



The current newsletter was drafted within the framework of cooperation between the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (G.S.F.P.G.E.)¹ and UNICEF Partnership Office in Greece² and is the first official report that presents the overall prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Multiple Discrimination against Women, from the National Network of Structures (Counselling Centres, Safe Shelters)³. The situation described in the newsletter is based on the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) database collected and kept by E.E.T.A.A.⁴ and the 24/7 SOS Hotline 15900, covering a two month period – March 2020 and April 2020 - in quarantine conditions/restrictions due to the pandemic of COVID-19 in Greece.

The G.S.F.P.G.E. acknowledges that home quarantine and movement restrictions aimed at minimizing the spread of the coronavirus, resulted in domestic violence being more frequent, more serious, and more dangerous for women and their children. Many women found themselves in a dangerous situation, with the pandemic being a perfect storm for controlling them and increasing isolation with violent husbands/partners, behind closed doors, separating them from the people and resources that can best help them. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights gender inequality in all its forms, with serious consequences in women’s health, their rights, and freedoms worldwide. In addition, it is worth noting the direct and indirect consequences of quarantine to all women and girls in Greece, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups in our community, such as refugee and migrant women , women living in poverty, women with disabilities, single mothers, low-skilled women workers etc.

The current newsletter is covering the period when the Greek Government gradually introduced a series of measures to protect public health and to reduce the spread of the virus and the rates of infection from COVID-19 disease. Therefore, this report cannot be used for further generalization and / or analysis of the situation of Gender-Based Violence in Greece.

The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality

The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality is the governmental agency responsible to plan,



implement, and monitor policies on equality between women and men in all sectors. It was founded in 1985 as an independent public service and today belongs to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The G.S.F.P.G.E. consists of 2 Directorates and 1 Independent Department: The Directorate of Planning, Standardization and Monitoring of Gender Equality Policies, the Directorate of Social Protection and Counselling Services and the Independent Department of European and International Cooperation. In this context, the G.S.F.P.G.E. in Greece is the competent state body for monitoring the implementation of the requirements set by the Istanbul Convention, ratified by Law 4531/2018 (Government Gazette FEK 62 A') and

follows a holistic approach covering the issue of violence against women and domestic violence in various fields and under the responsibility of different bodies.

¹ <http://www.isotita.gr/>

² <https://www.unicef.org/eca/>

³ WEBSITE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: <http://womensos.gr/en/about-us/>

⁴ The Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (E.E.T.A.A.) S.A, has been the institutionalized operational partner of the G.S.F.P.G.E. that supports the creation and maintenance of a Database of the Network (counseling centers and safe shelters)

National Network of Structures of the G.S.F.P.G.E. (Provision of Services - Directorate of Social Protection and Counselling Services)

The Network of Structures of the G.S.F.P.G.E. on preventing and combating GBV and multiple discrimination against women, consists of 42 Counselling Centres, 20 Safe Shelters in Greek territory and the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900. Safe shelters have a total capacity in hosting approximately 400 women survivors and their children or women at increased risk of violence. The Network of Structures is funded by the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), the European Union and national resources. While the G.S.F.P.G.E. is politically responsible and provides scientific supervision and support to the staff of the Counselling Centres, Safe Shelters and the SOS Helpline 15900, the Municipalities across Greece that host the structures, the National Centre for Social Solidarity⁵ and the Research Centre for Gender Equality Issues (K.E.TH.I.) are the state bodies that have undertaken the implementation of the above project (Counselling Centres and Safe Shelters).

• Counselling Centres

• Safe Shelters

The Network consists of 42
Counselling Centres and the SOS
Helpline 15900



COVID-19 Pandemic and Violence Against Women and Girls

Deep-rooted prejudice still stands in the way of gender equality worldwide, the consequences of the current pandemic have affected women and girls in a disproportionate way, while at the same time women typically shoulder more of the burden of family and household work, increased their presence in the health workforce and in other potential areas. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women and children and tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics⁶. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a significant increase of domestic violence against women in many countries, including Belgium, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and others⁷. The impact of domestic violence on health of women and children is equally significant as it can lead to serious physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health problems⁸, including femicide by male perpetrators⁹. Important reports on violence against women by the WHO during COVID-19¹⁰, as well as reports from the Council of Europe, the Expert Group GREVIO on the consequences of domestic violence to women¹¹, advocacy from International Organizations such as UN WOMEN¹², UNICEF¹⁴ and the Civil Society Organizations¹⁵ in Greece anticipate a series of measures in order to tackle the current phenomenon and protect women and children from any form of GBV including domestic violence.

⁵ <http://www.ekka.org.gr/>

⁶ COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

⁷ WHO warns of surge of domestic violence as COVID-19 cases decrease in Europe: <https://unric.org/en/who-warns-of-surge-of-domestic-violence-as-covid-19-cases-decrease-in-europe/>

⁸ WHO COVID-19 and violence against women: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331699/WHO-SRH-20.04-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁹ Coronavirus crisis will see 7 million unplanned pregnancies and 31 million gender-based violence cases, the UN says: <https://www.businessinsider.com/structural-inequality-gender-equality-coronavirus-pandemic-outbreak-contraceptives-pregnancy-fgm-2020-4>

¹⁰ Domestic abuse killings 'more than double' amid Covid-19 lockdown: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/15/domestic-abuse-killing-more-than-double-amid-covid-19-lockdown?fbclid=IwAR0_MWS_KkR9hrNoO_vColh1Q_YZh5ZuJ4vW0dCwhs4V8sZBZGhQTuP4pZw

¹¹ WHO warns of surge of domestic violence as COVID-19 cases decrease in Europe: <https://unric.org/en/who-warns-of-surge-of-domestic-violence-as-covid-19-cases-decrease-in-europe/>

¹² Statement by the President of GREVIO, Marcelline Naudi, on the need to uphold the standards of the Istanbul Convention in times of a pandemic: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/-/for-many-women-and-children-the-home-is-not-a-safe-place>

¹³ The United Nations (UN) supports actions to end violence against women and girls in the face of the COVID-19 crisis: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061132>

¹⁴ UN supporting 'trapped' domestic violence victims during COVID-19 pandemic: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-supporting-%E2%80%98trapped%E2%80%99-domestic-violence-victims-during-covid-19-pandemic>

¹⁵ UNICEF responds to the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe and Central Asia: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/unicef-responds-covid-19-pandemic-europe-and-central-asia>

¹⁶ For victims of domestic violence, "staying home" does not mean "staying safe": https://parontes.imedd.org/covi-endooikogeneiakiva/?fbclid=IwAR2t9p7T4Bt2vQRJan9arZ7nydfB5HXc6_I5uJQML066rMm93o1ZiYe96k



Initiatives and Actions of the G.S.F.P.G.E During the Pandemic

In Greece, the G.S.F.P.G.E. implemented a series of measures and good practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to violence against women and domestic violence. During the extraordinary measures of movement restrictions in Greece, the G.S.F.P.G.E. ensured the accessibility of women survivors to the National Network of Structures, with a legal framework aiming at allowing survivors and their children movement, so as to timely seek help and support from the professionals of the Counselling Centres and Safe Shelters across the country and, at the same time ensured the health safety of the staff and the safety of the beneficiaries. Moreover, the G.S.G.P.G.E. provided the Network staff with guidelines on teleworking, recommendations on remote GBV case management and data protection. The staff of the Network of Structures are currently ready to assist any woman who asks for their support, and with the informed consent of the survivors they proceed to offer their services and support either remotely (via telephone and/or online sessions), or with a physical presence and by taking all necessary measures in preventing the transmission of the COVID-19 disease.

Indicatively, the following actions were undertaken:

- **Participation at the Working Group of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹⁶**, Gender Mainstreaming and Governance, the topic of discussion was the questionnaire on “Mapping best practices and challenges by national institutions for gender equality and address the impact of covid-19”
- **Response to the High-Level Group of the European Commission's Questionnaire for Mainstreaming Gender into all policies and actions** (High-level group on gender mainstreaming) and actions on compacting violence against women and domestic violence during the pandemic in Greece.
- **In cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Permanent Mission in Greece, a joint statement was issued** in support of South Africa and Sweden, which seeks to promote sustainability and political action for women and girls in the fight against COVID-19 pandemics.
- **Active participation at the special report of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)**, remarks and recommendations on the Coronavirus pandemic in the EU and Fundamental Rights Implications¹⁷.
- **Update to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Guterres, on the actions taken by the G.S.F.P.G.E in responding to GBV** and the consequences of the pandemic to all women in Greece, while acknowledging Mr Guterres' call for protection survivors of domestic violence¹⁸.
- **Ongoing communication with the Council of Europe¹⁹ on measures taken to prevent violence and protect survivors in Greece during the movement restrictions**, while at the same time sharing GBV data from the Network of Structures of the G.S.F.P.G.E., including data from the Police Response Departments to Domestic Violence²⁰.
- **Information and awareness towards the Headquarters of the Hellenic Police, so that every effort is made on behalf of the police authorities for the effective management of incidents of domestic violence**, while emphasizing authorities obligation for the immediate manifestation of appropriate official and procedural actions and the need to inform all survivors about specialised support services (safe shelters, psychosocial and legal support etc.).
- **The Greek Government in cooperation with the G.S.F.P.G.E. issued in April 2020 a central TV and social media spot campaign for raising public awareness** and informing about available specialised response services for survivors of GBV with the message "*We stay at home but we do not stay silent*", "*Staying home does not mean enduring violence*". The 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900 to provide information and counselling via phone in women suffering any type of violence including domestic violence²¹.
- **A cooperation protocol was signed in April 2020 between the G.S.F.P.G.E. and the Attica Region that provides the 24/7 Support Helpline 1110 in Attica**, where specialized professionals inform and guide women in need to get immediate help either from the Greek Authorities and 24/7 from the SOS Helpline 15900 for psychological , social and legal support²².

¹⁶ OECD role: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/international-organisations/oecd_el

¹⁷ Coronavirus pandemic in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications - Bulletin: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1>

¹⁸ Statements of the UN Secretary General: <https://unric.org/el/category/antonio-guterres/>

¹⁹ Council of Europe : <https://www.coe.int/el/web/about-us>

²⁰ Police Response Departments to Domestic Violence: http://www.minocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=GR&perform=view&id=6960&Itemid=692

²¹ The SOS telephone line 15900, is in use 24/7: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGFDpoyfn4>

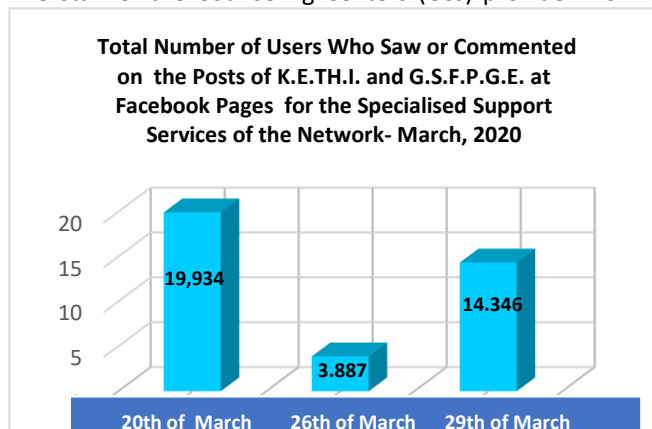
²² Data percentage on domestic violence incidents from the helpline 1110 are not yet recorded: <https://www.isathens.gr/syndikal/9102-60000-sto-1110.html>



- **The European Institute for Gender Equality (E.I.G.E.)** posted in their official webpage, in specific at the section “of Help lines for survivors of GBV, the Greek National 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900”²³.
- **The G.S.F.P.G.E supported the participation of the Panhellenic Pharmaceutical Association** in the Pan-European Campaign entitled "Mask-19", for incidents of domestic violence²⁴.
- **In order for women survivors of domestic violence and their children to escape unsafe environments during pandemic and receive specialised support, the G.S.F.P.G.E during the reporting period issued Temporary Accommodation Facilities across the country**, until all the necessary medical exams are completed and women can be placed at the safe shelters of the Network. In this context survivors could receive forensic examination and psychosocial support, as well their children in cooperation with the "Smile of the Child"²⁵ could receive medical examinations and support from child specialized professionals.
- **Ongoing communication with International Organizations (INGOs) and Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)** specialised to support services for refugee and migrant women survivors of GBV. During the reporting period G.S.F.P.G.E. worked with INGOs and CSOs to better address the phenomenon of domestic violence through participation in teleconferences, coordination etc.
- **Partnership cooperation with UNICEF Partnership Office in Greece and the NGO METAdrasi**, to increase accessibility of refugee and immigrant survivors of GBV at the Network of Structures (counselling centres and safe shelters), through interpretation by professionals trained on the issues of violence in 22 languages.
- **Translation of specialised service provision information leaflet of the National Network of Structures** in main languages spoken by of refugee women, as well as providing interpretation in the 24/7 SOS Helpline in Farsi and Arabic.

Counselling Centres of the Network

The staff of the Counseling Centers (CCs) provide information, long-term and short-term psychosocial support, legal



counseling, job counseling and referrals to temporary Safe Shelters of the Network across the country. The supervisors K.E.TH.I. officers are in direct and daily contact with all case workers and support staff of the Network ready to respond to all needs that arise. During the reporting period, K.E.TH.I. made consecutive social media posts about available specialised support services of the Network. **On their official webpage on Facebook, users who saw and provided feedback (like, share, etc.) on the posts on March 20 and 29 were 19,934 and 14,346, respectively.**

²³ The European Institute for Gender Equality __15900 24 Hours SOS Helpline: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/administrative-data-sources/15900-24-hours-sos-helpline>

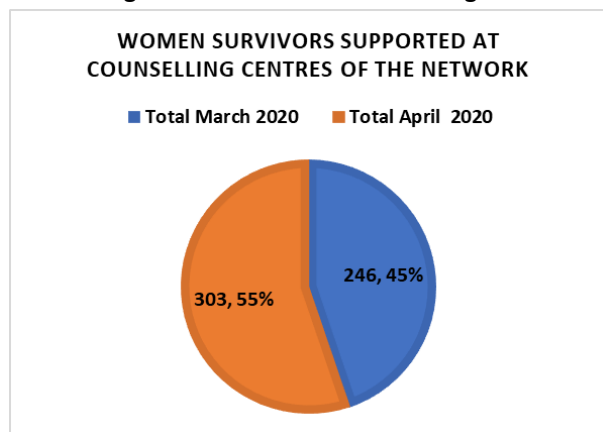
²⁴ Pharmacists participate in the Pan-European Campaign "Mask-19" against Domestic Violence: <https://pfs.gr/%CE%BF%CE%B9-%CF%86%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BC%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%AD%CF%87%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BD-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD/>

²⁵ Child's Smile: <https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/en/poioi-eimaste/>



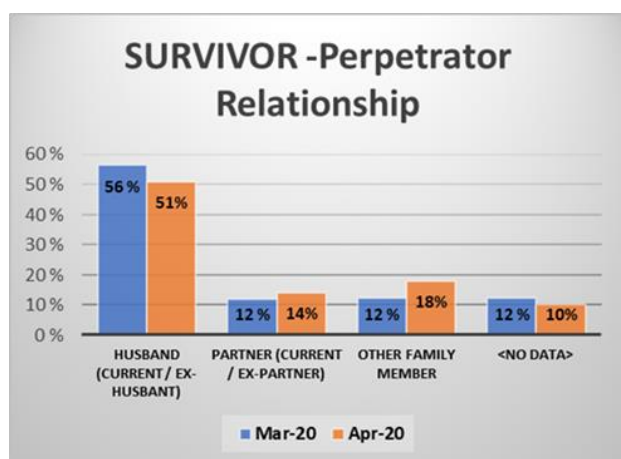
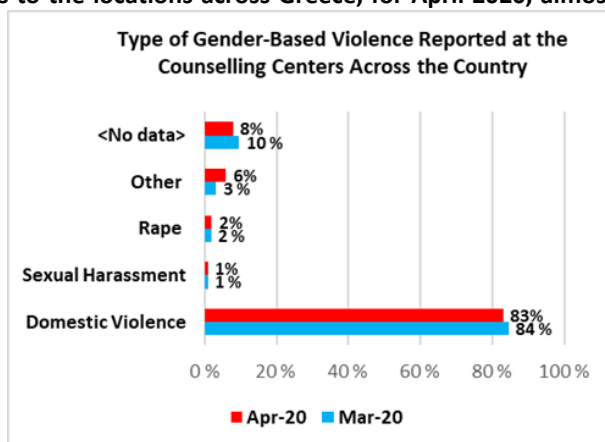
Counselling Centres of the Network (data covering two months period, March 2020, and April 2020)

In March 2020, in total 246 women survivors of GBV and Multiple Discrimination received specialised support from the Counselling Centres of the Network throughout Greece, with an increase of 23,2 % (303) in reported cases for April 2020



(totals March 2020 & April 2020: 549 unique cases). During the reporting period, the main source of women’s information regarding specialised support services of the G.S.F.P.G.E. Network of Structures was the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900, with 39% of survivors to informed during the month of April 2020, while 18% seem to have been informed by another source. In addition, the value of word-of-mouth dissemination of information on specialised available services is recognized in the safe access of survivors to public and non-public general services and specialized support. **Indicatively, for both reporting months, almost 17% of women who received specialised support services from the Counselling Centres throughout Greece, reported that they were informed about**

the existing structures by their friendly network. With regards to the locations across Greece, for April 2020, almost 55% of women received specialised support services at the Counselling Centres in Athens, Piraeus, Patras, Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli, while almost 17% from total unique cases were reported in Crete, Kos, Corfu, Chios and Mytilene while 28% in other Counselling Centres of the Network²⁶. The main form of GBV recorded in both reporting months at the Counselling Centres across the country, was Domestic Violence with almost 84% of all forms of violence against women. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual



violence) psychological and/or emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse²⁷. WHO data show that women of all ages can remain in abusive relationships for a variety of reasons, such as fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, lack of alternative means of financial support, concern for their children, lack of support from family and friends, the stigma or fear of losing custody of children associated with divorce and the hope that the partner will change²⁸. **Regarding survivor - perpetrator relationship, it is mostly a relationship between wife and husband (current and/or ex-husband), with 56% for the month of March 2020 and 51% respectively for April**

2020.

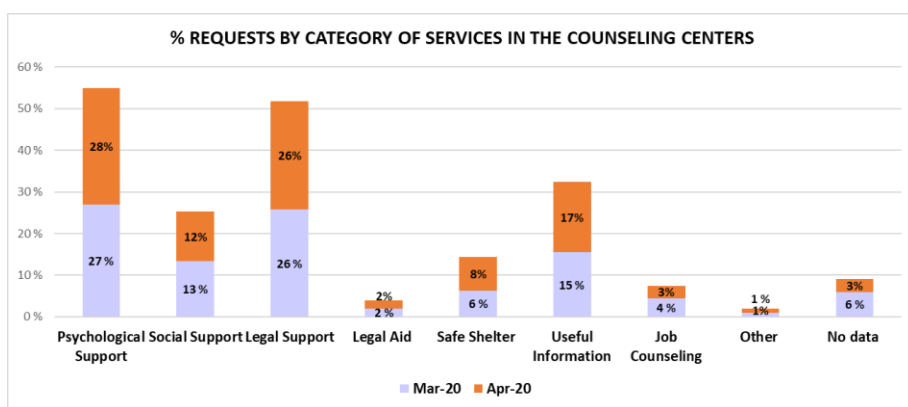
²⁶ Multiple factors such as awareness-raising activities, in combination with higher needs of women, due to the concentration of population in these areas. Therefore, presented results should not be taken as an outcome from which specific conclusions can be drawn.

²⁷ WHO : Violence against women : <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

²⁸ WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/24159358X/en/>



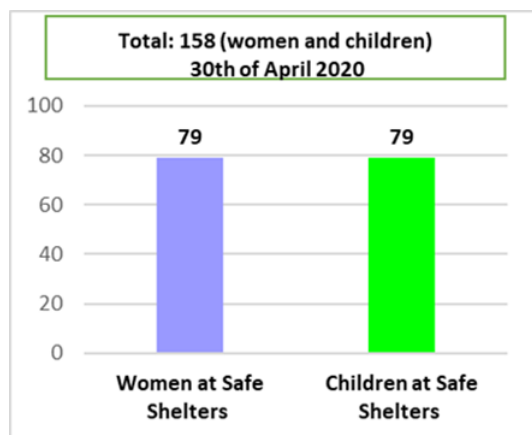
The age groups of women survivors who received specialised support services from the professionals of the Counselling Centres in both reporting months were approximately 7% for women between 26-35 years old, 25% for women aged 36-45 years old and 23% for women between 46-55. Survivors of violence and multiple discrimination belonging to the older age group 60+, are approximately about 5% for March 2020 and 12% of all women receiving specialised support services for April 2020, with the main type of violence being physical neglect and abuse, psychological and financial violence by abusive spouses / partners, their adult children, other relatives or carers. Among other characteristics of women survivors is their educational level, which for the reporting period varies approximately between secondary and post-secondary education, while regarding their employment status, about 42% of them are unemployed while 36% are working and 5% are retired. Regarding women’s nationality in both reported months, approximately 78% were Greek, 12% were non- European Union citizens and living in Greece, and 2,8% women within the European Union and almost 7,2% did not disclose these figures. Women survivors who sought specialized support from the Counselling Centres of the Network across the Country in both March 2020 and April 2020, approximately 28% received mainly psychological support and 26% legal support, while other women were supported socially and received useful information (such as networking, available services etc.).



Above data shows once again that violence against women and domestic violence occurs regardless of age, race, family and professional status and/or the educational level of women and girls.

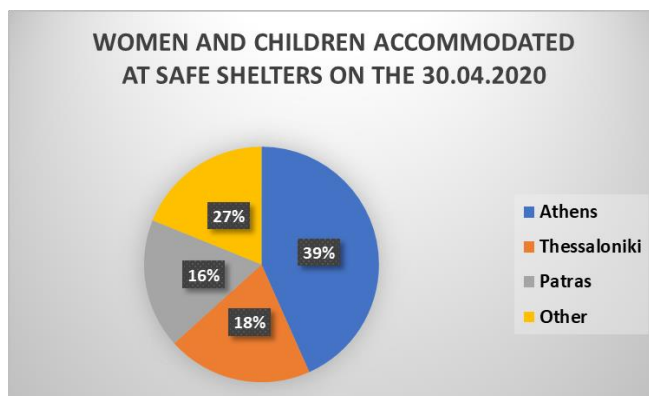
Safe Shelters of the Network (data covering two months period, March 2020, and April 2020)

At the Safe Shelters of the Network of Structures, women survivors and their children have access to nutrition, basic hygiene and clothing, useful information, long-term and short-term psychosocial support, legal and job counselling, as well as the possibility for external referrals to other actors, which are made with the informed consent of women and when necessary. The accommodation timeframe can last up to three months, as the main goal is to empower women in a direction of independent living. For women that no other housing solution is found during this period, the accommodation can be extended for another three months. As mentioned above, the Network of Structures is supported by 22 interpreters through a partnership cooperation between UNICEF Partnership Office in Greece and the G.S.F.P.G.E. **On April 30th 2020, Safe Shelters were accomodating in total 79 women, of which 44 are mothers and 79 children, covering about 37,6% of the total capacity of the Network of Structures across the country. In addition, 19 new cases were placed at the Safe Shelters during the reporting period and from the total accommodated women, 35 survivors are refugee women, of which 25 are mothers and 43 of the 79 children are refugee children.**



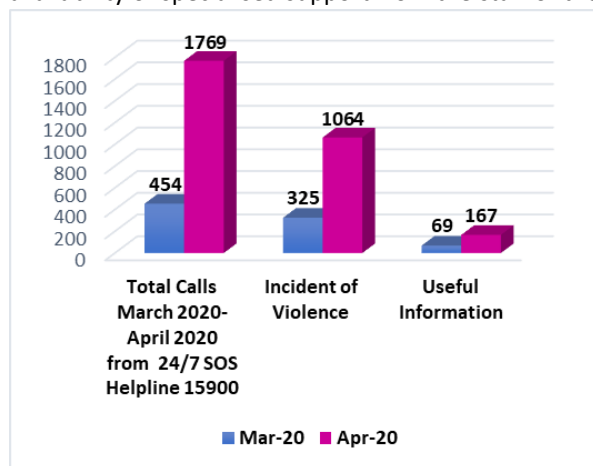


For both reporting months, Safe Shelters in Athens had the higher occupancy with approximately 39% from totals, Thessaloniki with 18% and Patras with 16%. In addition, it is worth mentioning that many women preferred to be accommodated by friends or relatives, while maintaining direct contact with the staff of the Counseling Centers for their ongoing specialised support. **Moreover, a total of 12 women survivors of Domestic Violence were accommodated at the Temporary Accommodation Facilities across the country, specifically in Athens, Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Mytilene. Out of the total number of women that were successfully removed from their abusive environment during the pandemic, 7 were women refugees and migrants, while the total number of children accommodated with their mothers at the Temporary Safe Accommodation Facilities were 10.** The staff of the Counselling Centers of the G.S.F.P.G.E. is in direct contact with NGOs / CSOs that provide support services to refugee and migrant women, in order to meet the urgent needs of safe accommodation for them and their children.



24/7 Helpline 15900 (data covering two months period, March 2020, and April 2020)

The video spot that was posted on TV and social media on 7th of April 2020 as part of the central campaign of the Greek Government to inform and raise public awareness about violence against women and domestic violence and the availability of specialised support from the staff of the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900, has apparently been seen by a total of



10,434 users²⁹. In March 2020, 325 calls were recorded in total as "incidents of violence" and 69 calls recorded as "seeking useful information", while in April 2020, there is a significant increase of 227,4% for calls related to "incidents of violence" and respectively 142% to calls related to "seeking useful information"³⁰. From the total number of calls recorded in March 2020 and that includes incidents of violence and useful information, 85% are beneficiaries or third parties calling the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900 for the first time, while the corresponding percentage for the month of April 2020 is 91%. The Regions with the higher number of calls from totals were Attica with 42% in March 2020 and 45% respectively for April 2020, the Region of Central Macedonia approximately 9% for both months and Crete island respectively with a percentage of

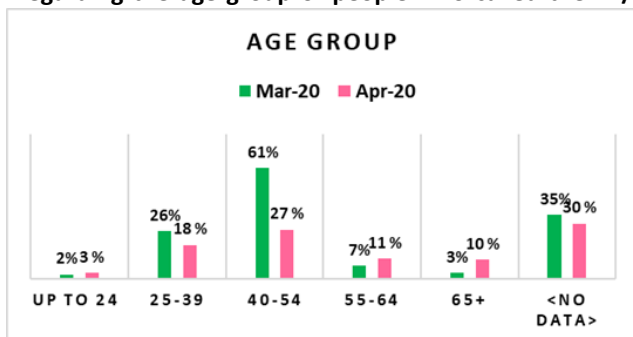
4%. In addition, the percentage of people who did not want to reveal the area from which they are calling, for both reporting months was approximately 20%. Regarding the nationality of people, either beneficiaries or third parties that called the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900 for both reporting months, about 76% of them were of Greek nationality while 24% did not disclose information about their nationality.

²⁹ Data from Google Analytics

³⁰ Note: Unrelated calls, such as pranks, etc. are not reported in this newsletter report

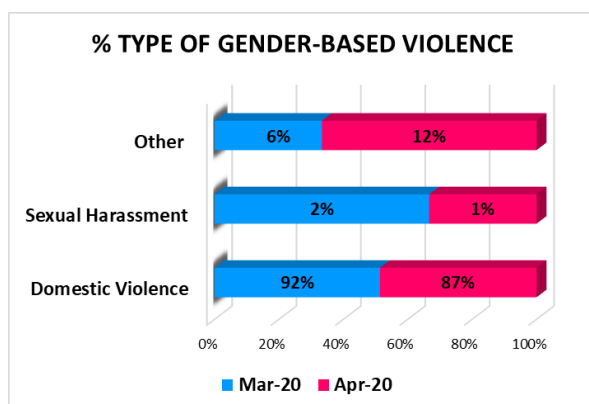


Regarding the age group of people who called the 24/7 SOS Helpline 15900 and received specialised support, it is

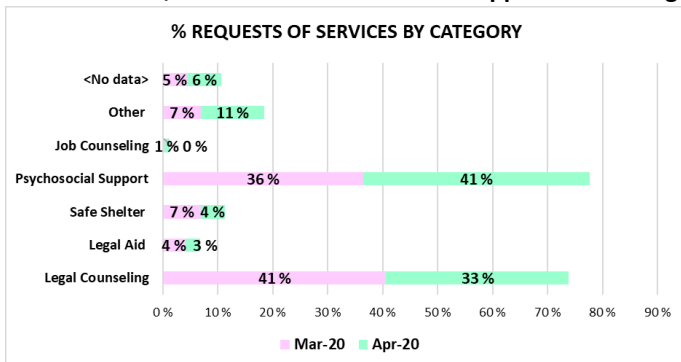


observed that people between 40-54 years old for the month of March 2020 constitute the largest percentage of 61% of the total calls, in comparison to April 2020 where the percentages are distributed in almost all age groups of beneficiaries or third parties. Indicatively, the highest percentage for April 2020 is 30% for people who did not reveal their age, followed by the age group of 40-54 with 27% and 18% for the age group between 25-39 years. Moreover, in both reporting months, Domestic Violence

was reported with the highest percentage of all forms of violence against women, with 92% of incidents in March 2020, and 87% respectively in April 2020. Regarding the Survivor-Perpetrator relationship, the husband (current or ex-husband) was reported with a percentage of 57% of total cases for March 2020 and 54% of all cases respectively in April 2020. In addition, the psychosocial support and legal counselling for both reporting months were the requests with the higher percentage provided by the specialized staff of the 24/7 Helpline 15900. Analytically, in March 2020, 41% from total calls were supported with Legal



Counselling and 36% from totals with Psychosocial Support, while in April 2020 33% from totals requested Legal Counselling and 41% Psychosocial Support, while a slight percentage from totals (March and April 2020) corresponds to the requests for free legal aid and safe accommodation.



Priorities of the G.S.F.P.G.E.

The G.S.F.P.G.E. as the monitoring authority for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention will continue periodic reporting on Policies and Actions on Family Policy and Gender Equality. Specifically, the Directorate of Social Protection and Counselling Services of the G.S.F.P.G.E. will continue the wide spread dissemination of detailed analysis on GBV data from the National Network of Structures, as well as the dissemination of future newsletter on actions and initiatives at local, national, regional and European level, while reflecting on coordination mechanisms and good practices from relevant stakeholders, including Women's Organizations. The ultimate goal of G.S.F.P.G.E. is to enhance the quality and accessibility of all women survivors of GBV and Multiple Discrimination to the general and specialized support services, while outlining the current situation in which women live and especially the vulnerable women of our community.

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ⁱ The current newsletter was supported by UNICEF, which received funding from the US Government.