



European good practices: how to tackle intersectional discrimination and violence against women with disabilities.

Promoted within the **Erasmus+ CARE-INT** project



2025

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The project **“CARE-INT: Equipping future care professionals to tackle intersectional discrimination and violence against women with disabilities”** is implemented in Italy and in the Netherlands thanks to the co-financing of the European Union under the Erasmus+ program.

The goal is to **promote the rights and inclusion of women with disabilities** and combat intersectional violence and discrimination.

Graphic Project
Roberta Arena

The project

CARE-INT Equipping future care professionals to tackle intersectional discrimination and violence against women with disabilities¹, is a project co-financed by the European Union, under the Erasmus+ program, promoted by CBM Italy and implemented in Italy and the Netherlands.

The project aims to **equip care professionals to prevent and address gender-based violence against women with disabilities**.

It is addressed to future care professionals (social health workers and family assistants) working in domestic settings and it has the purpose of enabling them to address intersectional violence and discrimination against women with disabilities.

The project CARE-INT is led by CBM Italy in partnership with Fondazione Libellula, Fondazione Irea, Koning Willem I College (Netherlands), and in associated partnership with European Disability Forum, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities, Scuola Centrale Formazione.

This document is the collection of the good practices presented during the event held at the European Parliament in September 2025: *Exchange Forum on best practices to tackle intersectional discrimination and violence against women with disabilities*.

Several organizations with expertise in the field of gender-based violence and the rights of persons with disabilities took part in the round table, sharing and discussing good practices experienced in Europe, with the aim of creating a community of practice that can continue knowledge and contacts exchange beyond the duration of the project.

The document has been disseminated through the network of stakeholders and project channels.

The event was organized by CBM Italy, in collaboration with Fondazione Libellula, KW1C, Fondazione Irea, EDF – European Disability Forum, LEDHA, ENIL – European Network on Independent Living, EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities, and Inclusion Europe.

¹ <https://en.cbmitalia.org/progetto/care-int-equipping-future-care-professionals-tackle-intersectional-discrimination-and>

01

**Libellula
Foundation**



Organization

Libellula Foundation is a social enterprise founded with the aim of acting on a cultural change to prevent and combat violence against women and gender discrimination. Founded in 2017, it evolved in a Foundation (legally registered in Italian register of non profit organizations) in 2020. Its goal is to ensure an equitable development of society, in which everyone where respect, equality and freedom are the rule.

The Foundation has created a network of around 190 companies where dedicated projects and activities take place: i.e. prevention and fight against GBV, women empowerment, deconstruction of gender bias and stereotypes, inclusive management, collaborative parenting.

Libellula Foundation promotes social and care projects involving public and private stakeholders and civil society organizations.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **From signs to dreams, recognizing and dealing with situations of domestic violence**
- Years/duration: **from 2021 till now**
- Geographical area of intervention: **5 Regions in Italy**
- Webpage and/or additional information: [Dai segni ai sogni: formazione sanitaria contro la violenza | Fondazione Libellula](#)

Abstract

From 2021 Fondazione Libellula is leading the project “**From signs to dreams, recognizing and dealing with situations of domestic violence**”. It focuses on training to support and help social and healthcare staff in hospitals and emergency rooms to recognize the signs of domestic violence even when they are not clearly visible and to respond to the needs of victims, in order for the violence not to go undetected and unreported. The training is designed for staff of the Emergency Department and in the Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Orthopaedics, Traumatology, Paediatrics and Orthopedic Surgery, as these are departments often attended by women or otherwise where consequences of violence are treated.

The project addresses the following needs:

- to train socio-health staff to identify signs (physical and otherwise) of violence, during triage and visits to the emergency room;
- to provide socio-health staff with relational tools to approach the situation of suspected violence;
- to know the legislation relating to cases of violence and mistreatment;
- to know the services and resources available and the referral network.

Description

Objectives

- Enhance the skills of social and health workers in recognizing situations of GBV, and in activating an intervention and protection network.
- Promote a multidisciplinary and multi-professional approach to the topic, able to respond to the complexity of the needs and requirements of women, victims of violence.
- Support collaboration between the different professional figures involved and referral networks.

Target groups

Hospital staff who work in the Emergency Department and in the Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Orthopaedics, Traumatology, Paediatrics and Orthopaedic Surgery departments.

Main activities

12 hour training course focused on domestic and gender base violence, the cultural context and bias, the recognition of the different forms and signals to be identified, the territorial resources and networks to be activated, procedures and protocols.

Partnership and collaborations

Active collaboration with women shelters and legal advisors. Partnership with professional bodies i.e. FNAS – Fondazione Nazionale Assistenti Sociali (National Social Workers Networks).

Results and impact

Results and innovative aspects

The creation of:

- A multi-professional team that connects different services and places, to be able to respond promptly to GBV.
- Creation of a protocol to prevent and combat the phenomenon of violence, through participatory approach.

As of date: 401 people trained, 11 hospitals involved, 5 regions reached.

Sustainability

- The project is transferable as it has modular design: specialized training can be adapted and replicated to other professional bodies, expanding its scope to the entire national (or even international) territory, after due context adaptation.
- The project is supported through donations from network companies and the participation in local, national and European tender.
- Libellula Foundation has internal staff specialized in GBV (internal cost).

Self-assessment

Strengths

Access to a highly specialized training course financed by the Libellula Foundation at no additional cost, with possible training credits; Participative work in multi-professional teams to consolidate knowledge, share experiences, and develop a network model.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Low participation —> accreditation with training credits and training during working hours.

Difficulty in recognizing elusive cases —> networking and discussion with other social and health workers helps skills development.

Recommendations

It is important to engage hospital management and professional bodies to improve the attendance.

02

ENIL - European Network on Independent Living



Organization

European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) - user-led network of disabled people, with members throughout Europe, advocating for Independent Living values, principles and practices (provision of personal assistance and other community supports and services, a barrier-free environment and adequate technical aids) to make full citizenship of disabled people possible.

<https://enil.eu>

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **Women and Girls with Disabilities for their Equality Project**
- Years/duration: **2019-2022**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Montenegro**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
 - <https://imiboke.me/>
 - [The Research on Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls with Disabilities](#)

Abstract

The project “Women and Girls with Disabilities for their Equality” was implemented by the Initiative of Youth with Disabilities of Boka (IYDB). This initiative included activities like online workshops to engage women and girls with disabilities. Within this project, research has been carried out, focused on violence and discrimination against women and girls with disabilities and the types of support they and their families need. In total, 30 women and girls with disabilities, 15 members of their families, 14 women activists with disabilities and representatives of women’s organizations and relevant institutions took part in the Research.

Description

- **Objectives:** Identifying Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls with Disabilities and the Types of Support They and Their Families Need.
- **Promoting organisation:** The Initiative of Youth with Disabilities of Boka (IYDB).
- **Target groups:** Women with Disabilities in Montenegro.
- **Main activities:** Research, individual interviews, focus groups.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** Strong cooperation with DPOs, women’s rights organizations, and local institutions.

Results and impact

- **Results and innovative aspects:** Intersectional approach > the project introduced an intersectional approach, analysing how gender and disability interact to shape access to rights and services. By involving both Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and women's rights organisations throughout the process, the study ensured that findings reflected lived experiences and collective expertise. This collaboration not only improved data quality but also strengthened cross-movement solidarity, leading to innovative, context-sensitive recommendations for local policymakers.
- **Sustainability:** the results continue to inform advocacy efforts through local networks and are being integrated into training and capacity-building programmes. Follow-up actions are planned to support the implementation of the recommendations and to monitor policy responses at both institutional and grassroots levels.

Self-assessment

Strengths

- Strong cooperation and trust built with DPOs, women's organisations, and local institutions.
- Successful engagement of researchers with diverse expertise and lived experience, ensuring a participatory and grounded approach.
- The intersectional methodology provided nuanced insights rarely captured in previous studies.
- Tangible policy and advocacy impact at the national and local levels.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Limited availability of disaggregated data made comparison and policy analysis more complex.
- Balancing the perspectives of different organisations required continuous dialogue and flexibility.
- Resource constraints affected the ability to expand fieldwork and follow up on all identified priorities.
- The process highlighted the ongoing need for stronger institutional recognition of intersectionality within disability and gender equality policies.

Recommendations

- Strengthen cooperation mechanisms between DPOs and women's rights organisations to ensure sustained intersectional advocacy.
- Encourage public institutions to collect and publish gender- and disability-disaggregated data.
- Provide targeted training for policymakers and service providers on gender and disability inclusion.
- Secure long-term funding for continued research and community-led follow-up actions.

03

EDF - European Disability Forum



Organization

European Disability Forum is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of over 100 million persons with disabilities in Europe.

We are an independent non-governmental organisation (NGO) that brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. We are run by persons with disabilities and their families. We are a strong united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **EDF Women's committee and its role in mainstreaming gender across all EDF work**
- Years/duration: **The current committee has been selected for 2022-2026. New elections will take place the next year**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Europe**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
 - <https://www.edf-fehp.org/group/women-committee/>
 - [Guidance on the transposition of the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)
 - The [Gender Mainstreaming Package](#)
 - The campaign to [ban forced sterilisation](#)
 - [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#) recommendations

Abstract

Some [EDF women's committee](#) advocacy and capacity building actions:

- The [Guidance on the transposition of the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), the Gender Mainstreaming Package, the [campaign to ban forced sterilisation](#), as well as relative work etc.
- The role of the Women's Committee is to **mainstream gender** in all EDF policies and documents, to **raise awareness** on the situation of women and girls with disabilities and to work towards the **inclusion** of women and girls with disabilities in society.
- The Women's Committee ensures that EDF work towards the European Union and United Nations level takes into account the **perspective of women and girls with disabilities**. They meet at least twice a year.

Description

- **Objectives:** Mainstream gender in all EDF policies and documents, to raise awareness on the situation of women and girls with disabilities and to work towards the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in society. The Women's Committee also ensures that EDF work towards the European Union and United Nations level takes into account the perspective of women and girls with disabilities.
- **Target groups:** The Women's Committee is nominated Women and girls with disabilities.
- **Main activities:** Every year, the Women's Committee approves a work plan, including relevant activities ([2025 Work Plan](#)). It has a multiannual work plan as well.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** EDF Women's Committee is composed by EDF members and observers and collaborate with many other organisations at European and national levels.

Results and impact

- **Results and innovative aspects:** The EDF Women's Committee plays a fundamental role in mainstreaming gender across all EDF policies, programs, and activities. It promotes women's participation and leadership, ensures gender perspectives are integrated into decision-making, and develops initiatives that strengthen equality and inclusion within EDF and its member organisations.
- **Sustainability:** The Committee's work is sustainable as it operates as an official EDF governing body, supported by a dedicated budget and Secretariat staff. Its Terms of Reference define a clear structure, composition, election process, and annual workplan, ensuring continuity, accountability, and long-term impact within EDF's governance system. The Committee produces every year an annual report with the activities undertaken over the year.

Self-assessment

Strengths

The EDF Women's Committee provides strong leadership and continuity in promoting gender equality within EDF's governance and activities. It ensures gender is systematically mainstreamed through dedicated expertise, structured processes, and close collaboration with EDF members and staff.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Maintaining consistent engagement across diverse member organisations and ensuring gender mainstreaming is applied at all levels remain ongoing challenges. Lessons learnt highlight the importance of continuous capacity-building, regular communication, and integrating gender perspectives into all policy and strategic discussions.

Recommendations

Consult and use of the materials and tools developed by EDF with the support of the Women's Committee, such as the [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#), which provides practical guidance to ensure gender perspectives are integrated into all organisational activities.

General conclusions and observations

- **Gender mainstreaming** is essential in **disability advocacy**, to ensure that **gender equality and women's rights** are not left behind.
- The EDF Women's Committee plays a key role **in raising awareness** and influencing EU, National, UN policies, etc.
- **Tools** like the "Gender Mainstreaming Package" support organisations of persons with disabilities in **integrating gender perspectives**.
- Collaboration between **disability and feminist movements** strengthens advocacy and impact.
- Continued **efforts** are needed to combat violence, discrimination, and exclusion of women and girls with disabilities.

04

Inclusion Europe



Organization

Inclusion Europe represents 20 million people with intellectual disabilities and their families across Europe. We have around 80 members in 40 different countries. We fight for equal rights and full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in all aspects of society.

Our vision is simple. We want a Europe where:

- people with intellectual disabilities enjoy equal rights and fully participate in all aspects of life;
- family members of people with intellectual disabilities can be just that – family members;
- the interests and concerns of people with intellectual disabilities and their families are considered in all policies affecting them.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **PAL4youth - Partnership for a more active life of young people with intellectual disabilities**
- Years/duration: **2018-2020**
- Geographical area of intervention: Europe (**Slovenia and Czech Republic**)
- Webpage and/or additional information: <https://www.zveza-sozitie.si/pa.5youth-2018-2020.html>

Abstract

Young people with intellectual disabilities are deprived of realistic information about their rights, their bodies and the opportunities they have. The main objectives of the project are to build partnerships between organizations, develop tools for information and education on relationships, sexuality and health care for young people with intellectual disabilities and their parents, as well as the development of a model of youth work with young people with intellectual disabilities.

Description

- **Objectives**
 - Build partnerships between organizations.
 - Develop tools for information and education on relationships, sexuality and health care for young people with intellectual disabilities and their parents.
 - Develop a model of youth work with young people with intellectual disabilities.

- **Target groups:** People with intellectual disabilities and their families.
- **Main activities:** Develop innovative contents to support young people with intellectual disabilities as they grow up. Organisation in Slovenia and Czech Republic created booklets on many topics (*Being a Woman, Being a Man, Love, Sex and Me, A Visit to the Gynaecologist, Pregnancy, Childbirth, Sexual Violence*) in easy-to-read language with helpful pictures - including one made for families (relationships, sexuality, support in growing up) that can support professionals working with youth on these issues.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** [Zveza Sožitje](#) (Slovenia) and [SPMP ČR – Inclusion Czech Republic](#).

Results and impact

Results and innovative aspects

- Results of the project have reached a large number of young people with intellectual disabilities, their parents, and professionals. We have expanded the concept of youth work and work with young people with intellectual disabilities as a specific population with their needs.
- The project has improved the opportunities for young people to access real information on sexuality, relationships, sex life and health, in an easy-to-read language, which has contributed to their greater well-being, independence and easier participation in events related to them, and by doing so increasing their independence.
- Project results dissemination focused on various groups of professionals, from the field of youth work, social welfare, education and health.

05

LEDHA



Organization

LEDHA is a social promotion association that works to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. It offers information and advice, as well as legal assistance, while acting as a liaison office with institutional authorities in Lombardy.

Representing over 180 organisations of persons with disabilities and their families throughout Lombardy, LEDHA is a key player in the region. It is part of the Forum Terzo Settore (Non Profit Sector Forum) and represents [FISH ETS](#) (Italian National OPD Umbrella) at a regional level.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **Artemisia (Attraverso Reti Territoriali Emersione di Situazioni di Violenza)**(translation: **Through Local Networks Emersion of Violence Cases**)
- Promoting organisation: Fondazione Somaschi onlus, [fondazione ASPHI onlus](#), [LEDHA-Lega per i diritti delle persone con disabilità](#), [Ceas-Centro ambrosiano di solidarietà](#), [Fondazione Centro per la famiglia card Carlo Maria Martini](#)
- Years/duration: **3 years**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Area with more than 200,000 inhabitants in Milan and suburbs**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
 - [Progetto Artemisia](#)
 - [Guidelines](#) for Inclusive Anti-Violence Centres

Abstract

Project Artemisia project promoted the emergence and care of cases of women and girls with disabilities victims of violence.

- **Mutual exchange and training programme** among the project partners, to build a common language and integrate respective working methods.
- Creation of a **multidisciplinary working team** around three strategic areas: training, awareness-raising, and accessibility.
- **Training:** 232 persons promoting synergies between the worlds of disability and gender-based violence,
- **Awareness-raising** general public arenas and at work places in companies (Lenovo, IBM, Bank of Italy); Order of Lawyers, High Schools.
- **Accessibility:** training to staff at anti-violence centres and shelters; revision and drafting of communication materials; renovation of three buildings confiscated from the mafia.

Description

Objectives

- Specific training addressed to the staff of anti-violence centres and of related shelter homes to build capacities on different forms of disabilities, on resources available on the ground for seeking support and accompaniment towards autonomy.
- Activation of accessible paths to make the operational spaces and contact methods of services dedicated to violence more accessible.
- Training and awareness-raising on the topic of violence against women to organisations and networks already working on disability (residences, day care centres, dedicated health services).
- **Target groups:** women with disabilities, staff of public social services and reception workers of Anti-Violence Centres and Shelter Homes.
- **Main activities:** face-to-face training sessions; renovation of three shelter houses made fully accessible.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** public and private anti-violence, family counselling centers, and Caritas, each leading to further networks connections.

Results and impact

- **Results and innovative aspects:** three shelter houses fully accessible; Guidelines for anti-violence networks on accessibility, also in an easy-to-read version.
- **Sustainability:** fully replicable nationwide.

Self-assessment

Strengths

the capacity to involve anti-violence networks connecting different institutions; promotion of dialogue among partners from different backgrounds and cultures.

Challenges and lessons learnt

There is a need to develop listening and collaboration between anti-violence centres and shelters where there is a lack of specific expertise on disability issues. The same applies to services and centres for persons with disabilities that lack expertise on issues related to harassment and abuse against girls and women.

Recommendations

- Training on the phenomenon of intersectional discrimination against girls and women with disabilities;
- Use concrete tools such as information, procedures, reception and protection pathways to make it easier for women and girls with disabilities to access anti-violence centres.
- Creating accessible and inclusive places that can take care of all women, including those with disabilities.

06

EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

Organization

EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities - is wide European network with 188 members in 33 European countries (including Eastern Partnership & the Western Balkans) which represents around 20.000 services across Europe and disabilities. The main objective of EASPD is to promote the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems. The work of the organisation is based on the three interconnected pillars of Impact (European Policy), Innovation (Research & Development as well as implementation of international projects) and Information (for the members).

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **RESPONSE: enhancing gender-responsive services for women with disabilities**
- Promoting organisation: **EASPD**
- Years/duration: **2 years**
- Geographical area of intervention: **France, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
 - [RESPONSE - EASPD](#)
 - [Response | Facebook](#)

Abstract

An innovative feature of the [RESPONSE project](#) was the organisation of five cascade workshops in each partner country, designed not only to present a training manual but to create genuine spaces of exchange. What made this practice unique was the participation of **women with disabilities alongside service providers and main service providers**, who rarely meet in a common working environment.

By combining theoretical input with practical exercises, the workshops managed to build trust, encouraged mutual understanding, and gave women with disabilities a direct voice in shaping responses to gender-based violence. This inclusive model highlighted the value of accessibility, peer support, and cross-sector cooperation, showing that when professionals and women with lived experience come together, services become more responsive, empathetic, and effective.

Description

- **Objectives:** Transporting knowledge from the disability sector to the victims' rights sector and vice-versa, thus creating an ultimate space for joint learning and cooperation.
- **Target groups:**
 - Service providers for persons with disabilities.
 - Mainstream service providers from the health, social care and judicial sector. These service providers should be for women with disabilities who are victims of crime.
 - Mainstream service providers, i.e. all service providers, mainly from health, social care and judicial sectors, that can encounter women with disabilities victims of crime.
 - Women with disabilities.
- **Main activities:**
 - A State-of-the-Art report at EU and partner country levels that gave an overview of the situation and identified promising practices, learning needs, key actors and gaps.
 - A Training & Awareness Raising manual on rights-based and gender-responsive services to address gender-based violence of women with disabilities. It has a series of training modules on key learning outcomes for the different target groups to work together.
 - A series of capacity-building workshops, using the above-mentioned manual. Each partner organised 5 workshops to gather the main target groups, collectively and individually. This led to mutual learning and cooperation activities and testing of the Training & Awareness Raising manual.
 - A Massive Online Open Course, adapted from the Training & Awareness Raising manual.
 - Policy recommendations on how to develop enabling frameworks on the prevention of gender-based violence against women with disabilities.
- **Partnership and collaborations:**
 - EASPD (coordinator) (Belgium)
 - [Plena Inclusion \(Spain\)](#)
 - [FENACERCI \(Portugal\)](#)
 - [Centre de La Gabrielle \(France\)](#)
 - [Hand in Hand Foundation \(Hungary\)](#)
 - [Eudajmonia \(Poland\)](#)
 - [Jaunuolių dienų centras \(Lithuania\)](#)

Results and impact

Results and innovative aspects

Some of the learning we have had through the project's working groups:

- **Spaces for exchange:** create safe spaces for women with disabilities and professionals to meet, share experiences, and build trust.
- **Accessible awareness campaigns:** ensure campaigns on GBV are inclusive, widely visible, and feature the voices of women with disabilities.
- **Peer support:** victims benefit greatly from peer groups and support networks.
- **Empowerment tools:** provide adapted, accessible self-defence and other skills courses.

Sustainability

- Building long-term collaboration among public services, NGOs, and women with disabilities ensures continuity of support.
- Empowering women with disabilities as trainers and self-advocates creates lasting change and peer-led capacity building.
- Developing accessible awareness materials and adapted training courses ensures ongoing use beyond the project's lifetime.
- Establishing case manager roles fosters a systemic, sustainable support mechanism.

Self-assessment

Strengths

- Strong emphasis on accessibility and inclusiveness in campaigns and training.
- Creation of safe spaces for dialogue and exchange between women with disabilities and professionals.
- Empowerment through peer support, role models, and self-defence/adapted training.
- Use of real case studies and practical exercises to strengthen learning outcomes.
- Recognition of the importance of training men and boys, not only women.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Lack of awareness and prejudice among professionals toward women with disabilities.
- Limited resources, staff shortages, and systemic pressures in the health system affecting service quality.
- Online abuse as an emerging and complex form of GBV.
- Difficulty ensuring consistency in interventions while also tailoring them to individual needs.
- Many professionals had never previously interacted directly with women with disabilities, revealing a gap in practice and sensitivity.

Recommendations

- Ensure all GBV awareness campaigns and materials are fully accessible and inclusive.
- Institutionalize the role of case managers to support victims through procedures.
- Invest in training programmes for both professionals and the wider public (men, boys, women, girls).
- Foster peer support groups and highlight women with disabilities as trainers and role models.
- Strengthen cooperation between administrations, NGOs, and women with disabilities to create a more integrated response.
- Address systemic barriers (e.g. staff shortages, workload) to improve the health system's responsiveness to GBV.
- Expand focus to include online violence prevention and support.

07

Sterk Huis (Strong House)



Organization

Sterk Huis (Strong House) is an organisation for anyone who needs support.

Children, young people, women, men, and families deserve the best possible help when they are facing safety or development issues. With specialist knowledge, tailored guidance, and personalised treatment, Sterk Huis contributes to prevention, early detection, and more effective intervention when problems arise.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **Tour and information**
- Promoting organisation: **Sterk Huis**
- Years/duration: **currently ongoing**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Goirle, Noord Brabant**
- Webpage and/or additional information: [Vrouwenopvang van Sterk Huis | Bouw een veilig bestaan op](#)

Abstract

The women's shelter is one of the services offered by Sterk Huis.

The women's shelter of Sterk Huis is there for women whose home situation is unsafe and who need immediate help.

If you are a mother and you are struggling with parenting, or if things are too much for you, you can also get support from us. We think along with you and look together at what you and your children need.

We offer a safe place where you can catch your breath, where you will be supported, and where you will receive the right guidance to build step by step toward a safe future.

Description

- **Objectives:** To provide safe accommodation, protection, and specialised support to women and families facing unsafe home situations, with the aim of preventing further harm, strengthening personal resilience, and supporting recovery and long-term safety.
- **Target groups:** The women's shelter of Sterk Huis is there for women whose home situation is unsafe and who need immediate help.

- **Main activities:** Provision of shelter and immediate safety; personalised guidance and treatment; prevention and early detection of safety and development problems; tailored interventions aimed at long-term stability and wellbeing.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** Sterk Huis works in close collaboration with local authorities, social services, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and specialised support organisations to ensure coordinated, effective, and timely interventions.

Results and impact

The women's shelter of Sterk Huis Goirle has made a significant difference for women (and their children) affected by domestic violence, honour-related violence, or other unsafe situations.

By providing safe accommodation, tailored guidance, and practical support, Sterk Huis helps women regain control over their lives.

Beyond direct client support, the shelter also contributes to greater awareness and collaboration in the region between care organisations, the police, and municipalities.

The impact is visible in the restoration of self-confidence, increased self-reliance, and the breaking of cycles of violence within families.

Results and innovative aspects

- Sterk Huis focuses not only on shelter but also on continuous support towards independence.
- An innovative aspect is the integrated multidisciplinary approach: social workers, psychologists, and family coaches collaborate within one coordinated plan.
- Sterk Huis also invests strongly in prevention and early detection, for example by training professionals and involving schools and community teams.
- The use of digital tools for contact and aftercare – such as online counselling – makes support more accessible and flexible.

Self-assessment

Strengths

- Safety and trust are central; clients feel heard and supported.
- Multidisciplinary cooperation ensures tailored and continuous care.
- Increasing use of peer expertise strengthens the recovery process.
- Strong regional cooperation with municipalities, police, and partner organisations.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- The demand for shelter and counselling continues to grow, leading to capacity and workload challenges.
- Many clients face complex issues (trauma, debt, addiction), requiring long-term support.

- There is an ongoing need for public awareness: making violence discussable and breaking taboos takes time and effort.
- Digital counselling offers opportunities but also requires digital skills from both professionals and clients.

Recommendations

- Continue investing in prevention and early intervention, to identify problems sooner.
- Increase shelter capacity and support staff with training.
- Keep the client's voice central by listening to their experiences and feedback.
- Strengthen regional and national collaboration to share knowledge and reinforce the care chain.

08

Aias Bologna Onlus



Organization

Since 1962 in Bologna, **Aias** has supported people with disabilities and their families. The goal of AIAS Bologna Onlus (Italian Association for the Assistance of People with Cerebral Palsy) is to ensure respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities and to promote their right to a serene and inclusive life within the community.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **Accessible support service for women with disabilities who suffer violence and multiple discriminations**
- Promoting organisation: **AIAS Bologna Onlus – Mondodonna onlus**
- Years/duration: **since 2020**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Bologna area**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
 - <https://www.aiasbo.it/sportello-di-supporto-per-donne-disabili/>
 - <https://www.mondodonna-onlus.it/chiama-chiama/>
 - <https://www.mondodonna-onlus.it/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Cartolina-CHIAMA-chiAMA-AIAS.pdf>

Abstract

In line with the recommendations provided by GREVIO (the independent body of the Council of Europe that monitors the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in all ratifying countries), AIAS and Mondodonna jointly created a service aimed to raise awareness of violence against women with disabilities and strengthen prevention, protection and support activities for this group.

The service was open in April 2020 in AIAS Bologna headquarter and is open to the public once a week. It aims to overcome the shortcomings of traditional services that tend to provide standardised solutions which could not account for the specific needs of a woman with disabilities: an expert in gender violence is working together with an expert in disability to better analyse all aspects and needs and to assure a multidisciplinary and flexible response that consider the entire ecosystem of the person.

Many women with different kind of disability and living conditions accessed so far and the service become a reference point in town and beyond.

Description

- **Objectives:** Prevent and tackle discrimination and violence against women with disabilities.
- **Target groups:** women with disabilities who suffer multiple discrimination and violence.
- **Main activities:**
 - Support for women with disabilities who have experienced violence and/or multiple discrimination.
 - Consultancy for professionals, educators and anyone that intercept a situation of violence.
 - Activities directly targeting women with disabilities: psychological support groups, awareness raising groups.
 - Awareness raising campaign and training for professionals.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** Municipality of Bologna, Public Social Services, other disability specific association in town (i.e. AISM).

Results and impact

Results and innovative aspects

The fundamental principle that underpins our service for women with disabilities experiencing gender-based violence is that we cannot discuss disability broadly but must focus on each individual's unique attributes. We cannot treat women with disabilities as a homogeneous group to which we can apply standardised, pre-constructed solutions. Instead, we must recognise them as individuals with their own identities, aspirations, plans, needs and skills. We therefore design the reception process with the unique needs of each woman in mind. This involves paying special attention to environmental accessibility and other crucial factors, such as relationships, communication, the characteristics of the violence itself, and our approach to listening. In this context, crucial elements to consider include the preparation of the interview, the location, the time dedicated to the woman, and any additional support services she may need, but most traditional services are neither prepared nor able to address these elements. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary team with expertise in both gender-based violence and disability is essential for providing effective care and the most appropriate solutions based on each woman's specific needs.

One of the main outcomes of the project is the '*Guidelines for the Care of Women with Disabilities Who Have Experienced Violence and Multiple Discrimination*', a freely accessible tool that provides useful strategies for identifying and supporting women with disabilities who are victims of violence. Designed with universal design principles in mind, the guidelines provide useful information on interview settings, characteristics of violence against women with disabilities, language use, psychological support, and the importance of local support networks

Finally, a strong network with other associations has been established and positive results have been obtained at policy level: the disability variable has officially been included in the data collected by all the anti-violence centres in the metropolitan area of Bologna, the topic of gender and disability has been included on the political agenda and a policy group working on this topic has been created.

Sustainability

The service was initially launched as a project supported by foundation and public-sector funding. It has now been established as a permanent joint initiative between the two organisations.

Self-assessment

Strengths

- The merge of knowledge, skills and tools of the two realities that in different capacities work with and for women that allowed for the establishment of a common pathway for the innovative service.
- The strong local network with other associations, the public social care service for people with disabilities and the local policy makers.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Addressing the recognition and emergence of violence requires a coordinated, ecosystem-level approach.
- Coordination and integration with different services still requires a lot of efforts.

Recommendations

- Continuous training and awareness campaigns are essential to maintain high levels of attention and to improve the quality of services for women with disabilities who experience multiple forms of discrimination and violence.
- Particular attention must be paid to communication to reach a wider number of women.

09

**SII - Soroptimist
International**



Organization

Soroptimist International (SI) is a global volunteer organization of women engaged in professional and managerial activities, promoting the advancement of women's status, the full achievement of equal opportunities, and human rights. It is a universal voice for women, expressed through awareness, advocacy, and action.

Best practices

- Title of the practice: **SENTINELLE NELLE PROFESSIONI**
- Promoting organisation: **Soroptimist International Italia**
- Years/duration: **two years**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Italy**
- Webpage and/or additional information:
<https://www.soroptimist.it/it/progetti/progetti-nazionali/sentinelle-nelle-professioni-contro-la-violenza-149/>

Abstract

The project "Sentinelle nelle professioni contro la violenza" (Sentinels in the professions against violence) aims to expand informal support networks, disseminate and promote a different culture and awareness in the broadest possible range of sectors, strengthen the level of "listening", and create new sentinel spaces capable of intercepting, recognizing, and accompanying women so that they can begin a process of seeking help.

Description

- **Objectives:**
 - Increase knowledge of issues related to gender-based violence.
 - Expand informal networks to promote a different culture and awareness across the widest possible range of settings.
 - Develop among those who, by profession, meet many women and girls an empathetic gaze capable of detecting signs of violence, along with basic listening and welcoming skills.

- Provide the necessary information to guide individuals toward support and care pathways.
- Promote the project in vocational schools, beauty centres, among wellness professionals, in amateur sports associations, and gyms.
- Support and disseminate the local help network and raise awareness about its roles.
- **Target groups:** professionals in the beauty and wellness sector (beauticians, hairdressers, etc).
- **Main activities** - Two 2-hour training modules
 - Module 1 – Introduction to gender-based violence (delivered by relevant professionals identified by each Club)**
 - Definitions (conflict vs violence; gender stereotypes and discrimination; violence in intimate relationships; the cycle of violence).
 - Sociocultural context.
 - Types of violence (physical, psychological, economic, sexual, stalking).
 - Short-, medium-, and long-term consequences; legal framework and protection services.
 - Module 2 – Being part of the local help network (delivered by specialists)**
 - Healthcare professionals (Emergency Department): identifying signs of violence and medical assistance.
 - Law enforcement: protection and emergency identification; availability of dedicated safe rooms.
 - Anti-violence centres: communicating with victims and identifying risk factors.
 - Social services: support for victims and minors.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** On 20 November 2024, an agreement was signed between Soroptimist International of Italy and Confartigianato Imprese Benessere to promote the project within wellness-related professions.

Results and impact

In each training program activated by the various clubs across Italy, wellness professionals have been trained who, after completing both modules, can direct clients seeking help (directly or indirectly) to the appropriate local services.

Results and innovative aspects

Training wellness professionals in preventing and supporting women who are victims of gender-based violence is innovative because these professionals—often very close to women and their bodies—can play an important role in pointing them toward territorial services able to address requests for help.

Sustainability

Once trained, professionals can continue to provide information and promote local services (also through informational and outreach materials).

Self-assessment

Strengths

- Preventing violence by recognizing early signs (control, manipulation, isolation, jealousy, intensity...) that may turn a relationship “toxic” and dangerous is a first step toward awareness.
- The project aims to expand informal support networks, disseminate and promote a different culture and broader sharing, enhance listening capacity, and create new sentinel spaces able to intercept, recognize, and support women seeking help.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Spreading knowledge of services, anti-violence centers, and institutional roles (law enforcement, social services, healthcare...) appears to be insufficient based on past experience.
- Involving more citizens in training so they can provide accurate information to potential victims seeking help.
- Promoting existing toll-free numbers and contacts for local resources.

Recommendations

- It is essential to emphasize that sentinels do NOT handle the help request, do NOT replace services or institutions, but act as important “links” and points of contact that can provide the information needed to reach dedicated services and institutions supporting women victims of violence.

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**University of Brescia /
University of Ferrara**



Organization

University of **Brescia** / University of **Ferrara**

Best practices

- Title of the practice: ***Gender, Disability and Violence. Guidelines for the Accessibility of Support Services for Victims of Violence (developed within the project BeSafe! Gender, disability and violence during the lockdown – MUR “FISR 2020 Covid” call)***
- Promoting organisation: **University of Brescia / University of Ferrara**
- Years/duration: **First phase: 6 months (1 July 2021 – 31 December 2021); a second 6-month phase is planned, pending funding approval**
- Geographical area of intervention: **Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna (guidelines applicable in any context)**
- Webpage and/or additional information: <https://besafe.unibs.it/>

Abstract

Istat (n.d.t Italian National Institute of Statistics) statistics show that women with disabilities are more likely than women without disabilities to experience severe forms of gender-based violence. However, the longstanding tendency to separate gender policies from policies for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities has prevented recognition of how the intersection of gender and disability exponentially increases inequalities affecting women with disabilities.

This “lack of attention” translates into deficient accessibility of services meant to assist victims seeking to escape violence. The **BeSafe!** project aims to draw attention to this problem and provide tools to address it.

The *Guidelines for the Accessibility of Support Services for Victims of Violence*, developed through the project and targeted primarily (though not exclusively) at staff in anti-violence centres, aim to directly support the creation of inclusive services—not only in the phases of welcoming and supporting women with disabilities who are victims of violence, but also by emphasizing the benefits of networking services and competences with other stakeholders (starting with associations of women with disabilities).

The guidelines invest both in staff training and in raising awareness among women with disabilities and the general public.

The intention is to offer not only theoretical reflection but, above all, practical tools.

This stems from the belief that only inclusive and universally accessible services can truly promote equal recognition of differences, understood as the acknowledgment of equal entitlement to fundamental rights (including the right to live free from violence) for all.

Description

- **Objectives:**
 - Draw attention to deficiencies in accessibility of support services for victims of violence stemming from disregard for disability.
 - Promote a new sensitivity toward disability, aligned with the biopsychosocial model and the language of human rights.
 - Offer practical guidance on how to assess and promote the accessibility of support services.
- **Target groups:** primary recipients are anti-violence centres; the project also actively involved both anti-violence practitioners and associations of persons with disabilities.
- **Main activities:** the project facilitated discussions between practitioners from anti-violence centres and disability organizations, after which the research team developed the guidelines.
- **Partnership and collaborations:** The BeSafe! project was funded by the Ministry of University and Research – MUR “FISR 2020 Covid” call.

Results and impact

Results and innovative aspects

Key innovative aspects include:

- focus on accessibility also in relation to communication with the victim;
- emphasis on the importance of networking services and expertise with other stakeholders (especially associations of women with disabilities).

The methodological principle of dialogue among multiple actors not only guides the guidelines but also characterized the research process, generating positive synergies among sectors—anti-violence centres, associations, and universities—that too often do not communicate.

Sustainability

the guidelines are freely available online and provide adaptable suggestions for any context. Proposed solutions aim to be ready-to-use, low-cost, and low-resource.

Self-assessment

Strengths

- Attention to accessibility not only of environments but also of communication and relationships.
- Emphasis on the benefits of networking.
- Focus on staff training.
- Free online availability of the guidelines.
- Adaptability to the needs of different centers.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Project activities revealed heterogeneous awareness of the issue, highlighting the need for further training and awareness-raising among practitioners.

Additionally, structural shortages of resources make it difficult for centres to remove accessibility barriers even when they are aware of their discriminatory nature.

There is therefore a need for agile tools offering ready-to-use, low-cost solutions, helping overcome the obstacles posed by limited time and staff capacities for activities—such as disability training or redesigning accessible practices—that are still viewed as “luxuries” by centres already struggling with their workload.

Recommendations

In the second phase of the project—if funded—the research team will test the guidelines with two anti-violence centres that have agreed to participate. Activities will focus on assessing how to operationalize the guidelines under resource-poor conditions typical of these centres. Results will feed into a concise operational handbook providing sustainable solutions.

This will allow centres to maximize existing resources and adapt their protocols and services to universal design principles and reasonable accommodations, making them accessible—in terms of environment, communication, and relational approaches—to victims of domestic and gender-based violence who also have disabilities.

The themes of training and networking remain central.

