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COUNTRIES ACROSS EUROPE TAKE FIRST STEPS TO ADDRESS FEMICIDE

The gender-related killing of women and girls, known as femicide, is the most brutal and extreme manifestation of violence against women. Globally, 81,000 women and girls were killed in 2021, and more than half of them died at the hands of an intimate partner or a family member. Moreover, the global report "[Gender-related killings of women and girls: Improving data to improve responses to femicide](#)," launched by UNODC and UN Women in December 2022, estimates that 17,800 women were killed in Asia and 4,500 in Europe, while in the Western Balkans, over half of murdered women were killed by their husbands or former husbands in their own home. According to the global report, "femicide and other forms of violence can and must be prevented through timely and effective interventions." This is why, over the last decade, UN Women has been spearheading determined efforts against this all-too-pervasive crime. Check out the article [here.](#)



INTERVIEW:

**“ONLINE IS THE NEW
FRONTLINE FOR VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS”**

Iris Luarasi is Director of the Counselling Line for Women and Girls, an organization from Tirana, Albania, that manages the national helpline 116117 for women survivors of violence. In the last two years, thanks to support from the European Union-funded regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” more than 3,000 women survivors have used the helpline for information, referrals and reporting – 900 of whom further obtained free legal aid and psychosocial counselling as well as referrals to more specialized support services. Luarasi spoke to UN Women about the importance of the national helpline, how it fits into broader measures to tackle violence against women, and next steps in the protection of women and girls from violence. [Read more](#)

**IN THE WORDS OF STOJNE
MITEVA: “EVERY HAND
EXTENDED TO A WOMAN
SURVIVOR IS A LIFE SAVED”**

More than ten years ago, Stojne Miteva began working as a psychologist in the first shelter center for victims of violence in Strumica, a city in south-eastern North Macedonia. Since 2019, at which point Strumica no longer had a shelter, Miteva has been the driving force behind the opening of a new center for victims in cooperation with the municipality and the business sector. In 2020, thanks to her advocacy work as a journalist and civil society representative, the largest shelter center in North Macedonia was opened, which can accommodate 12 women and their children. In this interview, Stojne Miteva shares how the Counselling Centre offering psychosocial services for women survivors of violence operates. The Shelter is also supported by the EU-funded regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.” [Read more](#)



INTERVIEW:

“FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SERBIA, SHELTERS MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE AN INTEGRATED VICTIM-ORIENTED APPROACH”

To provide a victim-oriented approach in safe houses for women and girls victims of violence in Serbia, the non-governmental organization Atina developed qualitative standards for shelters, a first in the country. While existing shelter standards focused on infrastructure and the number of employees, the new standards emphasize the need to improve a victim’s quality of life as soon as she enters the shelter. Specifically, the new standards focus on responding to victim’s needs, such as with psychological counselling, children’s support and the protection of personal data. The standards, created with support from the regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union, will be adopted by Serbia’s Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs. Andrijana Radoičić Nedeljković, Atina’s Coordinator of the direct support team for women victims of human trafficking and women victims of violence, spoke to UN Women about these new standards. [Read more](#)



TACKLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IN ALBANIA

Aferdita Kote’s* old Nokia phone had only one contact: that of her husband of 10 years. He called her constantly to know her whereabouts. But she did not tell him when she got a new smartphone equipped with a mobile application (Bright Sky) to report violence. Over the course of two months, she learned how to use it thanks to the Roma Women’s Rights Centre, until one day she finally got up the nerve to use it. The police showed up at her door to find her with bruises on her face. “I reported domestic violence through the mobile app and the police came to my house immediately. I tried to go to the police station before, but I could not find the courage,” says Kote, a mother of two. [Read more](#)

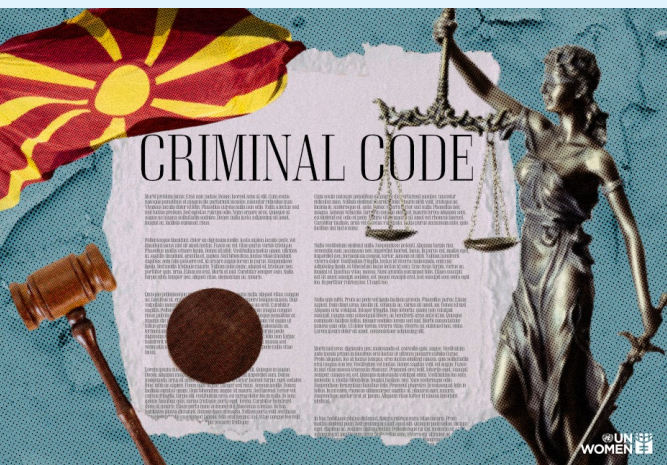
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* Name changed to protect the identity of the individual.

SIX WOMEN USING TECHNOLOGY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



The 2023 theme for International Women's Day is "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality." To mark the occasion, the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds," funded by the European Union, is celebrating six women who bring innovative solutions and leverage technology to end violence against women. Each of these women is essential to the endeavours of partner organizations to advance transformative technology to protect the rights of women and girls in our increasingly digitally-driven world. Discover the women [here](#) or watch [the video](#).



NEW AMENDMENTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA'S CRIMINAL CODE EXPAND PROTECTION FOR VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

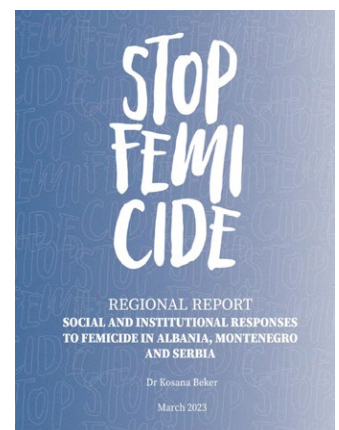
North Macedonia now has expanded protection for various forms of violence against women with the adoption of new amendments of the Criminal Code which align the country's laws with the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention.

[Read more](#)

REGIONAL REPORT

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO FEMICIDE IN ALBANIA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA

The regional report aims at understanding the characteristics, patterns, and causes of femicide – the most extreme manifestation of violence against women – in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia and setting forth recommendations for preventing femicide. The research methodology, developed from 2018 to 2021, was developed in Serbia and adapted to the national contexts of Albania and Montenegro. The report was developed by FemPlatz with the technical support of UN Women in the framework of the regional programme "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds," funded by the European Union. Please find the regional report [here](#).



MEET THE TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

The regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union, is coming to an end. After six years of hard work and dedication to making a transformative change in women’s lives and promoting freedom from violence and discrimination, we wanted to meet the people behind the achievements of the regional programme. So, we asked them what they found most memorable or impactful when they looked back at their time with the programme.



“ We are part of a collective effort contributing to policy advancement and improved service provision for women and girls survivors of violence in the Western Balkans. Six years ago, committed individuals, organizations and institutions joined forces to implement norms and change mindsets to end violence against women and gender-based discrimination.

Today, we count hundreds of successes and achievements in the midst of growing challenges. My gratitude to every women’s organization, human rights body, state and local level institution, every member of the UN Women team, and the European Commission for their vital role in tackling the most extreme manifestation of gender inequality.

YOLANDA IRIARTE
REGIONAL PROGRAMME MANAGER



“ This programme means a lot to me as I have grown alongside it. I am impressed by the dedication and passion of my colleagues, which kept me motivated, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was outstanding that we were able to adapt the programme, in cooperation with partners, and introduce innovative ways to deliver services to women victims of violence. I recognized how small interventions may make invaluable differences in their lives in such unprecedented challenging times. I feel privileged to be part of this fantastic team and of the programme’s larger community of partners and stakeholders.

EROL OHTAMIS
PROGRAMME ANALYST



“ I was most amazed and inspired by the solidarity and resilience exhibited by women’s organizations to offer lifesaving support to survivors of violence, especially at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Behind the numbers we report in written, there are real women, stories of sacrifice and stories of hope and success that give me confidence that one day we, as societies, will no longer need programmes like this.

MEGI LLUBANI
TECHNICAL PROJECT ANALYST, ALBANIA



“ My time with the programme was defined by the inspiring stories of survivors who found the courage to seek help and speak out. Witnessing their bravery in seeking help was inspiring. The programme empowered them, leaving a permanent mark on me. The regional aspect of the programme helped me recognize the diversity of experiences among team members. Despite facing similar challenges, the programme’s interventions responded to each country’s unique situation, ensuring everyone’s voice was heard. I trust that this recognition of individuality and addressing diverse perspectives made the programme more effective in its mission.

ZAMIRE KLEMENDI
TECHNICAL PROJECT ANALYST, KOSOVO



“ In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, joining forces to combat gender-based violence became a top priority. It was crucial to uphold and continue our programme, as it enabled us to swiftly respond to all forms of gender-based violence, especially against vulnerable groups. Together, we stood as a united front, determined to protect and empower them. Our joint mission was to dismantle the shackles of violence and create a future in which everyone can thrive. To achieve our goal and build a world where safety and equality prevail, let’s remain aligned, rise above adversity and amplify our voices to ensure that our efforts continue to make a meaningful impact.

MASA VUCINIC
TECHNICAL PROJECT ANALYST, MONTENEGRO



“ As a human rights practitioner, I consider myself privileged to be part of this amazing UN Women team that embarked on a journey together to end violence against women, with the highest levels of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment. On the other side of the coin are women’s civil society organizations that are truly inspiring and a pleasure to work with. Of course, most impactful is to witness the changes in the lives of women and children that are now no longer victims but winners. Strong and empowered women survivors are a sight for sore eyes, and everything is worth it for them.

IRENA SPIRKOVSKA LUKROVSKAA
TECHNICAL PROJECT ANALYST, NORTH MACEDONIA



“ Looking back and thinking of all the women and girls that have been – and still are – able to access quality and innovative services directly supported by the programme, such as SOS helpline via the Sound of Soul mobile application, trauma support and counselling through Centres for Victims of Sexual Violence or free legal aid and advice, is certainly the most impactful memory that will stay with me forever.

And not to forget – having the pleasure of working together, exchanging ideas with and learning from all our partners and colleagues from the region!

NATALIJA OSTOJIC
TECHNICAL PROJECT ANALYST, SERBIA



“ Looking back at my time with the programme, I felt inspired to wake up daily and work with such a caring and committed team to serve women and girls across the Western Balkans. But let’s be honest, some days felt like we are doing Sisyphus’ work. We have taken on some of the most difficult work, which is not only implementing norms but also changing minds. And changing minds so that women can live free of violence earns no awards, it is rarely appreciated, and it doesn’t happen instantly. But we kept doing it and will continue doing this hard work because we need to keep fighting for women’s rights and gender equality. This is our collective responsibility.

VICTORIA PUIU
COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY SPECIALIST



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The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds” and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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