

# RESPONSE



Responsive services to address gender-based violence against women with disabilities

## STATE OF THE ART: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The **RESPONSE** State of the Art Report aims to answer three main research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence?
2. What are the tools available to the professionals who support them?
3. What are the existing institutional responses and good practices aimed at bettering support for women with disabilities?

This study is based on a network-wide survey that involved **270 participants**, involving **women with disabilities, service providers for persons with disabilities** and **mainstream service providers** (all service providers, mainly from health, social care and judicial sectors that often work with women with disabilities who are victims of crime). The survey was distributed in **6 focus countries**: France, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.

The data confirms the **prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) against women with disabilities**; 8 out of 10 women with disabilities participating in the study have been victims of GBV. Under the weight of their trauma, many choose to stay silent or speak out only after a long period of time. Those who broke their silence recounted mainly negative experiences about how they were supported following their attacks.

The survey also showed that there is often **no follow-up or adequate support for victims after reporting assault**, even when the incident is reported to the police.



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On top of inadequate support services, there is a **lack of information and means of action**. For instance, the 112 emergency number was not mentioned by any of the respondents.

However, support for victims goes beyond the barriers and difficulties that come with institutional support and service providers. In terms of personal support they receive, which is mostly given by caregivers or relatives, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction.

On the other side of the table are the professionals in both service providers for persons with disabilities and mainstream ones. They face common challenges, especially when it comes to providing adequate support to victims and recognising the violence they face.

Firstly, difficulties in supporting victims are mainly due to **insufficient training** on how to support women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence (GBV), the **inaccessibility of specific services and resources**, a **lack of cooperation** between service providers for persons with disabilities and mainstream services, and **lengthy legal procedures**.

Secondly, professionals also face obstacles related to the lack of recognition of GBV, both by the victim and by their institutional or personal environment. For instance, in some cases, the victim struggles to recognise the abusive and unacceptable treatment they receive. There is also evidence of the 'invisibilisation' of violence by the victim's personal and institutional environment.

With these challenges, suggestions for improvement were also made by the target groups. Emphasis was placed on the **empowerment of women with disabilities** and on the need for better **training, resources, and awareness raising**, as well as **institutional actions** that can be taken and implemented by professionals.

Ultimately, this report is a contribution to the study and research of these issues, serving as a basis to produce a Training and Awareness Raising Manual, and policy recommendations. The end goal is to improve the conditions of support for women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence, and to support the quality work of both service providers for persons with disabilities and mainstream service providers.

 [Click here to read the full report.](#)