National State of the Art Report - Bulgaria
(WP2_D2.1)
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELABORATION AND DEFINITION OF RESEARCH CONCEPTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN BULGARIA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender-based violence and migrant communities</strong> (with emphasis on migrant/refugee women)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and migrants’ rights</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender-based violence and children (with emphasis on migrant/refugee girls)</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant and asylum seeking children</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS OF EXISTING STATISTICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPPING OF EXISTING NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF GBV</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTEXTUAL NEEDS RELATED TO PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF GBV</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIVE REMARKS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF REFERENCES</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements & Disclaimer

This document has been produced within the framework of the project BASE: Migrant and refugee child-friendly support services in cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

It has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Work Programme, of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Original citation


Editor
Blaž lenarčič, Science and research centre Koper, Slovenia

Author:
Gender Alternatives Foundation

01 April 2019
INTRODUCTION

Till very recently violence against women in Bulgaria was not perceived as a serious social issue that deserves special legal regulation. In 2005, with adopting the Law of Protection from Domestic Violence, the State recognizes the importance of the problem of combating domestic violence in the Bulgarian society and confirms that violence within the family and partnerships is no longer a private matter, but rather is a public concern. The EU accession of Bulgaria in 2007 enforced the introduction of the concept of equality, equal opportunities and against violence against women as developed within the European Community. The Law of Protection from Domestic Violence (LPDV) is an essential tool for protection against the most common form of gender based violence. In February 2019 Bulgaria defined the criminal offence committed in the context of domestic violence. With the adoption of the amendments to the Penal Code, a crime is defined as domestic violence if it is preceded by systematic acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence, forcible restriction of privacy, individual freedom and rights. The definition of gender based violence in Bulgarian jurisdiction does not exist, neither in the Penal Code, nor in the Law of Protection from Domestic Violence. Protection against sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in all its forms may be sought by all persons on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, irrespective of nationality and citizenship, irrespective of whether they are legally resident or not. This also applies to women and girls seeking or receiving international protection (migrant/refugees) who are at risk or have suffered from such violence.

ELABORATION AND DEFINITION OF RESEARCH CONCEPTS

The Law of Protection from Domestic Violence, which is the relevant law on domestic violence, has defined the rights of victims, protective measures and enforcement procedures in situations of domestic violence. The purpose of the enforcement procedure is to provide the victims of domestic violence, including children who are in need of protection, with proper measures and legal alternatives, as well as to account for the liability of the violating offenders. Domestic violence, according to the national law, refers to any act of physical, sexual, psychological,

---

1 The Bulgarian Law on Protection against Discrimination (in force since January 2004), which governs the protection against all forms of discrimination including gender, transposes a number of EU equality directives. The Law on Equality between women and men (in force since 2016) establishes the principle of equality as a coordinated state policy and designates specialised bodies and mechanisms for its implementation at all levels.
emotional or economic violence. It also covers any experience of such violence, forced restriction of privacy, personal freedom and personal rights committed against either family members or the partner in a relationship or in a de facto cohabitation.

With the last amendments to the Bulgarian Penal Code (February 22, 2019) the act of domestic violence, incl. sexual, psychological and economic violence, is criminalized. According to the Penal Code the definition of domestic violence will apply to cases in which the offence is committed against a spouse or former spouse, a person with whom the defendant has a child in common, a person with whom the defendant cohabits or has co-habited, or resides or has resided in the same household. For homicide in a situation of domestic violence, the punishment is imprisonment of up to 20 years or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

The definitions of “violence” against a child have been stipulated in the Regulation for implementing the Law on Child Protection as ‘any form of domestic violence committed in the presence of a child is considered to be mental and emotional abuse’, where “violence” in this context can be any type of physical behavior, psychological or sexual violence, neglect, commercial or other exploitation, which has resulted in an actually or potentially harmful influence to children’s health, life, development or dignity as a consequence. “Neglect” refers to any kinds of failure of the parent, the guardian or the person caring for the child to ensure the child’s development in one aspect or more from the following areas: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, providing home and safety when they are able to do so. The places where the perpetrators commit violence against a child can be in a family, a school or any social environment. Violence against a child can be divided into “physical violence” and “psychological violence”. “Physical violence” refers to the bodily harm which has caused pain or suffering without serious health damage, under the category of which “sexual violence” means to abuse a child for the purpose of sexual satisfaction. “Psychological violence” includes all actions that may have a destructive influence on children’s mental health and their development, taking the forms such as underestimation, mocking, threats, discrimination, rejection or other negative attitude and the inability of the parent, guardian or the person who is responsible for the caring for the child to provide an appropriate and supportive environment.

According to the national legislation “child at risk” can be a child:
(a) whose parents are deceased, unknown, whose parental rights are limited or deprived, or if the child is left without parental care;
(b) who is a victim of abuse, violence, exploitation or any other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment committed inside or outside his family;
(c) who is undergoing a risk of harm to his physical, mental, moral, intellectual and social development;
(d) who is suffering from disabilities or diseases that are difficult to be healed, as identified by specialists;
(e) who has dropped out of school or for whom there is a risk of dropping out of school

The BASE project (REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017) has been co-financed with the support of the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. Its contents and materials are the sole responsibility of its authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
The law does not envisage any specific identification mechanisms for vulnerable categories of asylum seekers, except for children. Neither guidelines, nor practice exist to accommodate the specific needs of these groups. The law does not exclude the application of accelerated procedure with regard to torture victims, but it is excluded for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Identification is mainstreamed in the training of caseworkers, and special trainings are rarely provided. In the 2008 the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) and UNHCR agreed on standard operation procedures (SOPs) to be followed with respect to treatment of victims of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). However, these were never applied in practice and therefore presently a process for revision of the SOPs is ongoing, which also aims to include new categories or vulnerable groups.

NGOs are very concerned by the lack of procedural guarantees for vulnerable asylum seekers in the Bulgarian asylum procedure. Most worrying is the situation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are not appointed legal guardians during the examination of their asylum application. The law provides that a legal guardian needs to be appointed immediately. However, if a guardian is not appointed, whatever the reason may be, the law allows a social worker to be appointed instead to assist the child during the examination. Thus, the law stipulates the right of the administration (State Agency for Refugees) to disregard the standard for the protection of the child and to determine the child's asylum application without a guardian, if the interviews are conducted in the presence of a social worker. Social workers however cannot legally replace guardians and assume their functions. The special Law on Child Protection explicitly envisages that any administration conducting any type of hearing with a child should do so in the presence of a parent, guardian or other person who provides direct care and who is familiar with the child concerned. Notwithstanding, in addition the law also requires the assistance of a social worker during the hearing. Thus, the law itself explicitly distinguishes the functions of guardians and social workers who cannot replace one another. The expert group appointed by the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights to provide an analysis of the November 2013 draft amendments to the asylum law unanimously advised the Commission to amend the draft with provisions relating to the mandatory appointment of guardians to unaccompanied asylum seeking children. In practice, for the time being this legal opportunity is applied extensively by the asylum administration and in all cases status determination is carried out with the assistance of social workers instead of appointed guardians. However, the law does not provide for any mandatory training of the social workers relating to the special situation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or even relating to the aim and modalities of the asylum procedure in general. Lacking basic skills and knowledge the social workers cannot and do not assist and advise properly the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, especially in a situation where legal aid is not secured (as described in the section on legal assistance under regular procedures). UNHCR and NGO reports raised concerns related to cases where the lack of training of the social workers assisting unaccompanied children impacted negatively on the outcome of their asylum procedures.

Social workers have an obligation to provide a social report with an opinion on the best interest of the child concerned in every individual case. The legal guardians have the right and obligation...
to represent the children during their status determination procedure and actively support the establishment of facts and circumstances, ask questions, appeal negative decisions, and - most importantly - to ensure that a lawyer is appointed for all these activities. Recent jurisprudence of the Administrative Court Sofia City ruled that status determinations, in absence of an appointed guardian are unlawful, but this has had no impact yet on the practice. Theoretically there is a sufficient number of legal representatives – 1273 registered alone in Sofia – available to represent all unaccompanied children, if the law is actually and properly enforced. However, training would need to be provided to legal aid lawyers with respect to the specific needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children during the status determination procedures.

The incorrect implementation of the EU asylum legislation in Bulgaria is a subject of concern of the European Commission. The European Commission sent a letter of formal notice on 8 November 2018 regarding shortcomings in the national asylum system and related support services, in breach with asylum acquis (Directive 2013/32/EU and Directive 2013/33/EU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Concerns related to: accommodation and legal representation of unaccompanied children; correct identification and support of vulnerable asylum seekers; provision of adequate legal assistance; and detention of asylum seekers, as well as safeguards in detention procedures. At the time of the preparation of this report the authorities do not announce any steps for developing the implementation of the legislation in accordance with the EU requirements.

Bulgaria is one of the few (8 in total up to this date) EU member-states that has not ratified the Council of Europe Convention for prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention). Bulgaria refuses to ratify the CoE Convention due to a misconception and misleading arguments regarding the word “gender”. Unfortunately, such arguments not only obstruct effective prevention and protection against GBV, but have yet another negative effect, namely, they create and fuel the fears, feed anti-migrant, anti-refugees and extremist vision in the society. It creates an attitude amongst the society to downplay the problem of violence against migrant/refugee women and girls.

The Istanbul Convention is an important tool against VAW and DV. The Convention focuses specifically on protecting asylum seeking and refugee women in its Articles 60 “Gender-based asylum claims” and 61 “Non-refoulement”. The misunderstanding of the meaning of the word “gender” and the strong gender stereotypes in the Bulgarian society are serious obstacles for protection and prevention from violence of all women and girls in Bulgaria, incl. those in very vulnerable conditions, like refugees, migrants, minorities, disabled women, etc.

---

3 the Asylum Procedures Directive
4 the Reception Conditions Directive
5 March, 2019
6 March 15, 2019
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN BULGARIA

As already mentioned the Bulgarian Constitutional Court\(^7\) decided that the concepts “gender” and “gender identity” are irrelevant for the Bulgarian constitutional and legal system, they have no clear and precise legal content and would create dangerous consequences for the national legal system. Bulgaria does not accept and the Bulgarian authorities do not provide information about gender based violence. In the addition, till 2019, Bulgaria does not collect official data about domestic violence. The analyses are based on the information provided by non-governmental organizations that work with victims of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence.

In the case of GBV, perpetrators may or may not have any relations with the victims, but the base of the violent act is always the gender, the perceived gender, or some gender characteristics of the victims. Various studies made by the Bulgarian NGOs show that women become victims of DV and GBV more frequently than men.

A recent national analysis, the 2016 National Study on Domestic and Gender Based Violence in Bulgaria\(^8\), confirmed that the most common victims of sexual and domestic violence are women. The study found that there is a lack of awareness and underestimation of GBV, and the level of underestimation is higher when men and children are concerned, and there is a public tolerance of violent acts against LGBT people. According to the study, Bulgarians recognized several types of actions as violence: physical violence; stalking; economic violence; coercive limitation of personal life, freedom and rights that also is committed in a domestic environment.

The statistics provided by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) show that murders of women committed by spouses, partners and close relatives have increased by 50 percent in the last three years. In 2016, they are 22, a year later they are already 27, and 33 women were killed in 2018.\(^9\) The data is frightening because every third murder in Bulgaria is a woman in her home. The murdered is among her closest people.

The MoI does not provide data about sexual violence. According to the survey, made by Alpha Research Sociological Agency\(^10\), every fourth woman in Bulgaria is a victim of domestic violence. The survey shows that 4% of Bulgarian women over 18 years old have experienced rape. Experts estimate that one of the most common forms of domestic violence is rape, but the majority of sexual assault victims do not acknowledge that they were raped.

---

\(^7\) Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria, Decision No 13, 27\(^{th}\) of July, 2018.
[link](http://www.constcourt.bg/en/Acts/GetHtmlContent/f278a156-9d25-412d-a064-6ffd6f997310)

\(^8\) National Study on Domestic and Gender Based Violence in Bulgaria. Analytical report. Published by Partners Bulgaria Foundation, Sofia, 2016 ISBN: 978-954-9945-33-1;
[link](https://csd.bg/fileadmin/user_upload/publications_library/files/23125.pdf)

\(^9\) The statistics is provided to Bulgarian mass media under the Access to Public Information Act. See:

\(^10\) Сексуалното насилие над жените в България. Резултати от социологическо проучване, януари 2011. Алфа Рисърч.
[link](https://alpharesearch.bg/post/843-seksualnoto-nasilie-nad-jeni-v-bulgaria.html)
The lack of data about domestic and GBV makes the phenomenon hidden and contributes to women not being in a position to report abuse. In addition, women do not report violence due to fear, stigma and impunity for perpetrators. But even in case they would like to report they face additional obstacles, including lack of information on how and to whom to report. There is also lack of gender sensitive training of staff in charge to work with migrant and refugees. In addition, Bulgaria does not provide a clear referral system, incl. legal, medical, psychological and other services to women victims of GBV.

**Gender-based violence and migrant communities (with emphasis on migrant/refugee women)**

**Refugees’ and migrants’ rights**

A study about the attitudes of the Bulgarian society to the refugees/migrants, made by the UNHCR in 2017, shows that during the last three years there is a significant increase in the proportion of people who believe that people seeking protection should be detained during the protection process and there is also a decline in the proportion of people who believe that government support and opportunity to work should be provided.

Hate speech and hate crimes continued, directed at minority groups, including Turks and Roma. Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants remained vulnerable to violence and harassment. Discriminatory or xenophobic statements were made during the campaign for parliamentary elections held in March, 2018 by candidates and political parties as well as by the coalition of far-right parties, the Patriotic Front, which gained enough seats to enter the government. Anti-migrant and anti-refugee statements are part of the 2019 European Parliament election campaigns as well.


Irregular border crossing remained criminalized resulting in administrative detention of migrants and refugees, including unaccompanied children, who arrived in greater numbers. Amnesty International reported that human rights organizations documented numerous allegations of ill-treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers and substandard conditions in detention facilities.

In February, 2017, local authorities in the town of Elin Pelin refused to receive a Syrian family that had been granted humanitarian status in Bulgaria. The Mayor of Elin Pelin publicly warned that “Muslims from Syria [were] not welcome” and refused to register the family or issue them with identity documents. Other municipalities expressed a similar unwillingness to accommodate refugees.

---


12 [http://news.bnt.bg/bg/a/735890-elin-pelin](http://news.bnt.bg/bg/a/735890-elin-pelin)
In July, 2017 the government adopted the Regulation on Integration of Refugees\textsuperscript{13}; however, this fell short of providing an effective mechanism for integration. According to UNHCR – Bulgaria office the Regulation failed to address the persistent problem of uncooperative municipalities or to propose measures to create more favorable conditions for integration in local communities. It also failed to address the gaps in refugees’ access to social housing, family benefits for children or language training, which limited their enjoyment of social and economic rights.

The government issued an order restricting freedom of movement for registered asylum-seekers. Adopted in September, it imposed territorial limits for asylum-seekers in refugee centres, prohibiting them from moving out of prescribed areas.

Bulgaria, as all the other EU member states, does not provide any statistics on violence against women and girls who are in need of international protection. According to the study made by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, FRA\textsuperscript{14}, there is increasing evidence that gender-based violence is a major issue for migrant women and girls.

The European Women’s Lobby (EWL) also published a report\textsuperscript{15} indicating that ‘women and girls fleeing conflicts and travelling to or settling in Europe are at higher risk of suffering from male violence’. Their situation puts them in a state of higher vulnerability to male violence: on the way and in the centres, they face rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, from different perpetrators; they have to resort to prostitution in order to get access to food, housing or transport; they face domestic violence; girls are being sold for marriage or trafficked for sexual exploitation. The report alerts the clear lack of specific measures to protect women and girls’ refugees from violence and calls for gender-sensitive asylum policies and procedures to help women and girls to escape or denounce male violence and access to their full human rights. Despite this evidence, there is lack of data at the national levels on the extent of violence against women and girls who newly arrived or are in need of international protection.

According to FRA\textsuperscript{16} in nearly half of the EU Member States reviewed, guidelines or procedures for identifying and dealing with victims of gender-based violence are in place or are being developed. In Bulgaria, standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identification and referral of cases of sexual and gender-based violence have been in place since 2007 and are currently being updated. Any first signs of possible gender-based violence are already sought at the stage of registration of asylum seekers. However, such incidents rarely emerge at this stage. Therefore, social workers are present at the medical examination, which foreigners undergo immediately after registration, where there is more possibility for such traumas to be declared.

\textsuperscript{13} Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for concluding, implementing and terminating the Agreement on the integration of foreigners with granted asylum or international protection (in Bulgarian)

http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=116399


\textsuperscript{15} European Women's Lobby, 'From conflict to peace. #Womensvoices. Recommendations on preventing and combating violence against refugee women & girls on the move', https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/_womensvoicesfinalforweb.pdf

Migrant women and refugees in Bulgaria are at increased risk of violence and multiple discrimination. Their access to services, as well as their right to financial support from the state, is often limited, especially when their status is undetermined or when they are without documents. Non-governmental organizations reported the insufficient protection and the lack of specific services for migrant/refugees women and girls. Women as a group in need of additional and specialized protection remain unseen and their needs are largely ignored in social interventions. Migrant/refugee women and girls are vulnerable to violence at all stages of the search for protection. They are particularly vulnerable when they are living at external addresses. These women are at risk, when they cannot rely on support and protection, including specialized services in cases of violence.

According to the report, published in 2017 in the frame of the European Commission Project\textsuperscript{17}, one of the forms of GBV, identified among women seeking international protection in Bulgaria and residing in the special reception centres for persons under the procedure for acquiring refugee or humanitarian status, related to honour related violence (HRV). The research, made by civil society organizations at the end of 2014, made conclusions about characteristics of sexual and GBV in Syrian and Kurdish communities, as well as women from the region of North Africa. The research found that the subject of GBV is relevant to the women, but the subject is difficult for discussion as it concerns deeply intimate relations and attitudes, and sometimes concerns old traumas and taboos. The women almost unanimously share that it is not accepted or even allowed to talk openly to others about the experiences of GBV in their communities and families. Very often the women themselves cannot recognize a certain behavior as violence against them, such as, arranged and forced marriages, especially if this behavior is a norm in the women’s families, extended families and communities.

Different analyses show that other forms of sexual and GBV include isolation (like for example isolation of the woman in another room when the family has guests), restriction of external relations and social life, which is common practice in the Syrian and Kurdish refugee/migrant women and girls. In this context, the women point at three main problems: domestic violence, sexual violence, which is closely linked to honour crimes, and forced marriages. Significant examples are also the early marriages of girls who are 12-13 years old. Most of the women share about violence by their spouses (domestic violence) experienced when they were still living in their home country. The violence continues also after the relocation of the family in another country, in this case Bulgaria. Experts found that despite the women’s critical attitude towards the violence, however, they remain in the abusive relationship and do not seek help due to shame and mostly because of their conviction that not only would they not receive help, but they would also become subjected to additional accusations and blame by the family and the community.\textsuperscript{18}

Related to this is often the denial of violence, despite some beginning of sharing personal


The BASE project (REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017) has been co-financed with the support of the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. Its contents and materials are the sole responsibility of its authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
experience. The study found that the sexual violence and the honour crimes are identified as particularly serious forms of violence. Quite often the perpetrator of the sexual abuse is an acquaintance or a family member. According to the unwritten law of the community a woman or a girl who has suffered from sexual violence will wear the "the stigma of shame" till the end of her life. Furthermore, this stigma is transferred over the whole family of the victim. The research found that in cases of forced marriages, which is a widespread form of GBV, the choice of partner is frequently up to the father of the girl: “Very often the first period of the girl is the moment for marrying the girl with a partner of her father’s choice. If she shows resistance, the father imposes his decision by force through psychological harassment and physical abuse.” (international protection seeking woman from the refugee centre in Harmanli, Bulgaria).

A steady trend from different national analyses is that refugee/migrant women do not want to report about violence as they fear it will delay and make obstacles for obtaining refugee status which would give them and their families the opportunity to reach the Western EU countries, mainly Germany. There is no evidence either for women using arguments of persecution and GBV in their countries of origin as a justification for asking and granting refugee status. There is no relevant research among migrant women in Bulgaria and the type of violence they suffer as there is no adequate and reliable registration system for those who stay in Bulgaria and rely on integration. There is no mechanism for tracking and monitoring these situations.

According to the literature and studies on violence against minority/refugee women and girls there is no practice of honour killings, different forms of FGM, or violence justified by religious interpretations. The National program for prevention of violence against children and child abuse (2017 – 2020) informs that in Bulgaria there are no registered cases of other HRV harmful practices - female genital mutilation, but the increase in migratory pressure from countries where this practice is a harmful tradition represents for Bulgaria new challenges in the future.

Gender-based violence and children (with emphasis on migrant/refugee girls)

Children’s rights

Data of the number of children victims of violence are collected mainly by the Agency for Social Assistance (SAA) and the Ministry of Interior (MI). But this information concerns only cases that have been reported by the public structures. There is no reliable source of information on the prevailing types of violence and the actual number of children that experience different forms of violence in their lives. Based on international studies it can be safely assumed that they are much more numerous than those established by the public institutions.

According to the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) data, the cases of violence against children on which social workers from Child Protection Departments worked in the period 2011

---

19 Ibid.
– 2013 decreased from 2,175 to 1,973. The number of cases for 2015 is even smaller (SAA data) – 1,839 and in 2016 the cases are 681. Girls are more vulnerable than boys.

According to an UNICEF report the actual number of children victims of violence is much higher (incl. children victims of domestic violence or school bullying).

Statistical data show that children aged 14 – 17 are more vulnerable to crime and violence – 58% of all crimes are against them.

According to data from an European-wide survey on violence against women, conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, a significant share of Bulgarian women are affected by violence against them from early child and adolescent age – 30% of the women in Bulgaria (35% for EU 28) confess that before reaching the age of 15 they have already been victims of physical, sexual or psychological violence.

Perpetrators of violence against children most often are members of the family (father, mother, relative) – in 2015 in 58.1% of all cases it was a parent, and in 5.8% – a relative. Similar are the data from the FRA study of violence against women – most often women state that offenders of all kinds of violence against them are men, and fathers, spouses and relatives prevail in physical violence. Violence happens mostly in the family: 1,224 cases (66.6%), in the street – 206 cases, at school – 186 cases. 126 cases of violence happened in types of formal care (89 in a residential service, 23 in institutions and 14 in foster families).

Based on international and national studies it can be assumed that the majority of cases of violence are of physical violence against children, neglect, psychological violence and sexual violence. A study of the health behaviour of children shows that one of the main forms of violence against children is school bullying. Studies and experts assert that very often a child is a victim of multiple types of violence.

There is not sufficient and disaggregated data on age, gender, disability, social status to clearly define children that are at a higher risk of becoming victims of violence. The available data allows concluding that children in formal care and children in the juvenile justice system are especially vulnerable.

As noted in the report “Sexual abuse of children – study of the phenomenon and dimension of the violence against children brought up in institutions”, about 20% of the children aged 12-18 placed in an institution have been victims of rape or attempted rape.

---

20 SAA data and data from the National Programme for Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children (2017 - 2020)
According to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), in the juvenile institutions within the system of criminal justice there are many cases of high level of violence and maltreatment by supervisors and policemen.\(^{25}\)

**Migrant and asylum seeking children**

The UNICEF Report about Bulgaria noticed that “although the Government is obliged to safeguard the best interest of every child, including the unaccompanied and separated children, the existing child protection system doesn’t fully take into consideration the specific situation of these (migrant and refugees) children and many challenges facing the refugee and migrant children remain to be addressed”.\(^{26}\)

There is no data about migrant and refugees children victims of sexual and GBV, but international researchers noticed that there are problems and barriers for children to access medical care, incl. psychological. In some cases access is impeded due to the unwillingness of general practitioners to register asylum-seekers, including children, for a number of reasons, such as lack of interpretation, leaving the country and filled quotas. In addition, reception conditions for unaccompanied refugee and migrant children remained inadequate. Children were routinely denied adequate access to legal representation, translation, health services and psychosocial support. Basic education is not available in the centres and most children were not enrolled in local schools. Limited social and educational activities were available several days a week and organized exclusively by NGOs and humanitarian organizations.

**ANALYSIS OF EXISTING STATISTICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

The official statistics do not include data on cases of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. The numbers of complaints for domestic violence registered by the Police and the numbers of cases of domestic violence submitted to the courts are not present in publicly available statistics. Murders, which is the most serious form of intrusion against a person, are also not documented and analyzed through the prism of gender-specific features. At the time of preparing this report, it is, therefore, not possible to determine the share of domestic and GBV among this type of crimes. According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency study on violence against women (2014) every fourth woman in Bulgaria is a victim of DV. So far, information has been gathered mostly by


non-governmental organizations and social agencies. According to Bulgarian non-governmental organizations one in three women in Bulgaria is subjected to GBV, or about one million women in Bulgaria are victims of domestic violence.

The National Statistical Institute (NSI) is the main national public source of information in relation to data about acts of violence and crime by designing and publishing official statistics. According to Bulgarian legislation NSI has to collect data on all criminal acts (including sexual and other types of violence), according to provisions of the Criminal Code. NSI provides data on convicted persons, disaggregated by gender and age, according to the type of crime. There is still no official statistics for victims of crime, including on the basis of gender.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) is responsible for collecting data on offenders and victims, but the data is not publicly accessible. Other institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, the National Investigation Service, the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office of Cassation, keep separate statistics that are classified according to various indicators and therefore comparative analysis is not possible. According to the Law on the Judiciary, the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office of Cassation maintains a Unified Information System, which collects information about the prosecution of all offenses under the Criminal Code (including rape and sexual violence) and the progress of cases in the criminal justice system, including the decisions of the courts in these cases. Data from the Ministry of Justice show that for the last 2-3 years an average 1500 applications for orders for protection under the Law on protection from domestic violence were registered per year in the courts in Bulgaria. The data kept by the MoI reveal that over two thirds of the orders for protection issued need enforcement by police.

The Bulgarian judicial statistics show that 35% of cases of murder and attempted murder of women were committed by a victim's current or former intimate partner. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee reports that every two weeks a woman is killed in Bulgaria. According to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) data in the period 2012-2017, the country courts issued at least 102 convictions for intentional murders of women by men. In 93% of the cases the perpetrator is a current or former partner or a relative. The BHC reports that every third woman killed has been subjected to systematic violence by her murderer, and every tenth has sought protection from the police for violence by the murderer. Two-thirds (62%) of the killings were committed in the victim's home. There is no statistical data about other forms of GBV (beatings, rapes, insults and humiliations, restriction of liberty, isolation of the victim, victim tracking and prosecution, financial pressure, property destruction, threats and physical violence).

Research data for Bulgaria for the period 2012-2014 from 10 regional courts in Bulgaria show that 35% of the murders or attempted murders of women is perpetrated by their current or former intimate partners. 25% are committed by their mainly male relatives, and another 35% are committed by a nonstranger more generally. Only 5% of the crimes were perpetrated by a completely unknown person. There is no reliable and comprehensive system for data collection on violence against women. The main sources for the moment are national statistics for some

27 Website on the femicide in Bulgaria by Bulgarian Helsinki Committee for the period 2012 – 2017, https://ubita.org/
types of crimes, where available, and the data from surveys and research reports of non-governmental organizations and agencies.\textsuperscript{28}

According to Bulgarian NGOs, in the period 2014 - 2017, over 5 500 women sought protection from the women’s organizations that provide services to the victims of domestic and GBV; over 700 women and their children were placed in the crisis centres and 870 applications for orders for protection were lodged by victims of violence under the LPDV with the support of these NGOs.\textsuperscript{29}

In addition, there is a lack of efficient services for victims of violence. In 2017, the courts issued nearly 2,500 restraining orders for victims of domestic violence, but Bulgaria has only five crisis centers and can accommodate only 2% of those in need.\textsuperscript{30}

Regarding migrant and refugee children, the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) reports that a large number of all refugees and migrants, who arrive in Bulgaria, are children, including unaccompanied children and children separated from their families. The reasons for the arrival of this particularly vulnerable category of children are numerous: escape from wars and conflicts, poverty or natural calamities, discrimination or persecution. The total number of children who sought international protection in Bulgaria in recent years has been continually increasing. According to data provided by the SAR, 19,418 new applications for international protection have been lodged in 2016, with approximately one third of them being applications of children. The most recent officially published data shows that from 1\textsuperscript{st} to 31\textsuperscript{st} of January 2019 Bulgarian authorities got 147 applications for international protection and 23 of them are from children under the age of 18.

On the territory of the country there are five Registration and Acceptance Centers and one Transit Center for children seeking asylum and/or receiving international protection.

The State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), which is the only specialized body of the Council of Ministers for management, coordination and control of implementation of the state policy on activities for child protection in Bulgaria, reports that in the first 6 months of 2017 the total number of children searching and/or receiving international protection, accommodated in the Registration, Acceptance and Transit centres is 743.\textsuperscript{31} 150 of them were unaccompanied, while 593 were accompanied by a relative or other adult. Data on the country of origin of children for this period show that 41% of these children arrived from Syria, followed by those from Afghanistan (28%), Iraq (24%), Gambia and Iran 1%. The SACP reports that over 90% of children do not suffer from severe impairment or chronic illness and all children use the health services at the center, and some of them with a chosen GP. According to the national legislation all children have access to several programs/services for social adaptation and cultural

\textsuperscript{28} http://hasp-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/HRV-in-Bulgaria.pdf  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{31} Descriptive analysis of data for children seeking and/or receiving protection under the Registration and Acceptance Center in the first half of 2017., p.12
orientation, social and psychological assistance and health care, education, administrative support, accommodation.

**MAPPING OF EXISTING NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS**

The Constitution of Bulgaria defines the right of every citizen to defend him/herself, if his/her rights or legitimate interests violated or threatened (Art.56). International treaties, constitutionally ratified, promulgated, and having come into force as for the Republic of Bulgaria, shall be a part of the domestic law of the country. They shall take precedence over any conflicting legal rules under the domestic legislation (Art. 5, Para 4, The Constitution of RB).

The concept of “best interest of the child” is introduced in the Child Protection Act (CPA, 2000). According to Art. 3, Para 3 CPA “the best interest of the child shall be secured”. The best interest of the child is one of the guiding principles of child protection.\(^{32}\)

In the Bulgarian legislation the definitions, legal sources and legal provisions regarding domestic and gender-based violence are as follows:

**Intimate Partner Violence**: In Bulgaria, intimate partner violence is included under "domestic violence": any act of physical, mental, sexual, emotional or economic violence and any attempted such violence, as well as the forcible restriction of individual freedom and rights and of private life, carried out against individuals who have kinship ties, who have or have had family relation or are or were cohabiting partners. In addition any act of domestic violence in presence of a child is considered mental and emotional violence against him/her.

\(^{32}\) Child Protection Act

“Article 3. Child protection shall rest on the following principles:
1. recognition and respect for the child's personality;
2. the child shall be brought up in a family environment;
3. the best interest of the child shall be secured;
4. special protection shall be provided to children at risk;
5. voluntary participation in child protection activities shall be encouraged;
6. persons directly involved in child protection activities shall be selected in accordance with their personal qualities and social communication abilities, and with care as to their professional training
7. restrictive measures shall be of temporary nature;
8. child protection actions shall be immediate;
9. care in accordance with the needs of the child;
10. the development of children of prominent talent shall be ensured;
11. responsible parenthood shall be encouraged;
12. support for the family;
13. preventive measures for child safety and protection;
14. the effectiveness of measures undertaken shall be controlled.”

The Child Protection Act is available in Bulgarian language at: [https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2134925825](https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2134925825)
Legal Source: Law on Protection against Domestic Violence 2005, Article 2 and Criminal Code, Article 296, Paragraph 1 (punishment for noncompliance with a protection order against domestic violence, issued by the court under the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence)

Legal provisions on protection orders: Law on Protection against Domestic Violence 2005, Chapter 2

Rape: Sexual intercourse with a female who is unable to defend herself and without her consent; by force or threat of force or by bringing her into a helpless state. This act is punishable with imprisonment of two to eight years.

Observations: Penetrative sexual acts with another person by using his/her employment or material dependence on him/her - imprisonment of up to three years (Penal Code, Article 153)

Higher punishment for aggravated rape (e.g., when the victim is under the age of 18, related to the offender, or if it is a repeat offence)

Legal Source: Criminal Code, Article 152

Legal provisions on protection orders: No legal provision

Sexual Assault (excl. rape): Molestation is an act with the purpose of arousing or satisfying a sexual desire without copulation regarding a person who has accomplished 14 years of age, by using force or threat, availing him/herself of his/her helpless status or by bringing him/her to such a status or by taking advantage of dependency or control.

Legal Source: Criminal Code, Article 150

Legal provisions on protection orders: No legal provision

Sexual Harassment: Any unwanted conduct of sexual nature expressed physically, verbally or in another way offending the dignity and honour and creating a hostile, offensive, humiliating or impending environment and, in particular, where the refusal or compulsion to accept such conduct may have influence in making decisions affecting the person.

Observations: The law explicitly recognizes sexual harassment as a form of discrimination and bans it. The EU definition of sexual harassment is fully recognized in the Bulgarian Law on Protection against Discrimination.

Legal Source: Law on Protection against Discrimination of 2004 and Law on Protection against Discrimination, Paragraph 1(1)

Legal provisions on protection orders: No legal provision

Stalking: In Bulgaria, stalking is a term used to describe a particular kind of harassment, namely "any unwanted conduct on the discrimination grounds, expressed in a physical, verbal or any other manner, which has the purpose or effect of violating the person’s dignity or creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating or intimidating environment, attitude or practice."

Legal Source: Law on Protection against Discrimination of 2004, Supplementary provisions, Paragraph 1, Item 2, Penal Code – Article 144a

Legal provisions on protection orders: No legal provision.
Bulgaria is a signatory to the United Nation’s Conventions on the rights of women\(^{33}\) and firmly committed to the principles and goals of the final documents, adopted at the UN World Conferences on Women\(^{34}\). The EU accession of Bulgaria in 2007 enforced the introduction of the concept of equality and equal opportunities as developed within the European Community, especially the establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the advancement of women. The Bulgarian Law on Protection against Discrimination (in force since January 2004), which governs the protection against all forms of discrimination including gender, transposes a number of EU equality directives. The Law for Protection against Domestic Violence (in force since 2005) regulates the rights of persons who are victims of domestic violence, the measures for protection, and the procedure for their imposition. The LPADV ensures higher protection of children against domestic violence, improves prevention and ensures financially the law enforcement. The LPADV definition of "domestic violence" explicitly provided that an act of domestic violence committed in his/her presence would be considered as abuse of a child.

Despite all these achievements, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court voted in 2018 to declare the Council of Europe Convention for prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) unconstitutional.


At national level, the monitoring of child policies and the implementation of the Strategy are supervised by the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP). The SACP has the prerogative to create and maintain a National Information System (NIS). NIS collects information from the Regional Child Protection Departments about children victims of violence and about the cases of children at risk on which they work. The Child Protection Departments and the territorial divisions of the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA) — the Social Assistance Directorates, work with children victims of abuse, and their families — they take protection measures, guide them to social services, provide counselling, support and assist them to overcome the adverse consequences of the experienced abuse. In addition, each municipality has created a commission

---

\(^{33}\) CEDAW, Convention on the Political Rights of Women, Convention against Discrimination in Education, and Equal Remuneration Convention  
on children with coordinating and advisory functions and with the participation of representatives of the various institutions and organizations.

**Asylum-seeking children, migrant children and children affected by migration**

The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) keeps and maintains permanent information about the requests received from the applicants for refugee status and their registration. SAR and Bulgarian Red Cross provide social assistance, psychological assistance and support. Where necessary, social mediators provide guidance and accompany the children for medical care, enrollment in Bulgarian language courses and a possibility for inclusion in the educational system of the Bulgarian State and municipal schools, attendance of kindergartens by the children, provision of teaching aids and accessories necessary for their education if included in the integration programme.

**IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF GBV**

Different initiatives and projects focused mainly on integration have been implemented since 2015. The desk research made for the purpose of the current report finds that there are no initiatives focused specifically on supporting girls and children migrants/refugees victims of domestic and GBV.

Here is the list of selected project initiatives focused on integration of migrants/refugees into Bulgarian society:

- **PROJECT “Improving of reception conditions and protection environment for asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria”, HOME/2017/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0053.**

The Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants (BCRM) under an UNHCR Project, with the additional financial support of the EU, published a book “Good Practices on Integration of Refugees with European Funding”. The book is a compilation of projects and activities, implemented under various European funds and programs aimed at financing integration measures for refugees.35

- **PROJECT “Advocacy for the Integration of Refugees in Bulgaria”,**

The Project, financed by the UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria, is implemented by the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants. In the frame of the initiative the BCRM developed and maintains an online platform36, that offers access to user-friendly information sources


facilitating the work of municipal staff and other stakeholders involved in the process of refugee integration. The platform does not provide information about possible services for women/girls or children victims of domestic and GBV, but contains comprehensive information on the integration, rights, and obligations of beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgaria, compiled on the basis of the legal regulatory framework and practice. In addition, the BCRM developed an online mapping on integration of refugees, including relevant programs, projects, and activities focused or related to refugee integration, including for the creation of a supportive environment.\footnote{www.mapping.refugee-integration.bg}

- **NIEM PROJECT**

The BCRM and the Association Multi Kulti Collective are Bulgarian partners in the \textit{National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM PROJECT)}\footnote{https://niem.refugee-integration.bg/}, measuring and improving integration of beneficiaries of international protection. The NIEM is a six-year long transnational project, co-funded by the Foundation Open Society Institute, the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, and the International Visegrad Fund. The Project aims to prepare key actors in the integration field in 15 EU Member States, (Bulgaria incl.), to better face the current challenges and improve the integration outcomes of beneficiaries of international protection. NIEM aims to establish an evaluation mechanism to provide evidence on gaps in integration standards, identify promising practices and evaluate the effects of legislative and policy changes. NIEM endeavours to provide evidence on the implementation of the EU standards on integration, the impact of the EU standards on national policies, the challenges, good practices and policy gaps both at national and European levels.

- **PROJECT "Development and implementation of a mechanism for social mediation for access to social services for the asylum seekers, the recognized refugees and the persons with humanitarian status with special needs"**

The Project is implemented by the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC)\footnote{http://www.redcross.bg/projects/finished_projects/refugees_project}. The aim of the project is to establish a network of 10 refugee community social mediators to provide social mediation to vulnerable foreigners seeking protection, refugee status or humanitarian protection in the first 12 months of receiving protection. In the frame of the Project BRC is informing refugee communities about the project, developing criteria and selecting those wishing to train for social mediators, introducing mechanisms for social mediation through recruitment, training and networking of refugee community mediators. The initiative is supporting the process of development of professional qualifications and specific skills in support of the secondary development.
integration of refugee community representatives and providing special mechanisms for facilitating the communication of vulnerable persons with institutions from the sphere of healthcare, social care, municipalities or other, related to the integration in the Bulgarian society. The Project is also focusing on providing specialized and intensive care through the mediation of other refugees trained to work with state institutions, know the rights, obligations and opportunities with regard to health services, social assistance and social services, education, accommodation, professional qualification and access to the labor market.

As already mentioned, there are no specific projects explicitly focused on violence against refugee/migrant women/girls and children. There are some analyses on the situation regarding violence against children and domestic and GBV against women and girls made by intergovernmental (UNICEF, UNHCR), governmental and non-governmental organizations, but there is no specific actions focused on prevention/protection or providing support to refugee/migrant women/girls and children victims of Domestic and/or GBV.

**CONTEXTUAL NEEDS RELATED TO PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF GBV**

Women and girls victims of violence in Bulgaria have difficulties in their access to justice due to prejudice and stereotyping of women in situations of violence, which is even more valid for women from vulnerable communities, and especially for refugee/migrant women and girls. There are not enough specialist support services for women victims of different forms of violence provided by law and for placement of women victims and their children, and the existing services are not enough financially supported by the state and municipalities. There are no specialized services for women victims of GBV among persons seeking international protection, services are not tailored to their specific needs and women face language, cultural, religious barriers and stereotypes. State institutions, namely child protection services, do not make clear connection between violence against women and violence against children, do not use their competences to claim protection of children against domestic violence through orders for protection. Perpetrators’ programmes are not enough spread and not supported by the state. NGOs main providers of services for victims are not sufficiently supported in their activities and their interventions are not sustainable. It is worth mentioning here that in order to provide qualified assistance to victims women and children, the Istanbul Convention, which Bulgaria rejected to ratify, requires that States recognize, encourage and support at all levels the work of the NGOs that are active in combating violence against women and as states should allocate adequate financial resources for these activities. There is no systematic training provided for state officials and the judiciary on GBV.

Evidence shows that refugee/migrant women and girls who are survivors of violence or other abuses rarely report them and that gender-responsive measures need to be taken to prevent GBV.
There is need of providing information on what GBV is and how to report it, and ensuring that survivors have access to client-centred medical, legal, and social support services. Prevention of and response to GBV is a challenge due to the lack of effective identification and referral mechanisms and cultural factors.

Access to information is limited, exacerbated by the lack of interpreters in most reception facilities. Relevant authorities are in many cases unable to provide individualized health and psychosocial care. Civil society organisations also have limited response capacity and are in some cases restricted from accessing reception and detention facilities.

Some studies find that the staff in the accommodation centers encounter difficulties in identifying violence. Serious obstacles are the language barrier, female translators' deficits, the lack of knowledge of the various aspects of the problem by employees in the centers, the attitudes of mistrust between staff and the refugees accommodated. Refugee women prefer to share issues and issues related to domestic and GBV, women's rights, sexual health with experts outside the State Agency for Refugees’ system, as they do not link them to current protection procedures and are therefore not perceived as dependent on them. Along with the lack of specialized legal, social and psychological services for victims of violence, the medical services needed in such cases are insufficient.

There is a clear need to introduce specialized programs to work with refugee/migrant women, girls, children victims of GBV, as well as a comprehensive strategy for counteraction, protection and prevention.

**CONCLUSIVE REMARKS**

The research done in the frame of the current Report found that there is minimal information available on the implementation of GBV standard procedures and protection policies in general, and very little information specific to the needs of refugee/migrant women and children. The lack of data and analysis on gender-based violence helps to conceal the scale of the problem, the factors that contribute to its sustainability and the ways to eliminate it.

Women and girls victims of domestic and GBV still face serious obstacles in getting adequate support. There is still a lack of coherent policies and commitment to regular and adequate provision and funding of activities for prevention and protection from violence. NGOs bear the burden of providing services and other activities for prevention and protection without having the constant support of the state and municipalities.

There is a lack of efficient services for victims of violence. In 2017, the courts issued nearly 2,500 restraining orders related to victims of domestic violence. However, Bulgaria has only five crisis centers for victims of domestic violence with a total capacity of 166 places. In response to this inadequate number of domestic violence shelters, police and social services workers refer domestic violence victims to NGO-run crisis centers but local authorities rarely provide financial assistance for their operating costs. There is no clear governmental commitment to support these services. Victims of domestic violence continue to face practical obstacles to protection from
domestic violence including insufficient social and legal services, and inadequate funding for hotlines, shelters, counseling and legal aid.

There is no special law on social services in Bulgaria, and the services for victims of violence are neither explicitly recognized nor guaranteed through financial support. Limited instances of support through the state and/or municipal budgets are available. In the last two years, almost no new state-supported services for women victims of violence were opened in the communities. Instead of developing existing and new services, the number of services and level of financial support decreases continually.

Some women and girls are at particular risk of violence as victims of multiple forms of discrimination and stereotyping. Women and girls from minority groups in Bulgaria, women seeking international protection, and migrant women are among these vulnerable groups. They face stereotyping and additional barriers—cultural, religious, and language barriers—to their access to justice. Legal aid and representation is an important element aimed at ensuring women’s rights. Under the Law on Legal Aid, persons who are entitled to free legal aid include victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, and victims of trafficking who have not sufficient financial means. Another group of eligible persons are those in the process of securing international protection. Nevertheless, in these cases, as with other cases of entitled persons, a “means” test is applied which limits access to legal representation and to justice for women victims of violence. The following circumstances are considered by the court in the “means” test: income accruals to the victim or her family; property status, as certified by a declaration; marital status; state of health; employment; age; and other circumstances. After the court decision to grant legal aid, the ruling is immediately sent to the Bar Association within the court’s district for the appointment of an attorney. Given the lengthy procedure and heavy requirements of the means test, this system is not appropriate for the urgent and unconditional protection that women in situations of violence need. The NGO-led legal services remain the only recourse for the victims in these urgent situations.

The social assistance directorates are hindered in their efforts to protect and provide services to victims of domestic violence by stereotypical prejudices about the roles of women in the family and society and severe bureaucracy. Social service officials underestimate the risk faced by domestic violence victims and rely on personal beliefs about women rather than acting in compliance with the law. As a result, many victims are prevented from obtaining adequate and timely assistance and are not directed to appropriate social service providers for protection and assistance. In addition, social services officials are not sufficiently informed about the powers, roles, and responsibilities of other government institutions. Lack of inter-agency knowledge impedes coordination and delays necessary interventions in domestic violence cases. These attitudes towards victims of domestic violence and lack of coordination efforts by institutions often lead to reoccurrence of the violence against the victim and victims’ loss of trust in the system for protection and assistance.

An important part of the development of policies, activities and services in the domestic violence and gender-based violence should be the creation of specialized services for children victims of
violence. It is also essential to increase the competence of professionals to recognize child victims of violence. Enhancing knowledge and skills for recognition of the signs and reaction in the case of a child victim of violence is an important aspect for the training of all professionals who have access to the group (teachers, medical specialists, educators, etc.).

Enhancing sensitiveness, knowledge and skills on domestic and GBV for the staff in the refugee/migrant accommodation centres is crucial step for providing efficient and timely services to the victims.

In addition, there is lack of sufficient programs for work with perpetrators of domestic violence. Work with perpetrators is one of the main approaches in most European countries to tackle the problem and reduce re-victimization. The same can be said about the need for programs for working with children for overcoming traumatic experience and capacity building for coping with the experience of violence.

LIST OF REFERENCES

In Bulgarian:

Г. Тишева и А. Николова, ‘Мониторинг доклад за 2014 г. за сексуално и основано на пола насилие в контекста на международната закрила в Република България’, София, 2015, UNCR.

Наредба за условията и реда за сключване, изпълнение и прекратяване на споразумението за интеграция на чужденците с предоставено убежище или международна закрила. http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=116399


‘План за действие за периода 2017 – 2020 към Националната програма за превенция на насилието и злоупотребата с деца /2017-2020/’

The BASE project (REC-AG-2017/REC-DAP-GBV-AG-2017) has been co-financed with the support of the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. Its contents and materials are the sole responsibility of its authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

In English


The BASE project (REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017) has been co-financed with the support of the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. Its contents and materials are the sole responsibility of its authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

European Commission, ‘November infringements package: key decisions’, MEMO/18/6247, 8 November, 2018


UNICEF ‘Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria. A review and analysis of data, cause-and-effect relations and key issues affecting the lives of children in Bulgaria’, December,
The BASE project (REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017) has been co-financed with the support of the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program. Its contents and materials are the sole responsibility of its authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.