

HERA's services on prevention and protection of gender based violence

Background

Gender equality backlash: The beginnings of organized anti-gender movement in North Macedonia were first recorded in early 2021, initially as a reaction to the Concept on Gender-sensitive education and Introduction of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Primary Schools. This movement in the last year only grew in its intensity, with organizations and activists working on gender equality promotion continuing to be constantly targeted with hate speech on the social media. The focus of the anti-gender movement is placed on sexuality education and gender identity, where they daily disseminate false news and disinformation and succeed in having an adverse impact on the successful processes of gender equality promotion. Due to the impact of the anti-gender movement, in 2023 the consideration of the Draft Law on Gender Equality, as well as the amendments and supplements to the Law on Civil Registry regulating the legal gender recognition in national law was prolonged. One of the demand of the movement is withdrawal of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (The Istanbul Convention).

Gender based violence response: North Macedonia **faces numerous challenges regarding prevention and protection** of the domestic and gender-based violence. These include inadequate education and training for professionals in both state institutions and civil society sector, a lack of implementation of cross-institutional protocols for cooperation in practice, insufficient follow-up on reported cases and limited availability of services. Despite ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the enactment of a Law on protection of violence against women and domestic violence in 2021, effective protection of violence remains elusive. National Action Plan on implementation of the Istanbul Convention envisaged establishment of counseling centres for victims, children and perpetrators of violence in 10 regions in the country by the end of 2023. However in practice, there is **limited number of specialized counseling services for survivors and victims' countrywide** and most of them are funded by international donors. There is **only one program for treatment of male perpetrators of violence** and only one program on counseling with children victims of violence in the capital city. Moreover, **the country lack centers for counseling and support of boys and men**, including youth in schools and LGBTI community. Schools professionals in primary and secondary schools are not properly equipped with skills and knowledge to work on prevention and psychosocial support of victims of gender based violence and do not offer appropriate support to youth, mainly due to burden with administrative tasks within the schools.

Through its services HERA's implement following licensed programs accredited by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

- Individual and group counseling of **women survivors** of domestic and gender based violence, average **12 sessions** with psycho-therapeutic support
- Individual and group session on counseling and support with **children victims** of domestic and gender based violence
- Individual and group sessions for counseling and support of **men and boys** in crises, including **LGBTI community**
- Individual and group session for **treatment of perpetrators of violence**, with focus on safety of women and children victims, average **16 group sessions** with trained therapists

Through Gender Based Violence program HERA's provide:

Accredited capacity building training on specialized counselling services for victims/survivors of gender based violence for professionals; Capacity building trainings and workshops on flag system on prevention of inappropriate sexual behaviour and violence among professionals in schools and social institutions working with youth and marginalised groups; Multi-sectorial trainings on prevention and protection of violence among professionals; Workshops on improvement of mental health and wellbeing for youth and marginalised groups.

1. The First Family Centre of City of Skopje

*Licensed program on counseling and support with **women and family member's survivors of domestic and gender based violence**, licensed program on counseling and support of **children victims of violence**, licensed program for counseling of **boys and men in crises**, including **LGBTI community and young boys** and licensed program on **treatment of perpetrators of violence**, with focus on safety of victims/survivors.*

First Family Centre of City of Skopje is the only centre in the country that provides integrated services on violence protection and developed programs according Austrian and Croatian model.



Services

We provide specialised psychosocial support services to **women survivors** of domestic and gender-based violence;

We provide specialised psychosocial support services to **children victims** of violence;

We provide **psychosocial treatment services to perpetrators** of domestic and gender based violence referred from courts and from social work centres;

Referral and legal support of victims and survivors of violence.



Year of establishment: 2013



Coverage:

More than 2300 clients reached and received app. 12.000 services through the comprehensive programs within the centre.



Supported by:

USAID, Verein für Männer - und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark, City of Skopje, Iris Network, European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, City of Skopje and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

2. MM Centre – for support and counselling of boys and men

MM Centre is the only male centre in the country that provides services for support and counselling of boys and men.

*Developed program on **counseling and support of boys and men in crises**, including **LGBTI community and young boys** in schools according Austrian model.*



Services

Individual and group counseling support of **LGBTI community**;

Individual counseling support for **young boys from primary and secondary school**;

Individual and group counseling support for **boys and men in crises**;

Workshops for boys and men on **emotional literacy and growth**.



Year of establishment: 2024



Supported by:

USAID, Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy