WE GO!

WE GO!2

Building economic indipendence: the way out of Intimate Partner Violence

OFF WE GO!
Local Networks for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of IPV survivors

actionaid
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INTRODUCTION:
WE GO!2 AND ITS THREE PILLARS

Violence against women is an extremely widespread phenomenon in Europe and the ongoing pandemic has further complicated this structural problem. According to official data, **one in three women** experience physical and/or sexual violence in a relationship with a man [1]. The causes of this violence are structural and rooted in gender inequality. They are also often linked to a particular type of inequality: **economic dependence**. On one hand, this is systemic, but on the other it is a concrete form of violence that the abusive man uses on the woman precisely to limit her autonomy.

Lack of autonomy and economic independence is one of the main challenges women face when trying to leave abusive men. Anti-Violence Centres (AVCs) across Europe recognise that women often remain in violent relationships because of their financial dependence on their violent partners. The data collected through WE GO! (project implemented from 2015 to 2017) show us that **82.5% of the women** who turn to the Anti-Violence Centres **are not economically independent**[2]. On one hand, this problem is part of an employment scenario in which less women are employed than men and, on the other hand, it is the result of economic violence that women suffer from their partners.

For all these reasons, the **WE GO!2 BUILDING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE - the way out of intimate partner violence** project is being launched in December 2018 in 4 European countries - **Greece, Italy, Spain, and Bulgaria - involving 6 partners**: **Women's Centre of Karditsa - WCK**, **ActionAid-Italy, Rel.Azioni Positive Anti-Violence Centre**, the **Institute for Social Research - IRS, Fundaciò SURT** and the **Center for Sustainable Communities Development - CSCD.**

The main objective is to support women on their way to economic independence **by strengthening local and national support systems**, promoting the exchange of **good European practices,** and creating cooperation **networks** between public and private actors.

The project is based on three interlinked pillars:

1. **Capacity Building** between Anti-Violence Centres (AVCs), NGOs and other actors working directly with women;

2. **Building** sustainable multi-actor **networks** able to adequately respond to and support women emerging from violence in the development of their social and economic relationships;

3. **Awareness raising** and direct **advocacy** to companies through training on the topic.

The following report presents the main project results, the lessons learned and some recommendations for top managers of companies to support the socio-economic empowerment of women emerging from violence.

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[1] World Health Organisation*, Devastatingly Pervasive: 1 in 3 Women Globally Experience Violence* Geneva, 2021.

[2] WE GO, *Final Narrative Report,* 2017.

1. Exchange and systematic organisation of know-how

1.1 Toolkit: methodology and use

Between 2015 and 2017, the main focus of the first edition of the WE GO! project was the **systematic organisation of the *know-how of the Anti-Violence Centres involved in the project*** and of the socio-economic empowerment practices considered most promising in Europe, developed by the Centres themselves in order to valorise them. In-depth exchanges and an experimentation process carried out by operators and experts therefore resulted in a *Toolkit* aimed at facilitating the work of the Anti-Violence Centre operators in empowering the women who turn to them (Training Toolkit).

The second edition of WE GO! (2018-2021) aimed to go a step further by strengthening the local and national support systems. Within this framework, the *Toolkit* was revised and disseminated. Specifically, its structure was simplified, and its content was enhanced to make it a more agile tool. The *Training Toolkit* is not to be considered a mere manual, but a basis to which additions and insights found in the repository of the project website can be added.

1.2 Working with Anti-Violence Centres between training and mutual learning

In order to implement the exchange of knowledge, the first project actions undertaken included **2 training cycles** for and with the operators, with the aim of exchanging good practices and systematising knowledge on the socio-economic empowerment of women who have suffered violence. A total of **169 operators and 31 Anti-Violence Centres** in different territories were involved in the **10 training courses** (*Mutual Learning Exchange*).

Each project partner chose to use different methodologies (e.g. group work, face-to-face training with experts, extended exchanges) and to explore issues closely related to the local socio-economic context and specific needs.

Fundació SURT, in Barcelona, focused on how to help women emerging from violence who, due to a migration background, may find themselves in situations of irregular administration, how to strategically collaborate with the public services and, finally, how to support women in finding alternatives to employment (e.g. through the creation of cooperatives and self-entrepreneurship initiatives).

ActionAid Italia also explored the theme of cooperatives and self-entrepreneurship, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses but also providing practical tools on how to start your own cooperative, using experiences from northern and southern Italy.

Instead, **Center for Sustainable Communities Development (CSCD)** in Bulgaria used the training courses to disseminate the *Toolkit* and focused on the importance of networking for AVCs, thus providing insights on two key points of the project.

On the other hand, **Women's Centre of Karditsa (WCK)** the Greek Anti-Violence Centre opted for a specific focus on policies, and launched discussions with the AVC operators on the specific measures needed to foster social and labour market integration, access to training opportunities, etc., and their interrelation with policies related to gender equality and the prevention and combating of gender-based violence.

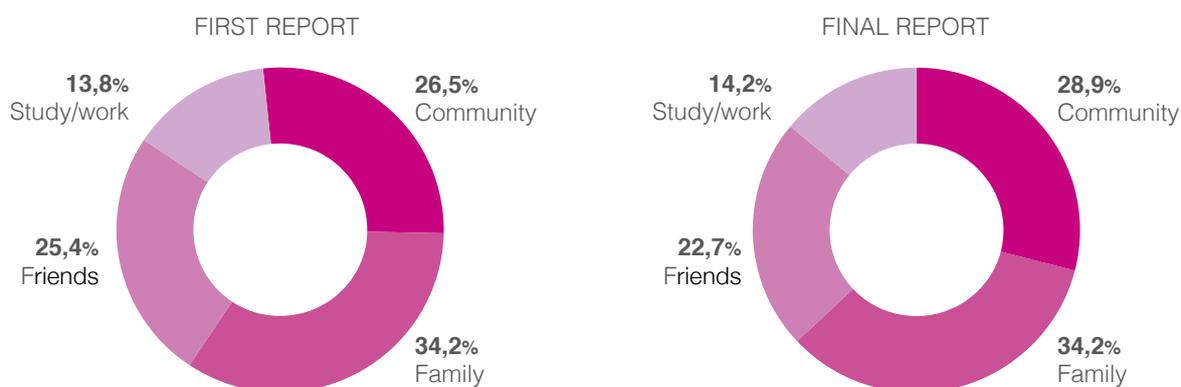## 1.3 The tools used: results and lessons learned

Although the *Toolkit* was disseminated in its entirety, it was decided to implement the use of three tools in particular: the ***Social Relationship Plan, the Balance of Competencies*** and the ***Career Plan***, accompanied by a **Job Matching** activity. These tools were chosen for implementation because they were considered to be the easiest ones to apply in the different contexts and the most useful. We did this by **involving 154 women** in total.

Prior to the use of these tools, **59 female operators were trained** during 2 sessions of 3 days each, where the tools and how to adapt them to different needs and contexts were discussed.

The ***Social Relationship Plan*** is a tool to help women visualise their network of relationships and rediscover its value, particularly when job-searching.

The women who used the tool **increased** the size of their relationship network **by an average of 10%**.

These are the areas in which the reports were distributed:

FIRST REPORT

13,8%
Study/work

26,5%
Community

25,4%
Friends

34,2%
Family

FINAL REPORT

14,2%
Study/work

28,9%
Community

22,7%
Friends

34,2%
Family

Source: IRS, *Knowledge Impact Analysis. WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

The proportion of **relationships in the study/work** and **community/services spheres** thus **increased**, while the family dimension remained the same and friendship ties decreased, probably also **due to the lockdown** that pushed women more to seek services but made informal contacts more difficult.

The relationships were rated on a scale of positivity or negativity ranging from -10 (extremely negative impacting relationship) to 10 (extremely positive impacting relationship) based on the intensity of the relationship and the woman's perception. From the first survey to the final survey, passing through the objective established by the woman with the support of the Anti-Violence Centre, there is an overall improvement of the relational network with **positive and extremely positive relationships increasing (86.9% at the beginning, 90% at the end)** and negative and extremely negative relationships decreasing (13.1% at the beginning, 9.9% at the end). However, looking at the average evaluations by sector, it emerges that, overall, for all sectors considered, the average positivity of relationships increased, and coincides with the objectives that the women had set themselves.

Overall, **73.5% of women significantly improved their relational network**. Considering only those women who did not initially present all relationships as 'positive' or 'extremely positive', the percentage of those who significantly improved their network rises to 80.6%[3].

Feedback from partners[4] is generally positive. The *Social Relationship Plan* is particularly effective when used with women who started their journey to escape from violence long ago. It should be noted that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the instrument had to be adapted for remote use.

The *Balance of Competencies* was useful for women precisely to rediscover what their skills are, for both hard and soft skills, and consequently to find the most suitable field of work and training to focus on.
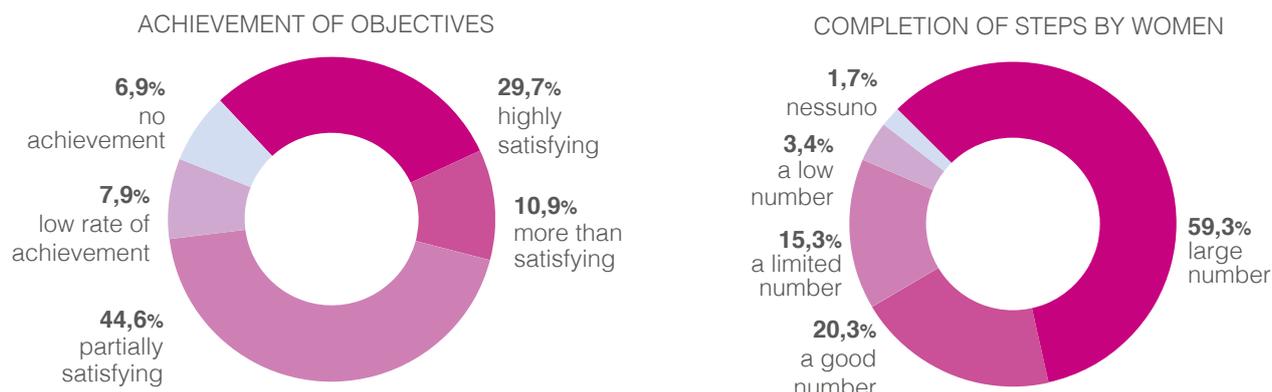
The third tool, the *Career Plan*, supports women in developing a step-by-step plan.

This tool, represented graphically with a scale accompanied by a table in which actions, their dates and objectives can be entered, helps the woman to plan her job search in the broadest sense. This means that, for example, a woman's ultimate goal may be to send an application, but in order to get there, there are intermediate steps (reviewing the CV, sending an email, asking for advice from a friend working in the field of interest) which need to be structured.

In spite of the difficulties of this period, the **objectives** set by the women have an **achievement** rate of **50%**, which rises to 60% when considering the additional objectives, i.e., those which the women did not set themselves but managed to achieve.

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[3] IRS, *Knowledge Impact Analysis. WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

[4] ActionAid, *Internal Evaluation Report D3, WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

6,9% no achievement

7,9% low rate of achievement

44,6% partially satisfying

29,7% highly satisfying

10,9% more than satisfying

COMPLETION OF STEPS BY WOMEN

1,7% nessuno

3,4% a low number

15,3% a limited number

20,3% a good number

59,3% large number

Source: IRS, *Impact Analysis report. WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

Setting a series of micro-objectives helps women to consider **job searching** as a **feasible objective**, to recalibrate their expectations so that their skills and desires meet the job offer which, moreover, in this difficult pandemic period, has changed in terms of quantity and type of working sectors.

The **Job Matching** activity involved **115 women**. Despite the difficult socio-economic period, the women involved in the project were supported in finding vacancies, traineeships and training courses, sending and managing applications, by the Anti-Violence Centre staff.

Some data about this

Actions	% sul totale
Uploading CVs to dedicated websites	58.3
Support in searching for job posts	84.3
Applications for jobs	80.0
Applications for training courses	22.6
Applications for traineeships	13.9
Other activities	58.3

Outcomes	% sul totale
Getting an interview	13.0
Recruitment for a temporary job	7.0
Recruitment for an open-ended job	0.9
Recruitment (no specification on the contract)	6.1
Traineeship	1.7
TOTAL	28.7

Source: IRS, *Knowledge Impact Analysis. WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

2. The importance of networks and the tools to develop them

2.1 Stakeholder Analysis

The stakeholder mapping activity of the project partners, elaborated by the Institute for Social Research IRS, was fundamental for the implementation of all subsequent actions of WE GO!2 (*Networking analysis*). In particular, this activity has been crucial for the implementation of public interest initiatives because it has made it possible to **identify the relevant actors** their expectations and interests. The main objectives were:

» identifying the actors (present in their own network and introduced for the first time) for the project activities;

» strengthening the network of each partner;

» inviting partners to reflect on their needs and shortcomings in terms of connections with other actors.

In addition to stakeholder mapping, specific analyses were carried out on the following dimensions: the evolution of the network, i.e. its implementation, which stakeholder categories the partners focused on, the size of the network and the relevance of the different stakeholders for the project.

One year has passed from the first to the last mapping (October 2019-October 2020) and **the partner network has increased overall by 101.2%**, each network now has an average of **68 stakeholders, whereas the initial average number was 34**.

The development of the network witnessed significant increases, especially **in the business sector (up by 276.9%)**. This increase occurred for several reasons. Firstly, because in the first mapping, although the business sector was considered fundamental, it was the one where the network was least developed. Secondly, the project activities (e.g. meetings and trainings) helped the partners to develop and strengthen this type of relationship. Particular attention was also paid to **institutional actors** with whom relations were **implemented with a growth rate of 70.2%**.

Categories	Final number of stakeholders	Percentage of growth
Companies	98	276.2%
Institutional actors	80	70.2%
NGOs and the third sector	119	60.8%
Other actors in society	21	75%
Experts	22	54.5%

Source: IRS, *Territorial Protocol Analysis*. WE GO!2, 2021.

The networks of all partners now present a good coverage of the different territorial/governmental areas initially mapped and are well balanced in terms of stakeholder size.

Networks require continuous expansion and those currently in place require **care** and **consistency** to be effective. According to the partners, the evidence of the project leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to **keep a specific focus in the search for alliances**, which does not mean limiting oneself to stakeholders who deal specifically with gender-based violence or, even more narrowly, with socio-economic empowerment of women who have experienced violence, but rather keeping women's empowerment as a goal and understanding who can best help us in this, who may have a direct interest and who can guarantee the strongest commitment. These three characteristics can ensure the construction of an effective network over time[5].

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[5] IRS, *Guidelines for Stakeholder Mapping and Screening to Structure a Multi-Agency Network*, 2020.

2.2 The importance of networks in the work of the AVCs: Networking Analysis

The other dimension on which the implementation of the network was tested is that of the Anti-Violence Centres themselves which, like the partners of the WE GO!2 project, tested the *tool* created in the framework of the project in order to expand and improve their network of relations.

The methodology is similar to the one used for the *Networking Analysis* of the individual woman, while the areas of analysis were the following: companies, institutional actors, NGOs and third sector, experts.

Each partner carried out **2 training courses of 3 days** each on the use of the *network analysis* tool. The training courses were purposely conducted one year apart to test the development of the network. Unfortunately, the year in question was 2020 which, due to the **health emergency, severely limited the expansion of the network of Anti-Violence Centres**, which were forced to significantly limit their activities (*Local network for women's centres*).

In total, **66 operators from 8 different AVCs and shelters** were supported in evaluating and developing the local network of their organisation.

All the operators involved in the testing of this tool recognised its value and effectiveness. The objective of building multi-actor networks around their anti-violence centre was also deemed important by all of them.

2.3 The Territorial Protocol: a necessary and sustainable network

Socio-economic empowerment of survivors is a complex issue, requiring the **response** of a **wide range of actors**. This requires the creation of a **multi-sectoral and multi-agency mechanism, that provides complementary roles and skills in the network**. Yet global interventions in this field are still limited and often lack coordination, agreements and formalised procedures. As a result, different priorities, principles and standards are put in place, resulting in the duplication and/or inconsistency of actions which may lead to the non-fulfilment of the final objective of the interventions: the socio-economic empowerment of women.

For this reason, we developed within the project a **Territorial Protocol Model to facilitate the construction and structuring of a** formalised **local mechanism** to promote and manage women's socio-economic empowerment plans in a coherent and coordinated way (*Territorial Protocol Model*)[6].

Each partner tested this model and tried to **adapt it to their own context**.

In Ruse, Bulgaria, a local protocol was signed on 16 March 2021 in which 12 actors[7] committed themselves to contribute, according to their areas of expertise, to the economic empowerment of women emerging from violence.

The process of signing the protocol is currently underway in Greece (with reference to the territory of Karditza) and in Italy (with reference to the territory of the Municipality of Milan).

As far as Spain is concerned, we can talk about a local informal network focusing on Sirga and the partner SURT which represents an excellent example of strong and effective relationships between different actors in the field of women's economic empowerment. This informal network, like the formalised territorial protocols, can also be considered a major achievement in the framework of the WE GO!2 project's objectives!

In Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, the Territorial Protocols that were developed during the project are new and not simply an extension or accession of signatories to existing, already formalised protocols. They can therefore be seen as **significant innovations in the local context**. Their creation involved a lot of work on the construction of this instrument. However, it was facilitated by the presence of some already very strong relations between some of the actors on the ground, the result of the work that WE GO!2 partners have been doing on the subject for years.

The **structural lack of funds, time and resources of the AVCs** to carry out some of the activities envisaged in the protocol, such as training and awareness-raising among companies, is certainly a point to which attention should be paid with a view to ensuring the sustainability of the action. However, the effectiveness of territorial protocols is also measured

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[6] ActionAid, *Territorial Protocol Model to Build Economic Independence of Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence*, 2020.

[7] The actors committed to the Territorial Protocol are: CSCD, Ruse Municipality, Ruse University, "Kanev" University Hospital, Zonta Club - Ruse, Soroptimist International, Ruse Club, "Nedka Lazarova" Vocational High School in Clothing, Ruse - Free Spirit City Foundation, Reiffeisen Bulgaria Bank, Kaufland Bulgaria, MIK BG Ltd (Sewing Company), Antoan Vill Ltd (Sewing Company).

by their future sustainability. It is very important that the planned actions are not only effectively implemented but also planned for the future, just as the cooperation between the signatories cannot end with the signing of the Protocol itself. The latter must not simply be a formal pact involving common actions with a deadline, but a strong commitment that is renewed over time. In this perspective, all the provisions of the Protocol aimed at facilitating its renewal, the entry of new signatories or, in any case, further developments, are fundamental[8].

3. Companies: a necessary ally for introducing women to the labour market

3.1 From training to Job Matching: a path of responsibility and an advantage for all

Training and awareness-raising activities on gender issues in companies are now quite **widespread**, thanks also to the creation and now common presence of internal working groups dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion, especially in large companies. There is also a strong need for Anti-Violence Centres (AVCs) to raise awareness among companies due precisely to their key role in the process of socio-economic empowerment. This awareness is also present at legislative and institutional level. We find this issue first of all in **international legislation** and in the CoE Convention[9]. More specifically, Article 17 'Participation of the private sector and the media', paragraph 1, states that '*Parties shall encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies and to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for their dignity*'[10]. European legislation in this area has produced EU Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, which in Article 26 'Prevention of discrimination' provides that *"Member States shall encourage, in accordance with national law, collective agreements or practice, employers and those responsible for access to vocational training to take effective measures to prevent all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, in particular harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, in access to employment, vocational training and promotion."*[11] and through Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/GAI[12].

Finally, a further element to highlight is that national, European, regional and international legislation stipulates that employers have a **legal responsibility to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace** and, as a result, potential lawsuits can have a major financial impact on the relevant companies. Therefore, it is crucial that partners are duly updated on the latest legal developments concerning the fight against gender-based violence and the protection of women who are victims of violence (e.g. anti-violence plans) as well as policies promoting gender equality in the workplace (e.g. leave for women who have suffered violence, anti-discriminatory employment measures, awareness-raising and safety in the workplace interventions), while also verifying the ratifications of European directives and relevant regional and international conventions in their countries.

We would also like to highlight that when the needs of women meet those of companies, this can be **productive and beneficial** for both sides.

The **ILO Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work 2019 shows how harassment has a negative impact** on work organisation, workplace relationships, worker participation, and the reputation and productivity of companies. It is in this context that GBV prevention (through training, awareness-raising, and the adoption of appropriate policies) plays a fundamental role, so much so that the Convention establishes an **obligation on the part of companies to promote a safe environment** and to guarantee a general environment of zero tolerance against violent and harassing behaviour and practices.

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[8] IRS, *Territorial Protocol Analysis. WE GO2! Report 2*, 2021.

[9] Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, article 18.

[10] Council of Europe, *Encouraging the participation of the private sector and the media in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence: Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention*Strasbourg, 2016.

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

[12] Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

For this reason, the pathway described here shows the different stages through which this awareness can be achieved, from training/awareness-raising, to commitment to job matching and the project *Label*.

The idea for the course was based precisely on the awareness that a single training session in a company is not enough to solve the problem, but that **a more lasting** relationship needs to be created and above all a relationship that serves to **understand the needs of the company in question**. The pathway that the WE GO!2 partners developed included: **training with staff and management**, a possible commitment of the company to contact or be contacted by the AVCs periodically for **updates on vacancies**, the filling in of the project **Label** questionnaire, allowing a self-assessment and consequent suggestions for improvement by the IRS.

For most partners, the activities with companies proved to be very effective in raising the awareness of private actors, expanding the network of relationships with them and promoting a local working environment that is more and more capable of supporting the empowerment of women emerging from violence.

3.2 What and how to tell people about gender-based violence in companies?

The training sessions focused on the topic of domestic violence in its different forms, with a **specific** focus **on the** socio-economic **empowerment** of women who have experienced violence, also in companies[13]. (*Awareness raising with enterprise on VAW*)
The latter is a topic that is still not very widespread, but is nevertheless crucial not only to show how gender-based violence can occur in various forms in companies or how our female colleagues can experience violence at home, but also to show how the workplace can be a way out of the situation. Understanding that you are part of the solution is what made these **training sessions engaging**, so much so that the question posed after each training session, by women but also by many men, was: "*And* ***what can we do?***"

During the project, **we trained more than 1,200 employees in approximately 70 companies** on gender-based violence: at the end of the training, a non-compulsory questionnaire was given to the participants, with a total of 246 questionnaires completed by 183 women and 63 men. Most of the respondents (65%) were between 35 and 54 years old.

The first question asked whether, before the training, participants had been aware of the phenomenon of domestic violence and its consequences for women, children, families, society and the economy. **Only about 30% had been significantly or very aware of these topics**, a substantial proportion stated to have been partially aware (significantly more women than men) and 11.5% stated that they had had very little or no knowledge at all of them.

Given these starting points, the importance of **awareness-raising** and training **activities** is **crucial**. In fact, when asked whether the training increased the respondents' knowledge about the initiatives that could be implemented to address gender-based violence and/or sexual harassment in the workplace, 87% stated that it had increased it very much or more than very much[14].

3.3 WE GO!2 Label: not a grade but a pathway to improvement

Talking about gender-based violence in companies means **improving the company organisation** and the **quality of work**. Seeking to achieve equal opportunities in the workplace implies not only **combating different forms of discrimination** that may affect women at work, but also introducing an **overall improvement** of the whole organisational structure. The approach to gender discrimination in employment has so far mainly focused on women's access to employment and their working conditions (e.g. barriers to recruitment and training, limits to career paths, difficulties in balancing work and private life, gender pay gap). Although still to a very limited extent, steps have been taken to begin addressing the matter of the forms of violence that women may suffer in the workplace, such as harassment and sexual harassment. Forms of violence against women workers outside the workplace, in particular domestic or partner violence, have rarely been considered as issues to be addressed in the work context.

For this reason, the Institute for Social Research (IRS) has constructed a pathway that takes into account specific areas of assessment, with a **focus on gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace**, and **the provision of support to women workers from a background of domestic violence**

In practice, it is **a questionnaire** addressed to the company management and/or human resources, designed to gather information related to the areas listed above. It is not a certification but a **self-assessment** that enables the company to undertake a continuous **improvement process**.

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[13] Women's Centre of Karditza, *Awareness Raising with Enterprises on VAW. Guidelines*, 2020.

[14] IRS, *Knowledge Impact Analysis. WE GO!2 Report*, 2021.

The IRS research institute, after reviewing the questionnaire, provides guidelines for the **implementation of actions** leading to a working environment that is as welcoming and violence-free as possible.

A total of **10 companies** were involved **in the labelling process**. Of these, 3 are large, 4 are medium-sized and 3 are small or family businesses.

They cover a variety of production sectors: 3 are in the area of services, 3 in wholesale and retail trade, 2 are in the area of health and/or social work, 1 is in the area of production and 1 in the area of financial insurance.

However, the rating system is designed precisely to be suitable for companies regardless of their size or sector of activity.

Here is some of the evidence that has emerged:

» The issues concerning "**Gender equality at work**" and "Corporate culture and working environment" (in the respective sections of the questionnaire) seem to be those most commonly **internalised by companies**.

» Instead, within the section **'Gender-based violence'**, the low score in the sub-section 'Support for women emerging from violence' showed that **companies still do not assign sufficient priority to this issue**.

» Of the measures implemented to improve the working environment, the most common are **training** activities **for women workers returning from leave**, special training to **support women's careers** and tools for the development of professional skills, **and flexible forms of work organisation**.

» As regards the section on 'Corporate culture and working environment', information and **awareness-raising** actions are often implemented **to counter gender bias** and promote gender equality.

» A large proportion of companies have established **rules and policies** to promote and respect gender equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as a specific company reporting system or informal procedures to address and counteract gender discrimination and actions to find out workers' needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Below we illustrate some evidence that we have been able to gather during the project and that can serve as guidelines not only for the project partners who will continue to work on the socio-economic empowerment of women emerging from violence, but also for the different stakeholders that constitute the multi-actor network we have identified as a necessary good practice.

First and foremost, we argue that it is important to act on **training** and **knowledge exchange**. We have seen that in the project the **valorisation of the knowledge** and practices of Anti-Violence Centres, its exchange at European level and its systematisation have given very good results.

We promote the continuation of this valorisation, which must take place at **a systemic level**. For this to happen, however, the **Anti-Violence Centres** must have the time and the funds to do so. This can only happen if they are **adequately and regularly funded by the institutions** that are **obliged to allocate the financial resources** for an adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence, including those carried out by NGOs and civil society, as provided for, for example, by art. 8 of the Istanbul Convention.

We also believe that the **collection of data** on the socio-economic profile of women who are victims of violence should be promoted at European level to help understand the complexity of the problem.

Networking is also a key area of intervention. This proved to be a fundamental action within the project but one that cannot remain confined to a two- or four-year project dimension. The networks initiated through the Territorial Protocol during the WE GO!2 project must become **sustainable in the long term** in order to be effective and, above all, they must have the **support of all the relevant actors, from institutions to companies, third sector realities and AVCs**.

Sustainability can and must be ensured by networking the available resources. It is a matter of ***co-ownership*** whereby all the actors involved, both institutional and private, commit themselves to achieving common goals, equally respecting the agreed principles and approaches and fulfilling their mandates, including in economic terms.

The presence of companies in these networks was also very important, so we ask **companies to be more and more involved** in the whole process leading to the socio-economic empowerment of women because only in this way can companies express their needs and meet those of other stakeholders.

The constant presence of companies as well as Job Centres (another key actor as identified by the vertical project meetings) is fundamental to understand which job sectors have more offer in the territory, in order to also **act on training and offering career guidance to women**.

The socio-economic independence of women is a key stepping stone in the pathway out of domestic violence, a violence we have witnessed as being very common and structural within our society. This is why we are asking all parts of society to **take responsibility**.

We believe that it is important for institutions intervene to facilitate and increase women's participation in the labour market, guaranteeing stability and social protection. Only with a systemic and comprehensive action regarding all women can we help, in particular, the paths of women emerging from violence, because this is only a 'moment' of their lives, but it is as women that the solution must be sought.

Increasing female employment must be accompanied by the **removal of all obstacles** that do not allow women to participate fully in the economic life of their country, and this must be done by **addressing the structural causes of gender inequality** through multidimensional and cross-sectoral policies.

Active labour policies are also useful, in the form of **incentives** for female entrepreneurship and **tax deductions**, thus affecting labour supply but not labour demand.

The areas where action is needed are those considered most promising for the future and, at present, these are predominantly male: the ecological and digital transition, as indicated by the EU regulation establishing the post-Covid-19 recovery and resilience facility[15].

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[15] Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

The report was drafted by **Elisa Virgili**, as project expert.

Partnership

The project involves 4 countries and six organizations:

ActionAid Italia, Italy
Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS), Italy
Rel.azioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, Italy
Center for Sustainable Communities Development,Bulgaria
SURT - Fundació de dones, Spain
Women's Center Of Karditsa (WCK), Greece

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