



Gender-based violence in Greece

report

1.1. The scope of gender-based violence in the country

Gender-based violence in Greece is conceptualized as both violence directed towards an individual based on his/her gender and violence that affects people of a particular gender. Gender-based violence is considered a multidimensional phenomenon that is composed of two basic forms of violence: physical, sexual and psychological. Physical violence is mainly conceptualized as a form of aggressive, unwanted behavior (i.e. beating) and sexual abuse of the victim provoking both physical & psychological harm. Psychological violence or abuse is approached as any form of aggressive or passive aggressive behavior towards the victim (i.e. emotional bullying, humiliation, insults etc.) that results in psychological harm. Although both men and women are victims of gender-based violence, the majority of victims in Greece are women.

As a matter of fact, Greek society remains mainly patriarchal despite significant steps or efforts made in recent years. Greek culture is still dominated by stereotypes regarding gender roles with women considered as inferior to men and are barely involved in decision making positions across the political (according to Gender Equality Index 2017 only 14.3% of women share of ministers, 20.6% share of members of parliament & 19.7% share of members of regional assemblies), economical (9.3% share of members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory board or board of directors & 2.8% share of board members of central bank) and social (11.1% share of board members of research funding organizations, 18.2% share of board members of publicly owned broadcasting organizations & 8.4% share of members of highest decision making body of the national Olympic sport organizations) spheres.

In regards to gender-based violence research reports reveal that violence against women is high in various forms. For example, according to the European Institute of Gender Equality, 21.3% of Greek women and 13.2% of Greek men report that domestic violence against women is common in Greece and 81.3% of the population (women & men) report that violence against women is most likely to occur at home.

Also, regarding sexual assault research reveals that 83.4% of the population (women & men) reports that sexual violence against women should be prioritized by the EU. According to survey data, 20.2% of Greek women and 11.5% of Greek men report that sexual harassment against women is popular in Greece.

In regards to psychological violence, psychological bullying at work seems to be higher for women (2.4% of women reported psychological bullying at work) than men (1.8% of men reported psychological bullying at work). In addition, a higher percentage of women (5.9%) have been subjected to humiliating behaviors than men (2.6%).





Overall, according to the UN Women- Global Database Against Violence in Women the most prevalent form of violence against women in Greece is *Lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence* (19%), then follows *Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence in the last 12 months* (6%) and third on the list is *Lifetime Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (1%).

1.2. National policies on violence prevention

Several actions and initiatives are taken by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE), the governmental organization in charge of equality between women and men, under the scope of the so called National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016- 2020.

The National Action Plan's mission concerns six policy areas with concrete objectives covering the way all fields of both public and private life in favor of young women, men, girls and boys. The National Action Plan's objectives regarding combating sexual and gender-based violence (all forms of gender-based violence) and its main characteristics are the following (<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/posts/policies-and-actions-greek-general-secretariat-gender-equality-improvement-situation-women-and>):

- fourteen Counseling Centers operated by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality at the capitals of the corresponding Regions of the country
- twenty five Counseling Centers operated by the twenty five largest Municipalities nationwide
- nineteen shelters for Abused Women operated by 19 large Municipalities, which started their operation within the period 2013-2014; they provide bilingual (Greek and English) services of shelter, psychological and social support to women victims of violence and their children
- two Shelters for Abused Women operated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Security & Social Solidarity / National Centre for Social Solidarity in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki
- the bilingual (Greek and English) SOS helpline 15900 accompanied by the email-address sos15900@isotita.gr, which has been in operation since March 2011; it provides services of advice, support and counseling to women victims of gender based violence, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year (a low-cost, nationwide, confidential helpline)
- implementation of an awareness raising campaign including relevant seminars, a thematic conference, informational material in four languages (Greek, English, French and Albanian), TV and radio spots, cultural events, publicity on public transport, entries in national and migrant Press, a webpage and a facebook page as well as banners in web pages; the information leaflet for the Counselling Centre of Komotini–Thrace is also published in the Turkish language
- training is offered to counsellors who are recruited in the Counselling Centers, the Shelters and the SOS telephone helpline, to lawyers who participate in the legal aid programmes of women-victims of violence, as





well as to professionals who deal with such cases (i.e. policemen/policewomen, judges, health professionals, etc.).

Undoubtedly, the rural female population can take advantage of this panhellenic network for their own safety and empowerment.

Moreover, other actions that are reported to have been implemented by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality are the following:

- (A) The "Observatory on Gender Equality" supplementary action has been initiated. The so called Flagship Project is entitled "Service organization for the integration, monitoring and evaluation of Gender Equality Policies in all aspects of Public Sector's Actions" (Observatory); its objective is to support Public Administration and Local Authorities to design, implement and evaluate policies concerning gender equality through various data on equality issues (statistics and surveys) deriving from the development and function of relevant tools.
- (B) The General Secretariat for Gender Equality initiated the implementation of gender-neutral language in the official documents in the Greek public administration. The proposal, followed by an official document addressed to all the Ministries and institutions/agencies of the public sector, is actually the implementation of the recommendations of a survey on this topic which was initiated by the GSGE. This was considered to be a progressive step towards changing mentalities on the relationship between the two sexes.
- (C) It has elaborated the incorporation of the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women](#) and domestic violence into national law.
- (D) It has prepared a draft law on real gender equality, which includes and identifies the issues of violence and provides for orientation on addressing such issues. The draft law will soon be voted in Parliament
- (E) It has contributed to the setting up of a parliamentary subgroup on trafficking.

1.3. Availability of prevention programs/good practices

- a) The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 has been included as a good practice in the 2016 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the European Union (European Commission, Brussels, March 2017): pages 51-52 of the EC Report http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc_id=43416.
- b) The European Commission has selected the "Service organization for the integration, monitoring and evaluation of Gender Equality Policies in all aspects of Public Sector's Actions" (Observatory) project as an example of good practice for the 2015 Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men in Europe (March 2016 – page 40, relevant link: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2016_annual_report_2015_web_en.pdf).





- c) Changing stereotypes actions: two poster competitions were initiated by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality were implemented during the school/academic year 2015-2016. The former was addressed to students of secondary education and the groups of schools classified at the three first places participated at an educational trip at the European Institutions based in Brussels under the sponsorship by Ms Konstantinka Kouneva, MEP. The latter was addressed to university students of fine arts and the best poster evaluated by a jury has become the official poster of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality with the motto: “*We break stereotypes - We promote gender equality*”.
- d) During the school year 2016-2017 two competitions of digital creation were in process. The former is addressed to students of primary education and it focuses on combating gender stereotypes through toys and games entitled “*All toys and games for all children*” (no special toys/games for girls and no special toys/games for boys). The latter is addressed to students of secondary education and it is associated with awareness-raising of the gender aspect of environment.
- e) During the Programming Period 2007-2013 extended up to 2015 methodologies and toolkits were created aiming to gender mainstreaming in public policies (youth policies included) of the 13 Regions and the 15 most populated Municipalities of Greece.
- f) Since July 2015 a Protocol of Cooperation has been activated between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, the Research Center for Gender Equality (an entity supervised by the Ministry of Interior), the National Center for Public Administration & Local Government and the Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs on the promotion of gender equality in education (e.g. a number of training seminars to the educational personnel of primary schools are in the process of implementation throughout the country, so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination between the two sexes are perceived by the young generation at a very early stage).
- g) The Secretariat General for Gender Equality also undertakes initiatives in cooperation with the Ministry of Education which aim to apply zero tolerance on sexual harassment in the educational environment to eliminate violence against women and to educate pupils on the values of gender equality by organizing visits to the GSGE, national competitions etc. Education also includes the signing of a cooperation Protocol with the Ministry of Education, the National Center for Public Administration and Research Centre on Issues of Equality for the training of Civil Servants on issues of gender discrimination and violence against women.
- h) The 8th of September, 2016 the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) announced a public call for five scholarships to Greek female graduates for attending the Postgraduate Programme in Business Administration offered by the Hellenic Management Association (EEDE) in Athens.
- i) In 2014 (January- June time period) under the framework of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union the General Secretariat for Gender Equality organised, in collaboration with the European Centre for Women and Technology and in cooperation with National and European Stakeholders, the Conference entitled “Women & Girls Go Digital, National Action Plan for increasing the female talent in digital jobs”. This initiative aimed to increase the female talent in Digital Jobs based on the European Commission’s Initiative Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs and elaborated in collaboration with national and European stakeholders. Positive reference to the Greek initiative “Women and Girls Go Digital” was made in the 2015 Report by the European Parliament entitled “Empowering women on the Internet”. Thanks to the specific Initiative, Greece won a major international award in the category of “digital opportunity”. The WITSA Global ICT Excellence



Awards is a biannual event for the recognition of excellence in digital technology, established by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance.

- j) In the context of Europe 2020 Strategy and in particular of the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe, the objective of the Conference had been to demonstrate the link between e-Skills, Gender Diversity and ICT as a key factor for economic growth based on the creation of digital jobs. The Conference addressed the digital skills gap and raised awareness about the added value by including female talent in digital jobs, research and innovation. Emphasis was given to the promotion of new opportunities for young digital entrepreneurs and to the challenges of the role of the media in the new digital era.
- k) The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has been a partner of the Project entitled “Innovation and Employability for Women, E-Women” co-financed by the European Economic Area (EEA Grants 2009-2014). Its aim was to identify the current evolution of technology in relation to women’s participation and sensitization, especially for young women, associated with ICT and employment (employment/employability and entrepreneurship). The leader of the Project was the National Center for Scientific Research DEMOCRITOS. The Project E-Women was launched in January 2016 and concluded in March 2017.
- l) The GSGE has been actively involved in the management of the female aspect of the refugee and migration crisis in our country. One concrete and tangible outcome of our synergies and networking with high profile International Organizations and NGOs is our involvement in the following two posters directly associated with the protection and respect of women refugees' and migrants' rights with emphasis on combating sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Both posters present their message in five languages - English, French, Arabic, Farsi and Greek:
 - a) We Keep each other safe by caring for each other:
<http://www.orangehabitat.com/16days/we-care-for-each-other.pdf>
 - b) We build a safe community with respect and equality for all
<http://www.orangehabitat.com/16days/safe-community.pdf>.
- m) The GSGE has ensured the continued operation of the integrated and coherent network structures (until 2018) which includes a [24/7 SOS line 15900](#), 40 Advisory centers, and 21 Hosting Places throughout Greece and it has made its structures available to Women refugees, victims or potential victims of abuse.

1.4. Gender based violence in the media

Overall, there are several cases of gender-based violence reported in Greece via the media. Two case examples are described below:





Case A: Gender-based violence in refugee camps

Last year (November 2017) Human Rights Watch interviewed 25 asylum-seeking women and girls around 13 yrs old, living in the Moria “hotspot” on Lesbos. Most of these women reported harassment and health risks due to insufficient security, poor hygiene and sanitation facilities. Human Rights Watch investigated this case and the conditions and concluded that the system fails to address the needs of vulnerable people.

According to Human Rights Watch investigation and interviews the women and girls described pervasive sexual harassment and a persistent sense of insecurity and feel that authorities are unresponsive to their complaints and do not take adequate action to ensure their safety. One woman said she had been approached by a fellow asylum seeker asking for sex in exchange for money. Many said they do not feel safe moving around Moria alone and leave their shelters only in groups or accompanied by male relatives. A 17-year-old girl from Syria said: “Out of fear, I stay in the tent. I don’t go out.”

A 13-year-old girl from Syria who lives in a section of Moria reserved for women and girls travelling alone, said that male asylum-seekers call to women and girls using insulting and sexual terms. “The guys [living here], it’s like they’ve never seen a girl before,” she said. She said another girl asylum seeker approached her about marrying the girl’s brother. “I was really scared,” she said. “I told her to go away. She left, but she looked at me with a lot of anger. I’ve seen her brother standing at the door [to the section], looking at us. I’m really afraid to go out.”

In addition, frequent fights among asylum seekers – often among intoxicated men – leave women and girls feeling unsafe, and they said that authorities do nothing in response. “Even if there is fighting, the police just stand there watching while the men are bleeding,” said a 31-year-old Syrian woman. “It is impossible to go out by yourself because of the drinking [and] the fighting.”

These findings echo what dozens of other female asylum seekers and representatives of agencies that provide aid to migrants told Human Rights Watch about conditions in the Greek hotspots, citing harassment, the threat of gender-based violence, and health risks, during earlier visits in 2016 and 2017.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/15/greece-dire-risks-women-asylum-seekers>

Responding to the need:

Doctors of the World has been training its field staff in Greece in how to react and respond to episodes of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the refugee camps at which they work. The training, which is provided as standard for all Doctors of the World staff, has particular relevance in the light of recent reports of sex-trafficking from refugee camps in the state, and in the context of what aid workers all over the state refer to as ‘worryingly high’ rates of violence motivated by sex and/or gender.

Doctors of the World protection officer in ECHO project, Alekos Anastasiou, said: «In communities across the world, in times of high stress and pressure, we see increased rates and incidences of violence,





including that based on gender or sex. This is by no means a problem exclusive to the refugee population here in Greece, or indeed anywhere, but it is one unacceptable outcome of the intense and awful experiences these men, women and children have been through, in some cases for several years, and the anger loss of hope they are feeling after spending so long in sub-standard living conditions, with no sufficient information about whether or when things will change. As an organisation, we provide physical, mental and sexual health services to the refugees here, and in common with all organisations working here, we are aware of the alarmingly high rate of incidences of sexually-motivated violence. Whatever the reasons for it, it is unacceptable, and it is our responsibility to help to prevent incidences from occurring, to ensure we can recognize incidents which do happen, and to provide care and protection to those at risk, as well as to those who have experienced such violence within our mandate».

The training, given in this instance to Doctors of the World's teams working at Kavala and Drama camps in North-Eastern Greece, began by exploring the concepts of sex (*a biological matter*), sexuality (*with reference to people's choice of sexual partner*), and gender (*with its associated societal expectations and connotations*) before moving onto practical matters including spotting potential signals that violence or abuse might have taken place, how to talk to those who have suffered it, and what to do if there are indications of incidents, or if people ask for help. The training also raised interesting questions about societal and cultural differences, including for example what constitutes and is perceived as abuse, and whether cultural relativity is appropriate or acceptable in matters of sexual relations, particularly where that relativity could potentially impact on individuals' human rights.

Along with medical and mental health care and support given to those attacked, Doctors of the World also engage in activities which work preventatively, such as discussion groups, sessions designed to reduce stress and activities for men, women and children to take part in which help to give people a sense of purpose and an alternative to being forced to focus solely on their recent past, and the powerlessness they feel as they are forced to wait for others to make decisions which will not only affect but in many ways define, their entire futures.

<http://mdmgreece.gr/en/responding-need-doctors-world-trains-staff-sexual-gender-based-violence-response/>

Case B: Domestic violence

Greek police have released chilling statistics which reveal that more than 13,700 cases of domestic violence – overwhelmingly against women – were recorded between 2013 and 2017. The Athens-Macedonia News Agency reported a police source saying 2017 alone saw 3,134 cases of domestic violence involving 4,234 victims. Women made up 70 percent of these victims, the source added, with the number of females killed in such assaults double that for men.

<https://www.timesnews.gr/greece-records-13700-cases-domestic-violence/>





An example of domestic violence was reported by the society of Kournas Apokoronos region in Crete has been stunned by the arrest of a 54-year-old Albanian father who was charged with sexually abusing his two daughters, 16 and 11, while also punishing his 20-year-old son. Media reports said the arrest happened after the 16-year-old told her classmates she was being abused by her father, and that they urged her to call police. The girl allegedly described to the police how her father was molesting systematically the two sisters as well as punishing his son, many times before the suspect's wife. According to flashnews.gr, the police arrested the Albanian man on the charges of the child sexual abuse, indecent assault and domestic violence, while he is expected to be led to the prosecutor. The children will be provided psychological support.

<http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/04/26/domestic-violence-story-shocks-crete/>

Responding to the need:

A Women's Support and Consultation Center is in operation since June 2013, covering the districts of Kavala, Drama and Xanthe. Its goal is to reinforce the role of local authorities in preventing and controlling every form of abuse against women. Meanwhile it offers specialized services for women, such as:

- 1) Consultation and psychosocial support to victims of violence
- 2) Referral to other social services
- 3) Prevention of domestic violence on a collective, family and personal level
- 4) Support in order to boost self-esteem and self-image
- 5) Consultation for parents
- 6) Legal support

<http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/11/01/one-in-three-women-victim-of-domestic-violence/>

1.5. Conclusions

Gender-based violence is a very critical subject for Greece and needs special attention and targeted actions since it can affect people's physical and psychological well-being. As a matter of fact, despite several efforts that have taken place in the past, gender-based violence still remains a subject unsolved that influences negatively Greek society and its well-functioning both in an individual and social level.





A main factor that makes difficult the solution to the problem is the stereotypes that are still dominant in Greek mindset regarding gender and specifically about women. Greek society remains mainly patriarchal both in a family or broader context (i.e. work, politics) meaning that women are considered as inferior to men and are barely involved in decision making positions across the political, economical and social spheres.

Although, all types of gender-based violence are very important for consideration Greek society the most prevalent type that needs a special attention is sexual violence against women. Sexual violence against women is prevalent and is manifested in different manners through aspects of social and personal life (i.e. domestic violence or violence at school). Also, it can be differentiated based on special circumstances and conditions such as in the case of immigration. For example, women and girls have described pervasive sexual harassment and a persistent sense of insecurity in refugee camps.

Since sexual violence against women remains a critical issue for Greece and can significantly affect a girl's and a woman's psychological and physical well-being it is a matter to be approached and addressed through education and other targeted actions benchmarking best practices that have taken place in Greece or other countries. The theoretical background that is proposed to be included in the research analysis should mainly focus on sexual violence and its different forms and consequent effects on physical and psychological health. Also, other aspects relevant to gender-based violence that are correlated with sexual violence could be further investigated in order to understand in-depth its nature, the factors that are interconnected and how we could finally develop a targeted collective action to educate people of all ages on this issue, make them cautious about it and finally eliminate it.

In addition, aspects of gender-based violence, apart from sexual assault, that seem to be important to investigate and address are domestic violence, violence in refugee camps and psychological bullying (i.e. at work). Teachers and students need to be fully informed on the aforementioned aspects; their true nature and cause of existence along with society's & culture's role both in the past and the present. In-depth understanding of gender-based violence by using real life examples and scenarios will not only facilitate the process of encountering this phenomenon but also it will make people more cautious and aware regarding violence and its negative consequences. Also, awareness needs to be raised not only to open forms of gender-based violence but also to hidden and less obvious violent acts (i.e. hidden bullying).

Overall, a systematic workshop/training on gender-based violence will result not only in a more efficient education of both teachers and students in order to be fully informed and cautious about it but also in a higher awareness and sensitivity on the matter in order to better monitor a situation of gender based violence, identify its cause and proceed with targeted actions (even if it concerns the self or another).

