.

-Salvation Army – “SMART” Project: Reached over 350 children in three and a half years with online workshops on safety, trafficking, and labor exploitation. An additional 100 children per year in cities like Bucharest, Craiova, Buzău, and Bacău benefit from similar programs aimed at prevention and well-being.

-Dorcas Aid Romania & Dignity Restored – “Next Steps” Project: Since 2021, this initiative has provided life skills and digital safety education in schools and vulnerable communities. Interactive workshops focus on recognizing online risks and critical thinking. A key tool is the short film *“I Am Alexandra”*, illustrating exploitation through the Loverboy method.

⁹¹ <https://asociatia-anais.ro/proiect/activitati-de-diminuare-a-violentei-bazate-pe-gen-care-vizeaza-femeile-si-adolescentii-refugiati-din-ucraina-si-din-comunitatile-gazda-baieti-si-fete-din-bucuresti-si-ilfov-gend/>.

Examples of promising educational and prevention programmes carried out by A.L.E.G. Association

Under CERV project N. 101005489 – BEE Boosting Gender Equality in Early Education, A.L.E.G. Association has developed jointly with kindergartens and primary schools an educational package on how to integrate content on mutual respect, non-violent behaviour and equality in different subjects, ranging from arts and communication to history and science. The project also produced guidelines for teachers, school decision makers and parents on how to address disparities that model unbalanced power dynamics between students. Despite informing the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the Ministry of Education about this resource, no further efforts have been made to disseminate this at national level, beyond the efforts of A.L.E.G.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association** despite the fact that the *National strategy on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and the prevention and combating of domestic violence for the period 2022 – 2027* includes concrete measures in the field of Education (Objective: Preventing and combating gender stereotypes and prejudices in the education system), no systematic action is being implemented throughout schools due to anti-gender attitudes among both high level and local level decision makers in education. Prevention programs proposed by NGOs often encounter opposition and are labeled as “gender ideology”. Romanian education authorities have succumbed to pressures from conservative groups to eliminate gender education from educational settings after the referendum in 2018 - for example by giving up on a strategy proposed and developed in cooperation with UNICEF - failing to invoke counter-arguments based on the Istanbul Convention or UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or at least to attempt to show the impact of not addressing gender violence prevention.

Many of the teenagers **A.L.E.G.** works with complain about cyberviolence becoming widespread, with direct negative impacts on girls daily lives, while the schools are failing to address it effectively. As part of a series of focus groups in April 2025 involving girls aged 14 to 18, A.L.E.G. collected information about poor educational practices from 6 different general schools and highschoools in Sibiu, in which cyberbullying is addressed once a year in a 50-minute speech by a police official that blames teenagers for the reckless use of social media. No interactive learning, no study cases and no practical guidance for reporting was included in such activities entitled anti-bullying information campaign. Only one private school - the ERI Finish School - included peer education methodologies.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 14

-Mainstreaming gender equality in all policies and laws in the field of education.

-Integrate mandatory, age-appropriate, and research-based education on gender equality and healthy relationships into the national curriculum, including content on: Equality between women and men; The right to personal integrity; Freely given consent in intimate relationships; Non-violent conflict resolution and respectful communication.

-In the process of drafting national strategies related to education introduce intersectional and gender-based approach when assessing the situation of Roma women, women with disabilities, elderly women, LGBTIQ+ women and women belonging to national minorities in pre-university and university education programmes and subjects. To ensure this, civil

society, in particular NGOs experienced in preventing violence against women and girls (including those working with girls who are or may be exposed to intersectional discrimination) should be included as a partner in education policy-making and implementation of prevention programmes. Also, it should be created a mechanism for reporting harassment, bullying and sexual harassment in schools and universities.

-Promote school-based tailored interventions that empower girls and address the needs of those facing intersectional discrimination (e.g., Roma girls, girls with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ youth, girls from low-income or rural communities), through mentoring, support networks, inclusive extracurricular activities, and participatory school governance. The inclusion of a gender and intersectional perspective in anti-violence programs in schools is crucial. Gender-based violence management programs, including the management of bullying and teacher-student violence, should include a gender and intersectional perspective, starting from the reality that forms of violence affect girls and boys differently, some forms of violence, especially those of a sexual nature, having predominantly female victims. Gender-based violence affects to a greater extent girls from vulnerable social categories: from placement centers, migrants, poor, with parents working abroad, with disabilities. Also, preventive interventions will take into account the fact that children perceived as "different" are more likely to be victims of violence in schools. Being perceived as "different" maybe based on various criteria such as physical appearance, skin color, language, religion, poor backgrounds, parents working abroad, gender non-conforming.

-Introducing mandatory training in the field of gender equality and domestic violence/violence against women for teachers and administrative staff employed in pre-university (primary and secondary schools) and university education institutions.

-Revise teaching materials and school textbooks to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes, and establish a permanent institutional mechanism (such as a multidisciplinary committee guided by experienced NGOs and academics) tasked with reviewing educational content through a gender-sensitive and intersectional lens.

-Fund and scale up successful civil society initiatives that have demonstrated impact in preventing gender-based violence and promoting equality in schools. Civil society should be included as a partner in education policy-making and implementation.

-According to GREVIO Recommendations enshrined in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 122), develop gender-sensitive educational programmes that address challenging topics such as sex education, sexual violence, forced marriages, forced abortions and forced sterilisation.

-Support and institutionalize digital literacy education and online safety modules, including gender-specific risks such as digital dimension of violence against women, image-based abuse, and online harassment. Although image-based abuse and online harassment are not directed towards girls only, girls are more often exposed/are disproportionately affected by these

phenomena. These can be embedded into the civic education curricula and aligned with **GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1.**

-Ensuring the training of staff from the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Educational Policy and Evaluation with the purpose of integrating gender equality into educational policies and empower employees to deal with negative conservative reactions based on misinformation.

-Ensuring the training of equal opportunities officers in schools – there is no information on who these appointed officers are and what their competences are. As Irina Ilisei, gender equality expert and representative of Plural Association notes, there is the need to have appropriate training, educational resources as well as a clear protocol/ methodology in regard to the responsibilities of the person who is the person designated with responsibilities for equal opportunities at the school level, as well as a monitoring system of their activities and last but not least funding to cover their activity. Without these the role of the persons designated with responsibilities for equal rights is only formal but and the policy is not translated into practice. The only initiative to create educational resources in this regard comes from non-governmental sector⁹², however according to our knowledge the Ministry of Education did not do any systematic training or at least initiative to develop, implement or scale the efforts of the organisations with expertise in gender equality.

-Establish a Directorate for Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination within the structure of the Ministry of Education. With improved know-how, the educational policies that are currently insufficiently developed in the issue of equal opportunities and non-discrimination could be greatly improved.

-Ensuring a stable collaboration between the Ministry of Education and National Agency on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men in joint projects. Currently, the protocol between the Ministry of Education and the National Agency signed in 2020 has expired, without producing sufficiently conclusive results.

-Establishing the Interministerial Working Group for the integration of the notions of equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men in the school curricula. This represents an obligation assumed by the National Strategy on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men 2022 – 2027.

-Conducting, by the Ministry of Education under the guidance of experienced NGOs and academics, of a research project to review the school curriculum from a feminist perspective.

-Expanding the network of school mediators, as a policy aimed at reducing the risk of early school abandonment in Roma communities and in poor and marginalized communities. At the same time, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate school mediation activities and to make training programs available for people who exercise the profession of school mediator.

⁹² <https://ongen.ro/2023/12/31/ghid-pentru-adresarea-violentei-de-gen-in-mediul-scolar/>

-Introducing modules on gender equality and gender-based violence in the psycho-pedagogical training of future teachers.

Article 15: Training of professionals

Overview

According to **Associate Professor Oana Băluță**, qualitative exploratory findings reveal the complex ways in which gender shapes the justice system, particularly through the interplay of professionalization, structural barriers, and persistent gender stereotypes⁹³. These insights call for further research on justice professionals—both women and men—as potential agents of change, and on case law that addresses gender stereotyping. Building on Cusack’s argument that education and training are essential to combating judicial stereotyping, it is crucial to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary in this area. Addressing stereotypes must also adopt an intersectional lens, recognizing how gender, ethnicity, and class interact to limit access to justice⁹⁴.

As mentioned by **AN AIS Association**, despite legal provisions and strategies mentioning training, Romania does not have, in practice, a coherent, mandatory, gender-sensitive training system for professionals who interact with survivors of gender-based violence.

From ANAIS Association perspective, training remains:

- occasional, often supported by NGOs or international donors;
- not compulsory across key sectors (justice, police, health and education);
- lacking a gender perspective, trauma-informed approaches or survivor-centred methodologies.

No professional group is systematically trained on intersectionality, LGBTIQ+ issues, or support for migrant/refugee victims.

11. Please complete tables I and II included in the Appendix in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the professional groups that receive initial and in-service training on the different forms of violence against women and domestic violence. Please specify the frequency and scope of the training and whether it is compulsory.

Although the State Report provides multiple examples⁹⁵ of training for practitioners responsible for preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women (including magistrates, police officers and teachers), **these training courses do not meet the requirements set by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania⁹⁶. Training sessions are**

⁹³ Băluță, Oana, 2025b forthcoming, *Overcoming Gender Bias in the Justice System's Response to Violence: a Call for Enhanced Academic and Professional Training* in Baer, Susanne and Ivana Jelic and Ivana Krstic, *The Gender and the Judiciary*, Springer.

⁹⁴ Băluță, Oana, 2025b forthcoming, *Overcoming Gender Bias in the Justice System's Response to Violence: a Call for Enhanced Academic and Professional Training* in Baer, Susanne and Ivana Jelic and Ivana Krstic, *The Gender and the Judiciary*, Springer.

⁹⁵ Please see pages 34–51 of the State Report.

⁹⁶ We specifically refer to paragraph 135 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to ensure systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training on the prevention and detection of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, on equality between women and men, on the needs and rights of victims and on the prevention of secondary victimisation for all professional

therefore fragmented and not mandatory. They are not conducted according to national programmes, so there is no coordinated approach to training professionals at the national level, and national programmes of training are usually supported by externally funded projects.

As underlined by **A.L.E.G. Association**, so far, training on domestic violence has not been compulsory or systematic, and provision of such training depended on projects accessed by public institutions or NGOs. Addressing gender bias is not often part of training programs undertaken by state institutions. **Some critical professional groups who have not been sufficiently trained on domestic violence are judges and medical staff.** These professional categories are more reluctant to cooperate with other professions and with civil society, and heavily affected by gender bias and other preconceptions related to traditional norms.

Another problem relating to the training of practitioners at a national level **is the absence of an independent body responsible for ensuring gender-sensitive training.**

According to the information presented in the State Report (pages 34-51), state authorities rarely seek the support of non-governmental organisations or other independent bodies to provide gender-sensitive training.

As a result, practitioners in public institutions are trained by other public institution specialists who are unable to provide effective training that addresses the shortcomings of the public system and that delivers relevant, gender-sensitive solutions.

When providing training, an honest and objective approach to the issues of violence against women and domestic violence must be taken. The degree of objectivity decreases if public authorities/institutions tend to train their own professionals.

In this context, it is desirable that training courses in the field of preventing and combating violence be provided by entities external to public authorities and institutions that can objectively analyze problems in practice and emphasize the importance of respecting victims' rights. **A structure made up of experts from NGOs could be an appropriate solution.**

Another issue regarding the state's provision of training courses for practitioners in the field of domestic violence and violence against women **is the lack of specialised courses on each form of domestic violence as defined by Law No. 217/2003 and set out in national policy documents.** These forms include sexual violence, ranging from rape to revenge pornography; forced pregnancy, forced sterilisation, forced abortion and forced marriage; economic violence; digital violence; physical violence; spiritual violence; psychological violence; and verbal violence. **The lack of specialised training on each of the forms of violence regulated by the Istanbul Convention is an issue highlighted by GREVIO in its Baseline Report on Romania which has not yet been addressed by national authorities.**

12. Please specify if the expertise of women's rights organisations or specialist support services is integrated in the design and/or implementation of the training.

As stated in response to the previous question, over the last 3 years there has been little progress in implementing recommendation mentioned in paragraph 135 in the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, according to which: *GREVIO urges the Romanian authorities to ensure systematic and mandatory initial and in-service training on the prevention and detection of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, on equality between women and men, on the needs and rights of victims and on the prevention of secondary*

groups, in particular law enforcement, the healthcare sector and the judiciary. All training must be supported and reinforced by clear protocols and guidelines that set the standards staff are expected to follow and by appropriate and sustainable funding for the training sessions.

victimisation for all professional groups, in particular law enforcement, the healthcare sector and the judiciary. All training must be supported and reinforced by clear protocols and guidelines that set the standards staff are expected to follow and by appropriate and sustainable funding for the training sessions.

Women's NGOs such as **ANAIIS Association** play a key role in designing and delivering training in Romania, particularly in the areas of:

- police training modules (in collaboration with IGPR),
- judicial system (training sessions with court staff);
- social workers and Public Social Assistance Services/SPAS professionals;
- teachers.

However, the involvement of women's NGOs is not institutionalised.

No funding is allocated to support NGO-led training on a regular basis.

Training efforts remain dependent on temporary project funding from UNICEF, HIAS and international partnerships.

The government rarely monitors the impact of training, and there is no evaluation system in place to measure behavioural change, survivor safety or service improvement.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, some training programs involve women's rights organisations or specialist support services or are even initiated by them at their own cost, although the state has the training duty and therefore, the state should put provide the resources. But specific professional groups (police, judges, medical staff) have less information on and consideration for the work of women's rights organizations and support services, and tend to reject a gendered understanding of violence and its consequences.

As mentioned in response to the previous question, the state only cooperates with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on an incidental and marginal basis in the delivery of training courses. **Furthermore, consultation/partnerships with NGOs on the development and delivery of training courses is purely formal, as the proposals put forward by NGOs are often disregarded.**

Examples of training courses offered by representative NGOs in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women:

-ANAIIS Association

-2022-2024, ANAIIS Association organized training sessions for professionals (lawyers, social workers, psychologists, police officers, staff working with the migrant community and asylum seekers etc.). Also, were organized information actions/information sessions about domestic violence and women's rights for employees of companies requesting this service or for other people interested in this topic.

-during 2022, ANAIIS Association developed the project "Supporting victims of domestic violence facing barriers to solve their problems during the Covid-19 pandemic" - funded by Vital Voices Global Partnership Inc. The main objectives of this project consisted of increasing access to specialized services for survivors of gender-based violence and provide access and organize two online training sessions for lawyers and other professionals with an intervention role based on the experience of working with victims and survivors of domestic violence, especially during

the Covid-19 pandemic. The main activities of the project were: - providing informational and psychological support for victims of gender-based violence; providing specialized services such as in-person and online counseling sessions and access to support groups for victims and survivors of gender-based violence; representation/assistance in court to obtain the protection order; consulting a group of survivors of domestic violence and specialists; organizing a working group with specialists from the national network of survivors and exchanging best practices on intervention in the field of gender-based violence; organizing online training sessions for Romanian lawyers. Project duration was 12 months: 21 December 2021 – 20 December 2022.⁹⁷

-another project that was initiated by ANAIS Association in 2022 and funded by the AVON Foundation was "Stop domestic violence! - an integrated project of social services for victims of domestic violence". Project duration was 12 months: May 2022 - April 2023. The project aimed to improve the access of victims of domestic violence to specialized information and services according to their needs (counseling and social orientation, access to support groups, legal counseling) and to improve relationships and the exchange of experience between specialists who interact or work with victims of domestic violence through their work (social workers, psychologists, lawyers, social service coordinators). Main activities - Providing information, counseling and social guidance; Online workshops with professionals-lawyers, psychologists, social workers; Supervisory workshops for the members of the "I succeed" program; Legal advice; Support groups; Online workshop for AVON Romania employees about domestic violence.⁹⁸

-during 2022 continued the project "VioGen RoJust - strategic action for the implementation of the Council of Europe's human rights standards" that was launched in 2021 and was finalized in 2023. The project was implemented by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men with the partners: ANAIS Association, GRADO Association, Transcena Association, FILIA Center Association financed through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, within the call "Human Rights - Implementation at national level", managed by the Romanian Social Development Fund. An important component developed in the project was the training of the main categories of professionals who have specific responsibilities in the judicial system and who must ensure the correct application of the law (police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers).⁹⁹

-between August 2022-August 2023, with the support of UNICEF, ANAIS Association implemented the project „Gender-based violence mitigation activities targeting refugee women and adolescents refugees and host communities (boys and girls) from Ukraine currently living in Bucharest and Ilfov” which had a very strong training component consisting of organizing training sessions provided to call center operators (national Help-line 0800500333) regarding intercultural dialogue, addressing GBV victims with a special emphasis on victims in trauma, protection tools for domestic violence victims, handling cases with children as direct victims of violence or witnesses, emotional health of telephone assistance operators, and more.¹⁰⁰

-the Project "Gender-based violence mitigation activities targeting refugee women and adolescents refugees and host communities (boys and girls) from Ukraine currently living in

⁹⁷ For more information, please see: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Activity-Report-2022-1.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Please see: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Activity-Report-2022-1.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Please see information provided at: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Activity-Report-2022-1.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ Please see further details at: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Activity-Report-2023-1.pdf>.

Bucharest and Ilfov" was retaken during December 2023 - June 2024 with the support of UNICEF. The same training programme was undertaken.

-in 2024, the role of ANAIS Association in the field of organizing training sessions based on the needs of the victim was highlighted by the training and mentoring sessions during the implementation of the project for the employees working at the National Helpline for victims of domestic violence managed by National Agency on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

The non-governmental organizations are participating in working groups both with central institutions, including the Ministry of Health and with local administration and institutions (i.e. DGASPCs and hospitals). One example of NGOs' advocacy success covering the intersection between gender and healthcare is the legislation change that bans on-demand virginity tests (these can now be done only at the request of a courthouse). NGO sector has made an important contribution to improving the healthcare's system response to gender base-violence. Some examples of such initiatives (non-exhaustive list): - The local network of professionals working on gender-based violence in Braşov initiated and facilitated by Pas Alternativ Organization; Numerous trainings for professionals working on gender-based violence (that included healthcare professional) organized by Sensiblu, Centrul Filia, E-Romnja, ALEG, ANAIS, Pas Alternativ and other organizations with expertise on the subject matter; Protocols for addressing GBV for forensic medicine and emergency medicine in tertiary care elaborated by the Institute of Reproductive Rights, used informally at local level in Romania and officially in other countries in the region; Training for forensic doctors on sexual violence against children (with credit points), organized by VIS Association with the support of UNICEF; Training program for healthcare professionals in the network Care for Mothers that included sessions on GBV and PSEA - implemented by AMI with the support of UNICEF. The results of the NGOs work show that there is a high need for continuation of these initiatives. However, due to limited capacity and resources, the efforts of the civil society cannot replace the work of public institutions and only serve as good practice models worthy to be scaled at national level.

Through the desk research we could not identify any University of Medicine that covers in the curricula studies aspects related to addressing gender-based violence in healthcare. For example, the University of Medicine has a course on legal aspects in the first year and a course on ethical aspects in the third year. Gender-based violence, sexual violence, or any other aspect related to these issues are not covered by the existent courses. Only some Universities, for some specializations, may provide some training on this matter, i.e. the University of Medicine in Timişoara during the residency program on obstetrics and gynecology. In order to keep their right to medical practice, healthcare professionals (doctors, medical assistants, and midwives) need to accumulate a number of credit points yearly, by participating in continuous training. The organizations that manage and regulate these credit points are: the College of Physicians (Colegiul Medicilor) and the Order of General Medical Assistants, Midwives and Medical Assistants (OAMGMAMR). The results of the desk research indicate some training for healthcare professionals is provided, initiated by International Organizations, NGOs, or by ANES – in partnership or with the support of the Ministry of Health, or professional associations healthcare, DSP, DGASPC or hospitals. However, there is no systematic training of healthcare professionals on GBV, neither in the initial professional training nor in the continuous training.

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¹⁰¹ Ilisei, Irina; 2023; The Response of Health Systems to Gender-Based Violence. Legislation, Institutional landscapes Service Provision Capacity Building Needs; p. 29 <https://ongen.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/The-response-of-health-systems-to-GBV-1.pdf>

In an exploratory research with over 300 healthcare professionals, 33.5% of the respondents answered that lack of education and training is a barrier in providing support services to victims of gender-based violence.¹⁰²

According to **Irina Ilisei, gender equality expert and representative of the Plural Association**, the academic curricula for teacher education in Romania do not include training on gender equality or the prevention and addressing of gender-based violence. Continuous professional development for teachers also largely omits these topics. In 2022, NGOs within the Coalition for Gender Equality sent formal information requests to all **Teacher Training Centers (Casele Corpului Didactic)** nationwide, asking whether they offered educational programs on gender equality or equal opportunities. Fewer than one-third of the centers responded, and only two confirmed that they provided training that included some elements of gender equality. Even those two initiatives were provided to a very limited number of teachers and were not focused on gender equality or GBV.

-Necuvinte Association

VERA: "Positive change through integrated action in turbulent times!" is a project financed by the Ministry of Justice through the "Justice" Program within the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. It is implemented in partnership with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, as well as the following organizations: CFCECAS, Sensiblu Foundation, the Necuvinte Association, and the Center for Mediation and Community Security. Specific objectives: 1. Improving the response capacity of interagency mechanisms for emergency intervention in cases of domestic violence at the community level (mobile teams — MT).

The training team conducted courses nationwide, and we assessed the level of the mobile teams. Although some of them have expertise, they lack clear training programs, and others are merely formal creations with no specialists or work experience with victims of domestic violence. Within this component, we organized training sessions for coordinators and members of mobile teams and developed a toolkit on emergency intervention in situations of domestic violence, which is necessary for the mobile teams' activities. 2. Improve institutional capacity by training domestic violence department specialists at the DGASPC level to increase their ability to provide access to justice for victims of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and affected children. Within this component, there will be: 1. Organization of training sessions for specialists within domestic violence departments/those with duties in the field of domestic violence 2. Elaboration of a work guide for specialists in domestic violence departments.

Bright Sky RO is the first mobile application and integrated database containing all the necessary information about domestic and gender-based violence in Romania. It offers specialized assistance and support to victims of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as to individuals concerned about the safety of a friend or family member. All of this information is easily accessible through a free application. The project was implemented with the Vodafone Foundation Romania and the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police. The app is available in Romanian, English, and Hungarian. Bright Sky RO offers:

- Relationship risk assessment questionnaires

¹⁰² Ilisei, Irina; 2023; The Response of Health Systems to Gender-Based Violence. Legislation, Institutional landscapes Service Provision Capacity Building Needs; p 36-39 <https://ongen.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/The-response-of-health-systems-to-GBV-1.pdf>

- A confidential diary to document signs of domestic abuse in text, photo, video, or audio format. This information will never be stored on your phone.
 - Resources and information on domestic and gender violence
 - An online safety guide with tips to help increase security in the online environment
- Contact details of specialized services that support victims of domestic and gender violence.

The *Improving The Justice System's Response To Cases Of Sexual And Gender-Based Violence project*¹⁰³, also known as E.L.E. (Evolve by Learning to Empower), is implemented by the Necuvinte Association in partnership with AVON Cosmetics Romania, the Foreign Policy Committee of the Romanian Senate, the National Agency for Equality Between Women and Men, the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, and the National Police Corps. One hundred and fifty specialists were trained over four days from January 20th to 23rd, 2025. The training took place in the Constantin Stere Hall in the Romanian Senate.

The general objective is to: The project aims to improve the justice system's response to cases of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence by implementing victim-centered interventions. Specific objectives: • Improving access to justice for victims of domestic and gender-based violence; • Creating a network of professionals in the Municipality of Bucharest through specialized training for justice system workers (police officers, prosecutors, and judges), psychologists in the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection in Bucharest, and lawyers in multidisciplinary teams; • Increasing awareness of domestic and gender-based violence.

"Preventing Sexual Offenses and the Recruitment of Teenagers Through Online Social Networks" is a project financially supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Romania and implemented in partnership with the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police.

The "Healthy Relationships" guide¹⁰⁴ is structured into four chapters that cover topics such as online security, privacy, consent, healthy communication, forms of violence, and applicable legislation. The material is intended for high school students (teenagers aged 14-18), their parents, and teachers, as well as the general public.

-eLiberare Association

-eLiberare has been doing capacity building on early detection and notification of cases with various professional categories in the last 5 years: between 2019-2024, a total of 300 training sessions for 8953 participants from different professional categories such as emergency line operators, social workers, DGASPC child care professionals, police officers, healthcare professionals, school counsellors and teachers, and professionals or volunteers working with refugees. These trainings focus on raising awareness about trafficking and improving the professionals' ability to protect at-risk children and were done in partnership with ANITP, ANPDCA, The Romanian Police, the Special Telecommunication System etc.

-Based on the National Mechanism for the Identification and Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Persons (NIRM) adopted in January 2023, eLiberare developed, in partnership with ANITP, ANPDCA and UNICEF a user-friendly guide for childcare practitioners explaining the NIRM in

¹⁰³ <https://www.necuvinte.ro/legislation/daca-lucrezi-cu-victimele-infractiunilor/?lang=en>.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.necuvinte.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Healthy-relationships.pdf>.

a simplified way. The guide has been disseminated in training sessions and was also made open-source on eLiberare's website.

-eLiberare has been running an Educational Program in schools at national level since 2013 up to present. The program contains a Teacher's Guide, a Lesson Plan and a Powerpoint presentation. This Educational Program first trains the teachers on what human trafficking is so that they can teach it in their classrooms. In 2024 alone, eLiberare reached 5885 teachers across the country and a total of 107,325 pupils.

-eLiberare has also contributed with input on the Procedure on the management of cases of violence against pre-schoolers/students and school staff, as well as other related situations in the school environment and suspected violence against children outside the school environment (approved by Ministerial Order no. 6.235/2023). The procedure regulates the working modalities, the applicable rules and the responsibilities of the persons involved in the inter-institutional and multidisciplinary management of various types of violence against students, including child trafficking and sexual abuse.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 15:

-Implement mandatory, continuous training for justice professionals (judges, prosecutors, clerks, lawyers,) and also for health and police professionals on the following subjects: gender equality, unconscious bias, and judicial stereotyping, with a strong focus on intersectionality (gender, ethnicity, class, disability, etc.).

- Ensure evaluation of impact for training programs by assessing changes in daily practices of the trained professionals and the overall change in institutional performance and cooperation with relevant partners in preventing VAW.

-Systematically review case law for gender stereotyping, including decisions that reinforce harmful norms, and develop judicial guidelines or commentaries to support stereotype-free reasoning in legal decisions.

-Mainstream intersectionality in judicial training and legal education, ensuring that professionals understand how overlapping systems of oppression affect access to justice for marginalized groups.

- Empowering NGOs in the training of legal and law enforcement practitioners, as well as educators, by:

- recognising NGOs as independent providers of quality expertise in training on domestic violence and violence against women.**
- ensuring sustained and continuous state funding for NGOs to provide state professionals with independent, high-quality training;**
- developing sustainable, effective, results-oriented partnerships between state authorities and NGOs to ensure comprehensive training for state practitioners.**

Article 16: Preventive intervention and treatment programmes

13. Please provide information on measures taken to increase the number of available preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence both for voluntary and mandatory attendance.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, **no significant progress has been made in Romania's development and implementation of preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators.**

In the Baseline Report on Romania, GREVIO explained the features of preventive intervention programmes as follows: *While some perpetrators may need anger management training, GREVIO stresses that preventive intervention should encourage all perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions and question their harmful attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes towards women. It is essential that such programmes address the underlying issues of power and control.*¹⁰⁵

In the State Report was highlighted the support provided to perpetrators solely in the area of anger management counseling¹⁰⁶. In this regard, it was exemplified that: *Also, 86 psychologists were trained in applying the Brøset counseling technique for anger management. A total number of 238 perpetrators have been benefiting from counseling, on both voluntary or mandatory attendance, in these 8 centers, from 2022 to 2024.*

The data provided by the state does not show that the 238 perpetrators who benefited from counselling received information about the minimum standards indicated by GREVIO in the Recommendation contained in paragraph 141 of the Baseline Report on Romania. According to the GREVIO Recommendation, the Romanian state must develop perpetrator programmes based on common minimum standards that:

focus on achieving behavioural change of perpetrators to adopt non-violent behaviour;
ensure that the safety of victims, their support and their human rights are of primary concern;
work in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims, such as women's shelters and counselling centres, based on multi-agency co-operation.

The State Report contains insufficient information to determine **the extent to which ANES's perpetrator programmes correspond to the minimum standards indicated in the GREVIO Recommendation.** On the other hand, the activity of non-governmental organisations has revealed that **ANES's programmes for perpetrators lack qualified personnel.** Thus, when assessing the 10 perpetrator programs-now functioning under General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC)- that ANES has implemented within a dedicated project, **A.L.E.G. Association** underlined that there are reasons to doubt the quality of these programs. In Sibiu County (where **A.L.E.G. Association** is located), the coordinator and the counselor of these services had to be nominated from the existing DGASPC structure, so that remuneration could be included under the county budget. This did not allow selection of staff experienced in domestic violence to serve the center, and no man was included in the team working directly with perpetrators. **Little pro-active effort is being put into cooperation with courts and probation services in order to ensure referral to counseling through protection orders or other court orders.** In over 3 years of functioning, the center served less than 20 perpetrators and the staff often complain that "perpetrators don't seek help", failing to understand that at the root of perpetrator behaviour is the unwillingness to take responsibility for their own violent actions.

From this practical case highlighted by the **A.L.E.G. Association** it results that **programmes for perpetrators do not benefit from personnel specialising in gender issues.** This contradicts the GREVIO recommendation contained in the Baseline Report on Romania

¹⁰⁵ See paragraph 136, page 32, GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania.

¹⁰⁶ See page 52 of the State Report.

(page 33, paragraph 141, letter b) according to which : GREVIO strongly encourages Romania to *ensure that staff administering such programmes receive adequate training that incorporates a gendered understanding of violence and the need to deconstruct harmful gender stereotypes.*

Also, from the example provided, it follows **that there are no uniform standards at the national level that would ensure the obligation of the perpetrator to take part in the program, nor indicators to evaluate the performance of these programs or a follow-up mechanism to monitor the perpetrator's conduct in the period after completing the program.** We acknowledge that programs for perpetrators may also be voluntary : nevertheless, NGO practice shows that, as a rule, perpetrators do not participate in such programs on a voluntary basis.

Furthermore, **ANAIIS Association underlines that programmes for perpetrators mostly exist on paper, usually within public social services, and are neither evaluated nor monitored.**

There is no national network or standard of practice, and very few professionals are trained to facilitate such interventions.

Courts rarely mandate participation in such programmes and there is no follow-up or enforcement system.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 16:

-Structuring the content of preventive intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators in accordance with the minimum requirements indicated by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania. In particular, the focus should be on changing the perpetrator's perception of the violent act, making him aware of his responsibility for the violence committed against the victim. Such programmes should also counteract any attempts by the perpetrator to blame the victim and change their perception of victims, while promoting the importance of peacefully resolving differences and taking the victim's rights into account.

- Developing performance indicators for perpetrator programmes by establishing minimum standards at the national that should assess at least :

- the extent to which the perpetrator's perception of violence and victims has changed.

- the tendency of perpetrators to reoffend (whether against the same victim or another).

NGOs should be included/consulted in a process of developing such standards. Furthermore, such programmes should cooperate with women's specialist services which are in contact with the victim, to ensure her safety (to prevent perpetrators to re-offend while they are involved in the programme).

-Developing mechanisms to monitor the perpetrator as a result of participation in dedicated programmes.

14. Please provide information on measures taken to:

a. increase the number of men and boys attending perpetrator programmes for domestic and sexual violence;

No progress has been made in this area since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania. According to the State Report (page 52), the only measures adopted by the state to increase the number of men and boys attending perpetrator programmes for domestic and sexual violence were partnerships and collaboration agreements with the relevant authorities:

The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), local police stations, and county probation services. **However, these measures are not mandatory and cannot motivate men and boys to participate in perpetrators programmes. The measures remain at the discretion of the perpetrators who, in the main, do not assume responsibility in relation to the acts of violence committed against the victim.**

According to **ANAIIS Association**, there are no public campaigns or referral systems designed to encourage voluntary participation. Many men are unaware that such programmes exist. **Attendance is often seen as a mere formality for legal purposes, such as in child custody cases.**

b. ensure that the perpetrator programmes apply standards of best practice;

No particular progress has been recorded in this area since the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania was adopted. The State Report identifies the Brøset Violence Checklist (BVC) as a standard of good practice (page 52). However, studies¹⁰⁷ question the fact that BVC is indeed a good practice and show that the BVC is primarily a tool for predicting the level of aggression, and not a tool for treatment. Also, the BVC is a tool for assessing a person's predisposition to aggression, but its effects are only observable in the short term.

Furthermore, while the BVC may be considered a good practice tool, it originates from Norwegian practice and cannot simply be adopted in Romania, particularly given that violence is influenced by deep cultural factors and local/geographic determinants.

Good practices in this area should be developed by taking into account the national particularities of the phenomenon of violence against women and by following a victim's rights based approach.

ANAIIS Association has advocated for the adoption of European standards. However, Romania lacks:

- guidelines on motivational interviewing;
- trauma-informed approaches;
- culturally adapted methods (e.g. for Roma communities).

c. ensure the safety of victims and co-operation with specialist support services for victims;

As the State Report shows, the state has not taken appropriate measures to implement a rights-based approach for victims. The absence of a national accreditation mechanism for perpetrator programmes, a shortage of trained specialists in gender-based violence to deliver such programmes, and the absence of an obligation for perpetrators to participate in special preventive intervention and treatment programmes collectively determine the state's failure to protect victims.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, there is no formal cooperation between programmes for perpetrators and victim support services. Often, survivors are not informed of their partner's participation, and safety planning is not integrated.

d. ensure that the outcomes of the programmes are monitored and evaluated

¹⁰⁷ Please see studies available (in English) at: <https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/10-Roger-Almvik-2015.pdf>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36718598/>.

No progress has been made in this area either. As stated in the State Report (page 53), there is no nationwide program exclusively dedicated to offenses regarding violence against women and domestic violence.

Also, **ANAIIS Association** stated that no national data on completion rates, reoffending rates or feedback from survivors and no follow-up system exist to ensure behavioural change or assess risk reduction.

Without structural reform and serious investment, perpetrator programmes risk becoming merely symbolic rather than transformative.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 16:

- Establishing a national accreditation mechanism for perpetrator programmes;**
- Ensuring trained specialists in gender-based violence to deliver such programmes;**
- Regulating the obligation for perpetrators to participate in special preventive intervention and treatments programmes and the application of dissuasive penalties in the event of non-compliance with that obligation. The state should be responsible for monitoring the attendance of perpetrators and gathering these data at the national level.**

Article 18: General obligations

15. Please provide information on any multi-agency co-operation mechanisms, structures or measures in place designed to protect and support victims of any of the forms of gender-based violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention (e.g., interdisciplinary working groups, case-management systems, cross-sectoral protocols/ guidelines...).

Overview

As mentioned by **Mihaela Mangu Darvariu, sociologist and co-founder of the ANAIIS Association**, Romania lacks an effective national, multi-agency coordination mechanism for victims of gender-based violence. Although legislation provides for local collaboration (e.g. Law No. 217/2003 and Law No. 292/2011), its implementation often depends on local political will and is merely formal.

From **ANAIIS's** perspective, real cooperation only emerges when initiated by NGOs, as is the case with:

Anais HUB – Bucharest, Sector 2

- A local safe space for women and girls, coordinated by ANAIIS Association.
- Brings together social workers, police, legal counsellors and psychologists.
- Hosts working groups and survivor circles.

ANAIIS Hub – A Safe Community Space for Women and Girls

The **ANAIIS Hub** is a community center developed by the **ANAIIS Association** to provide a safe, inclusive and empowering space for women and girls from vulnerable backgrounds. Drawing on years of experience in providing integrated legal, psychological and social services to survivors of gender-based violence, the **ANAIIS Hub** broadens the scope of community support by addressing the varied needs of women and their families in Romania.

The Hub is designed as a welcoming environment where beneficiaries receive direct, multidisciplinary assistance tailored to their individual situations. Services are provided free of charge and include:

- Social guidance and case management for women navigating complex challenges.
- Psychological counselling, psychotherapy and support groups on issues related to trauma, gender-based violence and empowerment.
- Legal counselling and representation in family law, labour rights, protection from domestic violence and access to justice.

Health-related guidance with a focus on reproductive health and access to medical services.

- Romanian language and literacy courses, as well as translation support to help with integration into Romanian society.
- Career counselling and job search support, including CV preparation and access to technology within the Hub.

In addition to its direct services, the **ANAIS Hub** runs small-group workshops and community events designed to boost women's confidence, leadership skills and sense of solidarity. These range from workshops on human and labour rights, to artistic and personal development sessions, to cultural evenings and thematic community gatherings.

The **ANAIS Hub** also facilitates collaboration between NGOs and community leaders, functioning as an NGO hub where organisations working on women's rights, refugee integration, Roma rights or LGBTQ+ inclusion can meet, organise activities and amplify their advocacy.

Beyond providing services, the Hub acts as a platform for advocacy and systemic change, and is connected to the Anais Association's long-standing Legislative Analysis and Harmonisation Group (GRAAL). This ensures that the issues faced by women within the community inform wider efforts to improve legislation and public policy in Romania.

Ultimately, the **ANAIS Hub** is a community-building initiative as well as a centre. It empowers women as both individual beneficiaries and leaders, encouraging them to play an active role in shaping inclusive, resilient communities.

This model is based on:

- clear referral pathways (NGOs–SPAS–police–courts);
- case-by-case coordination;
- Victim-centred and empowerment-focused support.

However, such initiatives:

- are not replicated nationally;
- rely on project-based, short-term funding.

They also function outside the public service ecosystem and are often ignored by the **General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Municipality of Bucharest (DGASMB)**.

Furthermore, in regard to **ANAIH Hub**, the following institutions are involved : local Public Social Assistance Service- SPAS, General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection-DGASPC, local police, community nurses, school representatives.

NGOs like **ANAIH Association** are only invited to consultations **ad-hoc**, and not systematically. State-run centers often **refuse collaboration or view NGOs as competitors**. Funding mechanisms do not prioritise partnership-based responses.

15. Please describe:

a. the state agencies involved in their functioning (law-enforcement agencies, judiciary, public prosecutor, local authorities, healthcare services, social services, educational institutions etc.);

b. whether they involve specialist support services provided by civil society organisations, especially women's rights organisations;

In regard to points "a" and "b" :

See also the answer provided at the previous point.

Compared to the situation described in the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, no progress has been made on this issue. The State Report presents a series of working groups and committees, which are mainly composed of state institutions and authorities, that lack a detailed understanding of the real/practical features of the gender-based violence phenomenon. These state structures **are bureaucratic and rarely interact directly with victims of violence** to develop ideas and action plans to improve the state's response capacity. **Although representatives from women's organisations are invited to participate in working group/committee meetings, this invitation is purely formal, as the authorities and member institutions of these groups generally do not take into account the opinions, points of view, suggestions or recommendations formulated by NGO representatives.**

To make these structures more efficient, the state's perception of civil society and NGOs dealing with gender-based violence needs change. **NGOs invited to participate in working groups and committees should be treated as equal partners, directly involved in the decision-making process, and their opinions should be valued, especially since they arise from practical experience and interaction with victims.** Moreover, to make working groups and committees more efficient, decisions must be made based on a bottom-up approach, starting with an assessment of situations in the field. It would be beneficial to authorities to listen to the observations of service-providing NGOs and use them to develop or streamline adopted decisions, intervention plans and case management models.

Also, the activity of the working groups/committees presented in the State Report is centralized, does not take into account local specificities, nor does it aim to ensure better coordination between local institutions. By not addressing local specificities and not taking into account the problems faced by territorial and local authorities in managing the phenomenon of

gender-based violence, **the cooperation mechanisms/structures remain fragmented, purely formal and inefficient.**

Conversely, the lack of inter-institutional coordination is evident in the manner in which various forms of gender-based violence are addressed. **For example, there is no coordinated action to address forced marriages, forced abortions and forced sterilisation, which contradicts the GREVIO recommendation in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 160, page 36).**

c. how they adopt a gender-sensitive approach to violence against women, including the prioritisation of the safety of women and girl victims, their empowerment and a victim-centred approach;

As they are disconnected from the realities faced by female victims of violence, cooperation structures and mechanisms do not apply a victims' rights-based approach. While the State Report mentions that a victims' rights-based approach is considered when developing relevant responses through the formulation of laws, public policies and support services, there are no concrete examples of this (page 56 of the State Report). Also, there are no concrete examples of how this approach is implemented, nor any clear means by which the authorities consult with victims of domestic violence and violence against women.

Public authorities and institutions involved in state-level cooperation mechanisms are not motivated to enter into partnerships with women's organisations. Thus, authorities do not take the opinions of representative NGOs into account when formulating a response to cases of domestic violence and violence against women. The disregard for the activities of NGOs results in a lack of coordination, which in turn results in a lack of a victim-rights-based approach in the actions taken by the state.

As mentioned by **Mihaela Mangu Darvariu, sociologist and co-founder of the ANAIS Association** the following is a relevant example from the practice of the **ANAIS Association** that illustrates the state authorities' failure to apply a victim-centred approach: a victim of domestic violence decided to move to another city for a fresh start, hoping to access specialised services for victims of domestic violence. When she requested access to a domestic violence support centre in Braşov, she was refused on the grounds that the centre had received instructions not to provide services to victims of domestic violence unless they had a protection order issued in their favour. This is very very problematic as protection order should not be the condition for providing specialist or general services to victims. In light of Article 18, paragraph 4 of the Istanbul Convention: the provision of services shall not depend on the victim's willingness to press charges or testify against any perpetrator.

Thus, according to ANAIS Association, gender-sensitive and survivor-centred approach are rarely applied in public services and survivors often report being blamed, re-traumatised, or pathologized. Risk assessments are weak or not used, and safety planning is inconsistent.

d. the financial and human resources dedicated to their implementation;

As the State Report (page 56) mentions, cooperation mechanisms usually develop projects that only include state institutions (without the participation of NGO experts). State structures do not see benefits of cooperating with NGOs within the respective projects. This means that NGOs do not have the prerequisites to engage their expertise within the projects undertaken by these cooperation mechanisms, nor will they benefit from appropriate funding. Service-providing NGOs are not funded by state or local authorities, thus they have to undertake voluntary work.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, most collaboration platforms have **no designated staff, budget, or operational procedures**. In the case of **ANAIIS HUB**, **no national budget line** exists for similar initiatives.

and e. any available information on the evaluation of their outcome or impact.

There are no monitoring mechanisms in place for national inter-institutional cooperation, nor any instruments to ensure accountability in cases of inefficiency in addressing domestic violence and violence against women.

Without performance indicators these mechanisms are not subject to impact or outcome evaluation.

As mentioned by **ANAIIS Association**, no national or local authority has conducted **independent evaluations** of inter-institutional mechanisms. NGOs do self-monitoring but are not integrated in national reporting structures.

16. Please detail whether any such co-operation mechanisms or structures set up for the delivery of support services for a specific form of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention is based on a legal or policy document advocating for or requiring such approaches.

The cooperation mechanisms established by the state are neither inclusive nor open to civil society, particularly non-governmental organisations that are active in preventing and combatting violence against women. Consultation with NGOs is **purely formal, and state representatives usually do not take into account the opinions that NGOs express within working groups**.

As underlined by **Mihaela Mangu Darvariu, sociologist and co-founder of the ANAIIS Association**, cooperation is **formally required** by Law no. 292/2011 (Social Assistance Law), Law no. 217/2003, and the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities (2022–2027), but **none of these are enforceable in practice**. There are no sanctions for lack of coordination, and institutions operate separately. **ANAIIS Association** draws attention to the following aspects that must be urgently implemented:

- Legally binding protocols with enforcement tools
- Budgetary allocations for multi-agency coordination
- Inclusion of NGOs in **decision-making**, not just service delivery.

17. Please explain whether all or some of the services of protection and support offered for victims of the different forms of violence against women are provided on the basis of a one-stop-shop approach.

The State Report (pages 57 and 58) mentions two examples of protection and support services provided on a one-stop-shop basis: the ten intervention centres for victims of sexual violence and the forty-two protected houses.

However, these services are usually poorly accessed by victims due to several factors, **the most important of which is a lack of trust in state authorities and bureaucratic measures that make accessing these services difficult.**

For example, Government Decision no. 559/2021 of 19 May 2021¹⁰⁸ establishes the conditions that victims must meet to access protected houses. Article 6 of the Government Decision stipulates that, in order to be admitted to a protected home, **a victim must cumulatively meet at least one risk requirement and one vulnerability condition.** The degree to which the victim meets the risk or vulnerability conditions is assessed based on proof or social investigation. After verifying that these requirements have been met, the victim must also submit a declaration confirming her victim status in order to access the protected home.

Therefore, to access a protected home, the victim must provide documents that prove that the risk and vulnerability requirements have been met, along with the aforementioned declaration. Accessibility is restricted under these conditions for the following reason:

- (1) as a general rule, victims of violence cannot easily gather evidence related to the abuse they are subjected to because they are in a constant state of fear;
- (2) requiring evidence to access the protected home is excessive, since victims may resort to this home as a last resort in urgent situations, neglecting to collect evidence against the perpetrator;
- (3) according to the Istanbul Convention, victims are recognised as such from the moment they experience violence, without the need to meet additional requirements such as providing evidence related to their status. **Any additional requirements for identifying the victim are excessive and accentuate their vulnerability.** Often, victims are forced to return to the perpetrator or remain in a precarious state because they do not meet the requirements for accessing the protected home.

In regard to the 10 intervention centres for victims of sexual violence, inaugurated by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, in practice **these structures do not offer services based on a one-stop-shop approach as sustained in the State Report.**

A recent press investigation¹⁰⁹ showed that if a rape victim approaches the special intervention centre at Bucharest University Hospital, she will not receive multidisciplinary support. Moreover, even the centre coordinator, who should guide the victim and initiate the

¹⁰⁸ Government Decision No. 559/2021 of May 19, 2021 on the approval of the National Integrated Program for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence and the Framework Methodology on the organization and functioning of the innovative integrated national network of shelters for victims of domestic violence, published in the Official Gazette No. 542 of May 25, 2021, available (only in Romanian) at: https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Legislatie/HG_559_2021.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ Please see further details at : <https://pressone.ro/reportaj-prin-ce-trece-o-potentiala-victima-a-unui-viol-la-spitalul-universitar-unde-ar-trebui-sa-functioneze-un-centru-special-pentru-femei>, article available only in Romanian.

integrated intervention procedure by requesting support from other professionals, including the police and social assistance services, is not available to guide the victim. This is also due to the lack of a national standard that should establish the conduct of health authorities in managing sexual violence cases.

At the same time, the journalistic investigation conducted by PRESS ONE revealed that the centre lacks a kit for taking biological samples, nor does it have staff who is trained in providing gender-sensitive and high-quality support to victims.

Against this background, intervention centres are **generally formal structures that do not apply an approach based on victims' rights.**

Moreover, in the opinion of **AN AIS Association, Romania does not apply a national one-stop-shop model.** AN AIS Association has piloted a local form of integrated service provision at **Anais HUB**, where survivors can access: legal counselling, psychological support, group therapy, social aid referrals. However, this remains the exception. **Public services are scattered, uncoordinated, and often require survivors to navigate multiple institutions with limited guidance.**

Recommendations on the implementation of article 18:

-Reforming cooperation mechanisms by strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations as equal partners with public authorities/institutions.

-Every public institution with responsibilities in GBV/domestic violence should elaborate trimestral/yearly reports on the activities it implemented concerning stopping further violence and case management.

-Every institution with more than 50 employees must hire/nominate a person with responsibilities in equality of chances – in order to create plans and procedures for case management, monitoring and stopping further gender violence.

-Accessibility of protection and support services offered for victims of the different forms of violence against women on the basis of a victim-centered approach by establishing the victim's declaration as the only accessibility requirement.

-Developing cooperation mechanisms to address all forms of violence, especially those that are currently less addressed such as forced marriages, forced abortions, forced sterilizations.

-Increasing the degree of responsibility and efficiency of cooperation mechanisms by establishing monitoring procedures and accountability measures in the event of an inadequate response.

-Making intervention centers for victims of sexual violence more efficient and implementing an approach based on the rights of the victim. This can be achieved by making the centre coordinator more accountable, establishing and applying a national action protocol for managing rape cases, and equipping the centres with kits for taking biological samples.

-Developing of a national protection system to ensure migrant victims access rights such as legal residence, safe accommodation, medical care, education, and work.

Article 20: General support services

18. Please provide information on programmes and measures aimed at ensuring, through general services, the recovery of victims of violence, including in the health and social areas, financial assistance, education, training and assistance in finding employment and affordable and permanent housing.

There is **no national recovery plan or reintegration strategy** for survivors of domestic violence. Social services are fragmented and under-resourced.

The State Report (pages 58–60) mentions vouchers and sheltered housing as programmes offered as part of the general support services provided to victims. However, **both are rarely accessed by victims due to a lack of information or low accessibility (see answer to question 17)**. Furthermore, the procedures for accessing both vouchers and sheltered housing **are highly bureaucratic and excessive**, which is discouraging for victims who are already under a great deal of stress.

As mentioned by **Carmen Nemeş**, from the perspective of **ANAIIS Association**:

-Women who leave violent homes often face housing insecurity, unemployment and stigma, and frequently return to their abusers due to a lack of alternatives.

- State-provided services (e.g. social housing, job placement and psychological support) are often inaccessible, unavailable or only temporary.

- No pathways exist for long-term reintegration (e.g. training, mental health support, child support, etc.).

ANAIIS Association fills these gaps by:

- individual case management;

- community reintegration assistance (when funding permits);

- collaboration with local businesses to provide vocational training or jobs.

However, without state co-financing, these programmes cannot be sustained or expanded.

Against this background, the state should increase its responsibility for ensuring that NGOs carrying out activities to prevent and combat violence against women have the necessary financial and human resources.

Questions specific to the public health sector:

19. Have specific measures been taken to ensure that public health services (hospitals, health centres, other) respond to the safety and medical needs of women and girls victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention on the basis of national/regional standardised protocols?

Regarding this issue, the national health system's response capacity has not improved since the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania was adopted. The GREVIO recommendation in paragraph 183 on page 40 of the Report remains relevant for Romania.

While the State Report does mention the ten intervention centres, as we mentioned in response to question 17, their effectiveness and capacity to deliver an efficient response to victims has yet to be proven in practice.

The State Report also mentions information and awareness-raising projects on sexual violence carried out through partnerships between the Department for Emergency Situations and civil society organisations. While these are a positive development, **the health system's lack of response remains a constant issue, mainly due to the poor training and awareness of medical personnel.**

In the opinion of Carmen Nemeş-president of ANAIS Association, in practice, public health institutions in Romania are neither equipped nor mandated to respond to gender-based violence as a health issue, nor to ensure the safety and support of victims.

There is no national protocol for identifying, triaging and referring victims of domestic or sexual violence in hospitals or clinics.

Medical professionals receive little or no training on how to address disclosures of abuse, provide trauma-informed care or make appropriate referrals.

In many cases, survivors report being disbelieved, dismissed, or judged by health workers.

Although the National Strategy mentions the involvement of the health system, this remains aspirational and has not been implemented.

Experts from the Coalition of Gender stated in a Report on the health authorities response to gender based violence (GBV)¹¹⁰ that NGOs **could not identify any existent clinical guidelines or protocols for healthcare professionals at national level or validated by a healthcare facility that would cover the assistance of the victims of GBV, addressing GBV in the healthcare system or Clinical Management of Rape –Intimate Partner Violence (CMR-IPV) service provision.**

The lack of guidelines validated through a Ministerial Order or protocols and methodologies validated through an official decision at hospital level was confirmed by the participants in the focus groups organized for the Report.

The same Report mentions a low level of awareness among healthcare institutions and professionals concerning their responsibility in addressing GBV. They are not aware that addressing GBV is a matter of public health and safety.

The healthcare system in Romania rarely manages to be, as recommended, a gateway for the victims to access social services, justice, or police. Furthermore, not providing certain services such as prophylaxis against sexually transmitted infections & HIV and emergency contraception can have severe and long-term consequences for victims' health and also block survivors' rights to justice.

GBV survivors must receive immediate and comprehensive assistance provided by a coordinated, multidisciplinary, and professional team, **whether or not they file a complaint,** including medical and forensic medical examination and treatment, together with post-traumatic psychological and social support as well as legal assistance. **These should be provided on a confidential basis, free of charge and be available around the clock. This is not yet a reality in most healthcare facilities in Romania.**

¹¹⁰Ilisei, Irina, 2023, The Response of Health Systems to Gender-Based Violence. Legislation, Institutional landscapes Service Provision Capacity Building Needs; <https://ongen.ro/2023/11/21/report-the-response-of-health-systems-to-gender-based-violence-2/>.

Moreover, in the experience of **A.L.E.G. Association**, many health clinics refuse even such basic measures as to exhibit posters with information on domestic violence and support services, claiming that it is not part of their scope of work. Forensic evidence can rarely be collected or documented by other units except for Legal Medicine Services. **Family doctors rarely address the issue of domestic violence, although they could play an important role in screening and directing victims to specialized support.**

The **Romanian Midwives Association** is part of the Working Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health at the Ministry of Health, where it actively contributes to the development of the SRHR Strategy. Within the group, the **Romanian Midwives Association** proposed an objective focused on preparing the health system to provide an adequate response for reproductive health and for survivors of gender-based violence in times of crisis or disasters. This objective was approved by the Department for Emergency Situations (DSU) and the other experts in the working group, and the Strategy is expected to be adopted in the coming months. **Romanian Midwives Association** also proposed ensuring free access to contraception, abortion, and family planning services, particularly for disadvantaged individuals.

In addition, **Romanian Midwives Association** integrated the necessary recommendations for the full implementation and rehabilitation of the midwifery profession in Romania, covering the midwife's comprehensive role in sexual, reproductive, maternal, and adolescent health.

Recommendations concerning the implementation of Article 20 :

- **The Ministry of Health in collaboration with other stakeholders, in particular, women's NGOs experienced in providing services to victims, should elaborate and validate a guideline at the national level for addressing different forms of GBV against women in the healthcare system in primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare. Nevertheless, we have to be mindful that domestic violence victims and sexual violence victims may have different needs when it comes to health-care.**
- **The specialized commissions under the Ministry of Health, together with Specialized Medical Societies, NGO's and GBV experts, should elaborate and validate clinical guidelines and protocols at the national level for addressing GBV in different healthcare specialties (with a focus on the specialties that have a greater role to identify and assist the victims: family medicine, emergency, pediatrics, forensic medicine, gynecology, and obstetrics).**
- **Ensure the dissemination, training, and implementation of guidelines and protocols for addressing GBV in the healthcare system.**
- **Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Centers of intervention for victims of sexual violence.**
- **Standards for Quality Management in Healthcare should mention that every healthcare facility should have available a methodology/protocol/SOP for addressing cases of gender-based violence, which should be updated regularly. Medical facilities should adopt regulations on how to apply in practice the national protocol.**
- **Ensure that all victims, without any discrimination, receive immediate and comprehensive assistance provided by a coordinated, multidisciplinary and professional team, whether or not they file a complaint to the authorities (report violence), including medical and forensic examination and treatment, together with post-traumatic psychological and social support as well as legal assistance; these should be provided on a**

confidential basis, free of charge and be available 24/7.

- Include responsibilities for addressing gender-based violence in the job descriptions of healthcare professionals as well in the job descriptions of other professionals working in the healthcare system that have responsibilities in GBV: i.e., social assistant, psychologist.
- Establishment and implementation of referral pathways for primary, secondary and tertiary level of care.
- Create effective mechanisms to increase human resource capacity. i.e., ensure every emergency hospital have a responsible person to address GBV cases 24/7, include these responsibilities in their job description.

20. Do such protocols detail the procedure to:

- a. identify victims through screening;**
- b. provide treatment for all the medical needs of victims in a supportive manner;**
- c. collect forensic evidence and documentation;**
- d. ensure that a clear message of support is conveyed to the victim;**
- e. refer to the appropriate specialist support services that form part of a multi-agency co-operation structure;**
- and f. identify children who may have been exposed to domestic violence or other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls and require further support.**

Please see the response provided to question 19.

As mentioned by **midwives experts working** in a UNICEF-funded training project for healthcare professionals, where over 600 participants from more than 10 cities across all regions of Romania took part¹¹¹ some observations were gathered from the participants concerning the challenges faced by health experts in the context of managing cases of gender based violence:

Challenges in providing support for **minor victims** of sexual and gender-based violence

- Most participants, healthcare professionals working in tertiary care shared that the institutions report to police cases of rape, and pregnancy of girls under 16 years old;
- The report rate is lower in primary care or for community nurses;
- Some cases of sexual abuse are under-reported (arranged marriages/unions of girls from Roma communities, if the girl declares that she is in love with an older man, or cases of sexual abuse not followed by pregnancy);
- Mostly only cases of pregnancy are reported;
- There are no common standards in regard to what cases need to be reported or who is responsible for reporting the cases;
- Some cases were reported where young girls were forced to get pregnant at a very young age, including a case where family was looking for IVF (in vitro fertilization) for a 15 years old girl;
- Healthcare professionals are rarely aware of GBV prevention.

¹¹¹ https://moasele.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport_GBV_-Training_Healthcare.pdf.

Barriers encountered by healthcare professionals in reporting cases involving **minor victims**:

- Lack of policies and protocols (at the national or institutional level) for addressing GBV in the healthcare system for minor victims;
- Lack of support at institutional level;
- Lack of training of healthcare professionals to address these cases, mandatory reporting or communication with the minor victim;
- Perception that addressing GBV is not among the responsibility of healthcare institutions and healthcare professionals;
- Lack of knowledge of existent legislation and international recommendations;
- Lack of motivation to report cases when the whole community knows about the abuses and does not intervene;
- Fear of facing violence, fear that they will not be able to cooperate with the community for other cases as well;
- Low trust of healthcare professionals in other institutions i.e. police, social services;
- Fear of healthcare professionals that the social services system does not provide a safe environment for the minor, that the minor may encounter bigger abuse if they are taken away from family members even if they are the perpetrators.

Challenges in providing support for **adult victims** of sexual and gender-based violence

- Most adults receive medical care if they are victims of gender-based violence, some of the cases are provided with psychological support
- If the emergency system is accessed by victims, the cases are reported to the police without the consent of the victims
- Most victims do not share that they encountered situations of violence thus healthcare professionals mostly do not address the cases beyond medical care
- There are cases when victims go to hospitals to be safe from aggressive partners
- There are cases when aggressive partners request that the mother should not be given pain relief or force the mother to breastfeed and the healthcare professionals comply with these requests
- Some cases when young mothers were threatened with violence by their family of origin if they do not give birth to boys
- Very few healthcare professionals provide referral to other services needed by the victim - forensic medicine, emergency contraception, prophylaxis, etc.
- Especially Roma girls and women and persons with under-privileged backgrounds receive less care and support
- Victims may encounter attitudes of victim blaming, and break of confidentiality

Barriers encountered by healthcare professionals in reporting cases with **adult victims**:

- Lack of policies and protocols (at the national or institutional level) for addressing GBV in the healthcare system;

- Unclear legislation concerning report/confidentiality for adult victims;
- Lack of support at institutional level, low awareness that GBV is a matter of public health and that healthcare institutions and professionals have responsibilities in this matter;
- Lack of training of healthcare professionals to address these cases, over 98% of participants were taking part for the first time in training on these matters, the ones who participated already in training either worked abroad or took part in training provided from other nongovernmental initiatives;
- Perception that addressing GBV is not among the responsibility of healthcare institutions and healthcare professionals;
- Lack of knowledge of existent legislation and international recommendations;
- Fear to address the cases due to the fact that the partner of the victim may seek revenge;
- Low trust of healthcare professionals in other institutions (i.e. police, social services) that can support the victim.

Except healthcare professionals, **social assistants** (in tertiary healthcare) and **psychologists** (in secondary and tertiary healthcare) may provide support for victims of gender-based violence. Every emergency hospital at county level (with some exceptions) usually has a social assistant. The existing procedure of intervention for social workers from emergency units in cases of sexual abuse was elaborated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Association of Social Assistants in Romania and the Center of Training in Social Assistance. According to the procedure, the victims of sexual abuse can receive - free of charge - the following services within the emergency departments of hospitals: testing, treatment, prophylaxis and screening for sexually transmitted diseases. **Case management for sexual abuse is done by the doctor who is responsible for the case and by the social assistant.**

Some challenges concerning the content of the procedure for social workers that may be improved:

- The definition of gender violence is limited only to situations when the person was constrained; thus, leaving other cases unexplored;
- There is no procedure in regard to victims under 18 years old;
- The procedure refers only to a few services that are available for the survivors;
- According to the procedure, the social assistant should contact authorities (Police, Crime Investigation Office) and doctors from Forensic Medicine Institutes **even when the life of the victim is not in danger, without the consent of the victim, under the condition that the social assistant perceives a risk.** The victim needs to sign a declaration that she does not want the police to be contacted;
- **The procedure does not cover key aspects, such as referral to social services, shelters, counseling, emergency contraception, and other aspects that are part of the WHO guidelines;**
- The Ministry of Health or any other healthcare institution is not yet involved in the elaboration of these procedures although the procedure has elements concerning healthcare professionals: **the lack of consultation of healthcare institutions may affect the implementation of the procedure.**

In regard to the issuance of medical certificates, in many cases documented by **ANAIIS Association medical certificates are refused or delayed**, leaving survivors of violence without legal proof much needed for obtaining protection orders or participating in court proceedings.

See recommendations provided to question 19.

21. Please provide information on the procedures in place for the documentation and collection by actors of the public health sector of forensic evidence in relation to victims of domestic violence, victims of sexual violence, including rape, and victims of female genital mutilation.

In the State Report, on pages 61-62, information is provided regarding the forensic medicine activity carried out by the Mina Minovici National Institute as well as by forensic medicine institutes in large cities.

In many cases documented by **ANAIIS Association medical certificates are refused or delayed**, leaving survivors of violence without legal proof much needed for obtaining protection orders or participating in court proceedings. Forensic exams are provided by the **National** (2) require **police referral or formal complaint**, delaying access; (3) do not include psychological assessments; (4) lack coordination with NGOs or trauma-informed approaches.

In cases of rape, survivors are often sent home or told to "come back later" due to lack of on-call forensic staff, which **compromises evidence and retraumatizes victims**.

ANAIIS has advocated for: (1) Mobile forensic teams; (2) Survivor-centred protocols; (3) 24/7 access points at county level.

Against this background, we must underline that, according to **A.L.E.G. Association**, forensic evidence can rarely be collected or documented outside units for Legal Medicine Services. Even some of the so-called integrated centers for assistance in cases of sexual violence send the victims to the Legal Medicine Service for the actual collection of evidence, after a police officer mandates the collection of the evidence. The possibility for women to request certification of forensic evidence on sexual violence has been restricted in practice by a legal provision from 2023 (joint Order of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice) aimed at stopping the issuing of virginity proofs by the Legal Medicine Services. We will elaborate on this topic. By the joint Order of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice no. 1.434/687/C/2023¹¹², the "Procedural Norms regarding the performance of expert opinions, findings and other forensic work", contained in Order no. 255/1.134/C/2000, were amended. The **A.L.E.G. Association points out** that in practice it has encountered situations in which, as a result of the legal amendments, **the forensic medicine services in the territory could no longer perform gynecological examinations except at the request of the police**. Thus, **victims are obliged to report to the police the acts of sexual violence to which they were subjected in order to obtain a forensic certificate**. The victim no longer has the possibility of directly contacting the forensic medicine services. This situation contradicts the principle of prohibiting the conditioning of access to assistance on the filing of a complaint (including the European Directive for the protection of victims of crime specifies this principle). Rape victims often need psychological assistance and support before deciding to report to the police, and in many

¹¹² Available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/DetaliuDocument/267499>.

countries the protocol provides for the collection and storage of biological samples in case the victim decides to report at the later stage (after a reflection period).

The effect of this reckless policy update is that in some counties, a police mandate is necessary for any genital forensics procedure, even to collect evidence of sexual violence, so fewer victims report sexual violence. This practice severely contradicts the provisions of the Convention.

Many gaps remain in the medical health system in regard to obtaining a forensic medical certificate by the victims of sexual violence. According to **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)**, these gaps refer to: costs, lack of training of medical personnel, lack of appropriate medical protocols.

In 2022, costs for forensic certificates (Romanian: *certificat medico-legal*) were reimbursed in only 109 cases from 10 counties. Most of the cases were from counties where active NGOs work on GBV. Some existing barriers are that women need to travel long distances to reach a healthcare unit that provides this service and must first have the money for transportation to the examination and later to travel again to receive the certificate.

The immediate financial cost of transportation to and from forensic units for examinations and certificate acquisition presents a major obstacle. Although the certificate fee may be reimbursed, the upfront travel costs can be prohibitive for many vulnerable victims, deterring them from accessing these essential services. Furthermore, the reimbursement process is often complex and requires victims to file a request with local authorities, where confidentiality procedures are rarely in place. This often results in victims not pursuing reimbursement, which adds to their financial burden and discourages them from seeking these services.

The observation that most reimbursed cases originate from counties with active NGOs addressing GBV indicates the crucial role of non-governmental organizations in guiding victims through the complex process of accessing forensic services. This underscores a systemic gap in the public health system's capacity to independently reach and support victims in regions lacking a robust NGO presence.

A broader range of medical professionals—such as emergency physicians, general practitioners, and midwives—should receive specialized training in collecting forensic evidence related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Currently, emergency doctors can consult victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and issue a medical certificate, but it must be confirmed by the National Institute of Forensic Medicine to be used in the legal system.

Irina Ilisei, gender equality expert, indicate that based on the discussions during training sessions with over 600 healthcare professionals across Romania¹¹³ that emergency personnel are often unaware of their capacity to provide such evidence, and practices appear to vary significantly across locations. Discussions with forensic medicine professionals suggest that involving other medical personnel in issuing these certificates is discouraged, as it may compromise the integrity of the evidence.

Without clear and consistent protocols for the initial response, evidence collection, and referral pathways, victims may not receive comprehensive and sensitive medical care nor justice.

¹¹³ https://moasele.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport_GBV_-Training_Healthcare.pdf.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 20

-Urgent alignment with GREVIO's recommendation according to which it strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to ensure women victims of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention access to adequately resourced health services trained to assist victims, in particular by:

a. being mindful of the forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, responding to the medical needs of victims in a sensitive manner and ensuring referrals to relevant and preferably specialist support services;

b. developing and effectively implementing protocols and guidelines which ensure that all healthcare professionals adequately respond to women victims of all forms of violence, including by acknowledging that women exposed to intersectional discrimination, in particular women with disabilities, migrant women and Roma women, may face significant barriers to help-seeking;

c. providing free-of-charge documentation of forensic evidence adequate for use by the criminal justice sector.

-Make accessible forensic medicine services for victims of sexual violence in order to timely collect evidence; eliminating all restrictions that prevent victims from directly resorting to forensic medicine services in order to obtain a forensic certificate.

-Establish confidential, accessible, and unified procedures for settling costs related to issuing the forensic certificate (in line with GREVIO Recommendation enshrined in paragraph 183, letter „c” of the Baseline Report on Romania) .

-Training all medical personnel, including family doctors, nurses, midwives, and medical professionals who provide emergency procedures, in regard to the collection of forensic evidence from victims of sexual violence.

22. 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.

This question highlights the need for an *intersectional approach* to providing services to victims of violence.

As indicated in the GREVIO recommendation enshrined in the Baseline Report on Romania, paragraph 183, letter “b”¹¹⁴, intersectionality refers to a broad coverage of vulnerable groups subject to violence (migrant women, refugee women, women with disabilities, Roma women, etc.). **In the State Report (page 62), the response to this question is synthetic and focused rather on asylum seekers and those benefiting from a form of international**

¹¹⁴ Developing and effectively implementing protocols and guidelines which ensure that all healthcare professionals adequately respond to women victims of all forms of violence, including by acknowledging that women exposed to intersectional discrimination, in particular women with disabilities, migrant women and Roma women, may face significant barriers to help-seeking.

protection. The gender-based approach is not applied. From the information presented within the State Report it can be concluded that little progress has been made in this area, thus GREVIO's recommendation contained in the Baseline Report on Romania is still pending implementation.

In regard to LGBTI women, TRANSCORE Association highlighted important aspects concerning the access to healthcare services. In practice, LGBTI women victims of violence experience several major problems when accessing health services.

First, victims are reluctant to seek medical help due to discrimination and prejudice expressed directly by medical staff. Trans women often report being misgendered, having their gender identity invalidated, being ridiculed, and having their bodies, transitions, personal lives, and financial situations questioned. **In some cases, these attitudes translate into a refusal to provide treatment.**

Staff lack training in recognizing and addressing the specific needs of LGBTI victims, **which can lead to re-victimization and re-traumatization.**

There is limited access to specialized services, such as post-traumatic psychological counseling adapted to the LGBTI context and forensic examinations performed in a safe, non-discriminatory environment.

Administrative barriers include identity documents that do not reflect gender identity and a lack of clear protocols for cases involving trans women.

It is important to note that trans women often have difficulty accessing health services even in the absence of abuse. **Unfortunately, these obstacles do not disappear when they are victims of violence. Sometimes, the situation is even worse because stigma and prejudice intersect with the trauma of abuse.**

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, severe barriers are faced by refugee, migrant women, women belonging to national or ethnic minorities, women with irregular residence status, women with disabilities and LGBTI women when accessing healthcare services. The *Care in Crisis* study undertaken in four countries including Romania in 2023 by Center for Reproductive Rights outlined **cost barriers, lack of accessible information adapted to their needs, sexist attitudes and abortion stigma** among the key obstacles to reproductive health services for Ukrainian refugees. These are common experience also for other local women belonging to vulnerable groups. Obtaining an insurance-covered medical appointment is difficult and requires long waiting periods, which in acute situations deprives women of their basic rights.

In the opinion of **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)**, while Romania's legislation aims to ensure comprehensive support for victims of violence, the reality of equal access to existing healthcare services for all women, irrespective of the grounds listed in Article 4 paragraph 3 of the Istanbul Convention (e.g., asylum-seeking women, refugee women, migrant women, women from national or ethnic minorities, women with irregular residence status, women with disabilities, and LGBTI women), presents significant challenges.

Legally, measures have been taken to reduce barriers for specific vulnerable groups. For instance, Government Emergency Ordinance no. 15/2022¹¹⁵ provides support and humanitarian assistance to foreign citizens or stateless persons coming from the military conflict zone of Ukraine. Article 1, paragraph 4 of this Ordinance stipulates that Ukrainian citizens, as well as foreign citizens or stateless persons in special situations who enter Romania from the armed conflict zone and request temporary protection, benefit from a basic package of medical

¹¹⁵ Available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/251954>.

assistance, medicines, and medical devices within the social health insurance system. This includes access to national curative health programs, similar to Romanian citizens who are insured, without paying social health insurance contributions or co-payments.

However, despite these legal provisions, practical barriers significantly hinder equal access for these vulnerable groups:

Discrepancies in Registration Systems: The reality often differs from the legal framework. Refugees, including those from Ukraine, are frequently registered under a different system at the National Health Insurance House ("Casa Națională de Asigurări de Sănătate"), which is not always fully operational nor easily navigable. This creates a "know-how" barrier, as healthcare providers may not be familiar with or equipped to process patients through this alternative system.

Language Barriers: A major practical impediment is the language barrier. Many healthcare professionals are reluctant to receive foreign patients, including refugees, citing difficulties in communication. This discourages foreign patients and refugees from utilizing the public health system, even when they are legally entitled to services.

Lack of Cultural Sensitivity and Specific Training: Beyond language, there's often a lack of cultural sensitivity and specific training among healthcare providers to address the unique needs and experiences of diverse vulnerable groups. This can lead to miscommunication, distrust, and inadequate care.

Discrimination: Women from national or ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, and LGBTI women may face additional layers of discrimination within the healthcare system, further limiting their access to services on an equal footing.

While legislative efforts exist to ensure access for certain vulnerable groups, significant practical and systemic barriers persist. The refusal to provide medical services to foreign citizens, such as registering with a family doctor, constitutes a violation of a fundamental human right, namely the right to health, as well as a discriminatory act, conditioning access to medical services based on nationality.

In regard to asylum seekers, the NGO **Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR)** states that asylum-seekers have the right to emergency healthcare, the right to medical assistance for acute conditions provided by the doctor in the reception centers, the right to be included in the national public health programs related to epidemiological risks. However, through the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund, there are several NGOs that provide free medical services or cover the expenses related to the health insurance.

While emergency healthcare is legally available to all individuals, regardless of residency status, it's limited strictly to urgent situations. In practice, access to emergency care can be significantly delayed due to long waiting times in emergency rooms, which poses serious risks to women's health, particularly for those in vulnerable situations.

The beneficiaries of international protection have access to medical services in the same conditions as Romanian citizens, **which means that non-emergency healthcare is available only to those with valid health insurance, either through employment or voluntary payments to the national health insurance system, both of which require a valid ID.**

Women with irregular status lack this access, limiting them to emergency care. Due to the fear of being returned, they are also reluctant to seek emergency services.

While insured women can register with a family doctor, language barriers often complicate this process. There were cases where family doctors were reluctant to register refugees. In **particular, there was a case of a female victim of FGM who was refused by**

family doctors on the grounds that they did not know how to handle the situation and many times when they heard that it was a refugee patient they said that they could no longer register new patients. An obstetrics-gynecology specialist gave her some pain medication but could not help her further, not being familiar with such cases. CNRR helped her access free specialised medical services in Bucharest with the joint effort of other NGOs.

To address these above-mentioned challenges, CNRR has supported women by referring them to medical NGOs that offer free or low-cost healthcare and seeking out multilingual family doctors to improve healthcare access.

According to **Mihaela Mangu Darvariu, sociologist at ANAIS Association** synthesized the information collected from NGOs that contributed to the drafting of the Report and concludes that despite legal frameworks, in practice **many women still face legal, cultural, and logistical barriers** to accessing health services as provided in the table below:

| Group | Barriers |
|--|--|
| Refugee/migrant women | Lack of translators, unclear insurance status, discrimination. ANAIS centre fills this gap but receives no public support . |
| Roma women | Discrimination, cultural stigma. Often excluded from screening/preventive care. |
| Women with disabilities | Physical inaccessibility, lack of adapted communication, infantilisation. |
| LGBTIQ+ women | Institutional homophobia and pathologisation. Trans and intersex women face systemic exclusion. |
| Women with irregular legal status | Denied services except in emergencies. |

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 20

-Put in practice GREVIO's recommendation contained in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 183, letter "b").

- Women asylum seekers victims of violence, should be granted health insurance without payment of contributions, regardless of their place of accommodation, for the entire duration of the asylum procedure and also regardless of providing a proof of their victim status, not exceeding 12 months.

-Introduce mandatory training for medical staff on gender diversity and sexual orientation and establish clear protocols for LGBTI cases and monitor their implementation. At the same time, the state should create explicitly inclusive medical and psychological services to reduce victims' fear of seeking help.

23. Please provide information on the measures in place to facilitate the identification and care of victims of violence against women in institutions for persons with disabilities and for the elderly as well as for those in closed reception facilities for asylum-seekers and to respond to their safety and protection needs.

Based on the information presented by the state in its report (pages 62–63), it is clear that significant progress has yet to be made in this area. The information is limited to women seeking

asylum and does not address the situation of women with disabilities or the elderly. Furthermore, regarding vulnerable women who are victims of violence, the state does not provide details on how the conditions of accommodation and assistance offered to victims are adapted.

As mentioned by Carmen Nemeş-president of **ANAIIS Association**, Romania lacks: (1) A national mechanism for screening or responding to violence in **care homes, psychiatric institutions, or refugee centers**; (2) On-site or mobile **support services**; (3) Mandatory **GBV training for institutional staff**. Thus, cases of abuse in such facilities are: (1) **Underreported**; (2) Often **covered up** or minimized; (3) Not followed by risk assessment or intervention plans. **ANAIIS Association** has tried to access closed centers for refugee or trafficked women, but **permission is rarely granted**, and collaboration is minimal.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, little measures are taken to identify or accommodate the needs of women with disabilities or elderly women who face violence. Most of the specialised services and information campaigns are not disability-friendly.

Also, **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** mentions that vulnerable women may lack adequate information about their rights to healthcare services, how to navigate the system, or where to seek support, especially if they have irregular residence status or limited social networks. The personnel in such institutions and facilities are often not adequately trained and may not be aware of specific health rights, especially in the area of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Consequently, policies and standardized protocols are still urgently needed for effectively addressing GBV within these specific environments and for responding comprehensively to the safety and protection needs of victims in these vulnerable settings.

According to **CNRR**, vulnerable asylum seekers, including victims of domestic violence, are identified through a dedicated screening protocol implemented in each Regional Center for Procedures and Accommodation for Asylum Seekers (referred to as "reception centers"). This protocol aims to detect signs of vulnerability at an early stage, conduct a thorough assessment of individual needs, and refer individuals to appropriate specialized services. However, **there are gaps related to inconsistent screening and efficiency in identifying complex vulnerabilities**.

In line with internal regulations, asylum seekers accommodated in these centers must be clearly informed—both by immigration officers and the NGOs operating on-site—about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the consequences of such acts, the available mechanisms for reporting incidents, and the institutions responsible for enforcing sanctions.

Upon arrival at the reception centers, all individuals undergo a health screening conducted by a doctor and/or nurse, which includes questions about their general health status. Each center is also required to have a psychologist available to offer mental health support. In some centers, NGOs also provide additional psychological assistance.

For women seeking asylum, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure represents an opportunity to disclose experiences of violence. This ensures that such cases are properly identified and addressed within the asylum process. In most cases, the interview is conducted by a female officer; if not, the applicant has the right to request a female interviewer.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 20

- Flexibility of protocols and policies to match the needs of women belonging to vulnerable, discriminated-against groups (respectively women with disabilities who live in closed facilities for disabled or elderly women and asylum seekers).

- Ensuring proper training for personnel/officials who provide services to victims of violence, so they are sensitive to gender issues and can provide victims with proper information on their rights.

24. Please provide information on how the authorities ensure that different groups of women and girls, *inter alia* women with disabilities, Roma women and other women belonging to national or ethnic minorities, migrant women and intersex persons are fully informed, understand and freely give their consent to procedures such as sterilisation and abortion.

The information presented in the State Report (page 63; see footnote 28) applies exclusively to medical abortions. **There are no details about tailoring abortion services based on the intersectional characteristics of patients, such as whether they are migrant women, Roma women, or women with disabilities. Thus, this issue is still pending in Romania.**

According to ANAIS Association, while consent is legally required, multiple systemic problems remain:

- Women with disabilities (especially those who are in institutions) are sometimes coerced into sterilisation or not provided full information.
- Roma and rural women report being pushed toward certain procedures without alternatives.
- Victims of abuse are often **not informed** of their reproductive rights, or are **manipulated by abusers** with no counter-intervention from institutions.

ANAIS Association has documented several cases where women: were denied the right to make their own decisions due to guardianship systems or were pressured into abortions without psychosocial support or safety planning.

There is no national monitoring system for **coerced or unethical reproductive procedures** in vulnerable groups.

Against this background, according to **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** the discussion of informed consent is secondary to the more fundamental problem: **if a woman cannot even access the service, then the question of her providing informed consent becomes moot.** The reality on the ground in Romania is that the legal possibility to abortion is severely undermined by a lack of access. This pre-existing barrier is the primary issue, and it disproportionately affects vulnerable women and girls.

The most significant obstacle in Romania is the widespread and growing inaccessibility of abortion services, which makes the legal right to these procedures largely theoretical.

Legal regulations on abortion on request in Romania are:

- art. 201 of the Penal Code provides that the termination of pregnancy is allowed up to 14 weeks;
- the Guide of the Romanian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology on medical abortion from 07.12.2020 states that the elective abortion must be performed only in the first 12 weeks from the last menstruation;
- Order of the Minister of Health no. 3368/2024, Annex 2 on medical services provided by obstetricians lists the abortion procedure as one of the medical services provided by this category of medical profession, on request, under 12 weeks of gestation.

A special look at the regulations on forced abortion and forced sterilisation shows that Romania has not changed its legal framework in this area since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania. GREVIO's observations on the national legal framework on forced abortion and forced sterilisation remain valid: Forced abortion is prosecuted and sanctioned in accordance with Article 201(2) of the Criminal Code. **Forced sterilisation has not been made a specific criminal offence but performing surgery without the consent of the woman, which has the effect of ending her capacity to reproduce naturally, shall be punished as bodily harm (Article 194 of the Criminal Code) or severe bodily harm (Article 195).**

According to the Report done by Romanian NGO¹¹⁶ regarding the access to the abortion services in Romania, over 80% of public medical units in **Romania do not offer abortion services or cannot be contacted**. Only 7 public units (4%) provide medical or surgical abortion in accordance with recommendations from medical guidelines, pharmaceutical leaflets, and national legislation. No public unit offers both types of abortion (surgical and medical abortion). 111 out of 176 public units (63.6%) nationwide do not offer abortion services at all. 26 units (14.77%) provide pregnancy termination services up to fewer weeks than recommended by medical guidelines, leaflets, and national legislation.

In many counties, no public hospitals provide these services. This is a deliberate and systemic failure, not a simple lack of resources. The report also notes that a growing number of doctors and public hospitals no longer provide the service, often citing "conscientious objection" without legally required referrals.

Doctors who refuse to perform abortions on moral or religious grounds are legally obligated to refer the patient to another professional (art. 34 of the Code of Medical Ethics of the Romanian College of Physicians of 04.11.2016, integral part of Decision no. 3/2016). **However, this referral often doesn't happen.** This leaves women victims of violence to navigate a fragmented and hostile system on their own, often with critical time running out due to the legal time limits for the procedure.

The abortion services on request are not reimbursed by the National Health Insurance Fund but they are more affordable in the public health system than in the private ones. When public hospitals refuse to provide services, women are forced to seek care in private clinics. The cost of a private abortion can be more than a month's salary on the national minimum wage, making it financially prohibitive for many, especially women in rural areas. This creates a two-tiered system where only those with the financial means can exercise their legal right. Women in rural areas are also at a disadvantage due to travel costs and a lack of available clinics.

The fact that many hospitals offer abortions for fewer weeks than the legal limit (12 weeks for medical abortion and 14 weeks for surgical abortion) is another de facto barrier to access. This further narrows the window of opportunity, particularly for women who face delays due to the other obstacles mentioned above.

Only after a woman has overcome the significant challenges of finding an accessible and affordable service can the issue of informed consent even arise. However, even at this stage, the system fails to adequately protect the rights of marginalized groups. **The very environment of limited access, discrimination, and misinformation makes it difficult to ensure that consent is truly free and informed.**

Disabilities: A woman with a disability, particularly an intellectual disability, may face a doctor who, due to lack of training and ingrained stereotypes, assumes she cannot give consent.

¹¹⁶ RO_20240313-Raport AMI.

This can lead to her being coerced into a procedure or, conversely, being denied access altogether because a doctor believes she is not capable of making the decision. The lack of accessible information and communication methods for these groups is a major barrier to informed decision-making.

Roma Women: The systemic racism and mistrust within the healthcare system make it difficult for Roma women to feel safe and respected. They may be subjected to pressure from doctors or face a lack of culturally sensitive information. This can lead to a situation where they consent to a procedure not because they are fully informed of all their options, but because they feel they have no other choice or are not offered all the information in an unbiased way. The history of forced sterilization of Roma women is a tragic example of how a lack of access to respectful healthcare can be combined with a violation of informed consent.

Also, according to **Cătălina Olteanu** in 2025, a group of feminist NGOs from Romania conducted research on Roma women's access to reproductive health services¹¹⁷. The findings illustrate a social reality in which the right to sexual and reproductive health remains almost impossible to exercise, constrained by a complex structural barrier that affect women differently depending on their background and social group. Roma women, women in rural areas and women with low socio-economic status face particularly severe obstacles, including deficient medical infrastructure, financial costs, lack of information, and ethnic or racial discrimination. The research documented forms of institutional racism embedded in SRH (Sexual and Reproductive Health) services, as a systemic form of discrimination disproportionately affecting Roma women. The Roma women experiences described in the report revealed practices and attitudes included verbal and physical abuse, humiliating and dehumanizing treatment, refusal or provision of superficial care, neglect in service delivery, and segregation of Roma women in separate hospital rooms. The lack of systemic measures for training medical staff and the lack of a safe framework for reporting such experiences further perpetuate these practices.

Also, the research shows that intersectional discrimination is significant for Roma women with low socio-economic status, lower levels of education, those coming from traditional communities, or with darker skin tones. For these women, ethnic and racial discrimination together with class and social barriers creating multiple, overlapping obstacles. The research also noted that informal payments ("bribes") often operate as a de facto requirement for Roma women to receive adequate care. This places additional financial burdens on them and further perpetuates inequalities. Women unable to make such informal payments continue to face exclusion or marginalization within the healthcare system.

According to **lecturer Crina Mureșanu**, Roma women's testimonies gathered during the research underline that these barriers not only affect their physical and mental health but also reinforce patterns of avoidance of medical services, perpetuating cycles of inequality. In 2022, the Council of Europe revealed that Roma women from Romania also highlighted discrimination regarding access to and quality of health services during the global pandemic.¹¹⁸

Migrant Women: As mentioned by **CNRR**, under Article 27 of Patients' Rights Law,

¹¹⁷ Între dreptate și realitate: accesul la sănătatea reproductivă în România, 2025, available only in Romanian at: https://e-romnja.ro/rapoarte/resurse/#flipbook-df_3499/7/.

¹¹⁸ Research on the barriers of Roma Women's access to justice in four Countries. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania; Council of Europe, 2022. Author of Final Research Report: Bojana Netkova. Authors of National Reports: Maria Metodieva (Bulgaria), Christos Iliadis (Greece), Tiziana Barrucci (Italy), and Crina Marina Muresanu (Romania). Available only in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/research-on-the-barriers-of-roma-women-s-access-to-justice-in-four-cou/1680a7cd27>.

all patients have the right to receive comprehensive information, counseling and access to reproductive healthcare without discrimination. According to art. 8 of the same law, the information should be presented to the patient in a respectful, clear language, with a minimum of specialized terminology. If the patient does not know Romanian, the information should be presented to her/him in her/his native language or in a language she/he knows or, as the case may be, another form of communication will be sought. If the patient is not a Romanian citizen, the information is presented to him in an internationally spoken language or, as the case may be, another form of communication will be sought. **In practice, however, hospitals do not have interpreters, especially for rare languages. In some cases, doctors speak English or French, and in other cases, translation is done through a person accompanying them (relatives or friends).** For this reason, when they feel confident enough, migrant women often turn to NGO social workers for support during medical appointments, including help with interpretation and translation. For instance, CNRR has observed a significant demand for medical assistance among individuals arriving from Ukraine, many of whom face urgent oncological health issues. To address this need, CNRR has established several cooperation agreements with public hospitals to offer interpretation services. However, in some cases, **doctors decline to provide medical services under these conditions, as they are unsure of the accuracy of the interpretation and worry that the patient may not fully understand the medical information.**

Against this background, **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** noted that language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the Romanian healthcare system mean that migrant women are often not fully informed of their rights. Without interpreters or translated materials, they cannot understand the procedure, risks, and alternatives. **In such cases, any consent they provide cannot be considered as a truly "informed."**

Intersex Persons: The issue of informed consent is particularly acute for intersex persons, where "sex-normalizing" procedures are performed before they can provide their own consent. There is lack of a clear legal and medical framework and guidelines that prioritize self-determination. The authorities' failure to ensure that different groups of women and girls are fully informed and give free consent is directly linked to the broader, systemic problem of access to these services. The "conscientious objection" of doctors, the lack of affordable public services, and the resulting financial and geographic barriers create a hostile landscape. In this environment, the legal requirement for informed consent is often undermined by coercion, misinformation, and the sheer desperation of women who have few, if any, options.

There is no evaluation and no monitoring related to the issue of how doctors and medical personnel are implementing an intersectional lens in their services and there is a lack of training for these topics, except some trainings provided by NGO's, like **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** and **E-Romnja Association**.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 20:

-Ensuring translation and interpretation services for victims of violence who have disabilities or do not know the Romanian language and informing them about abortion or sterilization services in an accessible and gender-sensitive manner.

Article 22: Specialist support services

Overview

The analysis of the information presented in the State Report (pages 63-66) shows that at national level there is no significant progress in the provision of specialist support services for victims of violence. Thus, the recommendation formulated by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 192, page 40 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania) has not yet been implemented.

Firstly, the information provided by the State Report does not indicate that there are specialist services for specific forms of violence regulated by the Istanbul Convention (forced marriages, forced abortions, forced sterilization, sexual harassment, digital violence or female genital mutilation). According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, a register¹¹⁹ of the specialist services for assistance is published on ANES website. However, the register covers only assistance for domestic violence, not specifying services for other forms of violence like sexual harassment, sexual violence etc. Furthermore, there are not many details as to what type of assistance (medical, legal, psychological) can be accessed in each of the services listed.

Secondly, there is no specialized staff to provide services for victims of the forms of violence presented in the lines above, nor for children who are witnesses of violence. Intersectionality is not taken into account in the organization and provision of specialist services for victims of violence. Therefore, there are no state-funded services **that meet the needs of Roma women, women with disabilities, LGBTI women**, etc. According to the **TRANSCORE Association**, there is a shelter for transgender people, but MozaiQ holds the data. Otherwise, there are no shelters dedicated to or adapted for trans women or LGBTI people.

TRANSCORE's work has revealed numerous cases of trans women being re-victimised by institutions that should be protecting them. Rather than receiving adequate support, many are invalidated, treated with suspicion or simply ignored.

A major problem is the lack of an official, accessible gender recognition procedure. This institutional omission has direct and serious consequences for trans women who are victims of domestic violence. Without documents reflecting their gender identity, they are often treated according to the gender assigned at birth. This process is not only deeply disrespectful, but also re-traumatising. This treatment invalidates the victim's experience and can force trans women to interact with institutions while denying their own identity, thereby amplifying the initial trauma.

This dynamic is perpetuated by the heteronormative and cissexist assumptions that pervade public institutions, including the legal system, the police, shelters, and support services. Queer and trans identities are either ignored or seen as exceptions to the norm, which leads to these victims being systematically excluded or marginalised from the framework.

Specialist services are not uniform at national level. There are no national protocols that establish uniform rules (both for public and private providers) regarding the services provided. Thus, there are discrepancies between the services provided by the General Directorates for

¹¹⁹ Website of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, accessed on 17.07.2025 <https://anes.gov.ro/asistent-a-pentru-victim-e/centre-de-asistent-a/>.

Child Protection and Social Assistance (DGASPC) or between the services provided by the DGASPC and private providers such as specialized NGOs.

This lack of unity contributes to deepening the state of lack of predictability for victims of violence who do not know which services they can turn to in order to benefit from a complete and complex approach to their needs. Also, this lack of predictability increases the period of time from the perpetration of the violent act to effectively helping the victim, therefore contributing to deepening the victim's trauma.

There is also a clear discrimination between state and NGO-run services: in order to obtain licensing, public and **NGO-run services** are subject to the same legal conditions, however, **NGO-run services that meet the licensing requirements do not benefit from automatic funding by the state.** On the other hand, there is another discrimination in the licensing process: **for NGOs, obtaining service licensing is much more difficult given that they encounter multiple bureaucratic barriers or logistical barriers caused by the lack of adequate state funding** (for example, barriers related to location - the lack of state funding determines substantial challenges in paying rent; barriers related to specialized personnel - retaining on a permanent basis the specialists necessary for carrying out activities is difficult in the absence of satisfactory and periodic remuneration).

In another vein, the victims either lack the confidence or the appropriate information to access state-run services. Added to these barriers is the random imposition of additional requirements by some public services for victims to access them, such as having a protection order.

Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association) supports this information based on existing data at European level. The FRA Report in 2014 shows that in Romania, only 15% of victims of physical violence and 22% of sexual violence from a partner contact a doctor or a health center. If the perpetrator is a non-partner, the rate of addressing institutions is considerably lower. Also, it should be noted that **doctors/ healthcare units and hospitals are the most addressed institutions**, even more than the police or other organizations and services. Women are most likely to contact healthcare services (hospitals, doctors or other healthcare providers). Furthermore, 74% of Romanian women do not know any institutions and organizations that are providing services to victims of gender-based violence. This data reflects a high need for information on the matter.

25. 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

In the opinion of **A.L.E.G. Association**, while Romania remains 34% short of meeting the Council of Europe standard of shelter beds according to WAVE Country Report 2023¹²⁰, the

¹²⁰ WAVE Country Report 2023 accessed on 18.07 2025 chrome-extension: //efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://wave-network.org/wp-content/uploads/WAVE_CountryReport2023.pdf.

situation is even worse when it comes to autonomous shelters that work from a gender perspective. **Several of the autonomous shelters run by women's organizations have closed due to lack of sustainable funding sources, especially lack of state funding**, and this is a significant loss of expertise and of dedicated services which had become known in communities. An example is the shelter operated by Women's Association in Sibiu since 2007, forced to close in 2018¹²¹, reopened shortly only to be closed again after the pandemic. The shelter was opened with financial support of women's associations in Norway: a house was bought in Sibiu and renovated to accommodate 7 women and their children. **The Norwegian partners continued to support the shelter for several years but in 2014 announced they would have to withdraw support, and actively advocated for Romanian authorities to take over the funding responsibility, coming to Sibiu for meetings with local authorities and the local organization.** Sibiu Municipality agreed to offer a lump sum reimbursement per beneficiary, provided that the victim had her official address (according to ID papers) in Sibiu City. The management of the shelter faced difficulties in covering costs for women from other areas or who were missing identification documents. Rightly so, the quality standards the shelter had to meet required that any victim in need would be accepted, but the funding mechanism did not mirror this obligation. A.L.E.G. supported the shelter beneficiaries with free psychological counseling to help ease the burden of costs. Finally, after several failed attempts at fundraising from other sources, the shelter closed down. All specialised staff that had served the shelter - some of them for over 10 years - was lost to the sector of domestic violence when the shelter closed.

At the same time, in 2017, the Child Protection Directorate Sibiu was also opening a new shelter¹²² based on EEA Grants project funding, to be further sustained from public county funding, recruiting staff and struggling to promote a new service to the local community. Other protected housing was added in Sibiu County in 2021 through the project VENUS coordinated by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. This project aimed to setting up protected housing dedicated to women who needed further support with social reintegration as a result of domestic violence. However, the location of the protected housing in a village (in a former child protection placement center) did not allow survivors to be very well connected with job and schooling opportunities in the city and actively reintegrate socially.

This case study illustrates a lack of cooperation between state authorities and civil society in ensuring the sustainability of existing shelters and making best use of resources in response to survivors' needs.

b. medical support

There is little involvement on the part of the medical sector in identifying or assisting domestic violence victims.

According to **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** in regard to education and training in addressing GBV within the healthcare sector - there **could not be identified** any university of medicine that covers aspects related to addressing gender-based violence in healthcare in the curricula. For example, the University of Medicine in

¹²¹ For details please see article <https://zilesinopti.ro/2018/04/12/s-a-inchis-primul-adapost-din-sibiu-pentru-femei-abuzate/>.

¹²² <https://www.oradesibiu.ro/2018/02/02/centrul-de-primire-a-victimelor-violentei-din-familie-88-de-beneficiari-in-primul-an/>.

Bucharest has a course on legal aspects in the first year and a course on ethical aspects in the third year. Gender-based violence, sexual violence, or any other aspect related to these issues are not covered by the existent courses.

Gender equality and GBV training should be included in the initial training for medical professionals (doctors, nurses and midwives) and in the in-service continuous training also.

c. short- and long-term psychological counselling

Please see response to question 26.

d.trauma care

Public services can rarely provided trauma care and long-term support, so survivors often have to pay for this services privately, not always finding specialist trauma care.

A good practice (recognized internationally by UN Women and Vital Voices Global Partnership) in this respect is SiEuReusesc (www.sieureusesc.ro) program established by **A.L.E.G. Association** since 2018, organizing online and offline communities of support in several cities, that bring together specialised professionals and survivors who have overcome violence and volunteer to help other women. The program facilitates support groups in which survivors share stories and empower each other, under the guidance of trained professionals with a victim-friendly approach recruited by **A.L.E.G. Association**. SiEuReusesc also facilitates access to information events and tools (a dedicated podcast involving professionals and survivors), legal counseling and economic empowerment programs like financial mentorship.

e. legal counselling

The State Report mentions the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC)/Social Assistance Directorates/Public Social Assistance Services as structures that provide legal counseling services. However, these structures do not have legal staff specialized in the field of preventing and combating violence against women. Thus, NGOs fill this gap left by the state in providing specialized legal counselling services.

Through the Center for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence, a licensed social service that has been operating continuously since 2012 in Bucharest, the ANAIS Association provides legal and psychological counseling to victims of violence. ANAIS's lawyers explain the rights of victims experiencing violence and how to obtain a protection order. If necessary, they can accompany clients to court hearings or represent them in court. The ANAIS Association's lawyers are committed to fighting for victims' rights and encouraging gender justice. They are dedicated to helping victims regain control over their lives.

The ANAIS Association actively contributes to legislative changes that support victims.

f. outreach services

According to WAVE Country Report 2023, there are 13 NGO-run centers and 25 state-run centers, but in reality the state-run centers rarely work from a women's rights and gender perspective on the root causes of violence against women, and often reinforce victim-blaming attitudes that victims choose to stay in violent situations since they often return to the perpetrator. An example of a local information campaign from a DGASPC promoted the slogan SHE IS THE

PROBLEM¹²³ (Violenta nu e soluția, ea e problema), unfortunately reinforcing the victim-blaming mentality.

g. telephone helpline

-

h. other forms of support (e.g. socio-economic empowerment programmes, online assistance platforms etc.)

-

26. Which type of specialist support service includes child psychologists or other professionals specialised in supporting children who have been exposed to domestic violence, including violence perpetrated by one parent against the other?

According to State Report (page 66), specialist services are provided for children by General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC)/Social Assistance Directorates/Public Social Assistance Services.

While it is true that the DGASPCs are officially the child care services who are supposed to have child psychologists, **in reality many of them do not have proper trauma training, and resources**. As shown by **eLiberare Association**, this means each specialist service is supposed to contract a private practice psychotherapy office specialised in child psychology. There are not many psychotherapists specializing in trauma care, and out of those, there are not many who specialise in child psychology.

In the same vein, **A.L.E.G. Association** underlines the fact that Romania has few services dedicated to children who have been exposed to domestic violence. According to the law, this role should be fulfilled by County Child Protection Directorates, but in reality little psychological support can be offered to children outside the child protection system (residential and foster care). School psychologists could be an alternative but they have to serve between 500 and 800 students, so they rarely provide individual support or contribute to identification and referral of children affected by domestic violence they witness.

Further access barriers are raised by the legal provision that parental consent is required for children to access psychological counseling, even in cases of domestic violence (draft legislation for amending this provision is underway, but not yet adopted). Therefore, perpetrators often refuse to give consent and exert pressure on the victim and other family members to prevent children from accessing such help.

According to ANAIS Association, the presence of these specialists in public centers is inconsistent and uneven due to a lack of dedicated funding.

The **ANAIS Association** collaborates with psychologists who specialize in:

- Counseling children who have witnessed violence;
- Risk assessments in custody cases or protection orders;
- Emotional recovery activities in traumatic cases.

¹²³ <https://sibiulinimagini.ro/campanie-de-constientizare-prevenire-si-combatere-a-violentei-domestice-servicii-sociale-oferite-de-dgaspc-sibiu/>.

27. Do specialist support services exist that cater to the specific needs of migrant women and girls or those belonging to national or ethnic minorities who are victims of violence against women, including women and girls seeking asylum and those granted refugee or international protection status?

This problem is still pending nationwide. The state's response (pages 66–67 of the State Report) focuses on Ukrainian children rather than on migrant or refugee women who are victims of violence.

In theory, refugees have the same rights as Romanian citizens when it comes to accessing social services. Therefore, any available support should also be made accessible to them.

However, in practice, there are significant barriers. Shelters for victims of domestic violence are often overcrowded and not equipped to address the specific needs of migrant women. Most institutions lack access to professional interpreters and rely instead on tools like Google Translate to communicate, which can lead to misunderstandings. As a result, victims may not fully understand the rules of the center or be aware of the support and opportunities available to them. While some centers do occasionally seek the help of interpreters collaborating with NGOs, these cases represent the exception rather than the rule.

For many refugee women—who are often financially and emotionally dependent on their husbands—there is no proper support for their long-term independence. In many cases, due to a lack of tailored support and empowerment programs, women eventually return to their abusive environments.

In Bucharest, there is a dedicated information center that offers counseling for women victims of domestic violence. There is also a center aimed at perpetrators, providing them with free psychological counseling, medical care, and detoxification programs. These initiatives represent valuable steps, but more inclusive and culturally sensitive services are needed to effectively support refugee women. **CNRR** does not have any data of how many refugees have used these services.

CNRR assisted a woman from Syria whose husband was abusive and facilitated communication with the Bucharest Social Assistance Department. A mobile unit was dispatched to remove the mother and her children from the home. No follow-up on their relocation so far. In another case, with the help of a lawyer from another NGO a mother and her children managed to obtain a social restraint order against her husband. In practice, in the absence of the assistance provided by civil society, migrants who are victims of domestic violence would face significant challenges in promptly accessing specialist services which provide them with protection. Delays in taking action and superficial approaches are sometimes reported when the migrants approach the authorities by themselves.

ANAIS Association operated a community center for migrant and refugee women, funded by HIAS¹²⁴. The center offered:

¹²⁴ HIAS is an impressive international nonprofit organization with a history spanning over 140 years.

Since 2022, HIAS has been active in Romania in response to the refugee crisis in Ukraine. HIAS has provided refugees with humanitarian support and integration programs. However, due to the U.S. Government's decision to stop global humanitarian funding, HIAS was forced to cease operations in Romania. This has had a significant impact on the communities it supported, especially since Romania is becoming an increasingly common destination for migrants.

- Legal advice on asylum law
- Support for victims of domestic and sexual violence
- Cultural and integration workshops
- Interpreting and institutional accompaniment services.

After the funding from HIAS ended, the community center closed due to a lack of other material resources. There are no similar services at the national level that have a specialized NGO component for these vulnerable groups.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 22:

- Creating a unified national system of specialist services for victims of all forms violence. Unity refers to eliminating all possibilities for the state to arbitrarily establish different requirements for access to the specialist services it provides.
- Establishing the obligation of the state to finance on an equal footing service providers (both public and private) that meet the legal licensing requirements.
- Eliminating of all discrimination in state funding against non-governmental organizations that carry out tasks in the field of preventing and combating violence against women.
- Recognition and treatment of NGOs as equal partners with the state in preventing and combating violence against women.
- Ensuring continuous and mandatory training for specialists working in services provided to victims of violence.
- Support specialist services that implement an intersectional approach for all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, including female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilization, etc.
- Shelters should be legally required to accept transgender women and ensure that their staff are trained to prevent discrimination. Additionally, explicitly LGBTI-friendly shelters must be developed.
- It is urgent that a clear and accessible administrative procedure for legal gender recognition is established, and that a policy of respect for self-declared gender identity is implemented in all public services. At the same time, the regulatory and operational framework of institutions supporting victims must be reviewed to reflect gender identity realities and eliminate prejudices that cause retraumatisation.
- Comply with GREVIO recommendation according to which: GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to: a. expand the number and/or capacity of specialist shelter facilities dedicated to women and their children, throughout the country, while monitoring the quality and financial sustainability of service provision; b. ensure equitable access to such specialist shelter services for all women victims of all the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, especially women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, older women, Roma women and migrant women (including those with an irregular migration status), including by reviewing the current criteria for accessing GDSACP shelters, and ensuring that access procedures do not contribute to secondary victimisation.

Article 25: Support to victims of sexual violence

28. 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.**

Little progress has been recorded since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania. As such, the GREVIO recommendation in paragraph 219¹²⁵ of the Baseline Report remains unimplemented.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men has established 10 centers for integrated assistance for victims of sexual violence (center), but there is reason to doubt that all of them are functional according to the definition of the service. The 10 intervention centers for victims of sexual violence are organized within hospitals. The establishment of these centers was intended to provide an integrated approach to cases by ensuring services appropriate to the immediate needs of victims, namely: medical examinations, post-traumatic assistance, guidance, and counseling, provided in the same place and as close as possible to the crisis situation, through a multidisciplinary team.¹²⁶

The centers are staffed by a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including doctors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses. The center established at Sibiu County Hospital does not have dedicated staff: the coordinator appointed is one of the two social workers serving the hospital with over 1000 beds. Her workload has not been reduced, and the responsibility of coordinating the sexual violence referral center simply added to her regular 8-hour shift.

Despite existing protocols signed with County Police Inspectorate and SML (forensic service), there is no specific officer appointed that collaborates with the center, so each time a police officer needs to be present, there will be somebody different. The forensic procedure does not take place in the premises of the integrated center. The term “integrated service centres” – is used in GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania to designate the corresponding structure at the national level. The psychological counseling is to be ensured by DGASPC, but does not take place in the premises of the integrated center. **Therefore, the integrated character of the service is rather missing.**

Also, **Asociația Moașelor din România (Romanian Midwives Association)** underlines the findings of dedicated press articles. In this vein, a media article¹²⁷ - published in April 2023

¹²⁵ GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to pursue their efforts to set up sexual violence referral centres and/or rape crisis centres and ensure their sustainable state funding beyond the initial project phase, recalling that one such centre should be available for every 200 000 inhabitants and that their geographical spread should make them accessible to victims in rural areas as much as in cities.⁸⁰ The gathering of forensic evidence and issuing of forensic certificates must not be subject to a charge.

¹²⁶ Further details at: <https://mfamilie.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Anexa-2-Centrul-IVVS-003.pdf>.

¹²⁷ Please see: <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/ce-se-intampla-cu-centrele-pentru-victimele-violentei-sexuale-in-romania-5-din-10-fara-niciun-pacient-4498973>.

by Diana Meseşan, a journalist with experience in covering GBV reports that the main barriers of victims receiving services in these centers, are:

- (1) the medical emergency personnel in the hospital does not inform the victim of the existence of the center – the victim is referred only to the police; the police takes the victim to the police station without providing counseling at the center and the victim does not file a police complaint and does not get forensic examination;
- (2) due to lack of trained personnel, protocols and established procedures, the door of centers can be locked when the victim comes;
- (3) lack of public awareness campaigns on the existence of these centers and the services they provide. Moreover, there is not yet any official methodology approved for the functioning of these centers as there have been pending discussions between ANES and the Ministry of Health on this matter, for more than 3 years.

TRANSCORE Association reports that in practice, there are no specialized centers for LGBTI victims. Many trans people avoid reporting sexual assaults because of the risk of discrimination from the police or medical staff. Some NGOs dedicated to trans and LGBT people offer such services (for example, MozaiQ has a social worker, and TransCore and Identity.Education sponsor therapy).

According to ANAIS Association, the sexual violence referral centers do not ensure an integrated approach of cases; the purpose for which they were originally created has not been achieved. Thus, it is safe to say that there are no effective, real victim-centered violence referral centers or rape crisis centers in the public system. Access to a forensic examination depends on completing bureaucratic procedures. The National Institute of Forensic Medicine (INML) performs forensic examinations by request. There are no integrated centers or 24/7 protocols. **ANAIS Association** offers victims support in the form of documentation assistance, accompaniment, and counseling, but lacks dedicated infrastructure.

29. Please provide information on the number of such services and the number of women and girls supported annually.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, few women are supported by the 10 centers annually, and this has to do with the low quality of the services and the lack of widespread knowledge about their existence both among the general population and among professionals who could refer survivors. There is also an issue of lack of trust in the victim-friendly approach of the new services due to some articles published in the national media which emphasized stories of women who found doors closed.

ANAIS Association assisted between 80 and 100 women and girls who were victims of sexual violence (directly or indirectly) each year. Unfortunately, official reports do not break down statistics by type of support or frequency of service use.

Please also see the response to the previous question.

30. Please indicate the procedures and time frames for collecting and storing forensic evidence in cases of sexual violence (e.g. existence of protocols, use of rape kits) in the relevant services

Please see the responses to previous questions : 18,19,21, 22.

Also, **ANAIS Association** mentions the following deficiencies identified at national level in this regard: (1) Forensic examinations are only carried out at INML centers or county offices;

(2) Rape kits are not routinely distributed in hospitals; (3) There are no national protocols for hospitals. Evidence storage is limited, and victims must file a complaint in advance to be examined.

31. Please describe any applicable access criteria for use of these services (e.g. affiliation with a national health insurance, residence status, prior reporting of the case to the police, other)

ANAIIS Association notes the fact that access to standard medical services requires health insurance. The INML operates separately. A valid CNP/identity card is required for legal residence. Undocumented migrant women cannot access services. Reporting to the police is mandatory in order to receive forensic services.

Please see the responses to previous questions: 18, 19, 21, 22.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 25:

- Ensure the functionality and effectiveness of the centers for victims of sexual violence, based on gender-sensitive and trauma informed approach. This includes providing continuous training to staff that is sensitive to the rights of victims and the particularities of sexual violence, in particular rape trauma.**
- Developing effective and victim-centered centers for victims of sexual violence by ensuring the one-stop-shop nature of the services provided.**
- Implementing an intersectional approach that benefits all victims of sexual violence (LGBTI+, migrant, Roma, elderly women, women with disabilities).**
- Establish uniform protocols focused on victims' rights at the national level to support victims of sexual violence.**

Article 31: Custody, visitation rights and safety

32. Please indicate whether under national law incidents of violence covered under the scope of the convention must be taken into account in the determination of custody and visitation rights of children. If this is the case, please clarify to what extent these provisions:
a. explicitly list domestic violence as a criterion to be taken into account when deciding on custody and/or visitation rights in the applicable legislation. If so, please clarify whether this criterion is/has been applied in practice in the determination of both custody and visitation rights;

The State Report highlights multiple legal provisions that identify violence as a factor considered when determining visitation or custody rights over a child. These provisions are found in Law No. 272/2004 on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights, as well as in the Civil Code. They are presented extensively on pages 68–70 of the State Report. However, the implementation of these provisions is flawed in practice for the following reasons:

-Judicial professionals are not required to take training courses on gender-based violence, leading to a lack of understanding of the phenomenon's complexity and dynamics. This also highlights the following reality, as seen in the practical cases of the ANAIIS Association: judges rarely rule that the victim should have full parental authority over the children in domestic violence cases. Even in rare cases where parental authority is granted exclusively to one parent,

according to Article 398, paragraph 2 of the Civil Code, the other parent retains the right to supervise the child's upbringing and education, as well as the right to consent to the child's adoption. Therefore, even if the victim is granted full parental authority, the perpetrator can still have visitation rights and make decisions regarding the child who witnessed domestic violence. This can keep the child in a traumatic situation, and the victim is often accused of parental alienation if the child refuses to maintain contact with the perpetrator. **Unfortunately, the law does not impose harsher penalties on perpetrators, such as the loss of parental rights.** Article 508 paragraph 1 of the Civil Code regulates the revoke of parental rights based on the premise that the perpetrator endangers the life, health, or development of a child through mistreatment, alcohol or drug abuse, abusive behavior, serious neglect of parental obligations, or serious harm to the child's best interests. However, the text has at least two limitations. **First, acts of domestic violence are not expressly mentioned as grounds for the perpetrator's parental rights to be revoked.** Second, the Civil Code's provisions **refer to acts committed directly by the perpetrator against the child**, not situations in which the child witnesses domestic violence.

-The lack of mandatory training of judicial professionals leads to a lack of uniform case law in cases of domestic violence that prioritizes the rights of victims and children. This lack of uniform case law also leads to unpredictability in situations of domestic violence which discourages victims with minor children from seeking justice.

-The principle of the best interests of the child is interpreted and applied theoretically, without specialized procedures being developed following this principle. Although expressly recognizing the principle of the best interest of the child is a positive measure, it is not sufficient to guarantee the implementation of this principle in accordance with international standards.

-The institution of parental authority in cases of domestic violence does not adapt to the needs of the victimized parent nor promote a child-rights-based approach. After an act of violence (we refer to acts of violence perpetrated by the father of the child against the mother of the child and acts of violence of the perpetrated by the father against the child) **the child must be protected from the perpetrator**, which may include limiting contact between the child and the perpetrator and restricting the perpetrator's visiting rights regarding the child. In practice, this is rarely applied.

b. acknowledge the harm that witnessing violence by one parent against the other has on a child;

There are no express and mandatory provisions acknowledging the harm that witnessing violence by one parent against the other has on a child. Thus, this aspect is left to the discretion of the judge who has the power to interpret the law on a case-by-case basis, which leads (as shown above) to inconsistent case law in cases of domestic violence that tends to disregard the rights of the victim and the rights of the child.

c. ensure that custody with the non-violent parent is preferred over foster-care;

As the State Report shows, there are no clear, express provisions ensuring custody with the non-violent parent over foster care. This legislative gap leaves a wide margin for interpretation by the judge, who may misjudge the situation, especially since he or she is not required to take courses on gender-based violence against women to understand its complexity and dynamics.

d. foresee the screening of civil proceedings related to the determination of custody or visitation rights for a history of domestic violence among the parties;

There is no screening of civil proceedings related to the determination of custody or visitation rights for a history of domestic violence among the parties.

The complex procedure described in the State Report does not address aspects of domestic violence that consider the causes of violence and its impact on victimized parents and their minor children. Furthermore, the conclusions of the psychosocial investigation report are not binding on the court. The judge has the final say and may make an inconsistent decision due to a lack of training on issues related to gender-based violence.

e. foresee that judges conduct risk assessments or request the disclosure of risk assessments drawn up by law-enforcement agencies or other competent stakeholders for victims of domestic violence, with a view to taking them into account and determining the best interest of the child in the context of custody and visitation decisions.

There are no legal provisions that specifically ensure risk assessments. The legal provisions (Article 21, paragraph 1, letter "d" of Law No. 272/2004) mentioned in the State Report (page 73) enable judicial authorities to document a history of domestic violence if it is supported by specific evidence: forensic evidence, social workers' reports, psychological assessments, and hearings conducted in a child-sensitive manner.

However, these provisions do not automatically lead to the incorporation of risk assessment into court decisions, given that in cases of domestic violence there is an inherent difficulty for the victim to gather formal evidence. Decision No. 1124/2025 issued by Cluj-Napoca Court on 28 February 2025, cited in the State Report does not necessarily indicate a model of good practice. This is because the court did not apply the law in accordance with a child rights-based approach, but took into account the rights of the perpetrator, imposing 30 minutes of contact per month between the victim and the perpetrator. This demonstrates that the revocation of the perpetrator's parental rights is a very rare occurrence in practice.

33. Please describe the measures in place to ensure that judges, court-appointed experts and other legal professionals:

a. have sufficient knowledge of the law and understanding of the dynamics of intimate partner violence, including the psychological impact of witnessing violence on the child;

As part of their continuing professional development, judges and other legal experts are not required to attend courses on gender-based violence. This explains the lack of specialized panels on the topic.

The examples in the State Report refer to family law training and specialized family law panels. However, these examples do not necessarily address gender-based violence directly, as it can occur regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator are family members or live together. Moreover, professional training in domestic law is not equivalent to training in accordance with the precepts and principles of the Istanbul Convention.

b. duly take into account victims' grievances in cases of domestic violence and hear children victims/witnesses, where applicable, in the determination of custody and visitation rights;

There are no special procedures nor courts for cases of gender-based violence. Therefore, there are no procedures for hearing from victims or children who have witnessed such violence.

c. are informed of the unfoundedness of notions of “parental alienation” or analogous concepts that are used to overshadow the violence and control exerted by perpetrators of domestic violence over women and their children.

There has been no progress on this issue either. The adoption of Law No. 123/2024, as referenced in the State Report, does not clarify the matter of parental alienation because it lacks a definition sensitive to domestic violence circumstances. The courts must identify the correct application of this concept in cases of domestic violence. However, this approach leads to inconsistent practices and further undermines the predictability of court rulings.

34. Please provide details on the procedures in place to ensure that the competent court for family-related issues co-operate/communicate with other relevant bodies/professionals, including, but not limited to, criminal courts, law-enforcement agencies, health and education authorities and specialist women’s support services when taking decisions on custody and visitation or when offering family law mediation. Please specify whether the law provides a legal framework for any of the procedures in place.

There has been no progress on this issue either. Although the State Report shows cooperation between courts, social workers, and psychologists, there are no express legal provisions requiring courts to cooperate with gender equality experts.

35. Please provide detailed information on the procedures in place (including, if applicable, the relevant personnel used, the specific infrastructure available), in the exercise of custody and visitation rights, to:

- a. eliminate the risk for the abused parent to be subjected to further violence;**
- b. eliminate the risk for the child to witness or experience violence;**
- c. ensure that the responsible personnel are trained and that the facilities are suited to enable safe supervised visitation.**

Currently, there is no specific legal procedure governing this area. Consequently, no substantial progress has been made.

Although some procedures allow for the revocation of parental rights, as exemplified in the State Report, these procedures are not based on a gender-sensitive approach to violence. Due to the unique characteristics of domestic violence, specific procedures should be developed for revoking parental rights in regard to the perpetrator.

In light of the above information, **AN AIS Association** offers some concluding remarks on the problematic aspects relating to the application of Article 31 — custody, visitation, and child safety (questions 32-35).

According to Law No. 217/2003 and the Civil Code (Art. 508), domestic violence is a criterion for granting custody; however, its application is inconsistent.

While the impact of witness testimony is recognized in theory, it is insufficiently valued in practice.

Although custody is theoretically granted to the non-violent parent, courts rarely completely withdraw the rights of the violent parent.

Regarding the assessment of a history of domestic violence, there is a risk of inconsistency between civil and criminal records. There is no automatic screening system.

Risk assessments in custody cases are not mandatory. Some courts request them on a case-by-case basis from the DGASPC.

With regard to professionals and safety in the exercise of custody, the following should be noted:

- Judges have limited training on the impact of violence on children.
- The concept of "parental alienation" is introduced in Romanian legislation and frequently used to dismiss allegations of abuse – not in line with GREVIO and WHO standards.
- There is a lack of standard procedures for supervised visits or adapted infrastructure (neutral rooms, trained staff).

36. Please indicate whether national provisions foresee the withdrawal of parental rights in criminal sentences if the best interest of the child, which may include the safety of the victim, cannot be guaranteed in any other way.

Both the Criminal Code and the Civil Code allow for the withdrawal of parental rights based on a final conviction. However, the measure is rarely applied. Courts are reluctant to impose it without significant pressure from victims and NGOs.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 31:

- Establish continuing mandatory professional training for judges and other judicial professionals that includes aspects related to gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence;
- Establish a specialized jurisdiction for gender-based violence cases with specialized panels and standardized procedures;
- Establish mechanisms for screening custody cases from the perspective of a history of domestic violence;

Article 48: Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing

Criminal law:

37. Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure that mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes are prohibited in criminal proceedings related to cases involving the different forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, **no significant progress has been observed in this regard. Thus, we believe that the recommendations made by GREVIO in paragraph 335 on page 64 remain valid.**

The State Report (pages 83–84) emphasizes that mediation (as an alternative dispute resolution procedure) is available to the parties in criminal proceedings as an option, not an obligation. **However, the State Report emphasizes that judicial professionals (judges and prosecutors) must present the advantages of mediation to the parties.** Therefore, the victim's will be distorted in accepting mediation. Victims are usually accompanied by a lawyer, not a psychologist, during legal proceedings and are often in a vulnerable state. **They may be**

influenced to choose mediation if the judge presents it as an advantageous dispute resolution option. Hence, the judge should also have a corresponding professional obligation to inform the victim of their right to refuse mediation. Also, since victims are often pressured by family and friends to amicably settle disputes with the perpetrator, authorities must take into consideration the **psychological consequences of pressuring victims to resort to mediation.**

The State Report emphasizes the role of mediators in achieving balanced, mutually beneficial solutions. It also clarifies that mediators cannot impose solutions on the parties, but rather facilitate dialogue between them. **While this is true, we believe that mediation is not a safe procedure for victims because mediators are not required to take specialized courses on gender-based violence as part of their in-service education.**

Thus, the approach outlined in the State Report does not constitute a sustained effort to ensure that mediation procedures are optional in practice. As GREVIO notes in its Baseline Report on Romania, **GREVIO encourages the Romanian authorities to:**

- a. take measures to ensure that in cases of family mediation in the context of divorce based on Law No. 192/2006 on mediation, effective screening processes and safeguards are established to enable judges and mediators to identify and address power imbalances among the two parties resulting from a history of domestic violence by one spouse against the other with a view to ensuring the free and full consent to the mediation process of both parties;**
- b. ensure that all women victims of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention are informed about the non-mandatory nature of mediation in criminal proceedings;**
- c. train judges, mediators and legal professionals on the need to ensure that victims freely consent to mediation and are not exposed to further revictimisation.**

Furthermore, in this regard, the **ANAIS Association** notes an inconsistency in domestic provisions regarding access to mediation in cases of domestic violence.

The Code of Criminal Procedure (Art. 67(a)) expressly excludes mediation in cases of domestic violence, sexual violence, and rape, which are offenses committed between family members.

Law no. 217/2003, Article 27 provides: (2) Cases of domestic violence may be subject to mediation at the request of the parties, in accordance with the law.

However, **ANAIS Association** has reported that some courts or lawyers indirectly encourage "reconciliation," especially in the pre-trial phase, in the form of an "amicable settlement."

ANAIS asked the Legislative Amendment Working Group at ANES to amend Law No. 217/2003 and **remove mediation in order to better protect victims of domestic violence from pressure to reconcile.** However, this aspect was not included in the proposed legislative amendments.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 48:

- Mandatory and systematic in-service education for prosecutors/judges/mediators on gender-based violence;**
- Mandatory informing the victim (including by the judge/prosecutor) in criminal proceedings about non-mandatory nature of mediation and about her right to refuse mediation.**

38. Where voluntary alternative dispute resolution processes exist for any criminal offences within the remit of the Istanbul Convention, such as conciliation or mediation, please provide information on the safeguards incorporated to ensure the free and informed consent of the victim to such processes and the measures taken to avoid that direct or indirect pressure is placed on the victim. Please also state whether the offer of alternative dispute resolution processes may result in the discontinuation of criminal investigation and prosecution or other consequences for the victim.

The State Report (page 84) presents general guarantees regarding the mediation procedure, but does not specify these rules in relation to victims of domestic violence. A systematic interpretation of Law No. 192/2006 (Mediation Law) **does not lead to the conclusion that it contains rules governing the particularities of the mediation procedure in cases of domestic violence. Nor does it contain rules ensuring the protection of victims' rights.**

Given that victims of domestic violence are in unequal power relations with the perpetrators and are often compelled to accept mediation against their will, and there are no measures taken to avoid direct or indirect pressure on the victim, **the law governing the mediation procedure should be amended accordingly to include** safeguards to ensure that victims of any form of violence covered by the Convention are informed about non-mandatory nature of mediation in criminal proceedings and to avoid direct or indirect pressure on the victims. Currently, the Mediation Law only mentions the word "victim" once, in the context of requiring that the victim not have contact with the perpetrator. No other safeguards exist.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, domestic legal framework establishes that in cases of domestic violence, mediation is optional and cannot be imposed by the judge. However, there is still no uniform framework to guarantee:

- risk assessment,
- informed consent of the victim,
- absence of direct or indirect pressure.

Through its practical work, **ANAIIS Association** has observed that the notion of "free consent" is often merely formal and that victims are not sufficiently informed about legal alternatives and the risks of mediation.

In practice, mediation for victims usually means someone convinces them to drop their complaint.

For further reference, please see also the answer and the recommendations made under Question 37.

Civil law:

39. Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure that alternative dispute resolution processes such as mediation or procedures which can be considered tantamount to the latter are not used in family law proceedings such as divorce proceedings or proceedings related to custody and visitation of children, where there is a history of violence.

No significant progress has been made on this issue, either. **The State Report's answer to this question does not provide information on the measures taken to enable screening for domestic violence in civil proceedings, for example, in cases of divorce.** Instead, the answer (pages 85–86 of the State Report) contains information on the applicable rules **when mediation**

is used in civil proceedings. This approach stems from the fact that Romanian law does not expressly prohibit amicably settling civil cases involving a history of violence between the parties, as mentioned on page 86 of the State Report.

While civil cases involving minors should be handled with greater sensitivity, Article 398 of the Civil Code, which permits a single parent to obtain parental authority in the event of divorce, does not promote the best interests of the child in cases of domestic violence. **This is because, even if the victim of violence obtains sole custody of the child after divorce, Article 398(2) grants the other parent (in this case, the perpetrator) the right to supervise the child's upbringing and education, as well as the right to consent to the child's adoption.**

According to the ANAIS Association, the Mediation Law permits mediation in civil matters, including divorce and custody cases.

There is no explicit legal prohibition against mediation in cases involving a history of domestic violence.

Courts are not required to check for the existence of a protection order before approving mediation.

However, ANAIS Association has proposed introducing an express provision that would require courts to check for criminal records or active protection orders between the parties.

Recommendation on the implementation of Article 48:

-Comply with GREVIO recommendation in the Baseline Report according to which GREVIO encourages the Romanian authorities to: take measures to ensure that in cases of family mediation in the context of divorce based on Law No. 192/2006 on mediation, effective screening processes and safeguards are established to enable judges and mediators to identify and address power imbalances among the two parties resulting from a history of domestic violence by one spouse against the other with a view to ensuring the free and full consent to the mediation process of both parties.

Articles 49 and 50: General obligations and immediate response, prevention and protection
40. Please describe the human, financial and technical resources provided to law enforcement agencies to diligently respond to and investigate all cases of violence against women, including their digital dimension.

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, **little progress has been made in this area.**

The State Report (pages 86–87) introduces the SMIA (Integrated Management Information System for Victims of Crime), emphasizing its function of informing victims of their rights in criminal proceedings. **However, the report does not explain how the system works or how it aims to respond to the needs of domestic violence victims.** Specifically, it is unclear whether the information provided to victims covers the period before criminal proceedings or only applies during them. Additionally, the report does not provide details on the extent to which this information is tailored to the specific form of violence experienced by the victim.

Additionally, the State Report does not indicate whether measures have been taken to address the issues highlighted in the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania (pages 66–67). The GREVIO Baseline Report highlights the following problems that victims of violence encounter

from the moment they report the violent act to the authorities until criminal proceedings are initiated:

- discrimination and stereotypes promoted by officials who interact with victims immediately after violence occurs, which discourages victims from reporting violence;

Officials promote investigative practices that re-traumatize victims, such as assumptions about victims' attitudes or attempts to convince victims to reconcile with perpetrators.

- the promotion of victim-blaming attitudes by police officers in relation to victims of domestic violence.

- the lack of information provided to victims about their rights throughout the proceedings (from the date of filing the application to the date of completion of the court proceedings).

According to the **ANAIIS Association**, the following shortcomings can be identified in relation to this issue:

- The budget allocated to the **Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI)** includes resources for law enforcement agencies, but there is no specific budget for violence against women.

- Law enforcement agencies handle cases of domestic violence without dedicated funding for training, equipment, or the implementation of standard protocols.

- Staff are often overworked and lack ongoing training.

- MAI has a policy on violence against women, but it is not implemented at the operational level.

For the aforementioned reasons, we deem the recommendations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 350, page 67) to be crucial.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-Adopting urgent measures for implementing recommendations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (paragraph 350, page 67).

41. Which measures have been taken to ensure that the premises of police stations are accessible and suitable for receiving and interviewing victims of violence while ensuring their privacy? Is it possible to report cases of violence against women elsewhere than in police stations, including through digital means?

The State's Report response to this question (page 87) is vague and does not indicate any progress in addressing the issue.

The state's response focuses on the steps taken to renovate 33 hearing rooms for children who are victims of domestic violence. However, no similar data is provided regarding adult victims.

While the organization of special hearing rooms for children is a positive development, it does not make up for the absence of similar accommodations for adult victims of domestic violence.

Likewise, the State's Report does not provide information on the existence of a specially reserved place within police stations for victims of violence if they wish to report acts of violence. The implementation of a victim-centered approach in police stations remains a pending and outstanding issue.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, very few departments have private spaces for interviewing victims. Although it is possible to report online through MAI applications or platforms such as "Fii Informat!" (Be Informed!), there is no associated emergency protocol.

There are no mobile teams outside of NGO partnerships. For example, **ANAIIS Association** offers accompaniment of victims to the police.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-Organizing locations within police stations where victims of domestic violence or other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention can benefit from privacy and interaction with specialized personnel trained in issues related to gender-based violence;
-Adopting urgent measures to establish special rooms (in courts of justice or prosecution offices) for hearing women victims of domestic violence or other forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention.

42. Please explain whether specialist police/prosecution units exist to investigate and prosecute violence against women and specify:

a. which forms of violence against women they are competent for;

b. whether such units exist in all police/prosecution districts throughout the country.

The answer contained in the State Report (page 88) to this question focuses on a specific aspect: violence against minors. No information is provided on violence against women, resulting that no progress has been made in relation to this subject. This is understandable given that there are no specialised units dedicated to investigating cases of violence against women and domestic violence. According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, in 2019, a specialised unit¹²⁸ was established for sexual assault against minors, and only under Bucharest Police. When a domestic violence case is reported to the national emergency number 112, any police officer from Public Order Department can be sent to respond and often the intervention fails to involve the interdisciplinary team despite being provided for by law¹²⁹, as many local communities have not established such a team or they cannot function 24/7.

According to the **ANAIIS Association**, some police structures have units that specialize in domestic violence, such as the Office for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence at some county police inspectorates. However, these structures are not uniform nationwide.

There are no specialized units at public prosecutor's offices in cases of domestic violence. Cases are handled under the general regime.

Since 2014, the **Necuvinte Association** has advocated for specialized units within the Romanian police. In June of this year, there was a meeting with the Chief of Police, who made another promise. The reality is that, besides management decisions, the Romanian police are short on personnel. A police union estimated that the shortage is around 30%, but there is no official data on this issue. If this data is accurate, the problem becomes one of national and individual security.

¹²⁸ For further reference, please see : <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/premiera-in-politie-a-fost-creata-structura-care-ancheteaza-agresiunile-sexuale-impotriva-minorilor.html>.

¹²⁹ Article 3(1) of Order No. 20.266/50/2023 approving the methodology for measures to prevent domestic violence. The implementation of measures to prevent domestic violence requires inter-institutional collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach by all categories of professionals who interact with victims and perpetrators in their daily work, with a focus primarily on the intervention of police officers and specialists from the general directorates for social assistance and child protection/social assistance directorates/public social assistance services, hereinafter referred to as DGASPC/DAS/SPAS.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-Establishing specialist police/prosecution units to investigate and prosecute all cases of violence against women, including domestic violence.

43. Please describe any measures taken to ensure swift investigation into and effective prosecution of cases of violence against women and domestic violence such as prioritisation through fast-tracking, benchmarking or other initiatives, without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

The State Report's answer to this question (page 88) is evasive and reflects little progress in this area. The normative acts invoked by the state: Order 173/65/3042/C/2021 and Law No. 272/2024, do not present the measures adopted by the national authorities to ensure a swift investigation into effective prosecution of cases of violence against women and domestic violence.

While the two normative acts highlight positive aspects of supporting victims of domestic violence by providing information about their rights, **they do not establish a uniform national-level protocol for ensuring swift investigations and effective prosecutions.**

According to **ANAIIS Association**, the Order No. 138/2024¹³⁰ of the Ministry of Internal Affairs establishes procedures for issuing temporary protection orders. Nevertheless, there is no specific criminal fast-tracking system for victims of domestic violence.

In light of these issues, the **ANAIIS Association** reports:

- delayed cases;
- lack of rapid hearings;
- lack of proximity or social environment investigations.
- patriarchal approach to victims, which is sometimes unintentional but results from a lack of initial training in gender-based violence.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

- Establishing a uniform national-level protocol or protocols for ensuring swift investigations and effective prosecutions of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention.

44. 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.

There has been no significant progress in this area either. The initiatives presented in the State Report (pages 89 and 90) respectively the Guide and Campaign launched by the Ministry of Justice do not include elements of intersectionality, nor do they address in depth each form of violence regulated by the Istanbul Convention.

¹³⁰ The Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs No. 138, dated 22 August 2024, establishes the procedure for police officers to handle cases involving acts of violence. It was published in Official Gazette No. 853, dated 27 August 2024, available only in Romanian at : <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/287721>.

ANAIIS Association underlines the fact that in order to support victims, it runs awareness campaigns ("Break the Silence!") for women in disadvantaged communities.

ANAIIS Association also provides interpretation services, adapted brochures, and support in filing complaints for: migrant women, women with disabilities, survivors of human trafficking, undocumented women.

However, the following issues remain pressing:

- o there are no ongoing government campaigns for vulnerable groups
- o there is a lack of materials in foreign languages or adapted for persons with disabilities.

According to **A.L.E.G. Association**, with the exception of Ukrainian refugees, there have been few public measures taken to encourage reporting violence, in particular by migrant women, asylum-seeking women, women with disabilities, women with addiction issues and other women and girls at risk of intersectional discrimination.

CNRR mentioned that refugee women reported negative experiences when they turned to the police for help. In some cases, police representatives were described as being insensitive to the victim and did not respect the legal procedures. For example, a refugee woman wanted to file a complaint against her violent husband but was not provided an interpreter. The police asked her to come with her own interpreter and cover the costs herself. She was accompanied by a **CNRR** representative who provided interpretation services. The police failed to protect the victim because the perpetrator showed up at the station at the same time and managed to speak with the victim, even though they were supposed to be kept completely separate. Additionally, the victim gave her statement with the perpetrator in the next room. The police took the perpetrator's statement and pressured the female interpreter, who had come to translate for the victim, to also translate for the perpetrator, even though she was afraid of him.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-Officials should be held accountable for empowering women victims of violence to report the acts to which they have been subjected by including an intersectional, victim-rights-based approach in their work procedures. Specific protocols for police professionals should be developed consequently.

45. Please indicate whether protocols/standard operating procedures or guidelines for police officers are in place providing guidance on how to receive reports, interview victims, investigate and collect evidence in cases of rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment (including their online manifestation), forced marriage, female genital mutilation and forced sterilisation/abortion. Please provide information on how the authorities ensure the comprehensive collection of evidence beyond the victim's testimony.

Not much progress has been made in this area either. The examples provided in the State Report (pages 90-91) do not represent national, unified standards that can be used in relation to all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention.

As mentioned by **ANAIIS Association**, with regard to domestic violence, there is a protocol for enforcing temporary protection orders (MAI Order No. 138/2024¹³¹). In cases of

¹³¹ The Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs No. 138, dated 22 August 2024, establishes the procedure for police officers to handle cases involving acts of violence. It was published in Official Gazette No. 853, dated 27 August 2024, available only in Romanian at : <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/287721>.

rape/sexual violence, there is a medico-legal protocol, but it is only applicable in cases of criminal complaints (*sesizare penală*). There are no clear standards or instructions in cases of harassment or stalking (including online). Female genital mutilation or forced marriages do not benefit from specific protocols, nor is there any clear protection in place in this regard. The collection of evidence relies almost exclusively on the victim's statement, with no proactive investigation or data corroboration.

According to **A.L.E.G Association**, while it is true that a joint Order¹³² establishes since 2023 the methodology for prevention of domestic violence, its implementation lacks consistency and there is no evaluation published as to how effective it has proved in practice. Who is responsible to coordinate and fund the multi-agency cooperation is still unclear, although the Order was issued to clarify aspects previously not thoroughly addressed by Government Decision no. 49/2011, where the focus tends to be on minors. There are no efforts or measures to collect evidence beyond victims' testimony.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

- Developing uniform national standards for police officers based on which protocols for directly and effectively managing cases of reported acts of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention will be imposed.

46. Please describe the efforts taken to identify and address all factors that contribute to attrition (the process whereby cases drop out of the criminal justice system) in cases of violence against women and domestic violence.

Little progress has been made in relation to this point.

The State Report (page 91) mentions measures to combat attrition in criminal cases involving violence against women, which remain pending at the national level: data collection and ongoing mandatory professional training for specialists.

Furthermore, the legislative and policy measures outlined in the State Report are not aimed at reducing attrition (see information presented under the responses given to Article 7).

In the opinion of **ANAIIS Association**, the following main causes lead to attrition:

- lack of support in drafting the complaint,
- lack of trust in the justice system,
- withdrawal of the complaint due to pressure from the perpetrator or family,
- inactivity of investigators (cases unsolved for years),
- lack of effective protection measures between the complaint and the trial.
- inappropriate approach of the direct worker with the victim causes her to return to the perpetrator.
- the inadequate approach of the social worker to the victim causes her to return to the perpetrator.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-urgent adoption of effective measures to address all factors that contribute to attrition (the process whereby cases drop out of the criminal justice system) in cases of violence against women and domestic violence.

¹³² Joint Order No. 20.266/50/2023 of the Ministry of family, youth, and equal opportunities and the Ministry of internal affairs approving the Methodology on measures to prevent domestic violence, available (only in Romanian) at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/DetaliiDocument/267261>.

-please see all previous recommendations made under articles 49 and 50.

47. Please indicate if legislative or other measures have been taken to issue a renewable residence permit to migrant women who have become a victim of any of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention if the competent authority considers that their stay is necessary for the purpose of their co-operation in investigation or criminal proceedings.

In the State Report (page 91), the State expressly acknowledges that it has not implemented policies or legislation containing explicit provisions in this area. Therefore, we cannot say that progress has been made in this direction.

To clarify how existing rules on this matter can be applied to victims of domestic violence, the **CNRR** has created a summary of the primary regulatory provisions in this area:

According to the Government's Emergency Ordinance No. 194/2002¹³³ on the regime of foreigners (OUG No. 194/2002), the temporary residence right can be granted independently, upon request, to the foreign national who had a residence permit as a family member and has held a temporary residence right for this purpose for the last 5 years. The foreign national may be exempted, upon request, from fulfilling the condition related to the length of the marriage in case it has been dissolved by court decision or the partnership has ended.

In order to be granted the right of residence, the applicant must additionally present, as applicable, the court decision dissolving the marriage or a notarized sworn statement on the termination of the partnership. The right can be granted for a period of up to 6 months, starting from the date the application is submitted, in alignment with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. **However, the Ordinance does not make any direct referrals to victims of violence as a distinct category of beneficiaries of this provision.**

The temporary residence right for victims of the above mentioned crimes is granted for a period of 6 months, without the requirement of obtaining a visa and even if the foreigners have entered Romania illegally, upon the request of the prosecutor or the court, if the following conditions are cumulatively met:

- the foreigners show a clear intention to cooperate or are cooperating with the competent authorities to facilitate the identification and criminal prosecution of those involved in committing the crimes of which they are victims;
- the foreigners have ceased any relationships with the persons suspected of committing the crimes of which they are victims;
- granting the right of residence is appropriate for the conduct of judicial investigations;
- the stay of the foreigners in Romania does not pose a threat to public order or national security.

The temporary residence right for victims of crimes is extended by the General Inspectorate for Immigration successively, for new periods of 6 months, at the request of the prosecutor or the court, if the conditions above are cumulatively met.

According to **ANAIIS Association**, Government Emergency Ordinance No. 194/2002 provides for the possibility of granting a temporary residence permit to victims who cooperate in the investigation (Articles 130-131).

However, the application is extremely restrictive, especially in cases where:

- o the woman does not have her documents translated/legalized,
- o she does not have a lawyer,

¹³³ Available only in Romania at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/41005>.

- o she is not officially registered as a victim in criminal files.

ANAIIS Association has provided assistance in the past with filing cases and has collaborated with the **IGI (General Inspectorate for Immigration)** and **HIAS** to document cases, but a dedicated mechanism for victims of gender based violence is needed.

Recommendation on the implementation of Articles 49 and 50 :

-urgent adoption of effective measures to issue a renewable residence permit to migrant women who have become a victim of any of the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Article 51: Risk assessment and risk management

48. Please describe any standardised and mandatory risk assessment tools in use by all relevant authorities in all regions for forms of violence against women such as stalking, violence committed in the name of so-called honour and domestic violence and to what extent these tools are being used in practice to assess the lethality risk, the seriousness of the situation and the risk of repeated violence with a view to preventing further violence. Please specify whether the following elements are considered as red flags when carrying out the risk assessment:

- a. the possession of or access to firearms by the perpetrator;**
- b. the filing for separation/divorce by the victim or the break-up of the relationship;**
- c. pregnancy;**
- d. previous acts of violence;**
- e. the prior issue of a restrictive measure;**
- f. threats made by the perpetrator to take away common children;**
- g. acts of sexual violence;**
- h. threats to kill the victim and her children;**
- i. threat of suicide;**
- j. coercive and controlling behaviour.**

Since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania, little significant progress has been made in this regard. The State Report (page 92) shows that the national authorities have achieved two things. First, they adopted a risk assessment tool: the Joint Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Protection No. 146/2018. Second, they expressly mentioned the risk assessment criteria in Article 37, paragraph (3), letter a of Law No. 217/2003. These criteria include the type of domestic violence, whether the acts are repetitive, the vulnerability of the victim(s), the context in which the acts occur, and the behavior of the perpetrator(s). According to this Romanian law, police officers apply risk assessment.

However, the information provided in the State Report does not address the GREVIO recommendation in the Baseline Report on Romania (page 73, paragraph 372) regarding the implementation of risk management tools in cases of domestic violence. For further reference, the recommendation states the following: *GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to ensure that risk assessments are repeated at all the relevant stages of criminal proceedings with the involvement of specialist women's services and that systematic and gender-*

sensitive risk assessments and safety management become standard procedures in all cases of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Nevertheless, the state's response did not address the main points of the GREVIO recommendation:

- Whether risk assessment procedures were applied at each level of criminal proceedings
- Whether the procedures were applied with the involvement of women's specialist services
- Whether risk assessment procedures are applicable to stalking for example.

Although adopting the risk assessment form is a positive development, its practical implementation is inadequate for the following reasons:

- There are no monitoring nor follow-up mechanisms concerning the implementation of this form;
- Neither victims nor specialists in preventing and combating violence (law enforcement, legal professionals, or social workers) are sufficiently informed about the form's content and application;
- Specialists (law enforcement, legal professionals and social workers) lack systematic in-service, mandatory training on the practical implementation of the form;
- Therefore, there is no uniform nor consistent application of the form;
- There are no records regarding the practical performance evaluation of this tool;
- There are no records concerning the application of the risk assessment form to all forms of violence against women, not just those concerning domestic violence.

The practice of **ANAIS Association** shows that Romania lacks a standardized, uniform, mandatory risk assessment tool used by all relevant institutions (police, prosecutors, courts, DGASPC, and social services) at the national level. Although risk assessment is mentioned in the legislation on protection orders (Law No. 217/2003 and the Code of Civil Procedure), there is no operational protocol applied consistently throughout the country.

Non-governmental organizations, such as the **ANAIS Association**, use their own risk assessment tools based on international best practices, including lethality risk. However, these tools are not officially recognized by the authorities, and their results are rarely considered or incorporated into public institution decisions.

However, Order No. 20840/2022¹³⁴ introduced case management for domestic violence social service providers, setting out risk assessment criteria.

The **ANAIS Association** and other NGOs consider the following to be red flags:

- possession of or access to weapons;
- recent separation or request for divorce;
- pregnancy;
- history of violence or abuse;
- existence of a previous protection order;
- threats against children;
- sexual abuse;
- threats of murder or suicide;
- coercive and controlling behavior.

However, these criteria are not enshrined in an official national instrument.

¹³⁴ Available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/260206>.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 51:

- Familiarizing victims and professionals with the risk assessment form. This will enable victims to know their rights and specialists to better exercise their obligations in this area;
- Ensuring transparency in monitoring the implementation of the risk assessment form;
- Enhancing the efficiency of the form by expressly mentioning factors that are not covered by the existing Romanian risk assessment form (for example previous acts of violence, possession of firearms by the perpetrator, controlling and coercive behaviour by the perpetrator, the filing for separation/divorce by the victim or the break-up of the relationship).

49. Please specify how effective co-operation is ensured between the different statutory authorities and specialist women's support services in making risk assessments and whether the risks identified are managed by law enforcement agencies on the basis of individual safety plans that include also the safety of the victim's children.

Cases identified as high risk by police units are communicated to General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) for further investigation from a social care and child care perspective. However, no joint multi-agency complex risk assessment is performed for safety management. Few police officers have knowledge of specialist women's support services and cooperation is inconsistent, not backed up by standard protocols.

Also, according to **ANAIIS Association**, cooperation between public authorities and specialized civil society services in risk assessment is generally sporadic and informal. Although there are cooperation protocols at the local level (e.g., between the DGASPC and NGOs), the police do not automatically involve NGOs in case assessments.

Authorities do not implement individualized safety plans, and child safety is rarely considered in risk assessments.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 51:

- Develop the real and effective cooperation between the different statutory authorities and specialist women's support services;
- Introduce standard protocol in order to coordinate joint multi-agency complex risk assessment.

50. Please describe the efforts made to analyse retrospectively all cases of gender-based killings of women, in the context of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women to identify the existence of possible systemic gaps in the institutional response of the authorities with the aim of preventing such acts in the future.

As mentioned at the beginning of the Report, femicide crimes have increased significantly in Romania. According to media reports, 34 cases of femicide have been recorded so far in 2025¹³⁵. Unfortunately, the authorities have not yet taken measures to address this situation. There are no efforts to analyse cases of femicide/gender-based killings of women retrospectively, in order to identify possible systemic gaps in institutional response. Currently, is in process draft legislation for recognizing femicide.

¹³⁵ For further information, please see: <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/dezvaluiri-despre-crima-oribila-din-craiova-femeia-a-fost-injunghiata-de-14-ori-in-inima-cel-de-al-34-lea-de-caz-de-femicid-in-romania-23598966>.

According to **ANAIS Association**, Romania lacks an official mechanism for the retrospective analysis of femicide cases. Instead, cases are treated as isolated incidents, and the State does not analyze institutional causes, such as failure to provide protection or enforce protection orders. **ANAIS Association** has documented several cases in which women were killed by violent partners despite having filed previous complaints and obtained protection orders.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 51:

- **Urgent criminalization of femicide as a distinct, autonomous crime;**
- **Reform the legal system and policies in order to ensure a coordinated and effective institutional response to femicide crimes.**

Article 52: Emergency barring orders

51. Have any legislative or other measures been taken to introduce and/or amend the legal framework governing emergency barring orders in order to align it with the requirements of Article 52? If yes, please specify whether:

- a. emergency barring orders may remain in place until a victim can obtain a court-ordered protection order in order to ensure that gaps in the protection do not arise;**
- b. support and advice are made available to women victims of domestic violence in a proactive manner by the authority competent to issue an emergency barring order;**
- c. children are specifically included in contact bans issued under the emergency barring order;**
- d. any exceptions to contact bans are made and in which circumstances.**

Although Romanian legislation is well developed in the area of provisional/temporary protection orders-PPO (the Romanian equivalent of emergency barring orders), **their application is not in line with a victim rights-based approach and their implementation remains deficient.**

Provisional protection orders are often violated by perpetrators **without facing legal consequences.** In practice, this fact determines the maintenance of unequal power relations between victims and perpetrators, as well as a climate of impunity for perpetrators.

According to **Vladimir Ignat, lawyer at ANAIS Association**, in Romania, police can issue provisional protection orders based on Law No. 174/2018¹³⁶, though the process varies. In practice:

- The provisional protection order may be issued for as little as five days, and it is not always possible to obtain a subsequent court order without interruption. This creates a dangerous vacuum for the victim.
- The authority issuing the order (usually the police) does not proactively provide support or counseling for victims, so the victim must seek help independently.
- Children are mentioned in some orders, but there is no uniform practice of including them in contact prohibitions.
- Exceptions to contact prohibitions are not clearly regulated and are left to the discretion of police officers or courts, thus increasing the degree of arbitrariness.

¹³⁶ Law No. 174 of July 13, 2018 amends and supplements Law No. 217/2003 on the prevention and combating of domestic violence. It was published in Official Gazette No. 618 on July 18, 2018. The law is only available in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/202718>.

The enforcement of provisional protection orders is deficient. In the absence of electronic bracelets (which have been introduced recently but are not yet widespread), monitoring compliance with orders is ineffective, and punishment for violations is rare and poorly enforced.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 52:

-Continuously improving the application of provisional protection orders in accordance with a victim-rights-based approach.

52. Please provide information on the measures taken to enforce emergency barring orders and on responses to any violations of such orders.

Non-observance of the provisional protection orders is an offence punishable by imprisonment from one month to one year, but this punishment was increased in 2020 to a prison sentence ranging from six months to five years.

Regardless of the legislation in this field, provisional protection orders are lacking proper implementation. As mentioned in the answer to the previous question, if the perpetrators violate the order, they are not punished, which creates a culture of impunity. While perpetrators violate provisional protection orders to commit new acts of violence against victims, most victims violate these orders to try to reconcile with perpetrators. Because the reasons for violating provisional protection orders differ, sanctions should exclusively target the perpetrators, and victims should be exempted from any sanctions.

Electronic monitoring of provisional protection orders requires perpetrators to wear a bracelet and victims to carry a mobile device. However, a high percentage of victims refuse this monitoring system. There are no alternative monitoring measures if the victim refuses electronic monitoring.

According to victims, communication with both victims and perpetrators regarding the entire provisional protection order procedure and the consequences of violating is deficient and inconsistent.

In the opinion of **Vladimir Ignat, lawyer at ANAIS Association**, the enforcement of provisional protection orders is inadequate. Without electronic bracelets, which have recently been introduced but are not yet widespread, monitoring compliance with orders is ineffective, and punishment for violations is rare and poorly enforced.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 52:

--Continuously improving the application of provisional protection orders in accordance with a victim-rights-based approach and ensuring compliance of the perpetrator with provisional protection order, including by effectively applying the legislative provisions related to punishment of perpetrators for violating provisional protection orders.

Article 53: Restraining or protection orders

53. Have any legislative or other measures been taken to introduce and/or amend the legal framework governing restraining and protection orders in order to align it with the requirements of Article 53? If yes, please specify whether:

- a. restraining or protection orders are available – in the context of criminal proceedings and/or upon application from civil courts - to women victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, including domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, violence related to so-called honour as well as digital manifestations of violence against women and girls;**
- b. children are specifically included in protection orders;**
- c. any exceptions to contact bans are made and, if so, in which circumstances these may be made.**

There has been little progress on this issue. The observations made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania remain valid and need to be addressed urgently:

-in cases where the person protected by the protection order violates the provisions of the order, they will be required to bear the costs incurred in issuing and enforcing the order, which may have a deterrent effect on victims. Furthermore, one of the protective measures provided for by law, namely the obligation of the alleged perpetrator to keep a minimum distance from the victim and, where applicable, family members, can only be implemented if the protected persons consent to an electronic monitoring system that allows for verification of the perpetrator's compliance with their obligations. (see GREVIO's findings in paragraph 385 on page 72 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania);

- there is no mention in the law of the evidentiary threshold for the provision of a protection order with the exception that evidence whose administration would require a long time is not admissible (see paragraph 388 on page 73 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania); the evidentiary system should be adapted to the needs of victims, and their statement regarding acts of violence they have experienced should be sufficient to initiate proceedings to obtain a protection order. As with the reversal of the burden of proof in cases of gender discrimination, clear provisions should be made to reverse the burden of proof in cases of violence when seeking a protection order;

- violation of the protection order before the amendment of the law in 2020 was rarely sanctioned or the sanctions were minor, resulting in administrative fines or suspended sentences (according to paragraph 389 on page 73 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania); it is still little transparency regarding how the protection order is implemented or how the perpetrator is held accountable in the event of a violation;

-although Law No. 26/2024 amended Romanian legislation to extend protection orders to other acts of violence that are not domestic violence, these legal provisions do not expressly cover all forms of violence regulated by the Istanbul Convention, including forced marriages, violence in the name of so-called honour and female genital mutilation. Thus, the observation made by GREVIO in the Baseline Report on Romania (page 73, paragraph 391) remains pending implementation.

In addition to these observations, the **A.L.E.G. Association** notes that several survivors shared the fact that children were included in protection orders only if there was evidence of them being direct victims of violence, but not in cases of witnessing violence. A victim with a protection order caring for a minor that can be visited by the father (who is also the perpetrator)

generates further occasions for perpetrators to contact and threaten the victim through the children or using visitation rights.

According to **Vladimir Ignat, lawyer at ANAIS Association**, protection orders can be issued in criminal and civil contexts but are primarily used in cases of domestic violence. There is no clear or consistently used mechanism for other forms, such as forced marriage or online violence. Although the legislation contains a broad definition of cyber-violence, there are no specific and effective measures to eliminate the danger in the online environment. In practice, perpetrators often continue abusive behavior through indirect means — such as sharing or resharing intimate images, creating defamatory materials, publishing personal data, or spreading false information about the victim — which, at present, are not classified as violations of the protection order, since the order only covers direct or indirect contact with the victim.

It is therefore necessary for the protection order to provide, in addition to the prohibition of contact, explicit obligations such as:

- the removal by the perpetrator of the online content that led to the issuance of the order;
- the absolute prohibition on publishing, resharing, or otherwise facilitating the circulation of any materials, information, or comments relating to the victim.

Children may be included in the order, but often only at the express request of the mother or her lawyer. There is no standard practice of automatically protecting children. Exceptions to the contact ban are unpredictable and can create confusion and risk.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 53:

-Urgently implement GREVIO's recommendations contained in the Baseline Report on Romania, paragraph 392, page 73¹³⁷.

54. Please provide information on the measures taken to enforce protection orders and on responses to any violations of such orders.

As mentioned by **Vladimir Ignat, lawyer at ANAIS Association**, although violations of protection orders can lead to criminal liability, many orders are violated without effective sanctions in practice. A lack of electronic monitoring and insufficient resources can make protection orders merely symbolic.

Furthermore, please see the answer and recommendations made to the previous question.

¹³⁷ 392. GREVIO encourages the Romanian authorities to: a. ensure that protection orders are available for victims of all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention; b. identify the causes of the high number of violations of the protection orders by perpetrators and regularly provide data on violations and sanctions imposed as a result of violations; c. ensure the effective and prompt implementation of the system of electronic monitoring of compliance with provisional protection orders and protection orders.

Article 56: Measures of protection

55. Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure the following:

- a. that the relevant agency informs the victim when the perpetrator escapes or is released temporarily, at least when they or their family might be in danger (paragraph 1 b);**
- b. the protection of the privacy and the image of the victim (paragraph 1 f);**
- c. the possibility for victims to testify in the courtroom without being present or at least without the presence of the alleged perpetrator, notably through the use of appropriate communication technologies, where available (paragraph 1 i);**
- d. the provision of appropriate support services for victims so that their rights and interests are duly presented and taken into account (paragraph 1 e).**

Little progress has been made in this area since the adoption of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania.

The **ANAIIS Association** points out some shortcomings in practice regarding the provision of effective protection measures for victims of domestic violence. Thus, in some cases, the police inform victims when the perpetrator is released, **but there is no standardized, automated notification system.** While the right to privacy is theoretically protected, in many courts, victims are exposed to the public or the perpetrator in the courtroom. **There is no systematic practice of using technology for remote victim hearings, although the Code of Criminal Procedure theoretically allows for it.** Legal support for victims is mainly provided by NGOs. The state does not provide a functional system of counseling and legal assistance for victims of violence. Perpetrators abuse their rights to file lawsuits, criminal complaints, and reports to the DGASPC to harass victims and exhaust them psychologically and financially to obtain something or out of pure revenge. Children are often used as a means to this end because there are no sanctions or protective measures in place.

While Romania has adopted some measures to support victims of violence, as presented in the State Report (pages 104–109), there is still room for improvement.

Therefore, GREVIO's observations in paragraphs 405–411 of the Baseline Report on Romania remain relevant, since the measures indicated in the State Report do not comprehensively address the issues identified by GREVIO.

For instance, the new legal provisions **do not extend to protecting victims of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention**, such as forced marriage, forced abortion and sterilisation, and female genital mutilation and honour killings. **Legal protection measures guaranteed to victims are unevenly applied at a national level, failing to cover all victims' needs** (notably, they do not ensure a safe environment during legal proceedings as there are no separate waiting rooms for victims and perpetrators, no separate entrances or exits, no specially designed hearing rooms dedicated to victims nor means of ensuring video recording).¹³⁸ **Access**

¹³⁸ For further reference, please see:

-paragraph 405 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: Although in cases where the offender escapes prison and the National Administration of Penitentiaries is under an obligation to notify the gendarmerie, who are responsible for seizing the individual, **there is no protocol or regulation to allow such a notification. Moreover, GREVIO notes with concern that victims without a lawyer to assist them encounter even more difficulties in accessing information, in particular during the criminal investigation, which is not public;**

-paragraph 406 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **However, according to the available information, in practice, these measures are rarely applied, or handled unevenly across the country. According to a report on the access to justice of victims of domestic violence, protection measures for victims are insufficient;**

to justice remains a challenge for victims of violence. This aspect, combined with the lack of training on gender-based violence among legal professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers), leads to a state of vulnerability for victims during legal proceedings. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a specialised jurisdiction at the national level that deals with gender-based violence issues. In particular, it would be beneficial to create specialised courts composed of judges who have received mandatory training in gender-based violence issues. These courts should have effective judicial procedures that respond to the needs of victims of violence and ensure a gender-sensitive approach.

Furthermore, the implementation of the GREVIO recommendation in paragraph 412 on page 76 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania is still pending.

Recommendations on the implementation of Article 56:

-urgently implement GREVIO recommendation provided in paragraph 412 on page 76 of the Baseline Report on Romania: GREVIO strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to ensure the systematic use of all available measures of protection for victims of violence against women and domestic violence, including child victims and witnesses, as envisaged by Romanian legislation, in particular during investigations and judicial proceedings, including ensuring hearings via audiovisual means, using safe rooms, informing victims about the release of perpetrators and installing separate entry and waiting areas in courts for victims and perpetrators.

-establish, at the national level, specialized courts for gender-based violence issues that apply nationwide and in a unified manner, a victim-centered approach.

-paragraph 407 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **However, the use of these protection measures is left to the discretion of the judicial bodies since they can only be taken when possible and “when the judicial body considers that this does not affect the proper handling of the trial or the rights and interests of the parties”. In addition, difficulties arising from the lack of specially designed rooms and insufficient means for audiovisual recording, as well as victims’ lack of trust in the effectiveness of these measures, seem to present barriers to their use;**

-paragraph 408 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **Measures are also taken to anonymise victim data included in court summons or judgments when the information is replicated on the courts’ portal so that they cannot be identified as victims of human trafficking or rape. However, these measures are not applicable to victims of other forms of violence (such as domestic violence);**

-paragraph 409 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **To date though, most courts have not implemented this measure and subsequently do not have the required separate entrances or waiting rooms for victims and perpetrators, meaning they usually wait together with their lawyers and the prosecutors in the lobby before the court session begins. In court, victims testify in front of the offender and their legal team, frequently only a few metres away;**

-paragraph 410 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **However, judicial authorities must include in the victim’s statement the reasons for not recording the interview;**

-paragraph 411 of the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania: **At present, there are only six especially designed, child-friendly interview rooms for children who have been victims of violence in prosecutor’s offices and in the GDSACP and 25 spaces in different Romanian courts. There is, nevertheless, a need to create rooms like these in all institutions dealing with vulnerable victims.**

PART III: EMERGING TRENDS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Overview

-The growing influence of politics in addressing issues of gender-based violence. The authorities and institutions responsible for preventing and combatting violence against women are politically led. This makes their work highly bureaucratic, inefficient and poorly coordinated. Without a politically independent structure to ensure the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, effective protection against violence becomes fragmented and inconsistent. Unfortunately, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men (ANES) has been weakened by its recent multiple relocation within the Government structure, as evidenced by its lack of coordination with civil society. As of the writing of this Report, the Ministry of Labor, Family, Youth, and Social Solidarity (MMFTS) is debating the draft Emergency Ordinance, which proposes the merger of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) and the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP), as well as the transfer of the new entity (ANESPVITP) from Government subordination to MMFTS subordination¹³⁹. In a recent opinion published on its website¹⁴⁰, **ANAIIS Association** expressed deep concern and firm opposition to the draft Emergency Ordinance, highlighting arguments in support of its opposition. Among these arguments, **ANAIIS** notes that the proposed merger contravenes Romania's obligations under the Istanbul Convention. **ANES is the only institution created specifically to implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and it must remain a leading body under the Government.** It should not be absorbed into an oversized, bureaucratic structure that would affect its efficiency.

According to **Oana Băluță**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Faculty of Political Science, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), **the major concern publicly expressed by academics is that** the field of equality of opportunity and treatment between women and men is diluted, lost among the other responsibilities.

The new structure – the National Authority for Gender Equality and Support for Victims of Crimes (ANESPVITP) – will manage four areas:

- a) equality of opportunity and treatment between women and men;
- b) prevention and combating of domestic violence and violence against women;
- c) support and protection of crime victims;
- d) prevention of human trafficking and support for its victims.

In the draft text put forward for public consultation by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity, the draft at times includes “equality of opportunity between women and men,” while at other times it only refers to “equality of opportunity.” The former ANES represented a step in the institutionalization of gender equality, meaning the transformation of a principle into a mechanism of public policy. This institution should not be shifted from one

¹³⁹ Please see: <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/transparenta/proiecte-in-dezbatare/7776-oug-reorganizare-19092025> (documents available only in Romanian).

¹⁴⁰ Available only in Romanian at: <https://asociatia-anais.ro/egalitatea-nu-se-comaseaza-solicitam-autoritatile-sa-retraga-proiectul-de-oug-privind-comasarea-anes-cu-anitp/>.

structure to another depending on political alliances or conjunctural interests. At the European level, the document “*A Roadmap for Women’s Rights*” (March 2025) calls for strengthening specialized institutional infrastructure. Principle 8: Institutional mechanisms ensuring women’s rights – “Promoting women’s rights requires the effective integration of a gender perspective in all policies, adequate budget allocations and a solid institutional infrastructure, as well as gender-sensitive research, data collection, policy design and planning that respond to women’s needs through an intersectional approach”. The merger of ANES with ANITP represents the very opposite of this process: the weakening of institutional autonomy, the dilution of the mandate, and the relegation of gender equality to a secondary function.

Oana Băluță underscores the concern that gender equality is entirely absent from the draft text submitted for public consultation by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity. **Gender equality and combating violence against women are closely interconnected.** Gender-based violence is rooted in structural inequalities and in stereotypes that keep women in a position of subordination. Promoting gender equality directly contributes to the prevention of violence by: reducing power imbalances between women and men; addressing social norms that normalize abuse; strengthening women’s autonomy and economic independence; consolidating the legislative and institutional framework for protection and support etc. According to international standards (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention), **without gender equality there can be no sustainable eradication of violence against women.** Therefore, prevention policies must explicitly include measures for promoting gender equality in education, employment, family and public life.

Simona Voicescu and **Necvinte Association** brought this issue to the attention of all central public institutions in Romania, including the Presidency, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Labor. However, no official answers have been received, despite the fact that the 30-day deadline has passed. Voicescu also stated that they appealed to the OSCE, the European Commission, European Commissioners, the State Department, and, last but not least, the National Ombudsman.

Necuvinte Association draws attention to the fact that the draft Emergency Ordinance to transfer the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP) and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities (ANES) to the Ministry of Labor is an unconstitutional and dangerous measure for Romania, as it follows the same pattern as the anti-rights agenda in other countries where democracy is under attack.

- Deepening the fragmented approach to violence against women at the local level. The fragmented approach to violence against women is deepening at the local level.

Since the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania was published, the local authorities responsible for addressing violence against women have not been restructured to make their approach to the issue more effective. The General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) are not specialised in managing gender-based violence issues, as they perform multiple tasks in the field of social assistance, including issues related to homelessness, children and social housing. **Consequently, there are no local authority structures that specialise in gender-based violence issues. Furthermore, there are no national protocols to ensure a unified approach to gender-based violence at the local level.** Each local authority can decide what services to provide to victims of violence. This can lead to inconsistencies in the protection of victims' rights due to a lack of predictability in service provision: victims may be able to access certain services in Bucharest but not in a provincial town, for example. **Furthermore,**

based on their autonomy, local authorities can impose specific conditions on victims to access services, such as possession of a protection order.

-Developments in artificial intelligence present new challenges to women's rights, with the potential to exacerbate digital violence against women. National legislation does not regulate new technologies (such as deep fakes) that use digitally falsified media content (audio or video) created with the help of neural networks to present as true behaviours or statements that a person has never made. As deep fake technology predominantly generates pornographic content that targets women and girls, the latter are subjected to the following: images on social media being transformed into pornographic content and distributed in the digital environment; teenagers using applications that promote false images of their schoolmates' bodies; and threats or blackmail related to content falsified using deep fake technology. **Romanian legislation and policies have not been updated to address violence against women facilitated by artificial intelligence technologies.** Legislative and procedural gaps leave victims vulnerable and in a state of legal precariousness, lacking the means to effectively protect their rights in cases of digital violence involving deepfake technologies.

-The resurgence of a culture of violence at the national level. The authorities responsible for preventing and combatting violence against women have failed to take concrete action, leading to a resurgence of extreme violence against women in the form of femicide. Currently, the Romanian Criminal Code does not criminalise femicide, and there are no specialised procedures for investigating, prosecuting and trying such cases. Also, in regard to other forms of gender based violence against women, a lack of systematic and mandatory in-service training for legal professionals on gender-based violence makes it difficult to identify, investigate and appropriately punish acts of violence. Conversely, the general public does not benefit from sustained information and awareness campaigns on issues related to violence against women, and is unaware of behaviours that can constitute gender-based violence against women. Together, these issues perpetuate gender stereotypes and unequal power relations between men and women, normalising violence against women.

-With regard to perpetrators, there is a resurgence of a culture of impunity. There is a low level of accountability for perpetrators who violate provisional protection orders and protection orders. The penalties imposed in practice for acts related to gender-based violence against women are not effective in deterring perpetrators, and the procedures are often bureaucratic and unresponsive to gender-specific issues. The respective procedures also fail to promote a victim-rights-based approach.

-The involvement of men and boys in preventing and combatting gender-based violence remains marginal, which exacerbates violence against women. Adequate information, education and awareness-raising in this area are lacking among men and boys, which contributes to the persistence of gender stereotypes and the lack of accountability among men and boys with regard to violence against women. It is important to continuously reaffirm the message that men and boys must be co-opted as partners in the effort to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women through dedicated events such as training courses, campaigns, workshops and round tables.

-Some forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, such as forced marriage, forced abortion, forced sterilisation and crimes in the name of so-called "honour", continue to be neglected by the authorities because there are no specific provisions on these issues in domestic policies and laws. Consequently, there are no specialised procedures for these forms of violence. These legal and procedural gaps leave women who are victims of

these forms of gender-based violence vulnerable, which discourages them from reporting acts of violence and seeking accountability for perpetrators.

-There is a pending lack in national policies and laws regarding an intersectional approach to gender-based violence against women. National policies do not take into account the needs of refugee women, Roma women, disabled women, elderly women and women belonging to the LGBTI community. For example, there are no protocols for responding to cases of domestic violence or any other form of violence where victims may be subject to intersectional discrimination based on factors such as race, disability, age, or membership of an ethnic or sexual minority.

- The exacerbation of the victim's subordinate position in cases of gender-based violence. Current legislation and policies treat gender-based violence against women as an issue solely within the remit of social assistance, perpetuating stereotypes such as 'violence only occurs in poor families' and 'victims of domestic violence are only women who are financially dependent on the perpetrator'. **The national legal framework lacks measures to empower female victims of violence and ensure their long-term empowerment and recovery, as well as reintegration into society as active community members.**

- National authorities do not recognise violence against women as a problem of national relevance. Although Law No. 217/2003 on domestic violence has undergone multiple amendments and additions since the GREVIO Baseline Report on Romania was adopted, the law has not been amended to expressly recognise violence against women as a priority issue. Article 1, paragraph 1 of Law No. 217/2003 recognises the protection of the family as a national objective rather than the prevention and combating of violence: the protection and support of the family and the development and strengthening of family solidarity based on friendship, affection and moral and material support among family members constitute objectives of national interest. Therefore, the legal provisions expressly protect the family and not women.

- The recently adopted legal framework on the protection of victims of violence does not take a victim-rights-based approach.

For instance, **Law No. 45/2025¹⁴¹**, which amends and supplements Law No. 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and the promotion of employment, **provides incentives for employers who hire victims of domestic violence.**

However, the law does not promote a victim-oriented approach for the following reasons:

-Enforcement of the law remains fictional, given that, in most cases, victims do not have the mental and emotional stability to engage in work for an extended period of time after the violent acts have ceased.

-Only victims with a protection order who are registered with employment agencies benefit from this law.

-These two conditions are not in line with the Istanbul Convention's definition of 'victim of violence', according to which a victim is any person who has been subjected to “violence against women” (as defined in Article 3a of the Convention or “domestic violence” (as defined under Article 3b of the Convention).

-The victim must initiate proceedings to obtain a protection order, but in most cases, victims lack the financial means or emotional stability to follow the cumbersome procedures involved.

¹⁴¹ Published in the Official Gazette, no.309, published on 8 April 2025, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/296479>.

- The victim is required to register with employment agencies, but they are usually afraid to do so in case the perpetrators find out relevant information about them, putting them at risk of further abuse.
- The law provides economic incentives for employers who maintain employment relationships with victims for at least 18 months. This leaves victims in a state of uncertainty, as after this period they may revert to their previous status. Consequently, it appears that the law prioritises employers' rights.
- **NGOs that advocate for the protection and promotion of women's rights continue to suffer from a lack of state funding. The state remains passive and uninterested in the fate of these NGOs, yet still expects them to provide effective services and even take on some of its own responsibilities in this area.** One example presented in the Report is the closure of Casa INVICTA, an emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence managed by the ANAIS Association. This shelter was a national model of good practice due to the integrated services it offered victims, including 24-hour accommodation for women and children, as well as legal, psychological and medical counselling and support for social reintegration.

56. Please provide information on new developments since the adoption of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on your country concerning:

a. emerging trends in violence against women and domestic violence, including its digital manifestations (types of perpetration, groups of victims, forms of violence);

In recent years, **ANAIS Association** has observed a significant increase in cases of psychological, economic and digital violence, particularly affecting young women, single mothers and women going through separation. The following are on the rise:

- Online violence, such as threats via social media, cyberbullying, deepfakes and coercive control via apps.

- Digital stalking, through geolocation, tracking online activity or installing cameras/spyware.

- Economic abuse and sabotage of financial independence, such as blocking accounts, controlling wages and preventing employment.

- The instrumentalisation of children in custody and non-custody situations as a form of continued control and intimidation. In the practice of **ANAIS Association**, there have been cases in which women who are victims of domestic violence continue to be harassed by their perpetrators through multiple vexatious court filings during divorce proceedings. In these filings, the perpetrators claim that the women are unfit mothers, that women do not properly care for their children, etc.. These cases demonstrate a form of psychological violence against victims during divorce proceedings, as well as a form of *judicial violence* that has not yet been addressed in Romanian legislation or case law. The interpretation of the concept of "parental alienation," as regulated by Law No. 123/2024, may exacerbate this form of judicial violence. The concept of "parental alienation" is not defined in a way that considers specific issues related to domestic violence, and it is often used against victims of domestic violence in practice. Often, the perpetrator of domestic violence accuses the victim of parental alienation if the child who witnessed domestic violence does not want contact with the abusive parent.

In the context of the refugee crisis (e.g. Ukraine), new forms of vulnerability have also been identified, particularly among migrant women lacking institutional or community support. These women are exposed to sexual exploitation, forced labour or abuse in informal settings.

b. emerging trends in domestic case law related to violence against women;

AN AIS Association has observed a lack of consistency and uniformity in court decisions, particularly in cases involving:

- protection orders for psychological or economic violence (sometimes rejected due to a "lack of concrete evidence");
- ignoring the risks to the child and allowing contact with the perpetrator to continue.
- indirectly invoking 'parental alienation' to justify custody decisions, or disregarding the child's wish not to be in the presence of the perpetrator;
- non-payment of child support, for which there is no penalty unless it exceeds three consecutive months. Perpetrators who do not respect this right of minors do not suffer immediate consequences.

The rights of perpetrators are protected rather than those of victims and children, with greater emphasis placed on the rights of the perpetrator than on the credibility of the victim.

Although some courts correctly apply the principle of the best interests of the child, judges are not systematically trained in the dynamics of gender-based violence and its impact on children.

c. emerging trends in the allocation of funding and budgeting by your state authorities;

AN AIS Association draws attention on the following:

Budgets allocated to preventing and combating violence against women remain extremely low and fragmented. Public services for victims are underfunded and unstable.

Funding for NGOs is often project-based, temporary and unsustainable.

Counselling programmes for perpetrators are underdeveloped and infrequent.

There is no national budget dedicated to implementing the Istanbul Convention.

Furthermore, starting with last month, there is a pending public discussion about merging key institutions (ANES/the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and ANITP/the National Agency against Human Trafficking), which suggests a political trend towards minimising the institutional importance of gender equality and the prevention of violence.

d. innovative approaches to primary prevention, for example new target audiences and means of communication, public/private partnerships etc.

NGOs remain the main promoters of innovative approaches:

- Integrated campaigns, with a community education component, civic podcasts, themed festivals, and storytelling;
- Projects such as those of that **AN AIS Association** directly address schools and teachers as vectors of change, building local prevention networks;
- However, prevention remains marginalized in national public policies, without a dedicated institutional infrastructure.

e. emerging trends related to access to asylum and international protection for women victims of violence against women.

In the absence of a coordinated policy between the asylum system and victim protection, migrant women exposed to gender-based violence face major difficulties:

- Lack of specialized interpreters (especially female interpreters; in our practice, male interpreters did not translate aspects that were not religiously or otherwise acceptable) and staff trained in the dynamics of gender-based trauma;
- Distrust of the authorities and the risk of deportation;
- Services for victims are not culturally or linguistically adapted.

NGOs fill these gaps, but there is no national mechanism to prioritize victims of violence in the asylum procedure, contrary to the provisions of the Convention.

The ANAIS Association was among the few that offered counseling and protection to Muslim women or women of other religions, hiring a gender expert specializing in Islam.

PART IV: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA AND STATISTICS

Overview

As coordinator of the GREVIO Shadow Report on Romania, **ANAIS Association** does not hold any official administrative and/or judicial information related to violence against women or domestic violence. None of our contributors who participated in drafting the Report provided us with any official data on this issue.

At the national level, we observe that the transparency of collecting administrative and judicial information regarding violence against women and domestic violence is low. Civil society, particularly non-governmental organisations, can only access relevant information by submitting a formal request under Law No. 544/2001 on access to information of public interest¹⁴². Even then, the authorities' responses are often vague and do not directly address the issues raised in the request. Furthermore, there is no coherent national framework for collecting data to coordinate the information provided by all relevant authorities and institutions. Without effective data collection, it is impossible to properly map the shortcomings in laws and policies related to the phenomenon of violence and, implicitly, provide a coherent and effective response to the issue at hand.

In conclusion, unfortunately, Romania does not have an integrated national system for collecting administrative data on violence against women, as required by the Istanbul Convention. The data is:

- fragmented between institutions (police, courts, prosecutors, DGASPC, health system, social services);
- incomparable between counties or between years;
- not published periodically in a uniform, accessible, and comparable format.

In the absence of a unified and interoperable system, civil society (including **ANAIS Association**) does not have access to detailed data and is forced to rely on ad hoc requests to institutions, activity reports, or partial statistical data.

¹⁴² Published in the Official Gazette no. 663 of 23 October 2001, available only in Romanian at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/31413>.

57. Please provide annual statistics for two complete calendar years prior to receiving this questionnaire on administrative and judicial data on:

- a. the number of reports, investigations opened, prosecutions, final convictions secured and sanctions imposed in respect of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;**
- b. the number of emergency barring orders issued by the competent authorities, the number of breaches of such orders, and the number of sanctions imposed as a result of these breaches;**
- c. the number of protection orders issued, the number of breaches of such orders and the number of sanctions imposed as a result of such breaches;**
- d. data on the number of decisions issued by family courts on custody/visitation/residence of children that have expressly taken into account incidents of domestic violence.**

Even if there isn't a unified and interoperable system on data collection, based on the latest available data (including reports from the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, the Public Ministry, ANES, and the Ombudsman), according to **AN AIS Association** the following observations can be made:

a.the number of reports, investigations opened, prosecutions, final convictions secured and sanctions imposed in respect of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence covered by the Istanbul Convention;

In 2022:

- o Over 51,000 acts of domestic violence were reported (according to the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police/IGPR);
- o Of these, less than 5,000 led to the opening of a criminal case;
- o The percentage of cases completed with referral to court is less than 10%;
- o The number of final convictions is even lower, and prison sentences are rarely imposed;
- o Psychological and economic violence remain under-reported and uninvestigated, although they are predominant forms in the cases reported by ANAIS Association.
 - For other forms of gender-based violence (harassment, rape, stalking, FGM, forced abortion or sterilization), there are no reports structured by the gender of the victim, and the coding in the judicial records does not allow for a clear segregation of cases in accordance with the Convention.

b. the number of emergency barring orders issued by the competent authorities, the number of breaches of such orders, and the number of sanctions imposed as a result of these breaches;

In 2022, the police issued 6,117 provisional protection orders; 2,774 of these were not confirmed by the court, which indicates a lack of consistency between institutions.

The rate of violation of provisional protection orders is not publicly reported, and sanctions for violations remain weak in the absence of effective electronic monitoring.

c.the number of protection orders issued, the number of breaches of such orders and the number of sanctions imposed as a result of such breaches;

In 2022, courts issued 10,532 protection orders.

Data on the number of violations and sanctions imposed are not publicly centralized.

Cases documented by **ANAIIS Association** show that:

- in cases of violation, victims do not receive immediate support, and
- authorities are reluctant to apply criminal liability for these violations.

d. data on the number of decisions issued by family courts on custody/visitation/residence of children that have expressly taken into account incidents of domestic violence.

There are no official statistics on the number of custody or visitation decisions in which domestic violence was mentioned or taken into account.

- In the practice of **ANAIIS Association**, it has been found that:

- o courts rarely request risk assessments before deciding on custody;
- o courts do not automatically take into account the existence of a protection order or an ongoing criminal case;
- o in some cases, mothers are indirectly accused of "obstructing the parent-child relationship," even in the context of clear dynamics of violence.

In conclusion, the lack of an integrated national mechanism for data and performance indicators in the field of preventing and combating violence against women creates a distorted reality of the phenomenon and hinders evidence-based decision-making. This also affects risk assessment, resource allocation, public policy formulation, and constitutional review of measures taken by the Romanian State.