



Conference Proceedings

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KMOP, Greece

Project Number: 101100732



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Deliverable information

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The Project

SAFEHUT is an EU-funded project which aims to support the social and labour integration of women and adolescent girls' victims/survivors of trafficking by establishing Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSSs), i.e. places where women and girls are supported through processes of empowerment. The main target of the Safe Hut project is third-country national women and adolescent girls who have experienced trafficking, including those who have not obtained an official identification, with a special focus on those at risk due to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The Safe Hut project directly involves 7 experienced partners from 6 EU countries (Italy, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria). Building on the WGSS model developed by the International Rescue Committee and based on the practical experience of Centro Penc regarding the establishment of WGSS in Palermo, the project will establish and pilot 4 new WGSSs in Greece, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria, and will include an additional childcare service in WGSS in Palermo.

By fostering women's participation into WGSS's activities, Safe Hut will facilitate access for women and girls' victims of trafficking to knowledge, skills and a range of relevant services offering the opportunity to access information, gain or strengthen skills, as well as receive psychosocial support through access to a referral network of safe and tailored services, at the same time strengthening their labour inclusion opportunities.

The project will also have a direct impact on service providers, local authorities, civil society, communities, and the general public by increasing their knowledge and awareness about human trafficking, and the strategy promoted by Safe Hut. First-line professionals will increase their skills in strengthening services offered for VoT women and girls ensuring better assistance and quality support. In the longer term, the project will foster smoother integration of VoT women and girls in the host societies through their enhanced psychosocial well-being and increased opportunities to participate in the labour market.

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Executive summary

This document presents the key discussions and outcomes of the international conference “[*Empowering Women and Girls through Safe Spaces*](#),” held on March 20 in Athens, Greece. As a leading international forum, the event brought together experts, researchers, organizations, and policymakers to exchange knowledge, share insights, and strengthen collaboration in the fight against human trafficking. The conference explored the EU strategy for combating trafficking and the *Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS)* approach to supporting survivors. Discussions centered on establishing a strong foundation for anti-trafficking efforts, creating protection networks for victims, and promoting the holistic integration of women with diverse backgrounds. A key focus was also placed on the role of safe spaces in advancing women's empowerment from a European perspective. This report captures the presentations, key insights, and valuable takeaways from the event, reflecting the breadth and significance of the topics addressed.

List of abbreviations

Acronym	Description
EU	European Union
VoTs	Victims of Trafficking
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
Safehut	Safehut - Holding safe spaces for women and girls' empowerment
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
WGSS	Women and Girls Safe Spaces

The international Conference



The international conference “*Empowering women and Girls through Safe Spaces*” took place on March 20, 2025 in Athens, and was organized by KMOP, with the collaboration of all partners involved in the Safe Hut project. The conference featured keynote speeches, panel discussions and interactive dialogue with experts, policymakers and practitioners. The discussion focused on best practices, policy recommendations, and sustainable strategies for creating safe spaces and strengthening victim protection networks.

The Agenda



16:30 - 17:00 **Welcome**

Jenny Lazarou, Unit Coordinator, Human Rights, KMOP

Greeting speech

Ioannis Brachos, Head of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Petros Chatzis & Monika Ekstrom, Policy Officers - Directorate General Migration Management Coordination Unit

17:00 - 17:15 **EU strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and WGSS Approach for the support and empowerment of women and girls survivors of trafficking**

Cristina Idone Befacadu, Safe Hut Project Coordinator - CESIE

Laying the foundations for Trafficking in Human Beings

Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani, Senior Researcher, KMOP

17:15 – 18:00 **Panel: Creating a Protection Network for Victims of Human Trafficking**

Moderator: Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani, Senior Researcher, KMOP

Theodora Gianni, Head of the Department of Reception, On-site Intervention and SSC – National Center of Social Solidarity

Stefania Toufexi, Regional Aftercare Manager (Europe & Africa), A21

Anisa Loli, Social Scientist, Member of the PROCAP Mobile Clinic, SolidarityNow

18:00 – 18:15 **Coffee Break**

18:15 – 19:00 **Panel: Empowering Women with a Migrant Background Through a Holistic Integration Model**

Moderator: Nefeli Papagiannakou, Senior Project Manager, KMOP

Jessica Gilbert, Project Manager, Glocal Roots

Aimilios Klimis, Project Manager, Médecins du Monde Greece

Anastasia Mouratidou, Job Counselor, Metadrasi

Katerina Paschou, MHPSS Coordinator, Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)

19:00 – 20:00 **Panel: The Role of Safe Spaces in Women's Empowerment: A European Approach**

Moderator: Silvia Calcavecchio, Area Manager, IRC Italy

Maria Chiara Monti, President and Founder of Centro Penc Antropologia e Psicologia Geoclinica ETS (Italy)

Kristina Stonyte, Director, KOPŽI – Center Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Lithuania)

Elena Carmen Nitu, WGSS Coordinator, AidRom (Romania)

Nadia Kozhouharova, Coordinator in Programs against Human Trafficking, Animus Association Foundation (Bulgaria)

Georgia Alexandrou, Researcher & WGSS Coordinator, KMOP Social Action and Innovation Centre (Greece)

20:00 – 20:15 **Discussion**

20:15 – 20:30 **Networking Session: Strengthening Connections for a Safer Tomorrow**

Key-note opening speeches

The conference was kicked off by an introductory speech from **Mr. Brachos**, Head of the office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, in the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (Greece). Mr. Brachos, in his speech, shared insights from the Greek initiatives and strategies towards a holistic approach to supporting victims of THB. He discussed recent legislative advancements and intergovernmental collaborations that strengthen victim protection. He stressed the need for ongoing partnerships between governmental bodies and civil society organisations to enhance preventative measures and long-term support structures.

Mr. Brachos highlighted the following points:

- ❖ First and foremost, it is crucial to coordinate all efforts related to trafficking, particularly



through national strategies and ongoing reviews, to combat any form of THB, including trafficking for sexual exploitation.

- ❖ In particular, vulnerabilities related to gender-based violence and discrimination contribute to trafficking, and migration increases those vulnerabilities. Nowadays, the war in Ukraine has heightened the risks of trafficking, especially for women and children.

- ❖ Challenges in prosecution are often discouraged because authorities are hesitant to pursue trafficking cases and prefer prosecuting sexual exploitation instead.

- ❖ Lastly, it is vital to strengthen legislative measures to reduce the demand for trafficked services and improve prosecution procedures.

Following, **Ms Monika Ekstorm**, Policy Officer from the [Directorate General Migration Management Coordination Unit](#), introduced the role of the European Commission in Athens. She outlined the European Union's approach to migration and the integration of vulnerable populations. She emphasized the EU's commitment to fostering policies that address the intersection of migration and gender-based violence. She also spoke about funding mechanisms available to organisations working on survivor protection and empowerment initiatives.

The key takeaways are:

- ❖ The Safe Hut project, which was launched in response to the crisis in Ukraine, highlights the EU Commission's devotion to combat trafficking, focusing on women and children.
- ❖ The EU's strategy for 2021-2025 EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) aims to reduce trafficking by tackling both the demand for trafficked services and the business models of traffickers, both online and offline.
- ❖ The EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and its recent revisions include more effective tools for law enforcement, new forms of exploitation, and better victim identification and support.
- ❖ The EU has appointed a dedicated anti-trafficking coordinator to enforce these new rules and facilitate cooperation among member states.



Diving into the topic of Trafficking in Human Beings and the WGSS approach

The first session of the Conference was dedicated to setting the base for laying the foundations for Trafficking in Human Beings and a first discussion of the EU strategy on Combating THB through the WGSS Approach.

To start with, the audience was introduced to the Safe Hut initiative and unfolded the *Women and Girls Safe Space methodology* and its implementation during the 2-year project. Ms Cristina Idone Befacadu, coordinator from the organisation, [CESIE](#), emphasized the role of community-based interventions in providing survivors with social reintegration opportunities. She also shared insights from the project across the 5 EU countries that developed the WGSS.

Key takeaways:

- ❖ Highlighted the EU's Strategy for combating trafficking, mentioning the ways of battling traffickers such as reducing their demand and disrupting their business model, as well as protecting and supporting all victims
- ❖ Focused on the intersectionality of gender and migration status, which creates vulnerabilities, making women with uncertain migration status more susceptible to becoming VoTs, due to gender-based discrimination and lack of economic, legal and personal stability
- ❖ Tackling structured prevention and support addressed to third-country nationals who were either exposed or at risk of getting exposed, she mentioned providing a safe space for women and girls, facilitating access to information, and ensuring long-term support
- ❖ Explain what a WGSS is, how it functions and how it achieves its objectives, as a place where women and girls can feel physically and emotionally safe, supported and have access to relevant information
- ❖ Lastly, she referred to the Responsive Information Sessions, with the aim to raise awareness on the rights and the risks in the hosting society

The following speaker, **Ms Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani**, Senior Researcher from [KMOP](#), set the foundation of the discussion around THB, by emphasizing the collaboration of all social actors in combating THB, as well as the need to inform and raise awareness to protect vulnerable populations from trafficking

Key takeaways:

- ❖ Outlined the importance of joining forces, training professionals and empowering people with vulnerabilities, as well as the role of all social actors in identifying trafficking victims to take action in cases where they interact with them
- ❖ Shared an example of the EU-funded [AMELIE project](#) training in 2022, after which many healthcare professionals realised that they had previously encountered VoTs, without realizing it at the moment.
- ❖ Underlined the significance of following up on the VoTs, for any support they may have after their identification, as in most cases, they are left with no resources and support system, and often physical trauma.
- ❖ Spotlighted the importance of raising awareness and informing vulnerable groups about trafficking, to avoid the risk of exploitation with a focus on increasing the visibility of the issue.



Both speakers highlighted crucial points in combating human trafficking and empowering women and girls who are survivors. They emphasized the growing need for awareness-raising and education to help identify trafficking cases and protect vulnerable groups. The conversation then shifted towards the importance of providing long-term support for women and girls, setting the stage for the subsequent panel discussion on creating effective networks VoTs.

Creating networks for Victims of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking remains a pervasive human rights violation, requiring a coordinated and multi-sectoral response to effectively identify, support, and protect victims. This panel, moderated by Maria Elli Doufexi Kaplani, Senior Researcher at KMOP, brought together experts from key organizations working on the frontline of victim support and prevention.

Specifically, Ms **Theodora Gianni**, Head of the Department of Reception, on-site Intervention and SSC of the [National Center of Social Solidarity \(EKKA\)](#), focused on the importance of cross-cooperation among the state and NGOs, while informing the public how to access information related to trafficking cases.

Key takeaways:

- ❖ Concerning the Greek Protection network for victims of human trafficking, she emphasizes the importance of cooperation among state actors such as the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs and along with 254 NGOs in Greece
- ❖ Focusing on the victims, she mentioned the victim-centered and human rights-based approach, and the significance of understanding victim's traumatization.
- ❖ At last, 500 cases of trafficking have been reported lately, information which is available to the public via EKKA's official website.

Ms Stefania Toufexi, Regional Aftercare Manager (Europe & Africa) from the NGO [A21](#), emphasized the barriers in practically supporting the VoTs, and stressed the importance of media in drawing attention to cases of human trafficking.

Key takeaways:

- ❖ Underlined the importance of training the frontline professionals in identifying cases of THB, and the need for the victims to self-identify as such;
- ❖ Mentioned crucial gaps in supporting victims, including the legal system and long-term support;
- ❖ Addressed the roots of this vulnerability, such as poverty and lack of education;
- ❖ Pointed out the role of media, in cross-border communication and raising public awareness.

Last but not least, **Ms Anisa Loli**, social scientist and member of the [PROCAP](#) Mobile Clinic, of the NGO [SolidarityNow](#), highlighted the importance of the Mobile Clinics and the difference they make, by being able to access rural places across Greece while also conducting information sessions.

Key takeaways:

- ❖ The Mobile Clinic initiative helps reach out to people in rural and less accessible areas across Greece, by visiting accommodation centers, collecting data and organizing information sessions on THB prevention, ensuring at the same time that people know how to reach their assistance
- ❖ The prevention involves how to initially avoid trafficking and prevent further victimization by supporting survivors, addressing vulnerabilities such as lack of documentation, and raising awareness about legal rights and essential services.

In summary, the panel emphasized the need for greater cooperation among state actors to combat trafficking, as well as the importance of adopting a victim-centered approach when supporting VoTs. All speakers highlighted the significance of recognizing victims and safeguarding vulnerable groups, particularly women with a migrant background, who are at high risk of exploitation. This discussion paved the way for the next panel, which focused on empowering women with migrant backgrounds through a holistic integration model.



Empowering Women with a Migrant Background Through a Holistic Integration Model

The integration of migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women remains a critical challenge across Europe, requiring a multidimensional approach that addresses barriers in education, employment, healthcare, and psychosocial well-being. This panel, moderated by Nefeli Papagiannakou, Senior Project Manager at KMOP, brought together experts from civil society organizations actively working to support migrant women's empowerment and self-reliance. Through diverse perspectives and best practices, this session aimed to foster dialogue on holistic strategies for sustainable and equitable integration.

Mr. **Aimilios Klimis**, Project Manager at the [Médécins du Monde Greece](#), set the stage for the discussion by starting with healthcare barriers, discussing the initiatives implemented by the organisation.

Key take - aways:

- ❖ Stated the practical issues in healthcare, such as lack of social security and health insurance numbers, which means that the patient bears 100% of the costs, as well as the long waiting time to book an appointment, affecting primarily the women in pregnancy that have to undertake screenings in specific weeks
- ❖ Highlighted a major issue concerning frontline personnel from the public entities who are not educated following cultural and gender approaches.

As the manager of the Women and Kids Space at [Glocal Roots](#) in Athens, **Miss Gilbert** outlined key steps for holistic support to refugees, especially women and children.

Key take - aways:

- ❖ Underlined the importance of a holistic approach under one roof, such as health care, asylum advice, social services and education projects, to facilitate their access to all of the relevant services.
- ❖ Emphasised the significance of bridging the gap between language barriers, low pay, and limited access to professional training and development, as well as the need for childcare, to practically address these issues without further obstacles.

- ❖ Highlighted the promotion of a culture of community and care, ensuring that women are indeed included in the decision-making processes and are feeling a sense of ownership in building their new life
- ❖ Noted the need for psychosocial support, especially for the mothers to engage in self-care activities

Following Ms Jessica Gilbert, **Ms Anastasia Mouratidou**, job counselor at [Metadrasi](#), shared her expertise by highlighting successful initiatives that support migrant and refugee women in entering the job market. She also provided recommendations on fostering connections between civil society organizations and businesses to promote fair and inclusive working conditions and services, while advocating for the expansion of existing best practices.

Key take - aways:

- ❖ It is essential to organise professional preparatory workshops to develop specific skills and to inform women about labor rights, risks of illegal work and cultural differences.
- ❖ Regarding family support, many mothers face difficulties due to the lack of childcare services and State provisions, suggesting partnering with organisations to overcome this barrier.
- ❖ Establishing a solid relationship with the women themselves through the process, has an impact on maintaining their trust despite challenges that might come along the way

The panel discussion concluded with a focus on the mental health of the TCN women. Ms **Katerina Paschou**, MHPSS Coordinator at the [Syrian-American Medical Society](#), outlined the most common psychosocial challenges faced by women on the move. She also provided insights on delivering culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care in psychosocial support services.

Key take - aways:

- ❖ Talking about single mothers, common issues that they face include problems with childcare, administrative procedures and language barriers, along with custodian issues, especially if the father has fled the country.
- ❖ Women on the move are at heightened risk for GBV, both during their migration journey and in their new environments.
- ❖ Paying attention to single mothers' mental health is crucial as stress and severe emotional disturbances are common challenges for them due to everyday challenges
- ❖ Lastly, she underlined key practices of cultural sensitivity, including collaboration with interpreters and facilitation of women's role in decision-making for their own lives.



In conclusion, this panel addressed key barriers faced by women, such as language challenges, low pay, childcare for single mothers, and the need for professional training to acquire new skills and achieve independence. A crucial takeaway was the importance of building a supportive community around these women to help them overcome these obstacles. Following this, the next panel focused on the role of safe spaces in women's empowerment, based on the experience of the SAFEHUT pilot partners.

The Role of Safe Spaces in Women's Empowerment: A European Approach

During the final part of the discussion, representatives from the SAFEHUT partner countries took the lead in sharing their experiences of launching and implementing safe spaces over the course of the one-year pilot. The panel was moderated by Ms. Silvia Calcavecchio, Area Manager at the [International Rescue Committee \(IRC\) Italy](#), who began by introducing the SAFEHUT project and outlining IRC's role in the initiative.

Since the WGSS methodology was based on IRC's [Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings](#), Ms. Calcavecchio highlighted the technical guidance and advisory support provided to all partners. She explained that IRC played a key role in strengthening staff capacity on critical topics such as gender-based violence, trafficking, and survivor-centered approaches, in collaboration with CESIE and Centro Penc.

Ms. Calcavecchio insights set the stage for a deeper discussion on the essential elements of an effective WGSS, a topic further explored by Ms. Maria Chiara Monti, President and Founder of [Centro Penc \(Antropologia e Psicologia Geoclinica ETS\)](#). Building on the technical guidance provided by IRC, Ms. Monti focused on the core principles necessary to establish and sustain a

truly impactful WGSS. She emphasized that a WGSS is more than just a physical space—it is a structured methodology designed to combat gender-based violence, human trafficking, and exploitation. Ms. Monti highlighted the importance of adopting a transcultural approach and integrating cultural and linguistic mediators into the team to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Additionally, she stressed the need for dedicated spaces for children, allowing mothers to fully engage in activities without concerns for their children's well-being.

For more information related to the WGSS in Palermo, explore the [presentation here](#).

Romania

Ms Elena Carmen Nitu, WGSS Coordinator from the Romanian organization [AidRom](#), shared key lessons learned from piloting the WGSS in her context. She reflected on the experiences of supporting women, including refugees and migrant communities, by providing legal, social, and educational services. Ms. Nitu emphasized the critical need for a safe space where women can speak freely about their challenges without fear or judgment. She also highlighted the importance of practical support, such as financial assistance and access to shelter, to help women regain stability and independence. Additionally, she addressed some of the challenges faced during implementation, including the lack of materials tailored for older children and logistical difficulties in coordinating childcare schedules. These insights underscored the need for continuous adaptation and resource development to enhance the effectiveness of WGSS initiatives.

For more information about the pilot implementation in Romania, explore the [presentation here](#).

Greece

Ms. Georgia Alexandrou, WGSS Coordinator from [KMOP](#) Greece, highlighted key challenges in implementing the Safe Space in Athens. She emphasized difficulties in reaching migrant communities and building trust, which were addressed through expanded outreach, collaborations, and community events. Flexibility in activities became essential, as women expressed a desire for autonomy in shaping workshops. Frequent participant turnover was mitigated by maintaining communication channels like WhatsApp for remote support. Additionally, securing sustainable funding remained a priority, with KMOP actively exploring financial opportunities ahead of the SAFEHUT project's conclusion.

For more information about the pilot implementation in Greece, explore the [presentation here](#).

Lithuania

Ms Kristina Stonyte, Director of the Lithuanian organization [KOPŽI](#), addressed the question of how women participating in WGSS activities can become leaders and drive grassroots initiatives. Working primarily with women affected by human trafficking, she highlighted the challenge of uniting participants from different backgrounds, particularly Ukrainians and Russians, amid political tensions. Despite initial difficulties, the WGSS fostered solidarity, allowing women to connect and support one another. She noted that self-defense and online safety were among the most popular and practical activities, equipping women with essential skills. Over time, many participants transformed from quiet attendees into active leaders within their communities, extending the impact of empowerment beyond the safe space. While challenges remain, she emphasised the progress made in building a strong, sustainable support network for women.

For more information about the pilot implementation in Lithuania, explore the [presentation here](#).

Bulgaria

Ms Nadia Kozhouharova, Coordinator in Programs against Human Trafficking at the Bulgarian organisation [Animus](#), discussed how safe spaces can be integrated into broader national policies on gender equality and women's rights. She highlighted the organisation's work with women from Ukraine and other crisis-affected countries, as Bulgaria increasingly becomes a transit country for migrants. Safe spaces have played a crucial role in identifying vulnerabilities and providing emotional and physical healing, supporting 110 women—exceeding initial expectations. She emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care, incorporating mindfulness and physical exercises to help women reconnect with themselves and regain agency. Despite the lack of state programs for migrants in Bulgaria, she advocated for the scalability of the WGSS model and its integration into national policies to enhance long-term support for women.

For more information about the pilot implementation in Bulgaria, explore the [presentation here](#).

In conclusion, the discussion highlighted the transformative role of safe spaces in women's empowerment across Europe. Representatives from Romania, Greece, Lithuania, and Bulgaria

shared valuable insights from their WGSS pilots, focusing on overcoming challenges like building trust with migrant communities and providing trauma-informed care. They emphasized the importance of flexibility, practical support, and fostering leadership among women. Despite challenges, including participant turnover and limited resources, the initiatives showed significant progress in creating sustainable support networks. The panel pointed to the potential of

integrating these models into national policies for broader impact. Overall, the discussion underscored the power of safe spaces to drive long-term change.



Conclusions & Key takeaways



The international conference “*Empowering Women and Girls through Safe Spaces*” was an inspiring and thought-provoking event that successfully brought together a diverse array of voices united by a shared commitment to combatting THB and enhancing the protection and empowerment of vulnerable women and girls. From keynote addresses to dynamic panel discussions, the conference offered a wealth of insights that will continue to drive positive change well beyond the event itself. The lessons learned during this event are not merely theoretical—they are practical, actionable steps that can drive forward progress. The journey to ending human trafficking and enhancing the empowerment of survivors is far from over, but with unwavering dedication, collaboration, and innovation, the vision of a safer, more inclusive world is within reach.

Below, the most significant takeaways stemming from this important gathering are outlined.

Key takeaways

1. The power of collaboration and multi-sectoral networks

- The importance of collaboration between governmental bodies, NGOs, civil society organizations, and local communities emerged as a critical theme. True progress relies on building robust networks dedicated to combating THB and supporting survivors effectively.
- Innovative approaches, such as the WGSS model, have proven effective in fostering empowerment and providing tailored support, particularly when implemented through strong partnerships.

2. Empowering women through Safe Spaces

- Safe Spaces are more than just physical structures; they are life-changing platforms for emotional healing, skill-building, and social integration. The

SafeHut project demonstrated the transformative power of these spaces in promoting resilience and empowering survivors to reclaim their lives.

- Establishing inclusive environments where women feel safe, respected, and supported remains at the heart of creating sustainable, positive change.

3. Addressing systemic barriers and gaps

- Legal, social, and economic barriers continue to hinder the integration of VoTs into society. Addressing these challenges requires policy reform, increased funding, and capacity-building initiatives tailored to meet the unique needs of women and girls affected by trafficking.
- Holistic approaches that integrate healthcare, education, legal support, and economic empowerment are essential for achieving long-term success.

Annexes - Presentations

Safe Hut

**Holding safe spaces for women and
girls' empowerment**

**Project: 101100732 — Safe Hut — AMIF-2022-TF1-
AG-THB**



EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025)

On April 2021, the Commission adopted a new **EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the period**

2021-2025. This initiative offering a comprehensive response to the trafficking in human beings focuses on three key areas:

- preventing the crime
- protecting and empowering victims/survivals
- holding traffickers accountable.



Key Focus Areas of the Strategy

The strategy emphasizes a coordinated approach to address trafficking from all angles, including:

- 1) **Reduce demand for trafficking** by addressing the root causes that encourage exploitation. By tackling the economic and social factors that drive trafficking, the strategy hopes to decrease the number of victims.
- 2) **Disrupt the business model of traffickers** breaking the criminal networks that facilitate trafficking, making it harder for traffickers to continue their operations.
- 3) **Focus on protecting, supporting, and empowering victims**, particularly women and children who are more exposed to trafficking
- 4) Lastly, the strategy emphasizes the **importance of international cooperation**, acknowledging that trafficking is a global issue requiring coordinated action across borders to combat it effectively.



Progress, Challenges and Achievements

The European Union has made significant progress in combatting trafficking in human beings. Over the years:

- ★ **cooperation between key actors** (e.g. judicial authorities, political figures) has been reinforced.
- ★ **Efforts to improve support mechanisms** have been progressed
- ★ **awareness campaigns, education programs, and training initiatives** aimed at reducing the risk to be trafficked have been promoted



Progress, Challenges and Achievements

However, despite the advancements, trafficking remains a serious threat with **thousands of individuals, particularly women and children, continue to fall victim to traffickers**. Traffickers exploit social inequalities and economic vulnerabilities, especially those faced by women, to prey on vulnerable individuals.

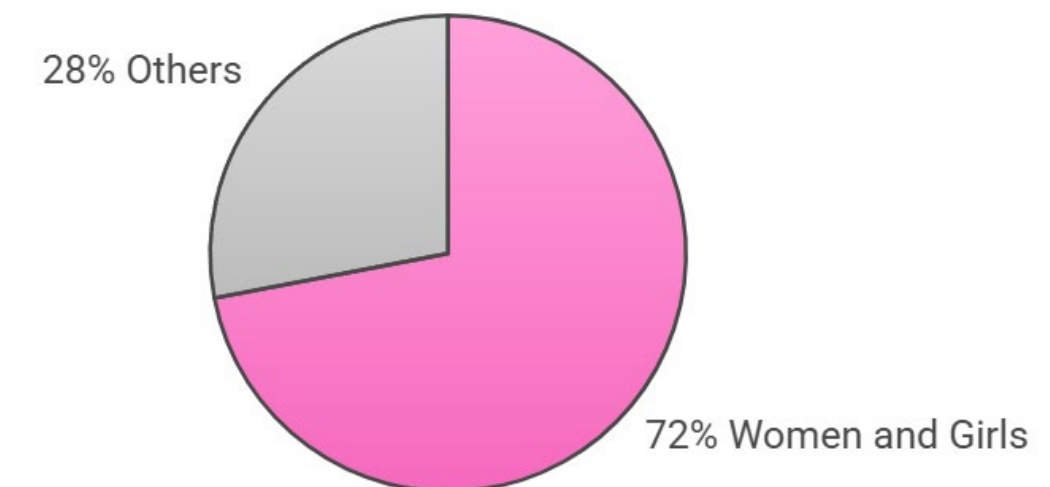


The Gender Dimension of Trafficking

The gender dimension of trafficking is particularly alarming. Women are more affected by trafficking due to various factors, including:

- gender inequality,
- social and economic discrimination
- gender based violence

Gender Distribution of Trafficking Victims in the EU



These structural conditions make women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking.

Trafficking in human beings in the context of migration

The condition of being an immigrant also makes individuals more exposed to the dangers of being targeted by traffickers. **Migrants are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking** for different reasons:

- ★ **Working in sectors that are either literally out of sight**, such as work in private homes as domestic workers, or in **informal sectors** that are not covered by labour protections
- ★ **Fleeing situations of violence and conflict**, which further increases their exposure to trafficking risks
- ★ **Dislocated from community and family support structures**
- ★ **Moving or working through irregular channels**, without access to legal status and social protection

Also, in this specific context **women and men are vulnerable but in different ways** – with women experiencing higher rates of modern slavery (e.g. domestic work, sexual exploitation)



Intersectionality

The intersectionality of gender and immigration status creates compounded vulnerabilities. Women with uncertain immigration status face increased risks of trafficking due to:

- **Gender-based discrimination:** which makes them more likely to experience violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- **Economic vulnerability:** Immigrants, especially women, often face economic insecurity and lack access to formal job markets. This makes them prime targets for traffickers
- **Legal instability and lack of rights:** immigrants without legal documentation or proper immigration status are often afraid to report exploitation or abuse because they fear deportation or losing their jobs. This fear of legal consequences makes them more vulnerable to manipulation by traffickers.

The intersectionality of gender and immigration status means that these women are not just at risk because they are women or because they are immigrants, but because these two factors overlap, creating a unique risk of trafficking which is crucial to address.



How to tackle prevention & support?

As a key strategy for the protection and empowerment of migrant women and girls, affected by trafficking (or in vulnerable condition), it is important to providing them with the **necessary support** to recover and rebuild their lives facilitating the **creation of support networks and empowerment programs.**



SAFE HUT APPROACH

To ensure assistance, support and protection

With this objective in mind the SAFE HUT project was designed to:

- **To provide a Safe Space** where women and girls can feel safe and raise awareness of their rights and specific needs.
- **To facilitate access** to knowledge, skills, and a range of relevant services for these women and girls.
- **To ensure long-term assistance and support** for victims and survivors of trafficking and violence by establishing partnerships with various stakeholders and community members.



Beneficiaries

Third-country national women and girls who were exposed to trafficking experience, including those who have not obtained an official identification. Other women and girls who are at risk of trafficking, experienced violence or simply need a space for empowerment for themselves also benefited from the service.



Newly launched Safe Spaces

Building on the WGSS model developed by **International Rescue Committee**, the project established and pilot 4 Women and Girls Safe Spaces in :

- Greece (KMOP)
 - Lithuania (KOPZI)
 - Romania (AIDROM)
 - Bulgaria (ANIMUS)
- + Additional child care service in the WGSS already established in Palermo, Italy (CENTRO PENC)



What is a Women and Girls Safe Space - WGSS?

- It is a **woman-only** space.
- It is a place where women can feel physically and emotionally safe.
- It is a place where women and girls are supported through the process of **empowerment** through the implementation of different activities



What is a Women and Girls Safe Space - WGSS?

The **objectives of a WGSS** are:

1. To facilitate access for all women and adolescent girls to knowledge, skills and a range of relevant services.
2. To support women's and adolescent girls' psychosocial well-being and creation of social networks.
3. To serve as a place where women and adolescent girls can organize and access information and resources to reduce risk of violence.
4. To serve as a key entry point for specialized services for Gender Based Violence survivors.
5. To provide a place where women and adolescent girls are safe and encouraged to use their voice and collectively raise attention to their rights and needs.

Dealing with Potential Victims of Trafficking in a WGSS


In a **WGSS**, there is no active identification of victims of trafficking, however the WGSS Staff can offer opportunities for survivors of trafficking to disclose their situation and seek help:

- ★ **Promoting ways to report** the situation and ask for help, with posters, leaflets, etc.
- ★ **Organising group information sessions** about human trafficking.
- ★ **Providing the opportunity to have one-one sessions** after some activities if women and/or girls want to disclose a trafficking situation.

Responsive information sessions

- Individually or in small groups
- With the aim to raise awareness on the rights and the risks in the hosting society
- Can be on various topics
 - ◆ What is trafficking in human beings
 - ◆ Rights to work / labour laws / labour trafficking prevention
 - ◆ Job orientation

What do I need to be SAFE at WORK?



1

You need to have the following documents:

✓ ID - Identity card
Carta d'identità

- The civil registry office of your municipality will issue your ID card, once you received your permit of stay.

✓ "Terza media" certificate

- CPIA (Center for Adult Education) allows you to get terza media certificate after passing the final exam.
- Terza media certificate is issued by the administrative office of the school you attended.

✓ Declaration of Availability for Employment (DID)

- The Employment Center (CPI, or 'Centro per l'Impiego') will process your declaration.
- If you are under 18, you need to go to the CPI with your guardian.

✓ Fiscal code
"Codice fiscale"

- The income revenue authority (Agenzia delle Entrate) will issue and process your fiscal code.
- You can find your fiscal code in your health card.

2

You must be at least 16 years old

If you are *under 16*, you can start a training path to be prepared to enter the labour market.
If you are interested please send a Wapp message to +39 3757805224

3

You need to speak Italian




It is not mandatory, but it is very important to better understand what is happening around you.

Valid Permit of Stay

If you do not have the permit, you can use these instead:







- Receipt of the application for international protection (C3 Model)
- Notification of the Territorial Commission with the result of the interview.

For more info, please scan the Q-R codes

Useful documents in Italy Permits of stay Job orientation

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK?

You have the right to be protected as a worker by an **EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT** - a written agreement between you and your employer that regulates your work relationship.

You have the right to a **SALARY** that is proportional to the amount of hours and the nature of the work you do.

The employer must ensure your physical and mental health.

Regular working hours may not exceed 40 hours per week.

WEEKLY REST
You are entitled to at least one day off per week

According to the contract, you are entitled to days off:
- paid **DAYS OFF**;
- paid **SICK LEAVE**, by showing your doctor's certificate

You may be at risk of FALSE job offers:

⚠ If you were told not to talk to anyone about the job offered.


⚠ If you were offered a job over the phone but you can't call the number back.

⚠ If you were offered a job with much higher than average pay.

⚠ If the job announcement does not state the name of the company.

⚠ If you have been asked to hand over your original documents or send personal photos and/or videos.

BEWARE of irregular employment!
Without a regular contract you have neither protection nor guarantees as a worker. It is often synonymous for **EXPLOITATION**, violation of rights and could be **DANGEROUS** for you and your safety.



Job orientation services
(make sure to contact the ones in your area):

Employment Center CPI:
guidance and counseling, promotion of internships, help desk for youngsters.

Job Agencies APL:
Job search guidance and support, skills assessment, activation of internships.

Trade Unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL):
For the protection of workers
Legal advice, citizenship rights, social security practices (unemployment, bonus, injury)

Useful sites for job offers:
Indeed, Infojobs, Cliclavoro

Toll-free numbers in multiple languages

800290290
If you are in a condition of exploitation, or forced to work against your will

800901010
UNAR - If you are discriminated and do not receive equal treatment

800199100
SOS caporalato
To report an exploitative situation in agriculture

WGSS Model as a best practice and partners' experience

- ❖ The WGSS model has proven to be a **key intervention in protecting women and girls, particularly survivors of GBV**, it offers a safe environment where they can report protection concerns, helping to reduce their risk of exploitation and trafficking.
- ❖ The model ensures **women and girls' participation from the beginning** of the project, giving them a voice in the design and execution of activities.
- ❖ **Multidisciplinary teams**, including psychologists, cultural mediators, and childcare workers, are involved in delivering services at these WGSS.

Recommendations for the protection of third-country national women and girls VoT and their smooth integration

- ★ **Foster collaboration** between governments, NGOs, community organizations, and international bodies to create cohesive and effective support systems to guarantee sustainability to the effective programs in place.
- ★ **Provide access to support services for the third-country national women who are victims of trafficking regardless of their legal status.** Fear to be deported for national migration policy makes girls and women vulnerable and prevents them from seeking help for fear of being identified
- ★ **Facilitate the obtainment of permit of stay** to guarantee a smooth labour inclusion and decent work (and avoid sexual and labour exploitation)

WGSS in Lithuania overview



01 WGSS in Lithuania overview

02 Key achievements
and best practices

03 Key Challenges

04 Further Steps and
sustainability



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Information on the WGSS launched In Kaunas (Lithuania)



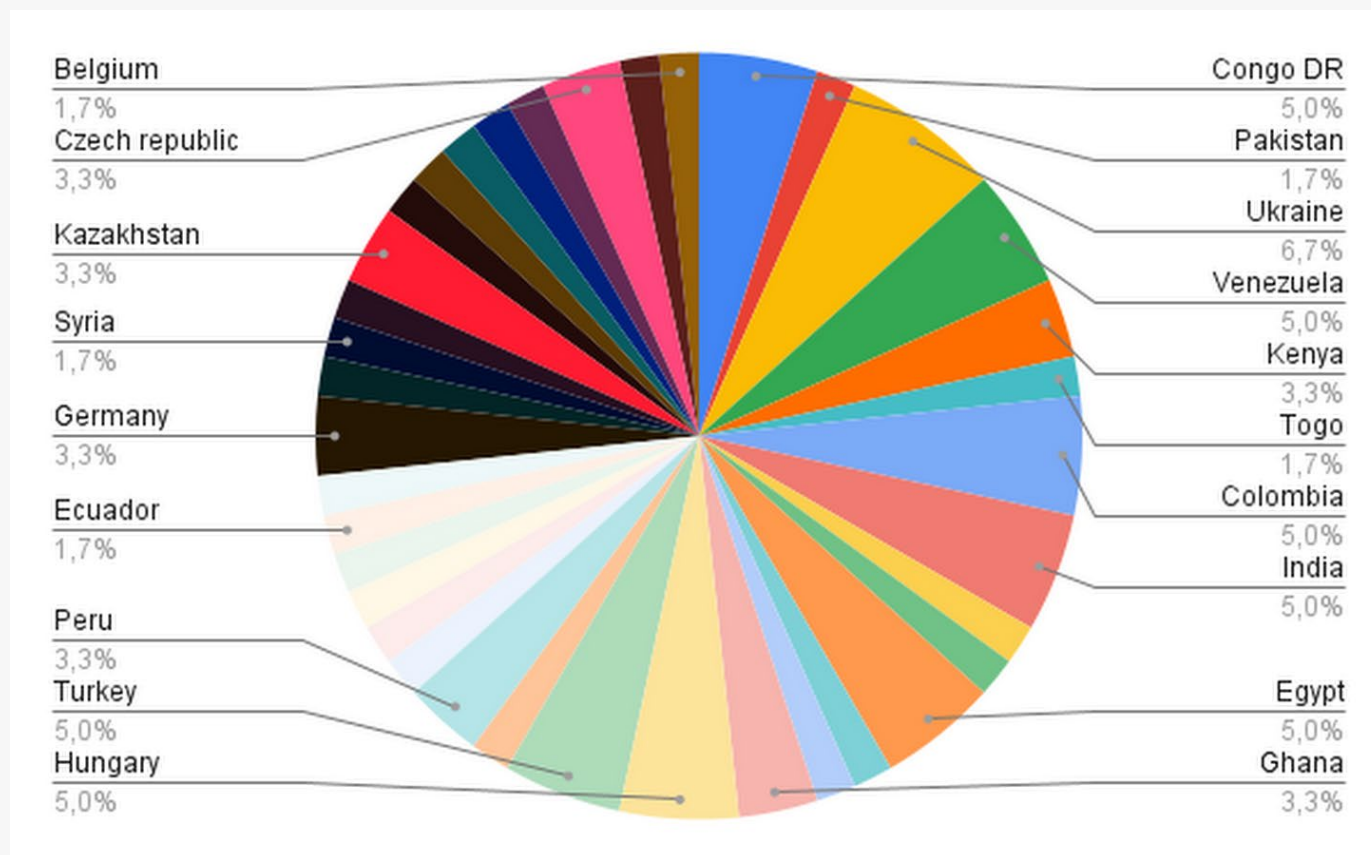
The WGSS is focused on addressing the needs of women and girls, with the aim of creating a safe space and raising awareness of their rights. It offers opportunities to participate in various activities that help strengthen their skills and provide psychosocial support to enhance their employment prospects. The space also offers support and assistance to women and girls who have been, or may be, victims of human trafficking or violence. In the Safe Space for Women and Girls located in Kaunas (Lithuania) we carry out a range of activities that promote personal, cognitive, psychosocial, and socio-civic empowerment. We strive to involve a variety of activities and engage different specialists who can help women and girls feel safe, build their skills, and address the challenges they face.



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Beneficiaries and activities

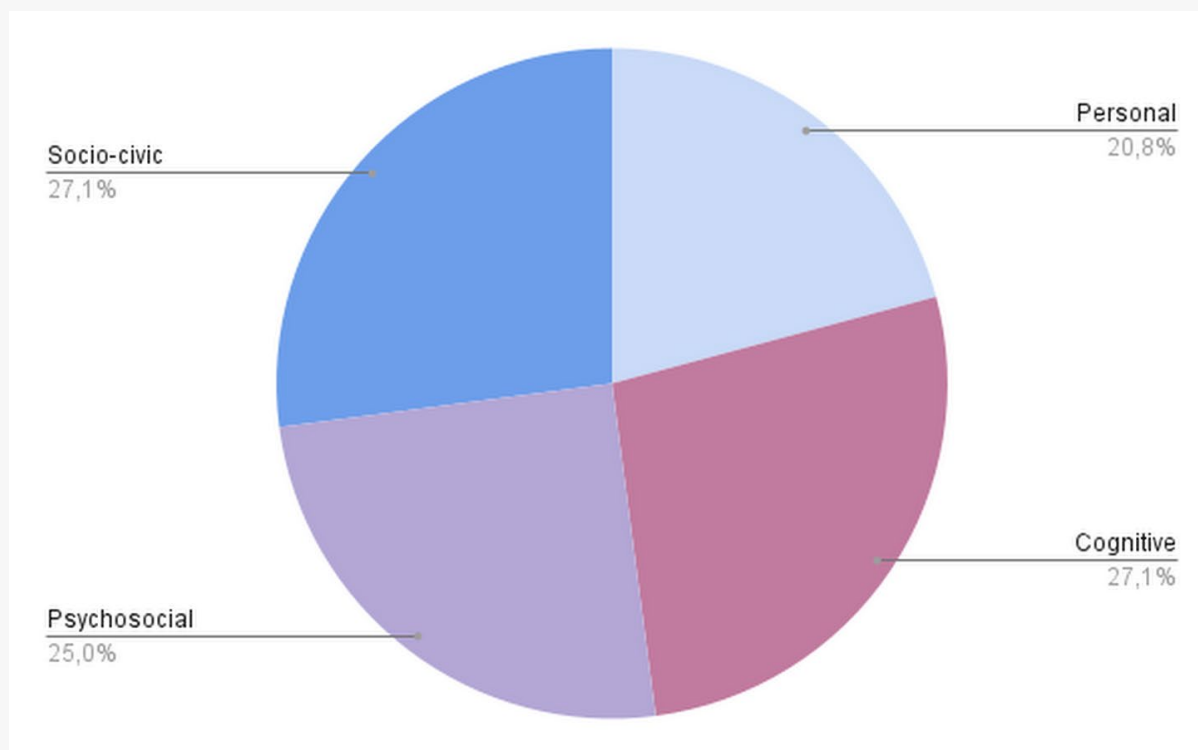
Over 60 women from different countries (Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Ukraine, India, Pakistan, etc.) visited the Safe Space in Lithuania.



Beneficiaries and activities

Beneficiaries participated in more than 100 personal, cognitive, psychosocial and socio-civic empowerment activities.

These activities included art-based activities, meditation, discussions, info sessions on topics relevant to women (internet safety, women's health and etc.) and more. The activities were carried out taking into account the needs and suggestions of women.



Key achievements and best practices



Key Achievements

One of the best outcomes is hearing the positive feedback from the women who participated in our activities and seeing the joy they experienced in our safe space. Nearly all of them said they felt very safe here, learned a lot, made new connections, and expanded their circle of friends. As a result, they felt stronger, more confident, and gained valuable knowledge about where to seek help if needed — and how to support others in similar situations.



Key Achievements

According to the women, when they first joined the Safe Space in Lithuania, they didn't know what to expect. Many felt confused, overwhelmed by personal worries, fear, and uncertainty. However, over time, these emotions began to shift. Getting to know the Safe Space, taking part in the activities, and connecting with other participants helped them experience more positive emotions and thoughts.



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Key challenges



Key Challenges

One of the main challenges was spreading the message and building trust with the women, helping them understand that this space was created for them — for their safety and empowerment.

The situations reported by the women included workplace disputes, domestic violence, and issues related to employment or migration. While each case was addressed, it was often difficult for the women to navigate the legal system, understand their rights, and overcome the artificial barriers created by local institutions.



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Further steps and sustainability



Sustainability strategies

- To constantly and patiently address municipal and national donors and institutions with requests to support the Safe Space
- To involve trained volunteers to continue with some of the activities.



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WGSS in Romania Overview



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Key topics

01 AIDROM WGSS

02 Key Achievements

03 Key Challenges

04 Further Steps



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AIDROM WGSS

- 35 Ukrainian women registered
- 135 activities developed during February 2024- December 2024
- Field of activities: legal support, cognitive, empowerment socio-civic empowerment, art craft
- Quotes from women
 1. *"Here I became a self-taught!"*
 2. *"We identify with the message shared by Eleanor Roosevelt: "You gain strength, courage and confidence by doing what you think you can't do!"*



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The most important activities highlighted by WGSS beneficiaries

- Legal sessions
- Financial education/labor market integration/entrepreneurship development
- Recreational activities : dance classes, fitness/pilates, movies nights, celebration of religious holidays or national events
- Art craft activities: braiding baskets, modelling clay, etc.



Key achievements

- Understanding legal procedure
- Understanding how to access social support services
- In collaboration with a local NGO beneficiaries have been supported to proactively detect situations of exploitation
- WGSS women familiarized themselves with the reporting of potentially suspicious cases of human trafficking through green phone



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Key challenges

- Difficulties in implementing integration activities during a period of political instability
- Financial stability to manage the newly launched Safe Space



Further steps

- Identify partners for future collaboration
- Engagement at institutional level to support the activities conducted at local level



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WOMEN AND GIRLS SAFE SPACE IN BULGARIA



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Our goals

- To support the healthy integration of women in migration by building resilience, empowerment and fostering emotional well-being
- To prevent human trafficking, labour exploitation and other forms of abuse and gender-based violence.



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Our approaches



- Trauma-informed approach - sensitive to traumatic effects caused by migration
- Intersectional approach - sensitive to vulnerabilities
- Support coping with psychological trauma
 - ❖ **Through the mind** – individual work with a psychotherapist; revealing , recalling, sharing, re-experiencing, becoming aware, making sense of; accepting and integrating into personal history;
 - ❖ **Through the body** - to overcome the "imprint" of the trauma; the body to forget and to learn that the danger is over and start living with a sense of a safe reality. (Bessel van der Kolk)
 - ❖ **Through relationships** - reconnecting; building a new life and new safe relationships with people. (Judith Herman)



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What we offer



- A safe, caring and predictable place
- Specific activities that support recovery and integration
- ♥ Personal empowerment
- ♥ Cognitive empowerment / learning
- ♥ Psycho-social empowerment
- ♥ Socio-civic empowerment
- Access to social services for psychological counselling, social support, labour integration, accommodation;
- Building women's community



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How do we work?

A weekly programme is published on social media

- **Community-building events:** since the Safe Space opened, more than 100 events have been organised, involving more than 100 women. These events have provided a space for new friendships, relations and inspiration.
- **Bulgarian language courses:** one full certificate course has been successfully completed.
- **Artistic workshops:** Enable women to create together and exchange ideas for coping with various life issues..
- **Empowerment:** Meetings focus on key areas of empowerment, helping participants build confidence and plan for their future. .
- **Thematic workshops** with guest speakers on integration, employment and prevention of trafficking and labour exploitation.
- **Mindfulness sessions:** help participants build confidence, mental resilience and awareness.
- **Individual support:** women have access to individual psychological counselling and social support to overcome challenges, find inner resources and move forward.



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Statistical data

- more than 110 registered women
 1. 98 from Ukraine
 2. 5 from Afghanistan
 3. 4 from Africa
 4. 1 from Iran
 5. 1 from Vietnam
 6. 1 from Haiti

Distribution by age:

- 1 – 14-17y.
- 4 – 18 -24y.
- 33 – 25-34y.
- 34 – 35-44y.
- 14 – 45-54y.
- 15 – 55-64y.
- 9 – 65+ y.



The Team

- Two social workers
- Two cultural mediators and a psychologist
- A supervisor
- Educator for childcare service



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Key challenges

- Participants separate themselves by nationality
- Language barriers
- Middle Eastern and African women are underrepresented
- Cultural differences between participants from different parts of the world.
- Many of the women also expect material benefits and are disappointed when they do not receive them
- Bigger interest from women from Ukraine than we can handle
- Financial stability



Mitigation strategies



- Organizing joint activities, celebration of holidays, physical activities, etc. where verbal communication is not essential
- Appointment of cultural mediators
- Cooperation with the State Agency for Refugees and the Red Cross for referrals
- Providing different forms of work. MENA women benefit primarily from individual counselling.
- Cooperation with companies for donations.
- Extending the WGSS team
- Active fundraising, project applications, discussions with institutions and possible donors.



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Thank you!



Animus Association Foundation
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animusassociation.org



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safe hut

The WGSS in Greece



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Key topics

01 Basic information on the WGSS

03 Key Challenges

02 Key Achievements

04 Further Steps



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WGSS in Athens, Greece

The naming issue

The Women's and Girls' Safe Space in Athens, Greece, was established under the name "*Friendly Space for Women and Girls*" to better align with the Greek context.



The term "safe" was intentionally omitted to:

- Avoid stigmatizing the space as only for survivors of violence.
- Prevent confusion with a shelter, which might exclude women without such experiences.

A more inclusive name was chosen to:

- Encourage greater participation.
- Foster broader community acceptance.

The use of "friendly" instead of "safe" space does not compromise fundamental principles or ethical commitments: ***The space remains free from trauma, abuse, intense stress, and violence.***



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WGSS in Athens, Greece



The Greek WGSS in numbers

By the end of December 2024,

- **80 women** and girls above the age of 16 have been registered;
- The top three countries of origin were *Egypt*, *Afghanistan*, and *Syria*. Other countries mentioned were Ukraine, Congo, Lebanon, Sudan, Cameroon, Guinea, Morocco, Somalia, Iran, Algeria, Iraq, Eritrea, Palestine and Sierra Leone.
- **77 group activities** have been organised and implemented. In total 32 activities aimed at *personal empowerment*, 21 at *psychosocial empowerment*, 18 at *cognitive empowerment* and, 9 at the *socio-civic empowerment* of the participant women.
- More than **30 successful referrals** have been realised to partner organisations for further psychosocial, medical, educational and legal support, as well as for the distribution of goods such as clothes, food and diapers.



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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- High publicity: invitations to festivals (e.g., Refugee Week 2024), radio interviews, online blogs (e.g., YMCA of Greece), receptions (e.g., British Embassy in Athens, Australian Embassy in Athens), and, host in platforms such as ACCMR and Refugee.Info.
- Many local stakeholders were constantly engaged through referral mechanisms, co-organisation of actions and workshops in the Friendly Space, and regular meetings.
- Signation of 5 collaboration agreements (Médecins du Monde Greece, Metadrasi, ELIX, Glocal Roots and Diotima).
- Invitation to and participation in local working groups (i.e., Communication with Communities Working Group, and, the GBV Working Group both coordinated by UNHCR).



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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

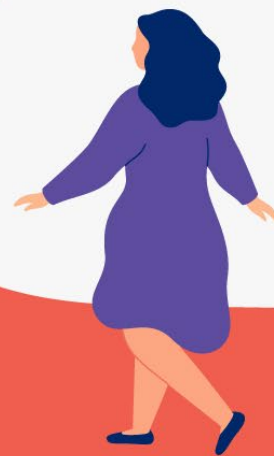
- **Activity programs are largely shaped by the needs and wishes expressed by women, both reported and emerging.** This approach makes the programs more relevant while also empowering women to take ownership of the space, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and agency.
- During the feedback sessions, the women described the Friendly Space as a transformative and supportive environment, fostering friendships, emotional security, and personal growth. Initially feeling isolated and hopeless, they now experience a renewed sense of hope, belonging, and empowerment. Learning new skills brought them joy and confidence, with the space serving as a source of light, resilience, and community.
- A subtle yet significant indicator of success is that the Friendly Space has fostered **new friendships**, enabling previously isolated women to build informal support networks.



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KEY CHALLENGES



KEY CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Challenge 1:

Reaching migrant communities and building their trust

Mitigation measures:

- To address this, KMOP and WGSS staff expanded outreach efforts by collaborating with organizations supporting TCN women and migrant communities.
- They engaged with community centers to raise awareness about the Friendly Space and its activities.
- Co-organizing events and hosting open days allowed women to visit the space alongside trusted individuals, helping them feel more comfortable and encouraging their participation.



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KEY CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Challenge 2:

The need for flexibility and adaptation to women's needs – Changes in the planned activities

Mitigation measure:

Despite having structured activities in place, many women felt empowered to take the lead and propose new activities on the spot. This shift demonstrated a clear desire for autonomy and ownership over the workshop process, aligning with the goal of fostering empowerment. Rather than adhering rigidly to the original plan, the WGSS staff embraced these moments of initiative, as they enhanced engagement and fostered a sense of shared leadership among participants. Ultimately, these deviations led to a richer, more participant-driven experience, promoting empowerment in practice.



KEY CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Challenge 3:

The Friendly Space served as a refuge for women, allowing them to escape their daily realities, challenges, and adversities. As a result, discussing their experiences of violence or anything that might disrupt the relaxing environment they sought often became difficult.

Mitigation measures:

- The staff consistently reminded the women of the Space's purpose and objectives.
- Facilitated discussions led by external local organizations helped them open up, as they realized there was a broader network of professionals they could trust and turn to for support.



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KEY CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Challenge 4:

Frequent turn-over of participant women due to their status and personal issues

Mitigation measures:

- The WGSS staff established a communication channel, such as a WhatsApp group, to ensure women receive important information even when they are not physically present in the Space.
- They have maintained open communication and provided individual support remotely, primarily through messages and calls, for those unable to attend in person.



KEY CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Challenge 5:

The demand for WGSS services has grown significantly, but limited resources make it challenging to meet this increasing need. As a result, both the frequency and scope of services may be restricted.

Mitigation measure:

- The KMOP development team has been actively researching open calls and exploring various funding opportunities to secure support for the Space, months before the official closure of the SAFEHUT project.

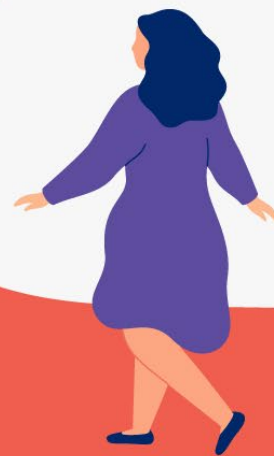


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FURTHER STEPS



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FURTHER STEPS & SUSTAINABILITY

To enhance the impact and long-term sustainability of the Friendly Space, we will focus on several key areas:

- Expanding childcare support: Strengthening childcare services to better accommodate mothers and their children, ensuring greater accessibility and participation.
- Enhancing specialised assistance: Recruiting additional psychologists and social workers to provide tailored support for women facing complex challenges.
- Meeting immediate needs: Supplying essential items based on identified necessities, ensuring women have access to basic provisions.
- Investing in staff development: Providing specialized training on gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking to strengthen staff expertise and response capabilities.



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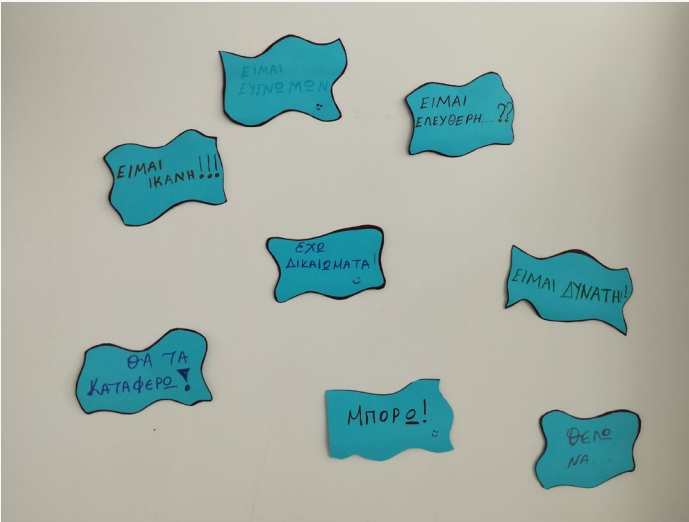
FURTHER STEPS & SUSTAINABILITY

- Improving communication and inclusivity: Hiring interpreters for Farsi and Ukrainian to bridge language barriers and enhance cultural understanding.
- Addressing operational gaps: Extending operating hours and establishing a structured support system for staff, including guided supervision and case management.
- Strengthening partnerships: Expanding collaborations with migrant organizations, local NGOs, and governmental agencies to broaden outreach and create a more robust support network.

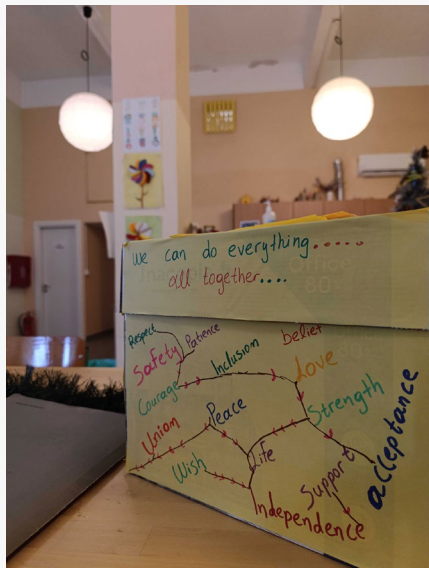
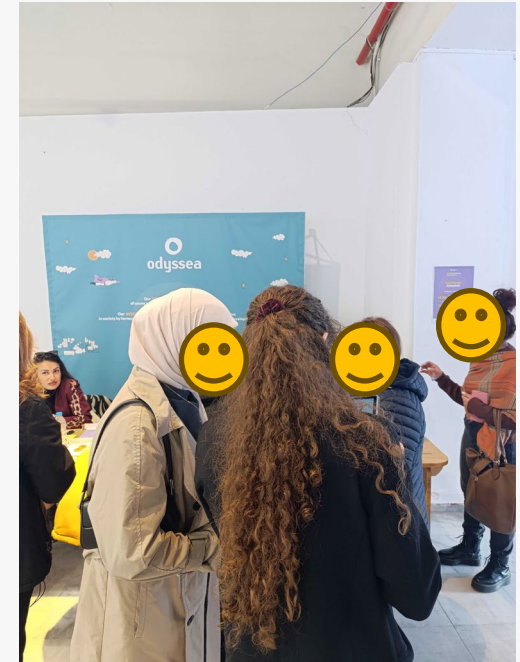


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CAPTURED MOMENTS



CAPTURED MOMENTS





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