

WE GO!

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of the European Union



WE GO!3

REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2020

From individual IPV empowerment to community activation

White Paper Bulgaria

actionaid
— REALIZZA IL CAMBIAMENTO —

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PER LA
RICERCA
SOCIALE **irs**



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INTRODUCTION

In 2014 the European Fundamental Rights Agency published the first EU-wide survey on violence against women based on interviews with 42.000 women about their experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV). The results were alarming: almost 1 in 4 women experienced violence in a relationship with a man. **It was a wake-up call.**

A year later, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme funded **WE GO! Women Economic Independence & Growth Opportunity**, a project that allowed actors from seven EU countries to exchange know-how and practices on how to support the social and economic empowerment of women who survived violence. The project thrived especially on the crucial knowledge and expertise of Anti-Violence Centres (AVCs), which eventually led to the development of ad hoc recommendations.

WE GO! 2 - Building Economic Independence, the Way Out of IPV was built on the foundations laid by WE GO!. Six organizations from Italy, Spain, Greece, and Bulgaria continued the work begun in 2015, **aimed to broaden the use and deepen the impact of promising practices to foster the IPV survivors' economic empowerment**, through a better coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector. The project's specific objectives were: 1) To design and deliver transferable training sessions to strengthen the capacity of professionals to support the economic empowerment of IPV survivors, also through the establishment of local networks (Capacity Building); 2) To test scalable models of territorial multi-agency coordination to boost IPV survivors' employability via a local ecosystem capable to provide for workable solutions for IPV survivors (Networking). 3) To update knowledge on the economic empowerment of IPV survivors and share it through trainings for companies, events, and debates, involving a wide range of actors (Awareness Raising).

The project **WE GO! 3 – From individual IPV empowerment to community activation** was built on the main findings of the former WE GO! projects. It started in April 2021 within a consortium of 6 partners from 4 countries, namely ActionAid - Italy, Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS) - Italy, Center for Sustainable Communities Development (CSCD) - Bulgaria, Relazioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, Fondation agir contre l'Exclusion (FACE) - France, and Women's Center of Karditsa (WCK) - Greece. It increases local multi-agency networks' capacity to promote intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors' socio-economic independence through design and adoption of gender-responsive labour policies.

The specific OBJECTIVES of the project were:

- » To **strengthen antiviolence centers (AVCs) and support services** capacity to influence institutional processes related to socio-economic empowerment
- » To increase the **active participation of companies, and the world of work at large**, in a multi-stakeholder local ecosystem to promote the economic independence of IPV victims and to become more favorable to offer them decent work opportunities and support.
- » To improve the availability, type, and access to **measures and policies that support IPV survivors** to overcome barriers to their economic empowerment
- » To **advocate at national and EU level** for the integration of IPV survivors support, socio-economic empowerment and anti-discrimination policies.

This way, **WeGo3** became a **tool** to promote the socio-economic empowerment of IPV survivors!

1. Origin of the White Paper as a result of a collaborative stakeholders' design process

Representatives of different stakeholders have to be involved in a highly participatory process for outlining the main problem that have to be sold.

The main instrument used within this process is s.c. Policy Lab.

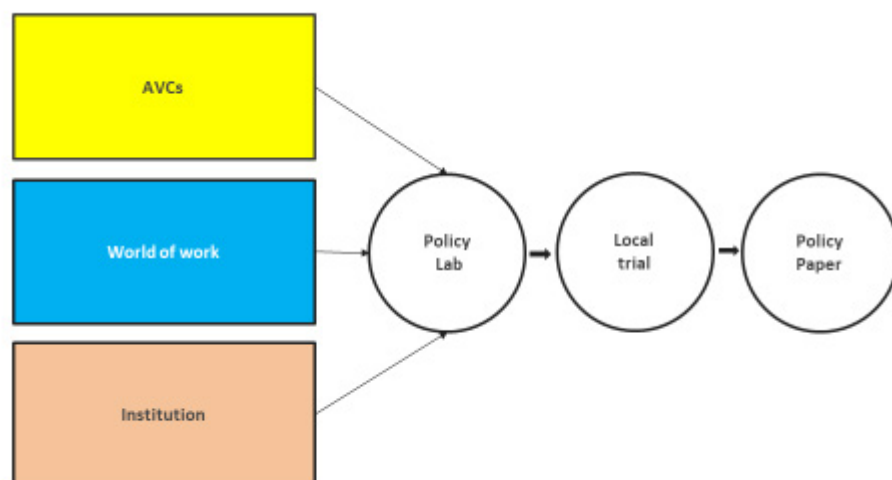
What is a Policy Lab? A “place” or group of people who develop new measures to solve a problem or revise existing ones. This is based on a structured discussion with participants from different backgrounds working together to develop proposals and recommendations for new policy measures.

What is different? The process goes from bottom-up. It implies active participation and inclusion of all participants. It has intersectional approach, which enables each interested party to recognize and take an active role in solving the overall problem.

The result of the Policy Lab is a selection by all participants of one problem to focus on solving it within a predetermined time period. This is the phase called **Local Trial**.

The final phase of this highly participatory process is the elaboration of s.c. White Paper!

This is a document / report that presents in detail the specific problem or critical situation (eg lack of measures to support women's economic empowerment) and proposes appropriate solutions. It includes an assessment of the stages the process has gone through and the lessons learned. This document serves to support the work of any group of interested persons in jointly solving a problem of importance to all.



2. The process of White Paper elaboration in Bulgaria

a. Description of the problem

Economic independence is an important condition both for achieving equality between women and men, and **for the victim's exit from a violent relationship**.

Through the last decade in Bulgaria has seen a significant improvement in the participation of women in the labor market. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has exacerbated the still-existing gender inequality and slowed the progress made. At the end of 2020, the employment of women in the labor market decreased, after an upward trend. The employment rate (15-64 years) of women reached 64.3%, at 66% in 2019. Since the beginning of 2020, the difference in the employment rate between men and women has increased to 8.2%, which reported a slower recovery in the female employment rate after it was 7.6% in 2018. <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/1>

Measures to promote women's participation in the labor market were carried out through the Employment Promotion Act, as well as programs, projects and incentive measures for training and employment, which are financed with funds from the state budget and under the Operational Program "Development of Human Resources". Integration in the labor market is supported through a wide range of services for the reconciliation of labor and family life, promoting the return of women to work after childbirth, facilitating and stimulating fathers to take leave to care for young children. A specific measure is regulated in the Employment Promotion Act (Article 53a), which provides, for example, financial incentives for employers who open jobs and hire full or part time single parents/adoptive parents and/or mothers/adoptive mothers with children up to 5 years of age. To support the career development of the parents, there are also opportunities for professional training.

No one of these measures however, concerns the specific group of victims/survivors of IPV!

In the "NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE" for 2022, SECTION IV. PROTECTION, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS it is mentioned the need of "assistance and support to victims of domestic violence by social services for providing shelter, therapy and rehabilitation, advocacy and mediation, community work, information and counseling, skills training and others", but there is no one word about specific measures for supporting their economic independence. Responsible authorities are Agency for Social Assistance and Municipalities in partnership with NGOs.

There is also a **lack of employers' sensitivity** on the specific needs of victims. The corporate world believes that the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) is not their problem and does not affect the effectiveness of their work.

b. Analysis of the context

The economic independence refers to a state in which women and men have their own access to the full range of economic opportunities and resources – including employment, services and sufficient disposable income - so they can exercise control over their life to meet their own needs and those of their dependents and to make a conscious choice.

The economic independence of women is closely related to the recognition and appreciation of women's work! This means that the quality of employment and conditions of employment are particularly important:

poor working conditions associated, for example, with low wages, precarious work part-time work, interruption of employment and career, labor market segmentation as well as keeping any cost of employment can actually lead to low and interrupted incomes, little learning opportunities and, in many cases, to a lack of access to social protection and thus to a reduction in pension rights in old age, which ultimately increases the risk of poverty.

Economic security from the other side is the ability to plan for future needs and risks so that basic needs are met, acquiring financial knowledge, new job skills, insurance against loss or damage, opportunity to save in different ways for retirement or for a child's education.

What is the relationship between economic dependence and violence against women? Any woman can become a victim of intimate partner violence. Women face this violence differently based on their social, ethnic and economic differences. Women of low socioeconomic status tend to experience it more often and more severely, while having fewer resources and less access to services to protect themselves. Structural barriers such as poverty, low education and lack of access to information make it difficult to avoid violence as they limit women's knowledge of available resources and their ability to be financially independent.

The abuser can interfere with her work and jeopardize employment in order to maintain her financial dependence, thereby potentially making it more difficult for her to leave; can have complete control over their partner's finances or give her only "pocket money". He may also interfere with studies and academic activities or attempt to compromise her scholarship and/or jeopardize the achievement of her future goals.

Economic empowerment concerns the ability of women to contribute to and benefit from the outcome of economic activities in conditions where their contribution is recognised, their dignity is respected, they are given the opportunity to negotiate a fairer distribution of the fruits of development. Empowerment is a process by which women strengthen their capacities, their role, autonomy and authority, as individuals and as part of a social group, which changes and transforms relations of subordination. It is not something that can be "gifted" but rather is a dynamic process that requires individual and collective efforts; requires a redefinition of the concept of "work", including not only paid work performed in the labor market, but also unpaid work in the public sphere.

c. Selection of the problem whose solution will be sought

The work of CSCD on the project shows that **no measures have been developed and introduced** at the national level in Bulgaria aimed at **socio-economic empowerment of women who have experienced violence from an intimate partner**.

CSCD distributed a questionnaire among 151 organizations registered at Ministry of Labor and Social Policy as social services providers, like anti-violence centers (AVCs) working legally as non-government organizations, Crises Centers, Public Support Centres and Centres for Social Integration and Rehabilitation – whose target is not exactly women but families in risks and conflicts. CSCD received 10 filled in questionnaires by organizations of different types including the 3 NGOs - partners for further activities: Centre Dinamika Ruse, Naya Association Turgoviste and Gender Alternatives Plovdiv. 1086 women were serviced at those centres in the year 2020.

The overall result of the survey was that the existing economic measures **do not address adequately the needs of that specific group of women – victims of GBV**. There is a need for awareness raising

both of decision-makers at all levels and of the specialists working in the different kinds of AVC that without economic independents victims of violence cannot exit of the violent relationship and cannot provide a decent life either for themselves or for the children they raise in most cases alone. For the purpose, identification and implementation of specifically prescribe measures are needed.

The following list of concrete issues and respective ideas for solving measures were suggested for deeper discussions by the participants:

» **Securing a place in a kindergarten for children of mothers who are victims of domestic violence**

According to an opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee related to childcare facilities, including crèches, kindergartens, centers for children with special needs in the EU, for children under 3 years of age the available places can accommodate 33% of children in need, and for those between the ages of 3 and 6 - 90%. This is grossly insufficient, especially at an earlier age of children, for mothers who care for them to rely on these structures and work. In large cities in Bulgaria, the lack of places in nurseries and kindergartens is a major obstacle to the inclusion of parents in the labor market, as well as the very expensive alternative care that is offered. According to a labor force survey by Eurostat, the unemployment rate due to family care (children and dependents) for women between 25 and 54 is 25.1%, compared to just 2.4% among men.

» **Preferential accommodation in municipal housing**

Housing is a primary need for women victims of domestic violence. The best practice in cases where restrictive measures are imposed by the court is for the perpetrator of domestic violence to be removed from the shared dwelling, while the wife and children remain there. However, this does not always happen. And then comes the challenge of heating a shelter at an affordable price. In many cases, it is too much for a single mother to be rent-free, cover household bills and provide everything she needs for herself and her children.

» **Additional days of paid annual leave (if needed)**

This measure focuses mainly on business. For this to happen, it is firstly important that employers are sensitized to domestic violence and its societal significance, and that this understanding is embedded in internal policies. Trade unions would also be helpful in its implementation. Additional paid annual leave would help women victims escape domestic violence without fear of losing their jobs. Paid leave, for example, is absolutely necessary when appearing in Court for the issuance of a protection order, when moving, for medical examinations, consultations, etc. One of the best examples of this is the legislation in New Zealand, which regulates 10 days of such leave for women victims of domestic violence.

» **Emergency package**

In a situation of violence, needy women can benefit from an interest-free amount to pay back in installments from their salary. This measure, tentatively called the Auxiliary Fund, summarizes in fact many more mechanisms of financial support for women victims of domestic violence that may exist. This help can be in the form of advance payment of salaries, low interest home loans, moving expenses, transport costs for commuting from another place to work, financial assistance for child care, for costs of enrolling the child in a new school, for medical examinations, hospital treatment.

» **Support for qualification and retraining**

The additional training, qualification and retraining of women are key activities in the National Strategy

of Bulgaria for the promotion of equality between women and men for the period 2021-2030. This is considered as a basic prerequisite to improve the quality of life of women and, to the greatest extent, of vulnerable groups of women, such as those who have suffered from domestic violence. Better professional knowledge and skills directly correspond to an increase in the income that victims receive during their lifetime. This would not only reduce the risk of poverty in their working age, but also reduce the risk of poverty after their retirement.

» **Flexible working hours for women survivors of violence**

Reconciliation of personal and professional life requires flexible working hours and reorganization of working hours to be adapted to the needs of the affected women, bearing in mind that in many cases they have no support and care for their children alone. For this reason, an increasing proportion of women work part-time, at home or in other atypical forms of employment to cope with family responsibilities, and this reduces the amount and duration of their future welfare benefits and -especially unemployment benefits and pensions. According to Eurostat data, 27.5% of women in the EU work part-time because of caring (for children or persons in need of care). For men, these figures are respectively 3.3%.

d. Solution identification process through Policy Labs

Representatives of AVCs, national and local institutions, companies, trade unions, job placement and training centres **have been involved in a participatory process** in order to co-design and test supporting measures for IPV in the field of work, including the adaptation of work-life balance measures to IPV specific needs; the extension of anti-discrimination policies to GBV cases; the introduction of support measures for IPV searching for a job or employed in precarious jobs.

The four Bulgarian partners – CSCD, “Centre Dinamika” from Ruse, “Naya” Association from Turgovishte and “Gender Alternatives” from Plovdiv held **three on-line Policy Labs** (on February 28, March 1 and March 2, 2022) with 68 participants - representatives of different organizations/institutions: Directorates of the Labor Office, Directorates of Social Assistance, University of Ruse, representatives of municipalities, human resources managers of business companies, representatives of the district administration and AVCs representatives; 63 women and 4 men.

The working Agenda was same for all 3 days:

10:00 - 10:30 - The concept of economic empowerment of women survivors of DV

10:30 - 10:40 - Presentation of the focus groups / interviews with women-victims of DV results: problems/ needs

10:40 - 11:15 - Presentation of the list with proposed measures for discussion and their justification

11:15 - 11:30 - Presentation of good practice from Ruse (Territorial Protocol)

11:30 - 11:45 - Voting and selection of 2 measures to be discussed

11:45 - 12:00 - Coffee break

12:00 - 13:15 - Discussion on the 2 measures; voting and election of 1 of them for the 3rd day.

Seven measures in favor of women-victims of IPV were negotiated by partners and presented and discussed at the Policy Labs.

On the first Policy Lab day, the stakeholder group discussed all 7 issues and their respective measures

and voted on 1 measure to be considered on the 3rd day; the same happened on the second day - out of the 6 measures presented, the participants chose 1 to discuss on the 3rd day; out of those 2 measures at the 3rd day participants selected only ONE and it became the one measure to be tried in the next 9 months.

1. Introducing a quota in kindergarten for children of mothers, victims of domestic violence

Women who have suffered from domestic violence are often single mothers and for them it is of the utmost importance that their children are in nurseries and kindergartens so that they can work. The local authorities are key factor in this process and could provide support through regulations that would enable mothers who are victims of domestic violence to rely on full-day care in municipal kindergartens. For example, in each group of each municipal kindergarten, there should be 1 free place for a child of vulnerable parents. In the next place, you can also think about nurseries and kindergartens with study rooms outside working hours, during vacations, dining chairs, specialized care centers.

2. Preferential accommodation in municipal housing

In many places in the country, such accommodation is associated with long lists of waiting registration persons and very long waiting time. Sometimes there is a lack of preferential treatment for groups that are particularly vulnerable and they are placed on an equal footing with everyone else. An example of a good practice in Bulgaria is the Ordinance on the terms and conditions for establishing housing needs and for renting accommodation in municipal housing of the municipality of Devnya. There, victims of domestic violence and/or guardians of child victims of domestic violence, as well as victims of human trafficking, are listed as a group entitled to preferential accommodation.

3. Additional days of paid annual leave / if necessary /

In Bulgaria, at the moment, the only possibility to apply such measure is through the collective labor bargaining. The two trade unions in the country - KNSB and KT "Podkrepa" have already raised the issue through various sectoral agreements. As arguments from the trade union organizations, it is pointed that the Collective Labor Agreement, negotiated by the Bulgarian Teachers' Union, provides for additional paid leave for mothers, thus creating a precedent with the possibility of granting paid leave for women, which in the future can be implemented such as paid leave for women victims of domestic violence. KT Podkrepa emphasizes the importance of including clauses to support the work of women and mothers in the negotiation of sectoral agreements, which often include additional paid leave and flexible working hours for working mothers. The union believes that the legal framework providing for paid leave can also be applied to domestic violence leave programs.

4. "Emergency package" to be included in organization's Inner policies for meeting first emergency needs

In case of need, in a situation of violence, the person in need can benefit from an interest-free amount to pay back in installments from her salary. The measure is aimed at business - not only!

5. Flexible working hours to be provided

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a large number of employers, where the work process allows for it, to introduce home working, telecommuting or flexible working arrangements for their employees. These forms of work have proven their positive effect as a means of limiting the spread of the virus, while also revealing their potential as a means of improving work-life balance.

6. Support for qualification and re-qualification at reasonable prices

Employers can take advantage of women's talents and skills more effectively by introducing a variety of measures for their training, qualification and career development support. Some of the examples of this are training for the acquisition of a professional qualification, training for the acquisition of key competences, training at the workplace (internship - for persons with a qualification and no work experience in the profession, apprenticeship under the guidance of a mentor - for persons with a basic and -low education and no qualification), training through work (dual training), etc. Training centers can be actively involved in the implementation of this measure, offering opportunities for free or partially paid courses to women who have suffered from domestic violence.

7. Social transfers in the form of goods to be provided

The measure is aimed at business.

During the discussion, the specifics of the different regions were clearly outlined. It became clear that a number of measures that are applicable to large cities cannot be implemented in small municipalities and vice versa. For example, in small settlements they rely on personal contact with representatives of institutions for networking. They have no problem finding places in kindergartens for children whose mothers have been victims of domestic violence. At the same time, they do not have enough municipal housing to be able to implement the measure for preferential accommodation. This led to the conclusion that the application of specific measures at the local level is more workable for Bulgaria than the application of a universal national measure.

The final result of the 3-day Policy Lab was selection of one measure that to be probated in the city of Russe together with AVC "Centre Dinamika": **"Support for qualification and re-qualification at reasonable costs"**.

3. The Local Trial in Bulgaria

The need: Acquiring new professional and soft skills is of utmost importance for women who have experienced intimate partner violence in the process of their integration. The priority of coming out of a violent relationship for these women is to obtain some income without claims for what job, so that they can meet their and their children's needs as a result of their choice of independent life. At a subsequent stage comes the search for new opportunities and here the women face a number of problems – on the one hand the lack of information about opportunities and potential niches in the labour market, on the other hand – a lack of information regarding the providers of specialized trainings if necessary. And last but not least is the high cost of these trainings. All this determines the need to create a measure at regional level that brings together the efforts of all stakeholders in providing information and enabling new professional development, which adds value to the skills of these women and enables them to find more skilled and therefore better paid work.

Existing national measure related to the need: The Bulgarian Law on Education, as well as the Protection against Discrimination Act ensure equal rights to equal education, inclusion and equality for all children and prohibit discrimination in pre-school and school education. Education systems strive for high efficiency of the educational process and define as their main objective the provision of equal access to education. Equal access consists in providing equal opportunities for quality education for all students, regardless of their gender, family background, socio-economic or cultural status. Equality in education means removing obstacles and restrictions that prevent students from fully developing their abilities and unleashing their potential, and creating conditions to limit the discriminatory impact of the social and family environment on their achievements.

In a separate section of the Protection Against Discrimination Act the right to education and training is regulated:

Article 29

(1) The Minister of Education and Science and the local government authorities shall take the necessary measures not to allow racial segregation in the training institutions. (2) The head of the training institution shall take effective measures to prevent any form of discrimination at the place of training by teaching or non-teaching staff or a student.

Article 35

(1) Persons providing training and education, as well as the compilers of textbooks and learning materials, shall be obliged to give information and to apply methods of training and education in a way focused on overcoming stereotypes about the role of women and men in all spheres of social and family life. (2) Kindergartens, schools and higher schools shall include in their educational curricula and syllabi training in problems of the equality of women and men. (3) Paragraph (1) shall also apply to overcoming the negative stereotypes about racial, ethnic and religious groups, as well as about persons with disabilities.

The National Strategy for promoting equality between women and men 2021-2030 in PRIORITY AREA 1: Equality of women and men in the labour market and an equal level of economic independence set out to ensure equality for women in general, namely promoting the employment of women and men, including through measures to increase professional qualifications and key competences, flexible forms of employment, etc.

The National Action Plan to promote equality between women and men for 2019-2020 implements measures aimed at women's participation in trainings – for acquiring professional qualifications; trainings for acquiring key competences; on-the-job training (traineeship – for persons with qualifications and without work experience in the profession, apprenticeships under the direction of a mentor – for persons with basic and lower education and without qualifications); training through work (dual training), etc.

In 2021, in order to guarantee the right to learning and lifelong learning enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, the new European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social justice and sustainability was implemented. The Programme sets objectives for upskilling and retraining, to be achieved over the next five years. To achieve these objectives, the Programme provides for 12 actions focused on skills for work through cooperation between a country, business companies and social partners in order to provide opportunities for people to learn throughout life, including using the EU budget.

There is no a specific measure oriented towards the needs of the project target group.

Justification: According to the latest analysis of the Institute for Market Research, the situation in Ruse region is as follows:

Gross domestic product per capita in Ruse region is growing, but at a significantly lower rate, and the region is increasingly lagging behind the national averages. Poverty levels in the area are similar to the national average. Economic activity has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years, accompanied by employment growth and a decrease in unemployment. Investment activity in Ruse region is approaching the national average. The infrastructure development of the area is categorized as good. The population continues to decline both because of low natural growth and because of the exodus from the area. Ruse is among the areas with the highest degree of urbanization. Economic activity in Ruse region has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years, accompanied by employment growth and a decrease in unemployment. In 2019 the economic activity rate was 72.7% at 74.3% in the country. The employment rate almost equals the average – 69.6% at 70.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate for a decade is lower than the average and in 2019 reaches 3.1% at 4.2% in the country.

The educational profile of the workforce in the area is significantly better than the national average. The share of graduates reaches 31% (at 28% in the country) and for people with basic and lower education – 11% (at 18% in the country). A challenge to the local labour market remains an ageing population. In 2019, the ratio of demographic substitution as a ratio of the population of 15-19 years to that of 60-64 years is 59% at 66% in the country. The number of enterprises is increasing and reaching 54 per 1,000 people (at 59 per 1,000 people in the country). After a two-year reduction in the cost of tangible fixed assets in 2018, they are growing again and are BGN 1948 per person (at BGN 2750/person in the country). For the first time in five years, there has also been a jump in foreign direct investment and they reach EUR 1964 per person (at EUR 3,560 per person in the country). Output is growing at a slower than average pace for the country and remains below average. Its relative volume reached 23.2 thousand euro. BGN/person at BGN 25.9 thousand BGN/person in the country.

The potential opportunities that the team identified in Russe region were in the following areas:

- » The growing number of outsourcing services companies looking for specialists with IT skills and foreign languages
- » Search for part-time childcare services.

a. Description of the testing process

The overall objective of the trial was to increase the employability of women who have suffered violence from the intimate partner by acquiring new personal and professional skills.

For **Ruse region**, the test of the measure also aimed at adding new participants (stakeholders as employers, training suppliers, etc) to the already signed Territorial Protocol, as well as further developing the relations with already joined members. Opportunities were sought to improve women's "soft" skills, including presenting an F2F interview and over the phone and developing professional skills in the two newly identified market niches at the labor market.

The testing started at June 2022 and 1 stage completed in November 2022.

b. Activities planned and completed

In accordance with the identified by the Policy Lab participants measure "**Support for qualification and re-qualification at reasonable costs**" activities for establishing a **Babysitter Agency** were planned and run by the team of CSCD with the support of Centre Dinamika with the idea piloting a franchise model that to become later a base for business development on national level.

Activity 1 – Development of 3 types of training courses on:

- a) social entrepreneurship / how to develop and manage social enterprise;
- b) babysitters and
- c) emergency care.

Training providers: CSCD (Social Entrepreneurship), Bulgarian Red Cross (first aid training) and Training Center at Basecom LTd (licensed provider of babysitters training).

All the participants in the trainings had been approved by Centre Dinamika (AVC) as representatives of the target groups. Training have been secured by signing of contracts with training providers and CSCD. All the participants successfully completed the final tests and received certificates (nationally recognized).

Activity 2 - Development of a pilot model for a social enterprise – a babysitter agency

A NGO has been legally registered by 7 women participants in the training activities and representatives of the target groups, named "Veselushko22". Engagements of the women as nannies / babysitters would be secured by contracts with the newly registered entity. The new NGO has been already listed in Register of Non-Profit Entities in Public Support and the Commercial Register.

Activity 3 – Market piloting stage and franchise model development

Team of 4 people will take responsibility for this activity, namely: CEO (Diana Georgieva – CSCD), Project Coordinator (Damla Ahmedova), Partnerships Coordinator (Boyanka Dimitrova) and Communication Manager (Yoana Aleksandrova).

c. Description of the testing results

Number of women that took part in the piloting: **7 women** (3 of them survivors of DV, 2 of them social workers and survivors of DV and 2 students at Social Activities Department at Ruse University). All the

them actively participated in all the above mentioned activities.

Three motivational videos have been shown in November 2022 – 2 with survivors of IPV who also are active participants in all the activities and 1 with representative of CSCD – organizer, trainer and CEO of the newly established NGO.



A logo was elaborated and a domain www.veselushko22.com.

A website is under construction.

New entity “Veselushko22” has been presented in front of some of the members of the Territorial Protocol – CSCD, Centre Dinamika, Zonta Club and Soroptimist, National Conference “Gender Equality in Academic and Scientific Institutions – Good Practices, Challenges and Perspectives” (December 2022).

Round table on economic empowerment of women - survivors of IPV is planned for February 2023 in partnership with Ruse University.

Team has been an active participant in [KAROL “Entrepreneurs in Science” Program](#) in September – November 2022

Recently a contract has been signed for confirmation of Veselushko22 as a participant at [BEYOND Pre- accelerating program](#).

Team is planning to apply for several granting opportunities – [VIVACOM Regional Grant](#), [MRGI Grant](#), [US Embassy in Bulgaria Small Grants](#)

CONCLUSIONS

According to the experience of the CSCD team the following steps should be undertaken:

- » Topic of economic empowerment of women – survivors of DV and IPV should be included in public debate on different levels – EU, national, regional and local;
- » Complete mapping should be organized of stakeholders who can support and contribute to the issue of economic empowerment – national and local authorities, institutions, business, academic and educational organizations, NGOs, media;
- » Capacity building programs for social workers at AVC for a better primary identification of survivors' skills should be organized and secured with funds. In case of skilled women with desires for starting own business, individual development plan has to be developed;
- » There is a need for organization of communication campaigns for sharing of good practices by successful women – survivors;
- » Grant-making programs have to be run on national and regional level to support entrepreneurial (social entrepreneurship) ideas of women survivors;
- » Grants opportunity to be complemented by special mentoring programs/ initiatives for women – entrepreneurs of this target group.

Partnership

ActionAid Italia, Italia

Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS), Italia

Rel.Azioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, Italia

Center for Sustainable Communities Development, Bulgaria

Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (FACE), Francia

Women's Center Of Karditsa (WCK), Grecia

WEGO!

 wegoproject.eu



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