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**PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
DEPARTMENT FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN**

**2021-2023**

17 November 2021

**Rome**

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# 1 | INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Aim of the Plan

There is a common 'feeling' in Italy towards policies to combat male violence against women and a shared focus on engaging both central and local government bodies and encouraging socio-economic partnerships. Italy's economic and social crisis – along with the lockdown imposed in response to the Covid-19 epidemic – has worsened the worrying situation of male violence against women. To address this situation, it is paramount for the full government to increasingly sharpen their focus on policies to tackle this violence, by acting preventively and supporting female victims of violence with a view to overcoming the violence and gaining autonomy.

The objective set by the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family through the '**National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2021-2023**' is to continue redoubling government efforts to address very specific needs relating to multiple aspects tied to conditions of violence: prevention; protection of victims; punishment of men who inflict violence; training and education of operators and population; information and awareness raising; action taken on abusive men; protection of migrant women and victims of various types of discrimination; employment, economic and housing autonomy; and the creation of more places dedicated to women.

Through the Plan's strategic and operational actions, the Department for Equal Opportunities intends to provide positive and concrete responses to the priority strategic objectives for the three-year period 2021-2023. It therefore plans to identify adequate structures, interventions and resources to tackle gender-based violence by putting in place effective and efficient initiatives in line with what was achieved under the previous Strategic Plans.

The Plan is therefore a **cross-cutting** one, giving meaning to the role of the Minister for Equal Opportunities and helping to bridge the gap between policies and the various interventions (both past and future), not only at government level but by regional and local authorities so as to enhance the role of associations and socio-economic partnerships in defining and planning policies.

On this basis, the Plan is tasked with setting in motion a virtuous circle which – through a policy of support for female victims of violence and prevention – aspires to create "*a Europe free from violence against women and domestic violence*", as stated in the *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*" (Istanbul Convention, 2011). The focus is on affirming fundamental rights (knowing one's rights, identifying ways to guarantee them), preventing and combating abuse (helping enact active change in society), and identifying and combating the conditions and processes that trigger processes of social exclusion (lack of autonomy, recurring violence).

The Plan's **time horizon** is in line with the UN 2030 Agenda, Goal 5 which indicates the aim to "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*", which is regarded to be a common goal on which political decision-makers can all join forces. Indeed, the Plan also represents the framework of the various European, national and regional strategic programmes for joint and coordinated action in the medium to long term.

At national level, the Plan will be an integral part of a unified strategy of interventions that help entrench solid protections for women, which ties in with the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Plan for the Distribution of resources as part of the "Fund for policies relating to rights and equal

opportunities” in line with Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013 on the “Urgent provisions on security and the fight against gender-based violence, and on civil protection and receivership of the Provinces”. As such, the Plan’s strategic and implementation framework may also serve as a platform for central, regional and local administrations to launch further shared and joint action to combat gender-based violence and for women to play a new, more central role in society, by bringing together human resources and dedicated funding from the investments of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the new European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2021-2027 to reach these objectives.

Given how quickly trends of violence against women evolve over time and the need for possible realignment of the Plan’s guidance, the duration of the Plan is set for the **three-year period 2021-2023**, with the possibility of an extension following a collaborative adjustment process, with a subsequent extension of its validity.

## 1.2 The Plan’s fundamental principles

The philosophy behind the Plan, characterising its implementation, is inspired by the key points tied to the fight against male violence against women. Specifically, these are:

- *the right to live free from violence* in the public and private sphere;
- *gender equality*, a fundamental principle for the development of society;
- *gender mainstreaming*, which relates to the inclusion of the gender perspective in every sphere of economic, social and political life;
- *women’s empowerment*, for the economic empowerment and autonomy of victims;
- *inclusion*, with a view to taking into account victims’ vulnerabilities and discrimination;
- *intersectionality*, as gender equality should be considered in relation to all possible forms of discrimination.

In addition to these principles, directions can be developed that cut across the Plan as a whole. This approach of mainstreaming refers to pivotal points that convey an overall vision to create a suitable environment for the implementation of the Plan itself, along fundamental principles which aim to:

- **enhance the experience gained from the previous *National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2017-2020***, taking the strengths and positive impact from the previous three-year period and mitigating any weaknesses found, while bearing in mind the current progress of interventions so as to build on what has been achieved so far;
- **adapt the Plan’s strategic action based on the changes and updates to the legal framework** in order to proceed in line with the Plan’s reference framework and take on the most up-to-date documentary sources;
- **meet the challenges posed by the context data**, which have highlighted that the phenomenon is on the rise, with worsening conditions of violence; yet the data also shows greater use of forms of assistance, which is a sign of greater awareness among victims of violence;
- **promote an active approach**, considering women not only as passive users or recipients of the policies targeted at them, but as individuals who are able to engage in and make contributions towards finding solutions to the issues that concern them, making it possible to intervene in a more immediate and timely manner to respond to real needs.

## 2 | REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

The 2021-2023 National Strategic Plan is based on an extensive context analysis, which is the result of investments and efforts made at various levels (political, institutional and wider public and private partnerships) in line with the Istanbul Convention and the subsequent strategic and planning documents.

In this framework, the actions of the 2017-2020 Plan have been crucial in fostering and implementing systemic interventions to promote and support a model to address the issue of male violence against women. A model which focuses on observing, detecting and analysing statistically detectable trends which, as we know, are increasingly easier to address with appropriate prevention, counteraction and support policies.

The Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide plays a particularly important role, carrying out important research and data analysis on the various implications of male violence against women, as well as a strategic function of giving impetus and guidance at legislative level and raising public awareness.

The following review contains some key references taken from the sources available to date, yet its range of topics also cover some new or renewed priorities that this Plan sets out as pre-conditions for better governance of the intervention policies.

### 2.1 Regulatory context

The Plan is part of a complex and articulated framework of policies aimed at combating male violence against women. This framework is characterised by significant work and past experience carried out primarily by the Italian regions, local bodies and socio-economic partnerships. It also focuses in particular on women's associations and government interventions acting on the guidance from the European and international level.

#### International framework

In regulatory terms, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-called **Istanbul Convention** of 2011) has continued to be a fundamental point of reference, Article 1 of which specifies the following objectives:

- *protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;*
- *contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;*
- *design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;*
- *promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;*
- *provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.*

The issue had previously received a major boost at international level thanks to the *Beijing Declaration* and its *Platform for Action* in 1995, in line with the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW, 1979) and subsequently its *Optional Protocol* (1999) and *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19 on Violence against Women*, which was later updated by

*General Recommendation No. 35* of 26 July 2017. The new Recommendation provides a clearer framework of Member States' obligations, as well as the areas on which action should be taken to address violence against women, recognising the prohibition of gender-based violence as a customary norm in international law and emphasising the need to change social norms that engender violence. The Recommendation also broadens the definition of gender-based violence to include forms that affect the right to reproductive health, as well as forms of violence that occur online and in other digital environments created by new technologies.

In 2013, on International Women's Day, the Joint Statement of the Heads of FAO, IFAD, WFP and IDLO on the relationship between women, violence and food security was published, based on the observation that "*in spite of the major role played by women in producing food and feeding their families, little attention has been paid to the connection between gender, violence and food security*".

More recently, the UN resolution of 25 September 2015 for the adoption of **Agenda 2030** for Sustainable Development sets out coherent international targets under the framework of Goal 5: to "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*".

#### **Box 1. UN Resolution list of targets**

- a) End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- b) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- c) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- d) Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- e) Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- f) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
- g) Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;
- h) Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;
- i) Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

It is within this framework that in June 2019, *Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work* was approved by the **ILO (International Labour Organisation)**. This stipulates that regulatory measures should be taken in line with the acknowledgement "*that violence and harassment in the world of work can constitute a human rights violation or abuse, and that violence and harassment is a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work*" and "*that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, [...] an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in the world of work*". The production of legislation following the Convention particularly relates to the aspects of protection and prevention, enforcement and mechanisms for redress and compensation, and to the plan for guidance, training and awareness-raising, which the Italian Senate ratified on 12 January 2021.

In international cooperation activities and, more specifically, in the area of preventing and combating SEAH (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment), there has been growing sensitivity to the issue since 2018 when trends once again became more severe. This focus is apparent in a series of international statements on the issue (to which Italy has adhered), namely the 2017 UN Voluntary

Compact on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the 2018 Circle of Leadership, the G7 Whistler Declaration of 2 June 2018; the DAC Tidewater Declaration of 5 June 2018; the Donors' Declaration adopted at the Safeguarding Summit in London on 18 October 2018; and, most recently, the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response adopted by the OECD Council on 12 July 2019.

### National framework

At national level, two months on from the law of 27 June 2013 authorising the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, Decree-Law No. 93 of 14 August 2013 (Article 5-bis) – converted with amendments by Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013 containing the “Urgent provisions on security and for combating gender-based violence, as well as civil protection and receivership of the Provinces”, further amended by Law No. 69 of 19 July 2019 (Article 18) – provides that the Minister for Equal Opportunities, upon agreement at the Permanent Conference for relations between the State, Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, shall annually allocate among the Regions the resources of the “Fund for policies relating to rights and equal opportunities” as referred to in Article 19(3) of Decree-Law No. 223 of 4 July 2006, converted with amendments by Law No. 248 of 4 August 2006.

**Box 2. Aims of the “Urgent provisions on security and for combating gender-based violence, as well as civil protection and receivership of the Provinces” (Article 5 of Decree-Law No. 93 of 14 August 2013, converted with amendments by Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013)**

- a) to prevent violence against women through information and community awareness, raising the awareness of men and boys as part of the process of eliminating violence against women and resolving conflicts in interpersonal relationships;
- b) to raise the awareness of media operators with a view towards a respectful representation of gender and the role of women in particular in communication and news (including commercial messages), by having operators adopt self-regulatory codes among other things;
- c) to promote adequate training of school staff on relationships and against gender-based violence and discrimination, and to promote (within the framework of the national guidance for nursery and primary school curricula, the national guidance for secondary schools and the guidelines for technical and professional institutes, in the curricular and extracurricular teaching programmes of schools at all levels) awareness-raising, information and training for students to prevent violence against women and gender discrimination, including by placing sufficient emphasis on the issue in textbooks;
- d) to enhance forms of assistance and support for female victims of violence and their children through standard ways of strengthening the network of local services, anti-violence centres and assistance services for female victims of violence;
- e) to guarantee training for all professionals who come into contact with cases of gender-based violence or stalking;
- f) to increase the protection of victims by boosting cooperation between all institutions involved;
- g) to encourage the development and implementation of nation-wide actions based on consolidated methods, in line with dedicated guidelines, to support individuals responsible for acts of violence in emotional relationships, facilitate their rehabilitation and avoid relapses;
- h) to provide for a structured and periodically updated collection (at least once a year) of data on the phenomenon, including through a census of anti-violence centres and by coordinating existing databases;
- i) to set out specific positive actions that also take into account the expertise of the administrations involved in preventing, combating and supporting victims of gender-based violence and stalking and the experience of associations providing assistance in the field;
- j) to establish a structured governance system between all levels of government, based on the various experiences and good practices already implemented in local networks and on the territory.

The above-mentioned legislation has framed the objectives to be pursued for effective action against gender-based violence in a detailed list, using locally allocated resources to implement wide-ranging measures which are targeted at: professional figures involved in the processes of caring for female victims, to help them overcome their victimisation; those working in the world of education and training to disseminate a culture of respect and counteract the victimisation of women; government professionals responsible for ensuring adequate governance so as to address the complexities of multilevel interventions; and the general population – especially men – to break down stereotypes and violent behaviour.

Here, mention should also be made of Law No. 107 of 13 July 2015 on the reform of the national education and training system and delegation for the reorganisation of the current legislative provisions, whereby the Three-Year Educational Offer Plan must ensure the principles of equal opportunities, promoting education (in schools at all levels) for gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination, so as to inform and raise the awareness of students, teachers and parents. With this in mind, in implementation of Article 1(16) of the above-mentioned Law, the National Guidelines “Educating to respect: for gender equality, the prevention of gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination” were issued, which identify education as one of the tools for combating all types of discrimination and promoting respect for differences, serving as an essential part of pupils’ civic education.

As of 2017, through annual Decrees, a total of more than €90 million has been allocated among the Regions and government bodies of Trento and Bolzano, of which: approximately €59 million was allocated to enhancing existing centres (and, where necessary, it was also possible to use the funds in 2019 and 2020 to create new Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters), just over €18 million was aimed at supporting regional planning measures, approximately €10 million was specifically allocated to creating new Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters and, lastly, in 2020 alone, €3 million was allocated to support Shelters for needs associated with the COVID-19 health emergency.

Compared to 2017, there has been a clear increase over time in the resources allocated to the Regions, which have risen from just over €12 million to 20 million in 2018, the year when the Department for Equal Opportunities simultaneously issued a call for direct management for financing projects aimed at preventing and combating violence against women, in implementation of the Istanbul Convention, with €10 million aimed at supporting awareness-raising activities on six areas of intervention: migrant and refugee women; job placement for female victims of violence; support for women prisoners subjected to violence; treatment programmes for abusive men; support and protection for women subjected to “economic” violence; and awareness-raising, prevention and education projects. In 2019, the resources made available by the decree for fund allocation reached €30 million. This amount stabilised also for the 2020 Allocation, with resources amounting to €28 million, plus the €5.5 million made available by the Department for Equal Opportunities starting in April 2021 for financing urgent interventions at national level to support the measures adopted by the Shelters and Anti-Violence Centres in relation to the Covid-19 health emergency.

The result achieved by the Department for Equal Opportunities through the programming of investments by the regions was particularly significant, both in terms of the hospitality system for female victims of violence and in terms of quality services. The territorial coverage of the care activities was expanded to realities with greater exposure to violence thanks to a major increase in allocations and improved use of funds, which has boosted the administrative and management capacity of local authorities and implementing bodies, as confirmed by the analysis of monitoring data set out in the most recent Report to Parliament in March 2021.

Another key step was the approval of Law No. 4 of 11 January 2018 on “Amendments to the Civil Code, Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and other provisions for orphans due to domestic crimes”, which amends certain provisions of the Civil, Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes, with



new protections for orphans due to domestic crimes (i.e. minor children or economically non-self-sufficient adults) who have become orphans as a result of a homicide committed against their parent by the spouse, by a separated or divorced spouse, by the other party to the civil partnership (including if the civil partnership has ceased), or by a person who is, or has been, in an affective relationship and stable cohabitation.

Another fundamental national reference is Law No. 69 of 19 July 2019 (containing “*Amendments to the Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and other provisions on the protection of victims of domestic and gender-based violence*”), called “**Code Red**”. The text includes key provisions of substantive criminal law, as well as additional provisions of a procedural nature. The new procedural provisions include accelerated criminal proceedings for some offences, such as domestic violence, stalking and sexual violence, so that protection measures for victims can be adopted more quickly. Moreover, the precautionary measure of prohibiting access to places frequented by the victim has been amended to allow the judge to ensure compliance through control procedures, electronic means or other technical tools, such as electronic bracelets. Specifically, the offence of abusing family members and cohabitants is included among the offences that may trigger prevention measures. Lastly, in addition to increasing the penalties already set out in the Criminal Code, the law in question introduces four new offences:

- the offence of unlawful dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos without the consent of the persons depicted (so-called ‘revenge porn’);
- the offence of deforming a person’s appearance by way of permanent facial injuries;
- the offence of coercion or induction into marriage;
- the offence of violating orders to leave the family home and the ban on coming close to places frequented by the victim.

Another important regulatory tool to support victims of male violence is Italian Prime Ministerial Decree of 24 November 2017 concerning the **National Guidelines for Health Authorities and Hospital Authorities** called “**Pathways for women subjected to violence**”, which stem from the need to ensure timely and effective emergency interventions and provide social and medical care for female victims of violence. The aim of the Guidelines is to ensure adequate and integrated interventions to treat the physical and psychological effects of male violence on women’s health, by guaranteeing timely and appropriate care for women. This starts with an emergency code assessment, before referring the women (if they consent) to the dedicated public and private services in their local area in order to develop personalised plans of support and listening so that they can overcome their experience of violence.

Lastly, on 5 August 2021, the Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family presented to the Italian Council of Ministers the first National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026, which was also the subject of a briefing at the Unified Conference. The National Strategy outlines the values, policy direction and point of arrival in terms of gender equality. For the Italian Government, the National Strategy for Gender Equality is the benchmark for the implementation of the NRRP and for the Family Act reform. In this context, women’s empowerment is as a pivotal point of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and, at the same time, falls under the coordination with this National Strategic Plan, which identifies the goal as a means of preventing and combating male violence against women.

### **Regulatory framework in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic**

The crisis triggered by the **pandemic** has presented governments with new challenges in the fight against male violence against women. The risk of violence against women has increased, particularly domestic violence, and the “social distancing” measures introduced to curb the spread of the virus have hampered the efforts of anti-violence centres and shelters to accommodate victims.

The **European Parliament Communication** of 7 April 2020 states in this respect, that as a result of the lockdown, domestic violence cases have increased by approximately one third in some EU countries. Looking again at the evidence of the UN Women report on this topic, the JRC (Joint Research Centre) underlines the even resurgence of the phenomenon across the EU during the lockdown (with a 30% increase in calls for domestic violence support services in both Cyprus and France).

The correlation between increased reports of domestic violence and reduced access to emergency, accommodation and protection services (also due to the measures imposed to contain the spread of the pandemic) has had a major impact on domestic violence victims, who were unable to even go to A&Es due to the influx of coronavirus patients. Therefore, on the eve of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in the same days that **European Commission and High Representative/Vice-President** Josep Borrell issued a Joint Statement highlighting the impact of Covid-19 on domestic violence, in November 2020 the **Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality** approved a motion for a European Parliament resolution on the gender perspective in the Covid-19 crisis and post-crisis period, calling on the Commission and urging Member States to take action, particularly on the issue of gender-based violence, by way of social measures, prevention, information and suppression. For the time being, the legislative process at EU level has led to the European Parliament Resolution of 21 January 2021 on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality, which takes largely into account the new context brought about by the pandemic also with regard to gender-based violence.

Explicitly recalling Pillar 5 of the 2030 Agenda, the **Next Generation EU** tool (approved in December 2020 by the European Council) also highlights that: *“women have been particularly affected by the Covid-19 crisis, as they account for the majority of care workers across the EU and juggle unpaid care work with their job responsibilities. The circumstances are very challenging for single parents, 85% of whom are women. Gender equality and equal opportunities for all and the integration of these objectives should be taken into account and promoted when drafting and executing the national plans submitted under this Regulation. Investment in care is important for ensuring gender equality and women's economic empowerment, building resilient societies and improving the regularisation of employment, social security and pensions in female-dominated sectors, stimulating job creation, preventing poverty and social exclusion and having a positive effect on GDP, as it allows more women to take part in paid work”*.

The approach indicated follows, at EU level, the *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027* (COM(2020)758 final of 24 November 2020) and Commission Communication COM(2020)152 of 5 March 2020 *“A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025”*, which reports on the need to achieve *a gender equal Europe where gender-based violence, sex discrimination and structural inequality between women and men are a thing of the past; A Europe where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity are equal. Where they are free to pursue their chosen path in life, where they have equal opportunities to thrive, and where they can equally participate in and lead our European society*. In this context, it should also be noted that, as part of the planning of the ESI Funds, one out of three specific objectives of the entire intervention strategy assigned to the ESF+ action is allocated to women, making them a key target on which to focus investments in development policies for the entire seven-year period, thereby fostering new and enhanced opportunities to counteract the hindering factors and states of disadvantage that still dominate certain social, institutional and economic contexts.

Lastly, at national level, in line with the Next Generation EU tool, the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** has made gender equality one of the three priorities cutting across all of the programme's missions, in order to *“achieve full economic and social emancipation of women by making gender equality the criterion for evaluating all projects (gender mainstreaming) and promoting an integrated strategy of reforms, education and investment in social infrastructure and support services”* with explicit reference to the need to address gender-based violence, the pathways out of violence, and economic empowerment of women

victims. This gives rise to the possibility of specific support for female entrepreneurship, which is an important factor in supporting female victims of violence in their path towards economic autonomy. A similar approach was taken in June 2020 by the Report for the Italian President of the Council of Ministers signed by the Committee of Experts on Economic and Social Matters (the “**Colao Plan**”), which proposed a specific area of intervention aimed at supporting female victims of violence “*such as establishing an income of freedom, assistance with entering the world of work, and bolstering anti-violence centres and shelters*”.

## 2.2 The work of the Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence

The work of the Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide<sup>1</sup> has made it possible to introduce and enhance, over time, the tools to gain increasingly extensive knowledge of the phenomenon of male violence against women (in its broadest facets and implications) and female victims with minor children, as well as to identify trajectories of intervention tools to tackle this phenomenon, starting at the legal-administrative level.

### **Box 3. The tasks assigned to the Parliamentary Investigation Committee (Resolution of 18 January 2017)**

Based on the first founding resolution of 2017, the Commission is tasked with:

- a) carrying out investigations into the real scale, conditions, characteristics and causes of femicide, i.e. the killing of a woman based on gender and – more broadly – all forms of gender-based violence;
- b) monitoring the actual implementation of the Istanbul Convention and any other supranational and international agreement on the subject, as well as national legislation inspired by the same principles, with particular regard to Decree-Law No. 93 of 14 August 2013, converted with amendments by Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013;
- c) ascertaining possible inconsistencies and shortcomings of the current legislation with respect to the protection of victims of violence and any minors involved;
- d) analysing cases of femicide that have occurred since 2011, to ascertain whether there are any recurring conditions or behaviours that can be statistically assessed with a view to directing preventive action;
- e) ascertaining the level of focus and intervention capacity of authorities and public administrations (both central and peripheral) to carry out prevention and assistance activities;
- f) monitoring the actual allocation of the resources allocated by the above-mentioned Decree-Law No. 93 of 2013 and by the stability laws starting as of 2011 to structures dealing with gender-based violence;
- g) proposing legislative and administrative solutions to achieve the most adequate prevention and most effective fight against femicide and, more generally, all forms of gender-based violence, as well as to protect victims of violence and any minors involved.

The Committee’s work has aimed to holistically reconstruct the existing framework on violence against women, highlighting the critical issues and limitations of counter-violence activities and identifying areas and tools for improvement; this starts at the legal-administrative level in order to strengthen the overall system of prevention, protection and support for women and the prosecution of perpetrators of violence. As such, the Committees have carried out numerous hearings, listening to all stakeholders, starting with female victims of violence and the associations that support them, then experts from various sectors (statisticians, psychologists, teachers), and lastly, institutional stakeholders that intervene

<sup>1</sup>Reference documents:

- Establishment of a Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence (RESOLUTION of 18 January 2017 - OJ No. 20 of 25-1-2017);
- Establishment of a Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence (RESOLUTION of 16 October 2018 - OJ No. 249 of 25-10-2018);
- Extension of the deadline referred to in Article 1(2) of the Resolution of 16 October 2018 on the “Establishment of a Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence”.

in the process in various ways, from prevention through to the prosecution of crimes. Moreover, as part of this activity, specific investigations have been launched and a computerised archive has been set up to store the documents handed in by the individuals interviewed during the hearings or subsequently sent in after requests for further investigation.

The results of these activities are set out in four reports.

Firstly, the **Final Report**<sup>2</sup> (approved by the Committee in the session of 6 February 2018), deals broadly with the work of the Commission established in 2017, in line with the tasks it was assigned, and contains the result of studies on the scale of gender-based violence, extensive regulatory studies, action measures and the prospects for possible investigations in the next legislature.

Secondly, the Report entitled “**Measures to address the issues of female victims of violence, anti-violence centres, shelters and anti-violence/anti-trafficking helpdesks during the Covid-19 pandemic**”<sup>3</sup> (approved by the Committee in the session of 26 March 2020) further addresses the conditions whereby violence against women (during the health crisis) is likely to be further exacerbated: isolation, forced cohabitation, restrictions on movement and socio-economic instability, meaning that women and their children are at risk of increased exposure to domestic violence and witnessing violence. The analysis also shows that sharing living spaces for prolonged periods is likely to lead to an increase not only in the number but also the gravity of incidents, thereby raising the risk of escalations of domestic violence situations.

Thirdly, also in 2020, the Report on the governance of anti-violence services and on funding anti-violence centres and shelters (approved by the Committee in the session of 14 July 2020)<sup>4</sup> sets out the results of the survey monitoring the institutional system of funding and governance of services operating in the field of prevention and combating male violence against women, starting by reconstructing the main political and regulatory stages underpinning the current institutional system and the primary role played by anti-violence centres. The report also illustrates the critical and most controversial points of this system, presenting various recommendations for a comprehensive reform of the governance of the system.

Lastly, the most recent “**Report on Gender and Domestic Violence in the Judiciary**” (approved by the Committee in its session of 17 June 2021)<sup>5</sup> analyses the investigations carried out at the Public Prosecutor’s Offices, ordinary courts, supervisory courts, the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the School for the Judiciary, the Consiglio nazionale forense (National Lawyers’ Council) and the orders of psychologists.

The Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Femicide has made a key contribution to the creation of a national statistical system focusing on gender violence and, of all tasks carried out, it is a fundamental point of reference for all individuals intervening in various capacities, providing information through the analyses presented below, which represent a selection of the broadest statistical analysis currently available at national level.

## 2.3 Knowledge of the phenomenon

The importance of the link between statistical data on gender-based violence and policies for preventing and combating violence against women is enshrined in the 2011 Istanbul Convention and in the multiple recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These principles have been reaffirmed in the Extraordinary Action Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2017 and in the National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2017-2020, achieving very important results particularly thanks to the contribution of

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<sup>2</sup> Rapporteur: Senator Francesca Puglisi.

<sup>3</sup> Rapporteur: Senator Valeria Valente.

<sup>4</sup> See previous note.

<sup>5</sup> See previous note.

ISTAT<sup>6</sup>, which has long been involved in measuring gender-based violence against women, as highlighted in this paragraph.

### **Dissemination, characteristics and impacts<sup>7</sup>**

The first survey is entirely dedicated to violence against women (entitled the Women's Safety Survey) and was conducted by ISTAT in 2006. The second was completed in 2014, and planning is now underway for a third survey.

In 2014<sup>8</sup>, it was estimated that one third of women (31.5% of women aged 16-70, 6,788,000) had been subjected to some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime: 20.2% (4,353,000) had been subjected to physical violence, 21% (4,520,000) to sexual violence, and 5.4% (1,157,000) to the most serious forms of sexual violence such as rape (652,000) and attempted rape (746,000).

On the other hand, considering only violence from partners or ex-partners, 13.6% of women had been subjected to physical and sexual violence (2,800,000) in particular 5.2% (855,000) from their current partner and 18.9% (2,044,000) from their ex-partner. The majority of women who had a violent partner in the past left him because of the violence (68.6%).

Psychological and economic violence by partners is also widespread (26.4% of women in a couple have been subjected to psychological or economic violence by their current partner and 46.1% by an ex-partner), as well as stalking (21.5% of women aged 16-70 – 2,151,000 women – have been subjected to stalking from an ex-partner in their lifetime; if we consider women who have experienced stalking multiple times, the figure is 15.3%).

It should also be noted that the most serious forms of violence are perpetrated by partners, such as rape and attempted suffocation or burns, up to and including murders of women, which in around 60% of cases (61.3% in 2019) are perpetrated by partners or ex-partners.

In addition to these types of violence, sexual harassment in the workplace and sexual blackmail in the workplace affected 8.9% of female workers and other types of sexual harassment were experienced by 43.6% of women during their lifetime<sup>9</sup>.

Of course, some things are changing; the survey on violence against women has already shown some key elements of improvement, which is likely a sign of cultural evolution that is only measurable in terms of its effects. Violence against women was indeed still a widespread, pervasive and silent phenomenon, yet it showed some signs of improvement: a decrease in psychological violence, less serious physical violence and sexual harassment, and the emergence of greater awareness among women. This is apparent in the recognition of abuse as a crime (up from 14.3% in 2006 to 29.6% in 2014 for partner violence) and not only as something 'wrong' or something that happens in normal relationships, in the ability to seek help at anti-violence centres and helpdesks (up from 2.4% to 4.9%) and in the reports of abuse suffered at the hands of a partner (up from 6.7% to 11.8%)<sup>10</sup>.

The spread of technology, however, exacerbates some situations, which is why there is a focus on new forms of violence, most of which can be identified as part of the broader umbrella of cyber-violence.

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<sup>6</sup> Following the signing of the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding<sup>6</sup> with the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the resulting 2017 agreement, ISTAT was tasked with creating a real integrated information system on violence against women (active since November 2017 which is continually updated <https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne>), aimed at providing quality information and indicators that give an overview of the phenomenon and integrate data from different sources (ISTAT, Department for Equal Opportunities, Ministries, Regions, National Research Council, Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters and other services such as 1522, etc.).

<sup>7</sup> The surveys were conducted with financial support from the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, thanks to the active project collaboration of anti-violence centres and help from several female victims of violence.

<sup>8</sup> ISTAT, Multi-purpose survey on women's safety, year 2014, <https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/violenza-dentro-e-fuori-la-famiglia>.

<sup>9</sup> ISTAT, Multi-purpose survey on citizens' safety 2015-2016, <https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/violenza-sul-luogo-di-lavoro>.

<sup>10</sup> ISTAT, Multi-purpose survey on women's safety, year 2014.

## Stereotypes on gender roles and sexual violence, intergenerational transfer of violence, and risk factors

The Istanbul Convention has focused on the causes of violence embedded in the culture of countries (Articles 12 and 14) and on the importance of statistical data to understand both the spread of the phenomenon and the causes behind it, as well as the State's response to the perpetrators (Article 11).

Measuring the spread of stereotypes about gender roles and attitudes towards violent behaviour is key to understanding the cultural context behind a form of inequality that results in, or is used to justify, violent relationships.

The picture that emerges from the statistical data<sup>11</sup> shows how important it is to invest in training and in the new generations: Stereotypes surrounding gender roles, as well as those that tend to blame women for sexual violence, are less common among those who are better educated and among younger generations.

Overall, 58.8%<sup>12</sup> of respondents agreed with at least one of the gender role stereotypes (e.g. that it is more important for men than women to be successful at work, men are less suitable for household chores or that men have to provide for the family's financial needs), with no particular variance between male and female responses.

Similarly, as many as 54.6% of the population either strongly or somewhat agreed with at least one of the stereotypes on sexual violence considered in the ISTAT survey. Again, stereotypes are higher among the adult generation and among those with fewer educational qualifications. Men and women differ more on this topic (57.5% of men and 51.7% of women), although their view tends to be similar on some statements, such as thinking that women can provoke sexual violence by the way they dress or that they are at least partly responsible if they experience sexual violence when drunk or under the influence of drugs.

Few respondents thought that physical violence is acceptable: more than 90% of 18-74-year-olds think that it is never acceptable for 'a guy to slap his girlfriend if she flirts with another guy' or for a couple to slap each other from time to time. However, this figure decreases to 80.6% when asked about whether it's acceptable to check one's wife's/partner's mobile phone and/or social network activity: 16.8% think it is acceptable in some circumstances, as do a worryingly large number of young people (30.3% of 18-29 year olds and 27.1% of girls in the same age group).

The intergenerational transfer of violence is a manifestation of the importance of the cultural context and learned conditioning<sup>13</sup>. Children who witness violence committed by their father against their mother or who are directly affected by it tend to repeat this behaviour as adults<sup>14</sup>. In these cases, the rate of partner violence quadruples and girls who either witness it or are subjected to it tend to tolerate it three times more than others. Sadly, children witnessing or experiencing violence has in fact increased from 2006<sup>15</sup> to 2014.

The gender culture and prejudices tied to violence against women underpin the opinions conveyed through all forms of communication, including social media.

To better understand how the phenomenon of gender-based violence is perceived by public opinion and how gender stereotypes are represented and disseminated via these channels in particular, ISTAT is currently engaged in possible analyses of the content created in social networks through specific tools such as sentiment analysis and emotion detection.

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<sup>11</sup> The module on gender role stereotypes and the social image of violence is carried out by ISTAT as part of a collaboration agreement with the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In 2018, individuals aged 18 to 74 were asked questions about gender role stereotypes and, for the first time, were asked for their opinions on the acceptability of violence, its prevalence and causes, as well as stereotypes about sexual violence.

<sup>12</sup> ISTAT, Module on gender stereotypes and the social image of violence, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> In 2013-2014, the ISTAT Time Use survey dedicated a section to public opinions on the role of women.

<sup>14</sup> ISTAT, Multi-purpose survey on women's safety, year 2014.

<sup>15</sup> ISTAT, Multi-purpose survey on women's safety, year 2006.

## Tools for caring for female victims of violence

In the context of victimisation and in relation to the cycle of violence suffered by women victims of gender-based and domestic violence, there are several channels and actors (both institutional and non-institutional) that support female victims and that women may turn to in their pathway out of violence. The analysis of the pathway, by nature, has various phases and is highly subjective in terms of the woman's situation, history of violence and opportunities she has available to seek help and overcome the context of violence. Yet it is an integral and fundamental element in order to describe and understand the trend of the phenomenon, the response and intervention of institutions and the private social sector, as well as the behaviour of women and their pursuit of support over time.

Violence is not overcome in one single moment; rather it is a pathway of varying length which can be embarked upon autonomously by the woman, or triggered thanks to the input of others supporting her (anti-violence centres and shelters, 1522 operators, law enforcement, social-health operators). In both cases, the process can also take place in an emergency situation (danger to life/safety of the woman and/or children).

In the three-year period 2017-2019, 16,140 women went to **Accident and Emergency at least once**<sup>16</sup>, with a diagnosis of violence, for a total of 19,166 admissions to A&E with a diagnosis of violence over the three-year period (1.2 admissions per capita). Accident and Emergency data shows however that, during the three-year period, the same women also went to A&E with diagnoses related to issues other than violence. Overall, the per capita number of admissions for these women, regardless of diagnosis, is more than 5, and in the 18-44 year age group, it is more than 6. This means that a woman who has been subjected to violence during the three-year period returns to A&E an average of 5/6 times. Of these women 66.5% arrived by their own decision, and 24.3% by 118 intervention. 22.4% of the admissions (4,285) were put on code yellow (moderately critical) upon medical examination, and 0.9% (180) on code red (very critical), whereas 72% were deemed not critical.

Although the data is of great interest, the number of victims of violence in A&E is still underestimated. Recognition of violence by operators is still not fully effective, although strategic training is being provided in this regard. Analyses carried out in A&Es where blended training was provided to health professionals showed that while the number of total admissions between the second half of 2014 and the whole of 2016 increased by 18.8%, the rate of admissions with a diagnosis of violence<sup>17</sup> almost doubled for the 28 A&Es (where blended training was provided). This means that providing training on gender-based violence as part of the mandatory CME (Continuing Medical Education) training makes professionals in the field better able to intercept cases of violence. The same has to be done in other sectors too, to include legal practitioners, police authorities, social services and teachers.

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<sup>16</sup> By way of the Agreement between the Italian Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), signed on 20 November 2019 for "Inputting health information on the gender-based violence database", the two entities (within their respective technical and institutional competences) entered into a collaboration relationship that in 2020 led to the analysis of A&E admissions entered on the Information System for Monitoring Assistance in Emergency-Urgency (EMUR) to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of gender-based violence. <https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/violenza-e-accesso-delle-donne-al-pronto-soccorso>

<sup>17</sup> This analysis will also be applied to the 2019, 2020 and 2021 data in order to monitor the outcome of the training carried out in the 632 A&Es in 2020.

**1522**<sup>18</sup> is the fastest tool for victims of violence to call for help. In 2020, calls from victims to 1522 rose by 81.8% compared to 2019<sup>19</sup>, and chat contacts more than doubled (up 250%), again due to the pandemic.

The volume of calls from victims surged from the end of March 2020, peaking in April (up 181.8% compared to the same month in 2019) and May (up 182.5% compared to May 2019), but especially on 25 November (the day when violence against women is remembered) and due to the media campaign. In 2020, this pre-existing spike became much sharper as calls more than doubled in the week between 23 and 29 November 2020 (up 117.8% compared to 2019).

Analysing the quarterly data, the number of valid calls (both by phone and chat) continued to rise in the first quarter of 2021<sup>20</sup> (7,974 valid calls and 4,310 victims), up 38.8% compared to the first quarter of 2020, yet still far from the peak of the second quarter of 2020 (12,942 valid calls). The volume of calls for help via chat is still increasing, making up 16.3% of the forms of contact (up from 11.5% in the first quarter of 2020).

The reasons for calling 1522 included a clear rise in “requests for help from victims of violence” and “reports of cases of violence”, which together accounted for 48.3% (3,854) of valid calls. Compared to the same period last year, these increased by 109%, while calls to 1522 to obtain information decreased (-37.6%).

Victims who called 1522 reported being subjected to more than one type of violence in 62.1% of cases (2 forms in 23.3% of cases and 3 or more forms of violence in 38.8% of cases). The violence reported when calling 1522 is mainly physical (42.7% of cases), yet psychological violence stands out (51.5%) among victims who have suffered more than one form of violence. The home continues to be one of the most frequent places where violence occurs: 72.3% of cases in the first quarter of 2020, peaking in the second quarter of 2020 (77.3%) during the lockdown period.

Many of the victims who call 1522 were found to be living in a state of great distress: 31.3% say they are afraid of dying and fear for their safety. The highest percentage of those in this state of mind (40.6%) was recorded in the second quarter of 2020, as were cases of violence at home.

In terms of the perpetrators, the upward trend in violence from family members has continued (16.8% in the first quarter of 2021 compared to 14.4% in 2020 and 11.7 in 2019), while violence from current partners is slightly decreasing (51.6% in Q1 2021 vs. 59.1% in Q1 2020).

A higher percentage of victims reported violence (18.5%) in the first quarter of 2021.

The 1522 service plays an important role as a bridge between local support services: 66.5% of victims in the first quarter of 2021 were referred to a local service (down compared to the quarters of 2020) and of these, 57.1% (2,462 victims) were referred to an Anti-Violence Centre.

There were 257 **Anti-Violence Centres** operating in 2018 and 286 in 2019. These Centres are a fundamental point of reference for the 49,394 women who have used them and for the 30,056 women who have been supported and protected and begun their pathway out of violence<sup>21</sup>. The Anti-Violence Centres – in addition to offering a highly available in-person service (being open 5.2 days a week for about 7 hours a day on average) – can also be reached, in 68.5% of cases, 24 hours a day. The centres can be reliably contacted as 22.6% provide users with a toll-free number, and 50.2% have a telephone line dedicated to operators. Moreover, in terms of reachability and proximity of women’s centres, 49.4% of Anti-Violence Centres have local helpdesks that provide similar services in order to reach

<sup>18</sup> 1522 is the number provided by the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, to support and help victims of gender-based violence and stalking in line with the Istanbul Convention. It is free of charge, guarantees anonymity and deals with various forms of violence 24 hours a day. This helpline provides first aid information in case of emergency and useful information on services and anti-violence centres operating at local level that can be used by victims of violence or other users.

<sup>19</sup> ISTAT - Department for Equal Opportunities - Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Data from the 1522 number against violence and stalking. <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2021/05/Case-rifugio-CAV-e-1522.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> For further reference: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/258897>

<sup>21</sup> ISTAT, Survey on services provided by Anti-Violence Centres, <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/249613>.



more women. Various services are offered to women at the Anti-Violence Centres, the most frequent of which are listening and receiving, guiding and providing support for other services of the local network (both 96.5%), legal support (93.8%), psychological support and counselling (92.2%), support towards gaining autonomy (87.5%), distancing (84.0%) and job orientation (80.5%). The services provided by the Centres also include prevention activities, such as training for other operators and awareness-raising in schools. Most of the Centres provide training to the outside world (81.7%). The main target groups are social workers (82.9%) and health professionals (77.1%), as well as police (57.1%) and lawyers (47.6%). Information activities in schools are carried out by 89.1% of the Centres, 96.5% arrange cultural prevention events and 86.8% perform data collection.

Female victims of gender-based and domestic violence can also receive hospitality and safety in the 272 **Shelters**<sup>22</sup> operating throughout Italy which, in 2018, hosted 1,940 abused women with an average stay of 259 days. Like the Anti-Violence Centres, the Shelters are also available 24 hours a day (in 90.1% of cases). These offer numerous services, the most common being: guidance and support services (96.4%), individual safety plans based on risk assessments (93.7%), psychological support and counselling for women (90.1%), guidance for independent living (90.1%) and work (87.8%), legal support and counselling (89.2%) and parenting support (80.6%). The Shelters' activities tie in with a broader context of local support and reception services for female victims of violence: local social services are in fact the main channel through which women use the Shelters (in 30% of cases), followed by the Anti-Violence Centres (26.1% of cases). However, it should be noted that there are also women who refer themselves to Shelters independently (6.2%) or on the recommendation of private individuals (2.6%). In 2018, half of the women who left Shelters (50.8%) did so because they had completed their pathway out of violence and 7.8% because they had completed their hospitality process, suggesting a positive outcome for around 6 out of 10 women.

#### Judicial process for perpetrators of violence<sup>23</sup>

Considering the latest episode of violence experienced by Italian women outside of their relationship, we can observe that **the perpetrators** are mainly Italian for all types of violence<sup>24</sup>; in particular, rapes of Italian women were committed by Italians in more than 80% of cases (81.6%) and by foreign perpetrators in around 15% of cases (15.1%). For foreign victims, the perpetrator is from the same country in 50% of cases, excluding less serious cases of violence and harassment where the perpetrators are mainly Italian. Rapes of foreign women were committed by compatriots three times out of four (73.2%) of cases, and by Italians and other foreigners in 18% and 10.9% of cases respectively. It is interesting to note how Italian women's inclination to make a report changes considerably if the perpetrator of the violence is foreign: the amount of reports filed by rape victims with a foreign perpetrator is in fact more than 6 times higher than if the perpetrator is Italian. For attempted rape, the difference is even more significant: the share of women who report the crime in the case of a foreign perpetrator is 10 times higher than in the case of an Italian perpetrator.

Some of the crimes committed<sup>25</sup> have a high social relevance tied to gender-based violence. These include murder (2.2 per 100,000 inhabitants in Italy), sexual violence (4 per 100,000 inhabitants), stalking (14.4), family abuse (12.8) and group sexual violence (0.3).

<sup>22</sup> ISTAT, Survey on the services provided by Shelters, <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/250750>.

<sup>23</sup> For information on the judicial process: <https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-percorso-giudiziario>.

<sup>24</sup> ISTAT Survey on Women's Safety, Year 2014.

<sup>25</sup> This data comes from the source "Istat, Survey on reported crimes for which the judicial authority has initiated criminal proceedings and on juveniles reported for crimes". The survey investigates the first stage of the legal process, i.e. the preliminary investigation phase. Indeed, this is the moment when the public prosecutor makes their first decision as to whether the offence entered in the register of offences is of a criminal nature.

With regard to the offence of stalking, 20,761 adults were entered on the prosecutor's office registers in 2018 for at least one offence, for which the offence was either ultimately dismissed or it was decided not to take criminal action. Prosecution took place in less than half of cases (9,470, i.e. 45.6%).

Also in 2018, there were 28,466 suspected family abuse offences, and just over 42% of these were prosecuted. For the offences of sexual assault and group sexual assault, there were 6,759 suspects in 2018.

Charges for stalking, abuse and sexual assault have been on the rise in recent years.

The perpetrators of violence are mainly male. The individual crimes established by the Public Prosecutor's Office are ranked by country of birth of the suspects, and show a prevalence of perpetrators of Italian origin, particularly for the offences of stalking (86% of perpetrators subject to prosecution and 83.2% dismissed) and family abuse (74.2% subject to prosecution and 74.7% dismissed). Compared to the other offences taken into consideration, in cases of sexual violence and group violence, the proportion of Italians decreases: for sexual violence in particular, 60% of Italian perpetrators are subject to prosecution and 68.4% of cases are dismissed; while for group violence these figures stand at 55.3% and 54.2% respectively.

In 2018, there were 847 cases filed with the General Register of Prosecutors' Offices with at least one offence of murder, 401 of which were dismissed, while the remaining 446 were prosecuted. In the last four years, the trend followed a rather regular pattern, with a slight increase in the number of proceedings being dismissed.

Not all homicides are the same: there were 271 defendants with a particular social relevance in 'violent' contexts within the family (40.1% of those accused of murder). These defendants are men in 93.4% of the cases and women in 6.6%. More defendants of this type of homicide were born in Italy (82.7%) compared to the total number of homicides (78.6% when considering all defendants with at least one homicide offence).

The trend of homicides 'characterised by violent contexts' appears to be rising slightly over time: the number of defendants of homicides 'in violent contexts' increased from 246 in 2010 to 271 in 2018. Homicide defendants who committed more than one type of offence were also charged with weapons offences (63.8%), concealment and destruction of a corpse (9.2% and 8.9% of cases respectively), voluntary bodily harm (6.6%) and family abuse (4.8%).

The aggravating circumstances with which murder defendants are charged in the context of relationship violence is particularly interesting. Thirty-seven (or 13.7%) of the defendants are charged with aggravating circumstances of homicide "against an ascendant or descendant" (Article 576(1)(2) and Article 577(1)(1)) and 5.2% (14 cases) "against relatives" (Article 577(2)). Four perpetrators (1.5%) were charged for homicides with aggravated sexual assault (Article 576(1)(5)). These aggravated homicides are also associated with other offences, such as sexual violence and family abuse.

In the analysis of **convictions for crimes related to gender-based and domestic violence**, in 2018 there were 3,462 convictions for family abuse, 1,870 for sexual violence and 1,982 for stalking<sup>26</sup>. In terms of consummated murders, 671 people were convicted in 2018 with sentences entered in police records. In terms of the gender of the convict, the analysis shows that females convicted of homicide account for 3.4% (23 women), while the males account for 96.6% (648 men). 71.8% of male convicts had a criminal record, whilst the percentage for women is much lower (34.8%).

Focusing now on homicides in violent contexts in relationships<sup>27</sup>, there were 237 sentences for homicides that may be described as tied to violent contexts in the relationship sphere. The survey showed a larger proportion of males – almost the entire number of convicts (98.3% versus 1.7% for women), and a larger proportion of Italians (84.8% are of Italian origin while 15.2% are foreign).

<sup>26</sup> ISTAT, Survey on convicts given final sentences.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to murder, other violent crimes have been sentenced, such as violation of the rules on weapons and explosives, voluntary injuries committed and attempted, destruction, suppression or removal of a corpse (concealment), desecration of a corpse, kidnapping, threats, sexual violence and group sexual violence, abuse in the family or towards children, private violence and stalking.

The final focus was on the statistical data collected in relation to male detainees, which showed that in 2019, there were 3,589 **male detainees**<sup>28</sup> in prison for committing sexual violence, 3,438 for committing abuse in the family or towards children, 1,329 for stalking, 248 for battery and 217 for trafficking and enslavement.

## 2.4 Implementation of the National Strategic Plan in 2017-2020

The Strategic Plan 2021-2023 builds on the implementation of the initiatives launched in the previous three-year period and, in particular, in the Operational Plan 2017-2020. Following a special survey carried out by the Department for Equal Opportunities in May 2021, the initiatives are essentially implemented by central government bodies and other organisations involved, with a 100% achievement rate (for at least half of the total interventions) of the planned objectives and respective targets. Reference is made in particular to all actions tied to the systemic increase in the quality of the services for female victims of male violence, in terms of the contact and care mechanisms (starting with police forces and social and health centres), housing facilities (Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters), and in terms of awareness and mainstream media communications.

The same government administrations that provided feedback to the consultation – Ministries of Defence, Justice, Interior, Economy and Finance, Education, University and Research, Economic Development, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Department of the Family of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – have largely expressed the will/need to continue and renew some of the main initiatives for which they were responsible also into the three-year period 2021-2023, in terms of triggering intervention procedures, management systems and targets, with a broader/redefined target audience.

In general, these are results achieved through the action of several actors and through the use of financial resources from several sources (national, EU and regional/local). Even though these results have been gained in operational settings that are not always fully developed or prepared to take up the challenges posed by the Plan, they now represent a point of arrival for the interventions tied to all strategic areas (prevention, protection and support, prosecution and punishment, assistance and promotion), on which the institutions and organisations involved in various ways can join forces.

The main area of coordination of the National Strategic Plan was made possible by the meetings of the National Steering Committee and Technical Committee – bodies provided for by the National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2017-2020. The Steering Committee aimed, as of 26 September 2018, to work jointly with Ministries, Regions and Municipalities and to set up a technical group responsible for developing an executive plan to implement a real process of cultural transformation. The task of the Technical Committee – meeting for the first time on 29 October 2018 – was therefore to support the Steering Committee with empirical technical evidence, to monitor the implementation of the National Strategic Plan and draw up the Operational Plan (subsequently adopted by the Steering Committee) through a fruitful exchange between its members<sup>29</sup>.

Next, after the meeting to establish the Steering Committee convened by the new Minister for Equal Opportunities on 30 October 2019, it became apparent that it was necessary to boost the effectiveness of anti-violence policies. In particular, the members shared the opportunity to intervene on two specific critical issues: economic violence and work empowerment. They also stated their willingness to commit

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<sup>28</sup> Data on inmates in adult penitentiary facilities is collected by the Department of Penitentiary Administration (DAP) of the Italian Ministry of Justice.

<sup>29</sup> Central administrations, local authorities, trade unions and employers, the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the National Research Council (CNR), the Italian University Rectors' Conference, the National Equality Councillor, and the most prominent associations in the field of violence against women.

to establishing three thematic Groups focusing on work, education and drafting the guidelines for the training of operators.

Technical Committee meetings were held between December 2019 and early 2020, which were dedicated to: the 2019 Operational Plan; reflecting on the actions of the 2020 Operational Plan; and starting work on drafting the National Strategic Plan 2021-2023.

Based on the information emerging from the Steering Committee, the following three thematic Working Groups were set up at the end of 2020:

1. Drafting of national guidelines on training for professionals who come into contact with victims of violence in various capacities;
2. Violence and harassment in the workplace and the integration and reintegration of female victims of violence into the labour market;
3. Issues relating to the use of the so-called Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) theory.

#### **Box 4. Parental responsibility, custody, best interest of the minor child: critical issues and possible resources**

The issue of parental responsibility, custody, and the best interests of the minor in cases of violence call for the State to protect the child and avoid situations of risk. Parental alienation or parental alienation syndrome – a theory developed by American forensic psychiatrist Richard Gardner – describes the dysfunctional psychological dynamics in minor children involved in conflictual parental separation and divorce. As part of the 2017-2020 Plan, a working group was set up to explore the issue in depth. A major critical element seems to be the use of the concept of parental alienation in civil court proceedings accompanying the definition of separations in cases of violence against mothers, which is often used as a form of conditioning towards female victims of violence. The issue of parental alienation is at the heart of many heated debates; the Court of Cassation was also called to rule with a further order (no. 13217/21) on the issue of PAS and Malicious Mother Syndrome. It should be pointed out that, where there is a criminal conviction for abuse, child custody proceedings enforce the clear and binding obligation to comply with the provisions of both the Istanbul Convention on the protection of victims in custody proceedings and the GREVIO recommendations. The actions deemed relevant by those supporting female victims of male violence in the process of freeing themselves from the perpetrator are: the consultation by civil court judges on the criminal acts inherent to the case; prohibition, where there is a complaint, of joint meetings between ex-partners; prohibition on administering the Lausanne Trilogue Play (LTP) paradigm and similar tools involving the joint presence of ex-partners interacting with each other and with the child; the assessment of the convict's risk of violence, before deciding on any protected meetings with the child; the assessment of the traumatic impact of the violence on the woman and on her parenting skills.

On 26 November 2020, the National Steering Committee formally started work on drafting the new National Strategic Plan to combat male violence against women (2021-2023), reconfirming the need to swiftly set up the three working groups. In this regard, the working group “Drafting of national guidelines on training for professionals who come into contact with victims of violence in various capacities” met on 30 March 2021; the working group “Violence and harassment in the workplace and job placement and reintegration of victims” met on 31 March 2021; and the working group “Issues relating to the Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) theory” met on 1 April 2021.

Lastly, the reconstituted National Steering Committee took office on 28 April 2021 and agreed on the need to adopt the next National Strategic Plan on male violence against women.

The working groups with the associations and organisations involved in the fight against violence against women and with social partners, and the results of the work of the Steering Committees set up in early 2021 to gain information and impetus for improving and enhancing the targeted policy system, still paint a mixed picture inasmuch as wide differences remain at local level in terms of achieving full compliance with the principles laid down by the Istanbul Convention. One reason behind the difficulties seen could be the critical issues and social/socio-economic problems made worse by the

forced isolation imposed as a result of the pandemic in settings and situations where forms of violence against women by men can occur, as well as by the dissemination of risk attitudes among young people.

## 2.5 Lessons learned and focus points for the National Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Drawing on past experience is a key objective in defining the National Strategic Plan: in this regard, the contribution provided by the monitoring and assessment work of the 2017-2020 Plan by the Institute for research on population and social policies-National Research Council (IRPPS-CNR) is particularly relevant. The main evidence emerging in relation to the priorities of the Plan's 'Routes' are reported below with regard to several specific aspects.

In terms of the **programme structure**, in the drafting phase of the new Plan, the critical points observed in the previous programmes demonstrated the importance of:

- a) establishing a preliminary overall financial ceiling to be made available in order to develop realistic and consistent planning;
- b) initiating – at the same time as defining the strategy – the programme's operational planning, by explaining, for each intervention to be implemented: *the general and specific objectives; the financial resources available; the description of the content and methods of implementation of the intervention; the expected results; the implementation timing; the individuals responsible for implementation; the procedures for identifying/ selecting the beneficiaries of the funding/ implementing individuals;*
- c) focusing on the type of interventions to be included in the Plan, which should serve: to overcome the emergency by allocating adequate resources to the routes of prevention of violence against women and punishment of perpetrators; to streamline the financial resources available by focusing on a limited number of 'interventions', giving priority to system actions that ensure a joint approach throughout Italy; and lastly, with regard to operational planning, to include only the actions being implemented under the new Plan and not those funded under previous Plans, so as to better represent and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities carried out and results achieved in each planning period.

In terms of the **governance model**, it was pointed out that the new Plan should specify the essential elements to ensure its effective operation. As such, it was considered that the new Plan should:

- better define some key aspects regulating the relationships and working methods between the various entities responsible for implementing the Plan, i.e. attention should be paid to the precise definition of the internal and external governance and inter-institutional governance mechanisms, by establishing approaches, procedures, mechanisms and devices that can regulate and coordinate joint action;
- involve a commitment to launch a joint discussion at all levels of government (national, regional and local) so as to find suitable solutions to overcome the problem of the scarcity of human resources dedicated to the issue and to reorientate intervention systems with a view to greater efficiency;
- continue to identify local networks as the core of local governance, given their greater proximity to women who are subjected to violence, by establishing their general functions and setting minimum standards for their existence and operation.

In addition to the indications previously expressed on the structuring of the governance system, it is crucial to enhance the **vertical subsidiarity** in terms of the Regions and Local Authorities' experience and knowledge (including through National Association of Italian Municipalities - ANCI and the Union of Italian Provinces - UPI). Thanks to their ongoing involvement (in the manner and setting deemed most appropriate), both in the planning phase of the new Plan and in the implementation/management/monitoring/evaluation phase of the planned interventions, it will be

possible to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of the system and avoid any overlap of interventions. As such, it would be appropriate to achieve greater homogeneity at national level in the services/interventions offered by establishing guidelines, recommendations and general directions based on the knowledge of Regions and Local Authorities, and developed through a participatory process.

A further element of coordination is the **effort to draw on the experience of qualified associations managing Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters and programmes for male perpetrators of violence (PUM)**. In line with the GREVIO recommendations (2020), the need has been reiterated to enhance the value and expertise of third sector organisations, and in particular the associations managing anti-violence centres and shelters, which bring a gender-based approach to combating violence against women. As such, they should also be engaged – in a substantial, systematic and continuous way – in the phases of implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the interventions set out in the Routes of the National Strategic Plan 2021-2023, using the process launched by ISTAT to develop the survey on users of anti-violence centres and shelters as a reference. To enable a truly capillary process, it will be necessary to engage associations – at the operational level – throughout Italy and for this engagement to be constantly monitored, by sharing with the regional administrations the most appropriate ways to implement the engagement processes, based also on the provisions of individual regional regulations.

In terms of strategy and available resources, an emphasis is placed on the key role of **strategic and financial complementarity**, which is believed to be able to make a real difference in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of national and local policies. In outlining the strategic set-up of the new Plan, the experience gained has resulted in the suggestion to:

- a) draw up guidelines – upstream of the definition of interventions, or as a specific system action – targeted at regional administrations in particular, on the European funding opportunities and on the integration of anti-violence policies with area planning, so as to ensure an optimal use of resources and a greater impact of the interventions;
- b) set out concrete actions to help foster greater integration between anti-violence policies and the various national social, medical, educational, training, research, employment, housing, protection and security policies.

Another key element is the construction of an adequate **monitoring system for the interventions**, as a specific intervention under the new Plan in the *Assistance and Promotion* Route: in this regard, a transitional phase is suggested, which lasts for the new Plan's period of validity and which is specifically dedicated to constructing and implementing a multilevel monitoring system. This should be able to effectively represent the activities carried out and the results achieved also at regional level, in order to use the information and knowledge needed for local planning and joint planning with the third sector.

In particular, the monitoring system should not be limited only to the financial aspect, but should include a set of indicators to *monitor procedures (administrative aspects on engaging resources), physical matters (human and material resources, physical objectives achieved), financial progresses (through commitment and expenditure indicators) and the context (socio-eco-demographic aspects that determine effects)*, with a view to facilitating the identification of effective intervention strategies or, vice versa, to correct the direction taken by policies following interventions that do not meet expectations.

The definition of the **evaluation process** is tied to the monitoring system. Given the need to engage in a gradual process of building and implementing a central monitoring system for interventions, at least in the first phase of implementation of the monitoring process, the evaluation should focus mainly on the accountability and analysis of implementation. This way, it will highlight the progress and potentially be able to redirect processes so as to bring them in line with the targets, thereby providing the necessary information to support decision-making and transparency. As such, it is suggested to

maintain both the participatory approach underpinning the evaluation process in the current planning period (with the active involvement of all stakeholders contributing to the implementation of interventions), and the mixed-method approach based on the integration of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and techniques.

Lastly, specific action is deemed necessary in the new Plan to guarantee adequate **publicity** of both planned actions and completed actions/results achieved, as well as of all documentation showing the results of the assessment. As such, it is essential to define some key elements during the Plan's planning phase in order to guarantee adequate publicity. This can be done on the website of the Department for Equal Opportunities, as well as on the websites of the central/regional and local government bodies involved, such as: the tools to be used, the human resources engaged in the activity, the processes used to collect the documentation and any financial resources that might be necessary.

The considerations presented above are the result of the analysis and assessment activities of experts who have supported the three-year implementation period of the 2017-2020 Plan. These experts used a scientific method of observation and carried out thematic in-depth studies on specific actions implemented by the bodies involved. Alongside the other major contributions received in the various forums and opportunities for discussion, these therefore provide a guiding line for structuring the contents of this Plan, in order to refine the priority system and focus on the key operational areas for 2021-2023.

## 3 | THE PLAN'S UNDERTAKINGS

In order to make the Plan a key instrument for creating and improving the conditions so that **actions to combat male violence against women have wide-reaching and lasting effects**, the contribution – in terms of the strategic direction and lines of action – must have an impact (in line with the work of the 2017-2020 Plan) on the complex processes which, in turn, pave the way for the full affirmation of women's rights.

In line with the achievements of the previous three-year period, the Plan serves as a tool for **building cross-cutting, organic and consistent interventions with policies aimed at combating male violence against women** at “institutional”, “thematic” and “geographical” level. Bearing in mind that the Plan contains proposals for action that fall within the sphere of the central and regional and local government bodies, , as well as economic and social partnerships, it has the key function of guiding, coordinating and monitoring a collaborative and integrated strategy to combat male violence against women.

The Plan therefore represents a shared document that promotes various tools in agreement and collaboration between the various entities in charge of direct policies. As such, its realisation/implementation is based on **institutional cooperation that stresses the role of the central, regional and local government bodies**.

Moreover, the Plan aims to affirm the **centrality of the issue as part of Italy's growth policies and the broader strategic framework of intervention – promoted also at the EU level – to boost recovery**.

The time horizon for achieving these objectives clearly appears to be rather long. One reason for this is that it is closely tied, firstly, to the potential complexity of the implementation framework (effective and renewed engagement in the action of various administrative and public/private entities), and, secondly, to the wider problems surrounding Italy's national and local growth prospects. The latter is especially significant given the medium- and long-term effects resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, therefore, the season of new opportunities offered by the planning of European structural and investment funds and the European Union's directly managed programmes for the period 2021-2027, as well as the opportunities provided under the Next Generation EU initiative and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), should be regarded as a strong drive that may provide the necessary boost to the processes of change.

The Plan acts **across the whole of Italy** despite the fact that action to combat gender-based violence may seem even more pressing in areas lagging behind in development, in metropolitan suburbs and in areas with high unemployment, where there is a wider gap between the world of women, the world of work and civil society and where public intervention is greatly needed to bridge the widest gap between demand and supply of opportunities and qualified services for women.

As mentioned above, the Plan is therefore a tool for planning, implementing and monitoring the policies envisaged at various levels of competence, and helps to ingrain a **culture of policy combating male violence against women in Italy** by:

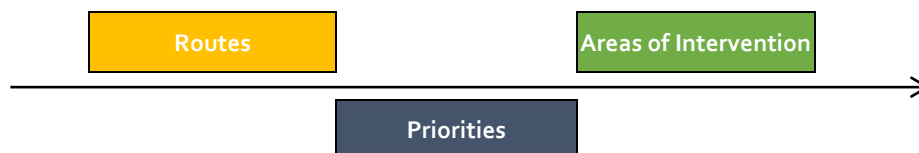
- enhancing and incentivising initiatives and fortifying the net impacts in the fight against violence, by cultivating coordinated governance;



- implementing initiatives so that once the obstacles preventing female victims of violence from fully exercising their rights (including in conditions of hardship) have been broken down thanks to positive actions, women are able to play an active role in social, institutional, cultural and economic life.

### 3.1 Structure: Routes, Priorities, Areas of intervention

In line with the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, the policy interventions to combat male violence against women have been established based on *Routes* along the guidelines provided by the Istanbul Convention, each of which have several *Priorities* that take the form of specific *Areas of intervention* of major national and regional interest.



Specifically, there are **4 thematic Routes associated with specific Priorities** that address the challenges related to the conditions of male violence against women, with regard to the most significant aspects such as: prevention, education, training, research, personal and housing autonomy, awareness-raising, information, protection and safeguarding. For each Priority, the Areas of intervention against which the Plan will be gauged are then identified in terms of guidelines, which the various individuals involved will follow in order to meet ongoing challenges.

The operational outcome of the strategic framework will be fully identified in the **Operational Plan**, which will be drafted as a complementary planning document to this Plan and will contain a precise list of actions to be implemented in the three-year period 2021-2023. These actions – identified based on the proposals that came out of the technical work of the working groups discussed earlier – will largely consist of the implementation of positive actions already initiated, the promotion (including through re-engineering procedures and tools) of other actions, which are still valid but need to be adapted to new needs, or the introduction of completely new innovations. All of these will contain information on the source of funding and the individual/entity responsible for their implementation.

As anticipated in several points herein, there are many wide-ranging elements of continuity with the 2017-2020 Plan. This stems from the belief that the task of a complex and multi-level strategy (such as that of combating gender-based violence) should have a medium-long term time horizon. Given this decision, the 2021-2023 planning must be largely considered as a way of addressing problems which are still unresolved or still being resolved, with a view to completing the approach to gender issues and breaking down stereotypes and attitudes that harm women's dignity. An approach suitable for a modern society that is ready to face the complex challenges for growth and welfare, through a real cultural revolution that will have to engage all members of society.

The elements underpinning the Routes of the Plan are presented in the diagram below, as a preface to the broader description provided in the relevant paragraphs.

## National Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Routes	Key Aspects
Prevention Route	This is the Route with the highest number of intervention Priorities (seven in total) as it is directly geared towards broad population targets with a view to amending and improving family/environmental behaviours. The Priorities have also been redefined from the three-year period 2017-2020. In the Operational Plan, the Route will therefore be accompanied by a wide range of actions, with various degrees of procedural, regulatory and implementation complexity. This Route is an asset of the National Strategic Plan inasmuch as its results (and dissemination thereof) will largely determine the success of the national strategy and gradual reduction of violence against women
Protection and Support Route	This is the Route of intervention Priorities most directly targeted at female victims of violence and child victims who witness violence. The underlying strategic choice is to make the kit of 'care' tools used up until now increasingly targeted, as well as more widely available and accessible. It is also the Route that acts to eliminate objective and contextual causes that make women even more fragile in the pathway to economic and professional emancipation. These require multi-sector institutional skills and call for decisive and stable integrated planning, starting from the standardisation process
Prosecute and Punish Route	This Route is tied to very complex Priorities but with achievable objectives, building on the efforts made so far to ensure the characteristics of violence are transparent and recognisable thanks to measures to guarantee the rights of female victims. The set Priorities will aim to further advance the justice sector and its practices, as well as to strengthen the mechanisms tied to the certainty of punishment and to make victims increasingly safe
Assistance and Promotion Route	The Plan's fourth Route has the Priority of completing and enhancing systemic solutions to monitor policies and interventions combating male violence against women, as well as to enact solutions more quickly by improving the tools for sharing and collaboration of the stakeholders involved. The added value lies in putting 'knowledge' at the centre of the Route and enhancing the various contributions of public and private organizations that specialise in the transfer of knowledge under the direction of the Department for Equal Opportunities

As a preface to the description of the contents of each Route, it should be noted that the **Plan is characterised by recurring topics**, which are addressed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the objectives adopted and pursued by the Routes through a range of targeted actions.

### Prevention Route

With regard to the Prevention Route, the priorities represent the objectives tied to systemic and integrated prevention actions divided into the specific areas of: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention is to be understood as the planning of awareness-raising and communication actions, as well as educational interventions aimed at preventing gender-based violence

by tackling gender stereotypes, entrenching a culture of respect between men and women, and stigmatising gender violence with particular regard to social models. The target of primary prevention is mainly young people and can be supported directly (i.e. with interventions by operators specifically specialised on the issues of violence against women) and indirectly (i.e. supported through in-depth cultural activities to promote male-female relationship models and social development models). Secondary prevention is implemented by pursuing forms of intervention that act on specific areas and settings where the occurrence of male violence against women has higher risk factors or where it is more widespread. Lastly, tertiary prevention interventions, i.e. actions tied to the need to intervene to prevent relapses in male perpetrators, or men who are likely to become perpetrators, or for minors who have passively witnessed male violence against women or femicide. At the same time, in order to intervene effectively in every phase of the pathway out of violence, from prevention to reintegration, **training for operators** is a particularly important tool to reinforce the skills and knowledge of all professional figures who interact with female victims of violence in various capacities.

To this end, the priorities identified to achieve the specific objectives of the **Prevention Route** are as follows:

Prevention Route	<b>Priority 1.1</b> To raise the level of awareness of both the general public and the education/training system about the structural roots, causes and consequences of male violence against women, and to break down stereotypes underlying violence
	<b>Priority 1.2</b> To engage the private sector (social networks, platforms, mass media) in the importance of stereotypes and sexism in male violence against women and in preventing behaviours that are detrimental to women’s personal dignity, including tools such as cyberviolence and the illegal dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos
	<b>Priority 1.3</b> To support actions that promote empowerment, financial autonomy, and a gender-based approach in labour policies to help all women, as a tool to prevent and fight male economic violence and harassment in the workplace
	<b>Priority 1.4</b> To engage actions to overcome and combat violence against female victims of various forms of discrimination, migrant women, asylum seekers and refugees, women with disabilities, especially in the places most at risk
	<b>Priority 1.5</b> To bolster tertiary prevention of relapses for male perpetrators of violence and offences related to violence against women
	<b>Priority 1.6</b> To invest in training to boost the skills of professionals in the public and private sector who, in various capacities, interact with female victims and minors during the process of prevention, support and reintegration
	<b>Priority 1.7</b> To tie regulatory measures and their implementation in with the prevention of secondary victimisation

For each of the above-mentioned **Priorities**, the respective **Areas of intervention** are described below.

***Priority 1.1** To raise the level of awareness of both the general public and the education/training system about the structural roots, causes and consequences of male violence against women, and to break down stereotypes underlying violence.*

This area includes, under primary prevention actions, information and awareness-raising interventions, since primary prevention refers to the set of actions and behaviours intended to reduce the likelihood of developing a behaviour or phenomenon at a social level, by acting on a general (non-risk) target. For

this reason, providing information and raising awareness help achieve the Route's general objective, based on two general actions:

- structural funding to be dedicated to prevention actions, which are separate from the specific funding to be allocated to Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters;
- a document (in the form of a "Charter"), setting out general and specific objectives to be achieved through systemic prevention actions which identify the most vulnerable groups, such as disabled women, elderly women, migrant women; such prevention actions should also define the concept of violence in all its forms, such as domestic, psychological, economic, sexual and physical violence.

Four specific settings of intervention have also been set out in line with the main actions and pilot actions:

**1) Schools and training centres**, by working with teaching staff and students with a view to prevention; this involves analysing and exploring the relationship between genders, the concept of violence and its different forms, and cultural and family stereotypes. This is achieved by:

- liaising with the Ministry of Education to address the issue of the male/female relationship in schools, with a view to achieving a policy plan backed by the Education Ministry to be implemented in all schools. This topic should be considered in connection with the measures in the field of education, set out in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026, geared towards overcoming the representation of gender roles which are still widespread in educational materials and programmes – materials which have no specific focus on the issue of gender equality and cause an internalisation of social norms and gender stereotypes during growth and education,
- awareness-raising interventions aimed at tackling gender stereotypes still present in social models, by ingraining a culture of mutual respect and stigmatising male violence against women, particularly in the domestic sphere,
- interventions to study in-depth the relationship models acquired by minor children, as passive victims of violence perpetrated by abusive men, based on the paradigm that "those who have been victims of violence become violent";

**2) University** as a place of training and research at various levels and, therefore, a key setting for combating gender-based, domestic and sexual violence, particularly in terms of prevention. The aim is to address the topic of gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence as a cultural, scientific, social, political and economic priority in line with the guidelines of the European Commission, as outlined in the document "A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025)", taking action in the areas set out below.

- Education and Training:
  - Multi-level and differentiated training actions, depending on their target,
  - specialised, multidisciplinary and cross-cutting curricular teachings, courses and seminars, with teachers, researchers, students, professionals, institutional figures and centres taking a joint approach to combat violence, starting with a cultural awareness-raising and a specific focus on occupations that entail direct intervention in cases of gender-based violence (medicine, midwifery, social service, psychology, law, etc.). These interventions are intended to prevent any secondary victimisation and to monitor references to PAS in the above-mentioned teachings,
  - a working group with the Department of Equal Opportunities, made up of central government bodies, representatives of professional orders, national representatives of postgraduate education bodies for the training and specialisation of professional figures involved in the process of identifying and overcoming violence, so as to establish guidelines on developing teaching materials that prevent forms of secondary victimisation of women and minors involved as victims in violent situations;
- Research:

- specific projects (including research activities, planning of doctorates and degree theses), at inter-university level and on a local, regional or macro-regional scale (with comparisons at European level), which also support public policies on issues relating to male violence against women and child victims of witnessed violence, as well as orphans of femicide;
  - a Memorandum of Understanding with the Italian National University Council (CUN), the Italian National Agency for the evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) and the National Scientific Qualification (ASN) for the recognition of specific gender competences in the declarations and evaluation of cross-cutting and scientific teaching competences;
- 3) **Socialisation, hospitality and self-care centres**, which have been identified and deemed important for carrying out prevention activities, such as:
- large-scale information and prevention measures aimed at men, with the involvement of sports clubs and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) in the case of clubs, sports centres, gyms, football clubs, and commercial operators in the case of pubs and discos and other places of aggregation;
  - codes or guidelines to be drawn up and adopted by institutions for preventing and combating harassment, abuse and sexual exploitation, safeguarding both staff (prevention of harassment at work) and the beneficiaries of the interventions executed, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable women, such as disabled women, elderly women and migrant women;
  - specific training and networking with services, family centres and trade unions, taking into account the fact that, although they are distributed differently across the country, they are important tools to invest in so as to intercept violence and promote women's empowerment. Such local entities have to perform specialised functions which are different from the Anti-Violence Centres (which people use when the violence is already active) and have to take an active role in preventing and reporting situations of risk;
- 4) **Media** to monitor and provide guidance on language and images that refer to male violence against women through:
- direct action by setting up stable places for discussion on mass media to ensure correct communication that does not convey a distorted image of violence against women,
  - promoting laws against sexism and misogyny in the media,
  - Working groups, exchanging good practices (also at international level) with journalists and professionals, in order to raise awareness and promote a correct use of the language in broadcast messages so as to avoid giving distorted images of gender-based violence and triggering secondary victimisation processes. It is proposed to work on an adjustment of the Treviso Charter, on the provision of sanctioning systems and on monitoring the application of Article 5 bis of the Consolidated act on the duties of a journalist (Testo unico dei doveri del giornalista) in force from 1 January 2021;
- 5) **Awareness-raising campaigns** including:
- communication campaigns on the '1522' hotline to promulgate the tool and ensure its continuity and systematic approach,
  - planning and executing inclusive campaigns on the phenomenon, aimed at young people and adults.

*Priority 1.2 To engage the private sector (social networks, platforms, mass media) in the importance of stereotypes and sexism in male violence against women and in preventing behaviours that are detrimental to women's personal dignity, including tools such as cyberviolence and the illegal dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos.*

The media, online platforms, and social networks have become key players in everyday life, especially as a result of the personal restrictions imposed on the whole population following the Covid-19 pandemic. In previous years (but with much higher numbers), there was a proliferation of online

exchange of intimate images between the young and middle aged. This made it necessary to carry out primary prevention actions aimed at users to highlight the damage that the sending of images can generate. It also called for secondary prevention actions to intercept the targets at risk and use all awareness-raising and control tools available to tackle growing phenomena such as cyber-bullying, body-shaming and illegal dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos. Therefore, in addition to the responsible institutions, the actions needed to achieve the aim identified by this Priority are as follows:

- prevention actions to be taken with the companies who own the various social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) in order to combat violence and reduce the growing spaces of digital violence and illegal dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos, stemming also from the behavioural models assumed during the Covid-19 social crisis;
- monitoring cyber violence and illegal dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos with a view to prevention and counteraction, and with a special focus on the exchange of sexually-oriented data and images due to the spread of the phenomenon, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.

***Priority 1.3 To support actions that promote empowerment, financial autonomy, and a gender-based approach in labour policies to help all women, as a tool to prevent and fight male economic violence and harassment in the workplace***

Women's empowerment is a very important objective for boosting women's confidence in their own abilities and is geared towards a process of developing self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-determination in order to effectively counteract economic violence by men against women, whether perpetrated through the use of money as a lever to subjugate women to undesirable conditions, or through an underhand devaluation of women's work within the family and at the workplace.

Given that empowerment is closely tied to women's assertiveness in pursuing their goals, the ability to consciously reclaim their potential to achieve personal and professional fulfilment underpins the concepts of equality, equity and women's empowerment and is a powerful tool for combating gender-based discrimination. In order to set in motion and enhance this process, it is essential to ensure that men (both present and future) gain awareness of the value of women's resources and the importance of professional identity in shaping personal identity and women's individual identity in particular. For this reason, it is considered a priority to develop pathways that use empowerment as a tool to prevent violence against women through:

- financial education, awareness-raising and information interventions with the involvement of women's associations, anti-violence centres and specialists in the field, including female prisoners completing their sentences, in formal and non-formal learning contexts, as a tool to prevent and combat economic violence, providing women with:
  - basic economic and financial skills to manage their economic autonomy,
  - knowledge of their rights in the economic, financial and patrimonial spheres, so as to develop greater participation in the decision-making process of their private and public life,
  - technical knowledge for proactive management of their savings to avoid situations of economic and social isolation and prevent economic independence;
- actions, projects, communication and awareness-raising campaigns on the concept of economic violence, which is still masked under stereotypes and social roles that perpetuate acts of control and monitoring of women's behaviour in terms of how money is used and distributed, which is often accompanied by the constant threat of having economic resources denied. Such actions and projects are implemented through a shared commitment between all institutions (such as the Committee for the planning and coordination of financial education activities, or the Bank of Italy, etc.);
- mentoring and coaching interventions carried out by women engaged in careers for cultural change; these are implemented in schools, universities and other learning settings within

communities, family centres, workplaces, Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters, with the aim of promoting new positive models and working with young women or female victims of violence who have embarked upon a pathway to overcome existing stereotypes;

- cooperation protocols, with the relevant institutions, Regions, trade unions and employers' organisations and job placement companies for female victims of male violence, to enable access to higher education and specialised training with a view to facilitating empowerment, reintegration and autonomy.

**Priority 1.4** *To engage actions to overcome and combat violence against female victims of various forms of discrimination, migrant women, asylum seekers and refugees, women with disabilities, especially in the places most at risk*

Female migrants – economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees – are particularly exposed to gender-based violence before, during and after the migration process, although there are specific differences in their situations determined by their status based on the applicable national, European (Council of Europe and European Union) and international (UN system, UNHCR, etc.) laws.

There are therefore various areas of intervention involved. Two targeted experiences worth mentioning which clarify the complexity and broad scope of the intervention strategy are the preliminary results of the research carried out by UNICEF Italy, which show that reception conditions with a lack of spaces for women and girls separate from those for men and boys, as well as a lack of privacy, can cause them to be exposed to specific risks. At the same time, as highlighted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is also necessary to implement an intervention to draw up and disseminate behavioural guidelines for cooperation staff working in humanitarian activities.

In order to consider the differing situations indicated above, the following activities must be put in place:

- guidelines for the adoption of a multidisciplinary and intercultural approach in reception places, with the aim of not excluding minors, young girls, and foreign women from the opportunities for protection and support offered by the local networks, including Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters and proximity/permanent reception services, by providing specific methods of integrated care for female victims of multiple forms of violence and engaging specifically trained cultural mediators;
- information actions on the principles underlying the phenomenon of violence against women also within different cultural and social contexts, to be able to interpret the disparity of power and control as well as the mechanisms of domination inherent in this type of crime;
- actions to raise awareness among the communities of origin of migrant and refugee women, with the aim of encouraging a change of social norms and cultural factors that harm women, ensuring their rights are affirmed (including through an approach that promotes the concept of “consent”), and taking action against specific forms of harmful practices such as early or forced marriages, Female Genital Mutilation, and trafficking of women in line with the Anti-Trafficking Plan;
- systemic actions aimed at mitigating the risk of gender-based violence within services, including the reception and protection system, through a safe reception pathway, adequate housing solutions and spaces that provide an easier path out of violence, with access to specific services;
- specific surveys on the harmful practices of female genital mutilation and forced marriages and on the mapping and typology of the interventions implemented;
- specific awareness-raising actions targeting particular fragile groups, such as elderly women and women with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence.

**Priority 1.5** *To bolster tertiary prevention of relapses for male perpetrators of violence and offences related to violence against women*

The Istanbul Convention, which sets out a comprehensive approach to gender-based violence, including Programmes for the rehabilitation of abusive men, states that the protection of women, and therefore the prevention of gender-based violence, must be implemented through interventions to

tackle relapses and re-educating perpetrators in particular, and more generally through actions that bring about cultural change regarding dominant models of masculinity.

Law No. 69 of 19 July 2019 (known as 'Code Red') provides for the "re-education" of convicts, leading to an increase in requests for treatment at all centres for perpetrators of violence; yet it has also caused several problematic issues to surface relating to the type of intervention, programme requirements, and the challenge of applying the legislation in a standardised way. Tackling relapses may therefore be described as a tertiary prevention intervention by identifying several specific actions to solve these issues:

- interventions, with a view to preventing relapses, directly targeted at male perpetrators or potential perpetrators of violence, by establishing guidelines for interventions and minimum quality standards with a twofold purpose: first, to monitor intervention programmes, avoiding a proliferation of unsuitable and ineffective proposals, and second, to monitor the standardised application of rules throughout the country;
- planning and executing communication, awareness-raising and direct support tools – targeted at complex and risk contexts – so as to avoid a recurring cycle between generations of the stereotype where child victims of witnessed violence are seen as potential abusers;
- setting technical criteria and required professional experience for operators, and technical and financial standards for structures when selecting associations and other entities who apply to perform interventions on perpetrators of violence. These criteria and standards should then be shared as part of the State-Regions Conference;
- structured pathways to ensure access to the Programmes for the rehabilitation of abusive men (PUM) by breaking down barriers tied to one's economic situation through the introduction of income-based tiers of subsidies for the service, and by striving to replace the regulation wording "with no charge to the State" with the principle of income-based cost-sharing;
- codified tools and methods of applying them to minors who are passive victims of violence by abusive men, to prevent children from repeating the experienced behavioural pattern through recurring violent behaviour, following the paradigm 'whoever has been a victim of violence becomes violent';
- interventions in the juvenile penal sector with the aim of setting up prevention programmes to encourage juvenile sex offenders to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships, reflect on attitudes towards women, and better understand the trends leading to gender-based domestic violence.

*Priority 1.6 To invest in training to boost the skills of professionals in the public and private sector who, in various capacities, interact with female victims and minors during the process of prevention, support and reintegration*

The proposed interventions geared towards a qualitative-quantitative increase in the skills and knowledge of professional figures who – in various capacities and in various phases of the pathway – come into contact with female victims of male violence, follow two different criteria: first, curricular training in the courses of study that lead up to the qualifications required to carry out certain professions (degree courses, high schools, vocational training); second, specialisation and refresher courses for operators who work in the services on a daily basis and are in contact with female victims of violence.

The key points set out above to promote efficient and effective training activity (bearing in mind the methodological and organisational aspect of training, its presence on the territory, its repetition over time and the harmonisation of sectors) to achieve the objective of preventing secondary victimisation and discrimination by institutions, may be summarised in the following actions:

- joint, mono-topical and/or multidisciplinary training programmes, focusing on a multicultural approach, to be applied in the following areas and to the following target groups:



- enhancing the knowledge and skills of the various professional figures who come into contact with the victim, so they can recognise the tell-tale signs of violence against women and support their pathway out of violence (multidisciplinary classes with public, private and private social workers, magistrates, law enforcement agencies, judicial police, lawyers, psychologists, medical and health personnel, cultural mediators, major trade unions, etc.), engaging professional bodies and providing specific training for young people,
- compulsory specific training activities, particularly CME (Continuing Medical Education) training for all health professions, doctors (especially general practitioners and paediatricians), as well as local social services in collaboration with Anti-Violence Centres,
- educational programmes on the issue of male violence against women to be included in university training and high-level training courses for professional figures who are involved in direct primary and secondary prevention, assistance and support for female victims of gender-based violence (social workers, psychologists, educators, teachers, lawyers, magistrates, and court-appointed expert witnesses),
- specific training interventions targeted at social service professionals, third sector organisations and private organisations managing protected meetings,
- specific training actions for operators of the State Police and Carabinieri, organised at their respective training institutes, and the Penitentiary Police (both internal and external criminal enforcement operators), organised in coordination with the General Directorate for Training.
- training actions on the topic of male violence against women for Family Centres in cooperation with Anti-Violence Centres,
- targeted training and mentoring actions for employers, key figures in company management and/or workers' representatives for the prevention of harassment and violence in the workplace, as well as gender discrimination,
- training actions targeted at business owners (discos, pubs and meeting places in general), sports professions, workers' representatives for preventing harassment and violence against women, promoting health and safety standards and breaking down stereotypes and gender discrimination, including through the network of services of trade unions;
- including professionals with multidisciplinary skills directly related to the issues of combating gender-based violence in the regional directories of qualifications, by setting specific standards as part of the work of the State-Regions Conference;
- supplementary guidelines to ensure the transparency of competences (both informal and non-formal) to be drawn up by the Regions in cooperation with women's associations, including those managing Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters;
- projects to enhance and promulgate good practices in the field of training on the provision of specific services for female victims of violence.

**Priority 1.7** *To tie regulatory measures and their implementation in with the prevention of secondary victimisation*

This priority is underpinned by the need to extend to the whole of Italy what was set out through the joint working group of the Criminal Court and Civil Court in the territorial scope of Roma Capitale, in accordance with 'Code Red' and with the Istanbul Convention. Indeed, the working group resulted in Guidelines for violent situations that surface in separation or custody proceedings before the ordinary civil court, which require the acquisition of certain acts of the criminal proceedings so that the judge be given a full overview of the facts and to ensure that he/she does not order any measures which could in fact invalidate the effects of the protection measures ordered by the criminal court.

The need to share acts between the criminal court, civil court and juvenile court became apparent on various occasions during the work of the thematic working groups in which government bodies and associations took part in spring 2021. It was also pointed out that the civil courts do not always take into account complaints, reports and measures issued in criminal proceedings and filed by lawyers,

despite the fact that Article 64-bis – in the implementing provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure – requires measures to be passed on to the civil judge for decision-making purposes. This provision has also been partly disregarded, as has the order of the Court of Cassation of 2019, which states that the acts produced in criminal proceedings must be used in civil proceedings, and in a timely manner.

There have therefore been calls for greater involvement of the judiciary and Superior Council of the Judiciary in particular with the VII Committee, to ensure that the Guidelines for Civil and Juvenile Courts are adopted (similarly to what happened with the 2018 Guidelines and the June 2020 resolution), together with the following actions:

- stimulus actions (technical working groups, ad hoc surveys) to bring gender-based violence into civil matters to provide grounds for exclusion from shared custody in order to protect minors;
- creating official lists of professionals (psychologists, child psychiatrists, cultural mediators, etc.) with in-depth knowledge of the issue of male violence against women (all forms of violence mentioned in the Istanbul Convention), to be made available to the government bodies and associations that draw upon specialised consultants to implement their institutional activities;
- economic incentives to help female victims of violence meet the costs of reports requested by the judge by court-appointed experts and party-appointed experts in civil proceedings.

## Protection and Support Route

The “Protection and Support” Route focuses on the aim of helping women and minors who may witness family violence in their pathways out of violence. The priorities are based on the indications of chapter IV of the Istanbul Convention, which have been integrated and enriched by the experience and results stemming from discussions with organisations, associations, employers and universities.

Through the Priorities identified below and respective activities, tools have been made available to ensure that women and minors who may be victims of witnessed violence are cared for and able to overcome the violence, helping to fully restore their dignity and autonomy before being released from the support programmes.

### Protection and Support Route

**Priority 2.1** To care for female victims of violence and child victims who witness violence, by integrating the interventions set out in the support and reintegration pathways, both in the emergency phase and in promoting job and housing integration and empowerment in their pathway out of violence

**Priority 2.2** To open economic, financial, labour and housing empowerment pathways

**Priority 2.3** To monitor and improve the effectiveness of ‘Pathways for women subjected to violence’: guidelines for health authorities and hospitals on aid and care, including risk indicators

**Priority 2.4** To enhance the free 24-hour national anti-violence hotline (1522), through cooperation between 1522, Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters, local networks, law enforcement and the judiciary system

**Priority 2.5** Protection, safeguarding and psychosocial support for child victims who witness violence

**Priority 2.6** To implement operational solutions so as to ensure equal access to prevention, support and reintegration services for female victims of violence and various forms of discrimination: migrant women, and asylum seeker/refugee women

Based on the **Priorities**, the respective **Areas of intervention** have been identified.

***Priority 2.1** To care for female victims of violence and child victims who witness violence, by integrating the interventions set out in the support and reintegration pathways, both in the emergency phase and in promoting job and housing integration and empowerment in their pathway out of violence*

In the integrated care of female victims of gender-based violence, and any minors involved, and in the actions of all services and bodies that intervene in the pathway of protection, support and exit from violence, the focus on the individual plays a vital role. Such focus requires a shared overall vision of language, models and operational procedures, and diverse factors that can be integrated without neglecting the specific aspects of different roles, so as to maintain a common goal: to support women and minors through the emergency phase and to pave the way for autonomous and violence-free living conditions.

In the range of policies that can be engaged for this target, through institutional consultations, the strategy must be geared towards the individual, making it possible to distinguish women in terms of the seriousness of their experience and the skills they hold and, based on this assessment, support them with the most appropriate decisions. This approach is supported by the local network, the 'Ambiti territoriali' (territorial areas) in particular, in line with the regional guidelines, and intends to actively engage public and private intermediaries, local social services (which play a key role in caring for women when minors are involved), third sector organisations, labour consultants, UPI, ANCI and the coordination of the Regions.

In these support pathways – both in the context of the activities promoted by anti-violence centres and shelters, and all services that work with women and minors – there must be knowledge, application and sharing which, despite the wide-ranging roles and methods of networking and co-planning, take into account women's work and the gender-based approach, while striking a balance with the process of formalising networks and standardising common practices. The ties and coordination in place (or which can be put in place) between services and resources should encourage the engagement of all actors who can play a key role not only in the management of the emergency, but also in the housing and job integration and empowerment of victims. In this regard, in order to maximise the effectiveness of the interventions and avoid repeating mistakes that expose women and minors to risks and secondary difficulties, account must be taken of the past experience and good practices of the long-standing entities that deal with violence and that have created established working methods, but it is also necessary to promote, incentivise and support the specialisation of centres which have been set up more recently.

Using care as a priority tool, the following areas of intervention have been identified:

- funding for the launch of networks to implement and structure collaboration between Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters and the '1522' hotline, and to broaden the interactions and coordination between all locally-operating services to foster autonomy and freedom from violence;
- a multi-year project to support the governance structures of the National Strategic Plan for arranging and structuring follow-up activities for women and minors who may be victims of witnessed violence in their pathway out of violence, particularly when approaching the various services, through:
  - an accreditation system (on a local basis but with national criteria) for the structures involved in their care, to be established with the regional government bodies,
  - in the presence of minors, procedures for care provided by local social services, in line with the regional planning approach of the interventions in the district area plans,
  - a model containing the standards of the characteristics and methods that identify local anti-violence networks, while respecting local needs. This starts with formally and substantially recognising anti-violence centres as expert and qualified actors, and providing ongoing structural funding for their routine activities (including but not limited to: adopting the

women's relationship method, providing a specialised multidisciplinary team, recognising the professionalism of operators, and setting up supervision processes).

**Priority 2.2** *To open economic, financial, labour and housing empowerment pathways*

The subject of economic, financial and work empowerment can be central for some women and is a key element both in the initial phase and in the provision of support towards autonomy. This Route focuses on economic violence, which is one of the most insidious and hateful forms of violence against women, perpetrated through financial blackmail, together with other types of abuse, and which in many cases is seldom detected. It is also an element that can heighten the difficulties faced during the pathway out of violence, making the road to autonomy longer and bumpier. Managing to escape from violence with a view to the empowerment of women must be made possible with interventions to enable women who have been subjected to violence to become financially autonomous, through social and job integration/reintegration, as well as housing autonomy.

A focus on economic and financial empowerment is therefore needed to accelerate the inclusion process for women coming out of situations of violence who want to be protagonists of their own life, regaining social and professional agency.

Employment, as well as full awareness and availability of one's own economic power, has a direct impact on the real possibility of housing autonomy. As such, it is also necessary to differentiate services that support woman and minors in the path out of violence before moving onto the support phase of the dedicated services.

Importantly, work for empowerment has a greater impact if it is contextualised in a scenario that does not exclusively concern female victims of violence, but can potentially be addressed to all women, with the involvement of men as well: only this way can it spark a change in the political and social approach to employment and gender equality policies.

Another key issue is the state of Italy's social infrastructure and its wide regional disparities. Social infrastructure must be redefined and implemented for two reasons: first, because it is a female-dominated sector in terms of employment, and because it also plays an important role in freeing women from the constraints of care which hinder their professional and economic agency. Specific attention should be paid to supporting women's access to the Next Generation EU programmes in the digital and green sectors. These sectors (which still employ a predominant number of men) are becoming increasingly strategic and are due to receive major investment under the new 2021-2027 European programme. It is therefore necessary to set out forms of intervention and balancing with female employment, so that new investments do not become an opportunity to further exclude women from the world of work, due to prejudices surrounding women's abilities and self-inhibition towards the possibility of being trained and employed in what are considered to be 'male' fields, as in the case of the STEM subjects.

The following areas of intervention have been identified under this priority:

- protocols for the re-employment of female victims of violence and, in particular, forms of cooperation between institutions, entrepreneurs and anti-violence centres; developing specific rules on the employment of female victims of violence in collective bargaining agreements;
- excellence training courses and paid traineeships with job placement, thanks also to special training of human resource staff, so that they can detect signs of domestic violence or harassment in the workplace;
- tools that can be used for job placement, such as employment incentives, 'freedom income', freedom micro-credit and job retention as in the case of leave for female victims of violence;
- a 6-month extension to the possibility for female victims of violence to take leave, provided by Decree-Law no. 8/2015, taking into account the woman's individual project;
- financial aid to support women's self-employment, in addition to existing forms of micro-credit, particularly in the first years after the start-up of the business, i.e. for the first five years needed to consolidate the business activity;

- pathways towards independent living by implementing and differentiating the housing network, with second homes and co-housing, and by supporting the possibility of including – with specific priorities – women emerging from violence in the ranking lists for access to public property assets.

**Priority 2.3** *To monitor and improve the effectiveness of 'Pathways for women subjected to violence': guidelines for health authorities and hospitals on aid and care, including risk indicators*

The National Guidelines for Health Authorities and hospitals on the subject of emergency interventions and social/medical care for female victims of violence were issued by Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 24 November 2017 and published in the Official Journal on 30/01/2018.

The aim of the National Guidelines – *Pathway for Women Subjected to Violence* – is to provide an adequate and integrated intervention to treat the physical and psychological impacts on women subjected to any form of violence and child victims who witness violence and who come to A&E with their mother.

By way of the Agreement between the Italian Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Statistics, signed on 20 November 2019 for “Inputting health information on the gender-based violence database”, the two entities (within their respective technical and institutional competences) entered into a collaboration relationship that in 2020 led to an analysis of A&E admissions entered on the Information System for Monitoring Assistance in Emergency-Urgency (EMUR) to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of gender-based violence.

The context data already published (on the websites of the Department for Equal Opportunities and ISTAT) in terms of A&E admissions highlight the characteristics of certain conditions underlying the experience of female victims, particularly in relation to the frequency of abuse requiring medical intervention. This highlights the need to take action through:

- monitoring of the application at local level and of the qualitative and quantitative functioning of the *Pathways for women subjected to violence*;
- structured systemic action to investigate how the service is referred to in the legislation, alternating with the name 'Code Pink', so as to identify procedures to standardise the name of the service at national level;
- incentives for the associations managing anti-violence centres to set up an in-person service in A&E, with 24-hour coverage including holidays, with actions to facilitate early recognition of cases of violence and immediately start a specific pathway by triggering the network of services needed to care for the female victim of violence and any minors, in a homogeneous way throughout the country.

**Priority 2.4** *To enhance the free 24-hour national anti-violence hotline (1522), through cooperation between 1522, Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters, local networks, law enforcement and the judiciary system*

The effectiveness of the intervention carried out by the national '1522' hotline depends, especially in emergency situations, on having clear information tools and procedures available and on being able to promptly involve the relevant institutional point of contact in the woman's proximity, so that she can be provided with immediate support, anywhere in the country, including if children are involved. The following actions have been set out in this regard:

- measures to promulgate risk assessments and care routes so that '1522' operators are given all the information they need in order to take swift action (respecting anonymity at all times);
- targeted and specific communication campaigns by the '1522' service, e.g. for: regular and irregular migrant women, women with disabilities, elderly women, young people and men, on economic violence and cyber violence;

- financial incentives to support the operation and development, throughout Italy, of the local networks that can be triggered by '1522', including services for minors, for example by engaging inter-institutional cooperation protocols with the judicial system (Superior Council of the Judiciary, local working groups with the courts, public prosecutors' offices, etc.).

**Priority 2.5** *Protection, safeguarding and psychosocial support for child victims who witness violence*

As emphasised by the Istanbul Convention, it is paramount to consider the needs of minor children who witness violence when making policies to combat violence against women, so that dedicated support is provided and the child's best interest is taken into account. Although the Istanbul Convention explicitly includes minors (under 18 years) in the definition of 'women', it is stressed that specific and additional vulnerabilities of this population, such as disability, require a response that includes targeted considerations at the programming level, with particular regard to adolescence, being a critical phase both for the risk of violence and the need for support.

By analysing risk factors of minors and coordinating response systems for women with systems for child survivors of violence, it is possible to develop effective prevention and response strategies.

Effective integration is also essential between social and health services and anti-violence centres when receiving and caring for mothers with daughters/minors.

The following intervention procedures have been identified under this priority:

- up-skilling and re-skilling of operators dealing with minors, so as to effectively and consciously care for minors who are victims of violence, and fill any existing skills gaps with the ultimate aim of avoiding secondary victimisation and excessive untargeted welfare;
- mapping of family type homes which includes minors, children of female victims of violence, and orphans of femicide, together with information on their situation and conditions as well as the procedures and tools adopted for their care;
- guidelines for social, psychological and educational interventions carried out with minors who are victims of violence and orphans of femicide in local services, family centres and home care for minors. These guidelines are to be drawn up through an inter-institutional process in line with the outcome of the work to revise the national guidelines on the reception of minors in communities and foster care entrusted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and the work on the National Guidelines for Family Centres drawn up by the Family Policies Department;
- interventions to reinforce mother-baby dyad care.

**Priority 2.6** *To implement operational solutions so as to ensure equal access to prevention, support and reintegration services for female victims of violence and various forms of discrimination: migrant women, and asylum seeker/refugee women*

In terms of **protection and support**, the pandemic has exacerbated many of the pre-existing barriers that migrant and refugee women and girls face in accessing gender-based violence response services and, moreover, has created new ones. It is clear that in order to address the cultural and language barriers hindering access to services, it is essential to ensure a stable presence of linguistic and cultural mediators (specialised in gender-based violence) in care services. In order to spread awareness of the existing services, the referral scheme, and how to access to them, the following activities are essential: mapping the services, making connections with the information provided by the SIOSS (unified information system of the supply of social services), and identifying good practices for services that can be accessed by migrant and refugee women and girls, and replicated on a large scale. Similarly, priority should be given to developing multilingual information campaigns that take into account the different cultural backgrounds of migrant and refugee women and girls, so as to promote awareness of, and access to, services that respond to gender-based violence, including the national anti-violence and anti-stalking hotline '1522', with a specific focus on the target group of young women. As mentioned previously in the chapter dedicated to context, ISTAT has provided data on the topic which, despite

dating back to 2014, can serve as a snapshot of the areas for planning actions under this priority. In particular, a multidisciplinary and intercultural approach must be ingrained across the board, with the aim of ensuring that foreign women are not excluded from the protection and support opportunities provided by local networks. The phenomenon of violence against women must also be understood within a cultural and social context which is different from the Italian one, so as to be able to interpret the disparity of power and control and means of domination inherent to this type of crime. To develop these actions, it is necessary to recruit and train professionals who have the tools needed to approach and understand different cultural backgrounds, to gain a greater understanding of the notions of masculinity and femininity in the cultures of origin of foreign female victims of violence.

The following actions have been identified under this Priority:

- financial incentives for the job placement of cultural mediation professionals in Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters, as well as in other institutions that play a role in the pathway out of violence;
- structured and formalised tools to help foreign women gain access to criminal and civil justice processes and meet – based on their individual projects – the additional costs incurred in criminal and civil proceedings if court-appointed/party-appointed experts are needed, in order to facilitate the protection and integration of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women with particular vulnerabilities;
- studies and analyses with a view to improving legal and administrative procedures to reaffirm the protection of citizenship rights (maintaining the requirements of legal presence on the national territory);
- actions aimed at increasing activities outside anti-violence centres on the territory, in meeting places and workplaces to help foreign women overcome situations of violence;
- guidelines at national level on the standards and competences of professionals who care for migrant women surviving gender-based violence, and on the approach to be taken in services supporting survivors of violence, with a focus on the specific issues of migrant and refugee women;
- trialling interventions based on mechanisms that recognise the key role of refugee women as protagonists in the full exercise and enjoyment of their rights, and that promote their participation in defining and implementing those rights;
- targeted actions to boost the participation of refugee women in the world of associations through empowerment and knowledge-building so that they can acquire what they need to play an active role.

## **Prosecute and Punish Route**

Women subjected to violence have the right to feel protected and obtain justice from the courts as soon as possible. The violence experienced must be suitably investigated to avoid the continuation of further violence; the perpetrators of violence must be prosecuted and punished in accordance with the current system. Through the strategy and priorities of the Prosecute and Punish Route, the aim is to enact all the measures provided for by law to protect women from the perpetrators of violence, to prevent, recognise and manage the risk of repeated violent behaviour, and to carry out actions to affirm victims' rights in the various stages of both criminal and civil procedures, including in juvenile court, with a special focus on ensuring rapid proceedings.

For this Route, it is important to swiftly engage institutions that support victims of violence and trigger prevention actions in the initial phase following the complaint, so as to avoid deadly outcomes such as homicide. Against this backdrop, it is now imperative to launch collaborations between the actors of local networks supporting victims of violence, working closely with institutions and their local branches (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, civil, criminal and juvenile courts) with a view to guaranteeing rapid, effective responses for women who experience or have experienced

violence and child victims who witness violence, considering the woman's best interest, as laid down in chapters V and VI of the Istanbul Convention.

In civil custody proceedings on domestic violence cases, in order to effectively apply the principles guaranteeing the right to safety of women and child victims of violence, the victims' best interests must take precedence over the demands of the violent parent.

The 'Code Red' Law, as explained above, introduced important changes to substantive law (Criminal Code), procedural law (Code of Criminal Procedure) and other legal provisions on domestic and gender-based violence. Of these provisions, the 're-education' of convicts with a view to restorative justice was institutionalised for the first time in Italy. This led to a major increase in the number of requests for treatment at all centres for perpetrators of violence. This did however give rise to a new context which entails some risks that must be promptly prevented. These relate to:

- 1) the proliferation of inappropriate and dangerous proposals by bodies and/or professionals without any specific training, if there are no clear quality standards or requirements for intervention programmes;
- 2) uneven application of the rules across the country, as different Judicial Offices may adopt different practices in terms of referring offenders to treatment, monitoring measures, and requesting information and certificates from the bodies providing the service;
- 3) legislative requirements that such measures be paid for by the offender at no cost to the public purse; Article 6 of Law 69/2019 runs the risks of discriminating based on wealth (giving priority to those who can afford the treatment and failing to guarantee the service for those unable to afford it), and discriminating against offenders prosecuted under 'Code Red' compared those given a warning from the Police Commissioner under Law 119/2013, for whom free treatment is provided. Based on GREVIO Recommendation 117 for Italy, this Plan must establish the minimum standards for programmes targeted at perpetrators of gender-based violence, by adopting measures to ensure that only entities operating in compliance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and nationally and internationally recognised good practices are listed in the State-Regions Agreement and qualified to implement the interventions. This is necessary to ensure that the programmes implemented uphold the principle of admission of responsibility by perpetrators of violence, by cooperating with specialised women's services and focusing on the safety and protection of victims.

Associations operating in the field have pointed out the need for clear, standardised regulations on referring and treating perpetrators of violence in rehabilitation programmes. The patchwork of legislative references requires reference protocols to be adopted between the Public Security and Judicial Offices and bodies providing treatment and re-education services, since the absence of such protocols is currently hindering the effective implementation of the measures.

In terms of security, the Ministry of the Interior presented several measures in the Steering Committee to enhance the protection of victims and the effectiveness of law enforcement interventions:

- operation 'Scudo' – an inter-force application developed by the various offices of the State Police and Carabinieri – enables operators to obtain information on previous interventions. As such, intervention teams can use the tablets provided to them to consult and implement police databases in order to make prompt decisions;
- the new Guidelines for police operators, drafted by the Central Anti-Crime Directorate of the Police, for recognising dangerous situations of victims. Specialised sections of the mobile squad have been set up at police headquarters to investigate crimes against minors, sexual violence and abuse against women. Lastly, the anti-crime divisions oversee the implementation of Police Commissioner warnings as a preventive measure for victim protection;
- the project 'Questo non è amore' (This is not love), implemented by the State Police with the support of specialised personnel and psychologists, to help victims report violence.



The following priorities have been identified under this Route:

<b>Prosecute and Punish Route</b>	<b>Priority 3.1</b> To ensure shared procedures and tools for protecting female victims of violence that enable an effective and rapid assessment and management of the risk of lethality, re-offence and relapse, including by stepping up cooperation between all institutional stakeholders involved
	<b>Priority 3.2</b> To establish a shared model of risk management and risk assessment within the security department
	<b>Priority 3.3</b> To improve the effectiveness of judicial proceedings when applying pre-trial supervision measures and suspended sentences
	<b>Priority 3.4</b> To establish guidelines for qualitative and quantitative analysis and monitoring of interventions in male abuser programmes

***Priority 3.1** To ensure shared procedures and tools for protecting female victims of violence that enable an effective and rapid assessment and management of the risk of lethality, re-offence and relapse, including by stepping up cooperation between all institutional stakeholders involved*

Although Italy’s legislation and regulations may appear adequate (on paper) for combating violence and preventing femicide, several critical issues persist in institutional practice. In some cases, it must be acknowledged that institutions fail to stop situations with obvious homicidal intentions in time, and fail to assess the danger of a family situation. In other situations, victims find themselves totally unprotected, falling victim to death threats, while their aggressors run free, receiving mild and ineffective limitations at most. Sadly, one often wonders which devices, practices, or attitudes need to be changed or introduced in order to act before (and not after) a woman is killed. Action must be taken right from the moment of the investigation following the report and/or complaint of violence, to set up a space for consultation/intervention for the court’s decision-making and handling by institutions. Specifically, a priority-based assessment method (Triage of violence) could ensure structured and agile procedures for assessing the level of danger of individual situations. Where there is suspicion of actual risk, in-depth structured evaluations can then be made, after which, in the event of dangerous individuals, early care can be provided in order to immediately and effectively manage the risk of violence. This should be done not only in terms of precautionary measures, but also with a view to psychological stabilisation. Moreover, these schemes should be evenly spread out throughout the country.

The areas of intervention identified in this Priority include:

- a document for the official definition – in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice – of the victim/offender relationship;
- monitoring the provisions introduced by ‘Code Red’ based on inter-institutional sharing, the structure and the items on the check-list, in order to assess the damage to the women;

- providing specialised psychological support in the preliminary investigation phase to improve the effectiveness of the risk assessment in the preliminary phase; expanding resources to ensure standardised services and the same service standards throughout the country;
- drawing up Guidelines for the child custody process, where there is a criminal conviction for abuse, making it compulsory to comply with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention on the protection of victims in child custody processes (consultation of criminal records; cautions even only with a complaint, with a ban on joint meetings between ex-partners, a ban on the administration of clinical LTP or similar tools involving the joint presence of ex-partners interacting with each other and with the children; where there is a conviction, assessment of the risk of violence of the convicted person, before deciding on any protected meetings with the minor child; assessment of the traumatic impact of violence on the victim and on her parenting skills);
- a Code of Conduct (coherent and standardised measures) for the protection and prevention of gender-based violence in reception and detention facilities for asylum seekers and refugees, including – inter alia – mechanisms for regular risk assessments through safety audit tools, establishing safe spaces for confidential psychological support, gender segregation of rooms and health services, proper lighting in the facilities and appropriate measures to ensure privacy;
- actions to ensure that sexual abuse and exploitation (including by public and private actors with authority and/or protection duties) is managed by adopting an appropriate strategy that includes prevention, detection, protection response and abuse reporting mechanisms to ensure that perpetrators of violence are held accountable;
- an evaluation study on the regulatory, organisational and managerial impacts of the introduction of case managers, based on the results of international and national trials.

**Priority 3.2** *To establish a shared model of risk management and risk assessment within the security department*

In the previous National Plan, research/trials on the risk assessment and risk management of violent relapses of individuals who had committed crimes against women (homicides, sexual violence, group sexual violence, abuse) were successfully launched by the Ministry of Justice – Department of Penitentiary Administration (General Directorate of Training), which used the Structured Professional Judgement approach (with tools such as HCR-20v.3, RSVP - The Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol). The trial was conducted jointly with the operators of six Italian prisons to train them on the use of the procedure.

The areas of intervention identified in this Priority include:

- the national protocol (to be drawn up and signed) for the treatment of adult perpetrators of sexual and/or gender-based violence and the identification of the most effective intramural treatment models, as well as training for operators directly involved in their application; establishing the trial period at national level and collecting the results in order to evaluate their effectiveness;
- establishing and testing intervention models for minors who have committed sexual and/or gender-based offences, focusing on approaches that treat them as perpetrators of violence and adopt training courses for operators focusing on sexual violence risk assessment.

**Priority 3.3** *To improve the effectiveness of judicial proceedings when applying pre-trial supervision measures and suspended sentences*

This priority stems from the need to bolster the enforcement processes already in place, through actions to improve the regulatory framework. There must be an in-depth focus on the decision-making context of preliminary investigations and hearings, which are one of the moments when contact is first made with alleged violent persons in an institutional setting. This is a particularly delicate setting given that the judiciary is required to control the investigation, order any precautionary measures, and examine whether the evidence against the suspect provides grounds for referring the case for trial. It is a decision-making setting where action can be taken to prevent the possible recurrence of violence. It is

also necessary to explore potential psychological counselling and support tools in this legal phase, to help determine the risk posed by the violent individual, as well as to identify treatment pathways, and precautionary measures, both in terms of restrictions and in terms of the time and action dedicated to actually reducing the risk through specialised psychological interventions by professionals with appropriate skills. The key interventions identified in this Priority are:

- creating a manual of practices for enforcing legislation in order to equip the criminal judiciary with the legislative tools to decide whether to remove the man committing violence against the woman, and to monitor the situation post-sentencing;
- multi-annual system action to engage integrated collection, cataloguing and observation of the implementation of judicial orders to remove the abusive man from the family setting (usually the home);
- creating a procedural protocol to boost collaboration between the work of the Criminal, Civil and Juvenile Courts, ensuring that all judges are able to assess their decision based on other rulings and measures already taken, in implementation of Article 64 bis of the implementing provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure;
- developing effective methods, procedures and collaboration protocols (communicative and project-related) between penitentiary institutions and local social services in order to prevent relapses when the perpetrator of violence is referred for alternative measures or granted access to measures that reintroduce him into the community. This action is taken prior to the individual-based and integrated treatment projects, with a view to risk management and conscious monitoring with the involvement of local social services. In cases where convicted persons have direct access to alternative measures, the risk of relapsing into violence must be assessed and managed, so that the individuals subject to alternative measures (such as house arrest) cannot flout the measures and commit violence, including homicide.

*Priority 3.4 To establish guidelines for qualitative and quantitative analysis and monitoring of interventions in male abuser programmes*

Interventions aimed at perpetrators of violence must maintain their focus on the victim's safety, including through timely and individual-based monitoring, clinical monitoring, and quality services, in order to overcome situations that undermine their legitimacy.

It is therefore important to strengthen the actions to ensure women have access to justice and are able to overcome financial barriers. At the same time, programmes for abusive men must not be pursued as a way of reducing their sentence. Rather, they should be carried out independently from their sentence and be authentically motivated. This ensures both the punishment of violent subjects, and enables them to access pathways of change and risk reduction which, in turn, will benefit possible victims, the community, and the target individual himself. It is essential, when he returns to his community, that the perpetrator of violence does not present a risk for others; as such the treatment pathways must be tailored to the **needs and specific characteristics of each violent individual, to be assessed and understood using methods and practices which have been scientifically tested at national and international level**, resulting in clinical practice. To this end, treatment should be based on the findings of a structured violence risk assessment and management procedure.

To achieve their respective objectives, the interventions under this priority are:

- National Guidelines to be drawn up for treatment pathways for abusive men within a comprehensive control system of criteria in order to certify methods and pathways and verify outcomes;

- the allocation of dedicated resources to increase the number of available programmes in addition to the resources allocated for victim support, in agreement with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces;
- the Observatory for data collection, monitoring cases of male violence against women, including cases of femicide (with qualitative and quantitative variables describing the phenomenon), and evaluating the effectiveness of treatment programmes for perpetrators in terms of reducing/stopping violence, in agreement with bodies and associations working with abusers.

## Assistance and Promotion Route

In line with the past three years, the Assistance and Promotion Route serves to support the previous three Routes and represents the monitoring and evaluating function of the Plan. The latter is a key element not only in terms of gaining knowledge of the phenomenon and directing action to combat male violence against women, but also in terms of the capacity to promote the Plan's outcomes and the tools it puts in place so that they can be of help to female victims of violence, ensuring the necessary dissemination for prevention, support and inclusion of the target. Assistance therefore requires work – in addition to identifying the measures needed to make the Plan effective while work is ongoing, and selecting suitable tools to build the capacity to interpret, analyse and manage specific aspects of the phenomena – to ensure constant monitoring of all priorities set out.

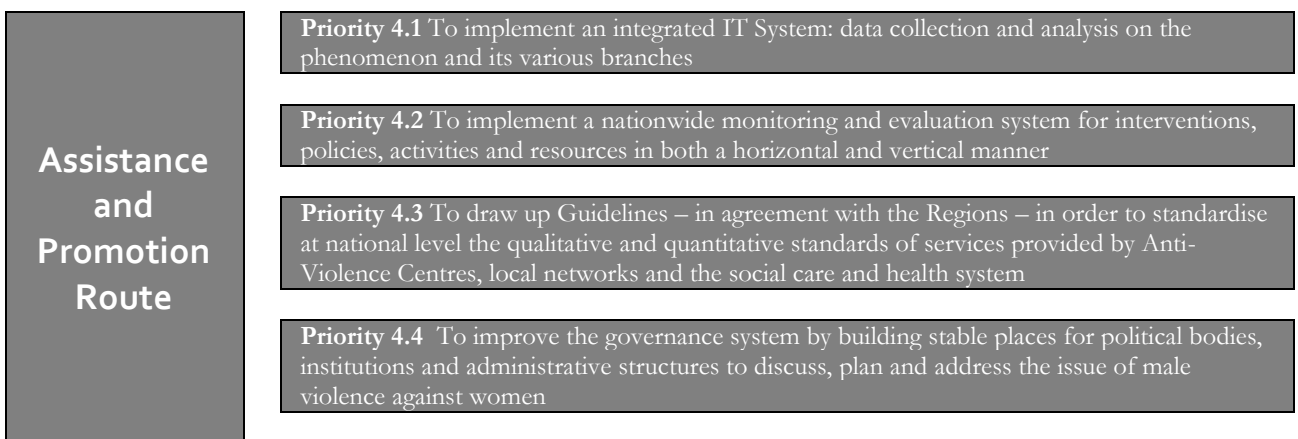
This function of the Route has two purposes: firstly, to prepare suitable tools to study the trends of the issues addressed by the Plan as well as the trends emerging at social, cultural, national and international policy level; secondly, to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the measures underpinning the interventions.

In this regard, it is necessary to establish the extent and nature of the activities which the ministerial body (specifically the Department for Equal Opportunities) is called upon to carry out.

In addition to the administrative activity tied to the interventions to be implemented, the provision of specific measures, drafting of key documents regarding the phenomenon, as well as the Governance of the processes and tools indicated by the legislation, the Department for Equal Opportunities has to perform fundamental data collection in order to monitor both the phenomena and – in qualitative-quantitative terms – the measures implemented and resources engaged.

Lastly, the **horizontal and vertical coordination** function of the Plan's provisions plays a key role in the Department's work in terms of collaborations with other institutional and private social actors involved in the processes, and defining the contents and the way in which measures are implemented.

Therefore, assistance in the processes and promoting tools and results are the two main areas that make up the Route, based on the planning and programming of the following priorities.



**Priority 4.5** To communicate the Assistance and Promotion Route

For each of the above-mentioned **Priorities**, the respective **Areas of intervention** are described below.

***Priority 4.1** To implement an integrated IT System: data collection and analysis on the phenomenon and its various branches*

The aim of this priority is to monitor the phenomenon of male violence against women, by identifying suitable tools for collecting and interpreting data, and disseminating this data where deemed appropriate.

Identifying specific focuses that can provide an insight into the context, using targeted statistical tools integrated with the regional information systems, is key to establishing effective measures to combat the phenomenon and support women in their pathway out of violence.

The collaboration with ISTAT, building an Integrated IT System shared with every individual involved in combating male violence against women, has given the Department significant data which is essential for the execution of the previous Plan. The activities to be promoted under this Priority are:

- Agreement for collaboration with ISTAT to make greater use of the Integrated Information System so as to extend the sharing of data relating to the various aspects of the phenomenon based on areas of action and interest;
- Creating an Integrated Information System and a multi-level evaluation function with a view to enhancing and continuing the provisions of the previous three-year period, and transforming the results achieved during the process into opportunities for progressive and constant learning for all stakeholders involved, whether public or private entities. The Plan must focus on the following actions:
  - unifying existing research on male violence against women with a systemic approach to all sources and data sets, considering the various sources already available and those needing to be created,
  - real-time dissemination of scientifically-accredited information and data on trends and phenomena relating to gender-based violence,
  - collaboration between the various institutional and local levels in terms of knowledge of the phenomenon and sharing of good practices,
  - disseminating direct information on the interventions to potential or actual female victims of violence and to society as a whole;
  - improving statistical surveys on gender-based violence, with the aim of increasing the frequency of surveys and the detail of information (e.g. the socio-economic status of victims of violence);
  - promoting coordination between MEF/RGS-DPO-ISTAT in order to publish data on gender-based violence as part of the annual drafting of the State's gender budget;
  - updating the information needed to gain increasingly in-depth knowledge of the phenomena, and developing the skills needed to intercept and predict the changes underway, using disaggregated data on gender-based violence and targeted surveys on asylum seekers and refugees;
- Promoting the conversion of the bill "Provisions on gender-based violence statistics" into law.

***Priority 4.2** To implement a nationwide monitoring and evaluation system for interventions, policies, activities and resources in both a horizontal and vertical manner*

The National Strategic Plan involves the implementation of an advanced evaluation function which monitors and analyses the achievement of institutional objectives in terms of organisational structure

and relationships between the stakeholders, as well as the achievement of the goals set out by the respective actions. As such, the expected results, processes/phases/activities, as well as the functions and competences attributed to the stakeholders involved must be kept under observation.

In terms of monitoring and evaluating policies combating male violence against women, the aim is to verify the progress and results of the set of actions undertaken and, in turn, whether the set policy objectives have been met. It is particularly important to monitor the dissemination of skills aimed at preventing secondary institutional victimisation and endemic welfarism.

To achieve the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, the following actions have been deemed necessary tools, not only to obtain the goals indicated in the priorities, but also to systematise the procedures:

- setting up and executing the qualitative-quantitative and local monitoring of the interventions in order to achieve an even distribution of prevention, awareness and training actions that span the entire national territory and engage peripheral local areas;
- allocating specific funding to ensure the sustainability of prevention and training actions, including by identifying different financial sources with the contribution of the regions, and distinguishing this funding from that allocated for actions to support female victims of violence;
- setting indicators, methods and timeframes for data collection and systemisation, as well as quantitative and qualitative targets for collecting, processing and analysing the data needed to evaluate the interventions with the constant involvement of the regions and both horizontal and vertical stakeholders;
- performing *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations of the support actions for female victims of violence, starting with the pathway triggered after calling '1522', following up on their situation, and differentiating requests for help made: to '1522', to the police under Code Red, through the procedures set out in 'Code Pink', and through direct access to Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters, in order to gain an overview of how the phenomenon of violence arises;
- specific surveys on child victims who witness violence, focusing on the specific target of preventing relapses with male perpetrators or potential perpetrators of violence;
- qualitative and quantitative statistical surveys on the use of PAS theory in consultations with court-appointed or party-appointed experts in civil proceedings regarding the separation of spouses and custody of minors, particularly in cases of violence, in order to understand the extent of the phenomenon.

**Priority 4.3** *To draw up guidelines – in agreement with the Regions – in order to standardise at national level the qualitative and quantitative standards of services provided by Anti-Violence Centres, local networks and the social care and health system*

The Strategic Plan sets out the complex and multivariate interventions required throughout the pathway out of male violence for female victims. This complexity means that various institutions and bodies must participate and be engaged throughout the country. Indeed, in order to avoid any management, qualitative and quantitative inequalities in the provision of services, procedures must be established for the provision of interventions and coordination of the existing procedures with different areas (social, medical, judicial, welfare, etc.). As such, various parties have expressed the need for the Department for Equal Opportunities to take on the role of coordination and defining operational standards to ensure even and equal services, tools, requirements and procedures. This responsibility is the product of an onerous task of introducing both horizontal and vertical sharing processes when sharing guidelines on the various processes that make up the different areas of the phenomenon.

Prevention, training, resource management, care requirements and information sharing are just some of the areas identified as important, highlighting the fact that these areas require shared or complementary skills. In this regard, the actions indicated as priorities are expressed with a view to systemising the whole process from the onset of violence, assistance and support through to the pathway out of

violence, in which female victims play a central role. With this in mind, the following measures are deemed necessary:

- Providing the Regions with Guidelines to standardise, at national level, the quality standards of the services provided by the Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters, by local networks, and by the local-level health system (Essential Levels of Social and Welfare Assistance) by routinely updating the mapping of the centres (Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters), whether or not they are funded with public resources, operating at both national and local level (including specific areas such as peripheral areas), by monitoring their activities and the financial resources made available based on each source of funding;
- proposing a supplementary procedure to ensure the transparency of skills, including informal and non-formal skills, to be developed by the regions in conjunction with women's associations, so that they can then be adopted and used to supplement existing models;
- administrative capacity building measures to establish efficient and effective local processes to improve the quality of services and make full use of resources allocated to local interventions;
- monitoring governance and the way in which A&E interventions are carried out by engaging the Regions and the Ministry of Health in order to identify tools and share good practices to improve reception services and, by establishing a set of variables, to identify the characteristics of the women who go to A&E for problems relating to violence. These tools will be made available to health care personnel thanks to specific Guidelines drawn up to support operators;
- Guidelines for sharing information and standardising procedures in Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Courts (where female victims of violence are party to the proceedings) to be drawn up in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice. In particular, it is possible to draw on the experiences gained at local level in order to extend and share the results achieved at national level. In this perspective, the following actions are considered important:
  - specific actions for training court-appointed experts who work on male violence against women, so as to prevent secondary victimisation,
  - the creation of a data register on the secondary victimisation of women, using – for instance – data on court-appointed expert reports: to quantify the motivations, following said reports, for women (in situations of violence) to be removed from their minor children (based on PAS theory),
  - the creation of a register for court-appointed experts who are specialised and specifically trained on issues relating to female victims of male violence.

*Priority 4.4 To improve the governance system by building stable places for political bodies, institutions and administrative structures to discuss, plan and address the issue of male violence against women*

The fact that the National Strategic Plan is divided into Routes and acts through the work of issue-based working groups, highlights the need for the whole phenomenon to be coordinated through governance actions of planning, management, monitoring and results.

The Minister for Equal Opportunities, through the Department for Equal Opportunities, is tasked with coordinating the various interventions and channelling them based on the priorities indicated in the Istanbul Convention. It also establishes corrective measures based on the critical issues detected in the periodical GREVIO reports, adjusting interventions according to ongoing social changes, and dealing with emergencies arising due to extraordinary events (e.g. Covid-19). All of this must also be achieved through horizontal coordination with the ministries involved in the sector, while at the same time acting with the regions and bodies that work with female victims of male violence or in the rehabilitation of abusive men. This important function must be addressed through governance actions including:

- local working groups which periodically monitor and evaluate what has been achieved, and the effectiveness of the actions taken at local level in relation to the social and cultural context of the local area in question;
- issue-based working groups which aim to set out the specific measures needed to tackle the precise aspects of the phenomenon at national and international level, with a view to growing, improving and adapting the measures to changes in the broader context.

More generally, following the result of the work of the working groups and of the information gathered within the Steering Committee, account must be taken of the cross-cutting nature of some issues – such as disability and immigration – which entail the provision of certain qualifying points, referring to the need to:

- set up stable places and an Agenda of meetings on a six-monthly basis to monitor the implementation of the National Strategic Plan 2021-2023, in order to build a structured and stable governance of policy bodies, institutions and administrative structures who are qualified to work on issues of violence against women (based on competences directly relating to equal opportunities) to ensure unity of approach, including at linguistic level, towards the issue;
- create and set-up a computer database, by gathering the information and data available from the various government bodies, to be made accessible to entities working to support female victims of male violence, with the aim of creating a single and shared system and point of reference;
- set specific protocols to clearly and strictly regulate the relationships and commitments between the parties, by developing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure continuity of action even when one or more contact persons are replaced.

#### *Priority 4.5 To communicate the Assistance and Promotion Route*

Communication is a priority that arose very clearly during the work of the working groups, which highlighted both good practices and dysfunctions in the process. One major issue was the lack of communication about the legal instruments and operational interventions that support female victims of male violence, of which the women themselves are not aware. This arose, for example, with regard to female victims' ability to take leave from work (which is provided by law yet remains virtually unused), and encouraging the participation of the network of free services of trade unions.

The actions defined as fundamental are reported below, bearing in mind that communication actions referring to specific issues are already largely included within the Routes' priorities. Nevertheless, the actions deemed to have priority at the general governance level are:

- An integrated plan to update the website of the Department for Equal Opportunities, so that it serves as:
  - a tool to ensure the flow of opportunities and support tools for female victims of male violence,
  - a place for sharing knowledge and culture, where data, information, and thematic focuses are made available,
  - a tool for learning and skills building by exchanging experiences, creating a special section for the content and activities related to the National Plan,
  - a network builder, by sharing connections with other sites where there are individuals operating in the process of intercepting and combating gender-based violence;
- a communication plan which differentiates the content, procedures and means used in communication campaigns based on the target (general population, female victims, men, male abusers, minors, intercultural communities, etc.), and on the content, dissemination channels and messages to be conveyed.



# 4 | GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES AND IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

## 4.1 Governance model

The policies to combat male violence against women entail multiple aspects, cutting across various levels of government and areas of competence of central government bodies, on which the State functions for 'sector-based issues' are based (e.g. work, education, health, etc.), and across Regions, Municipalities and Provinces (the first Bodies to deal with issues and topics relating to gender violence). As such, they are able to take **a joint direction in the strategy and development of the Plan's aims and actions** also for the three-year period 2021-2023.

The Plan's governance system can therefore take on *guiding principles* to help strengthen the processes to be put in place, so that all the forces in the field can operate effectively to achieve results of full implementation:

- clear roles and competences of the actors involved, and clear procedures for decision-making, so as to facilitate the process of planning and implementing interventions;
- consistent purposes between the various sectors that contribute to the integration of policies (protection and prevention, awareness-raising, education and training, protection and empowerment, etc.);
- building and stepping up collaboration networks and partnerships between local actors operating in the field of policy against male violence against women (local institutions, associations, non-profit organisations, social cooperatives, social and health services, schools, universities and training centres, etc.), in order to develop synergies and improve the effectiveness of the actions implemented.

As mentioned above, there are many *players* involved in the **Plan's governance model**, and their administrative actions are largely interconnected.

To ensure the full implementation of the guidelines set out in the Plan, the governance system requires extensive and shared organisation, which – in line with the implementation of the 2017-2020 Plan – is developed around the following structures (the main aspects of which are set out below, qualifying their roles and responsibilities with a view to optimal operation):

- **Body with the role of coordination between institutional actors:** this is the Minister with for Equal Opportunities, which is tasked with fostering dialogue between institutional actors and between public and private-social actors, encouraging interventions for cultural and social change and rewarding the sharing of good practices;
- **Ministries and Departments** responsible for 'sector-based issues' (e.g. health, education, university training, employment, etc.), which participate in sharing the Plan and implementing specific lines of action (under their exclusive responsibility). They are asked to set up the ordinary channels of communication with other institutional actors, including local actors, particularly in terms of the models and standards for dealing with and managing the various situations in which the phenomenon occurs;
- **Regions** in their dual role as policy planners for the areas assigned to them under the Constitutional Charter, and co-actors in the guidance, planning and co-financing of national and local strategic objectives, in order to ensure a coordinated impact of the investments that come

together, at local level, thanks to the various development tools used for Italy's socio-economic recovery, in which the Regions will play a key role. In accordance with their constitutional and/or shared competences, they are also tasked with ensuring the implementation of systemic and direct actions in order to raise the general service standards and rebalance local disparities, making a significant contribution also to defining the actions set out in the Operational Plan;

- **Municipalities/Provinces/Metropolitan Cities and therefore also ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) and UPI (Union of Italian Provinces)** in order to ensure that policies combating gender-based violence are cohesive as a whole, also in view of their competence in the social policies and their “proximity” to the realities with the greatest exposure to gender-based violence, among other things;
- **Associations, at national and local level**, as bodies for protecting and supporting female victims of violence at local level (but not only), which – thanks also to consolidated Networks – are able to: increase knowledge of the phenomenon; report to the competent authorities the need to adapt the legal and regulatory instruments for combating violence used by implementing bodies to provide care and support with a ‘complete and multidisciplinary’ response to ensure pathways out of violence;
- **Socio-economic partnerships**, representing organisations (including international organisations), for their role as promoters of improved interventions in the reference sectors, such as support in identifying general solutions, for their role as mediators in achieving joint objectives and objectives of general interest in the fight against the phenomenon, and as observers who participate in settings where the effects of the intervention policies are weighed up;
- **Governance structures of the Plan:** a model structure made up of three integrated levels: 1) **National Steering Committee** with the role of strategic political guidance; 2) **Observatory**, with a specialised role; 3) **Local governance**, with the role of liaising between central and local government and coordinating the local networks acting on the issues under the Plan.

In addition to these structures, a multidisciplinary **task force is to be created** to provide coordination and – in certain cases – management of the NRRP's measures for the empowerment of female victims of violence, which will integrate and support the governance model in the implementation of the actions set out by the Next Generation EU initiative, as well as the overall plans for the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) – key financial instruments to improve economic, social and local cohesion by bridging the gap between the most advanced regions and those lagging behind.

In terms of the **decision-making process**, the philosophy behind the governance model must be based on a shared approach, so as to standardise the various lines of action stemming from the decisions. This will be ensured through the assimilation of the following objectives which – given that they cut across all Routes of intervention and underpin the entire implementation process – will make it possible to achieve a coherent framework:

- to represent the vision and drive of the Department for Equal Opportunities, resulting from the experiences gained and results achieved, as the product of an overall vision acquired at the strategic level;
- to integrate the contributions provided by the stakeholders and socio-economic partnerships – actors who can effectively represent the players' needs and provide a conscious and thorough reading of the phenomenon of violence, with the possibility to support central and local government bodies in defining the strategy underpinning the Plan;
- to accept the proposals and guidelines from the governance structures of the National Steering Committee and local bodies, as well as the observations made in the thematic working groups.

The interaction between the various actors working to prevent and combat male violence against women is ensured through memoranda of understanding inspired by the principle of public-private partnerships and full engagement of all relevant stakeholders.

The level of local governance (based on that at national level) ensures the full integration and coordination of regional policy supporting female victims of violence at political level, as well as broad sharing of objectives, interventions and actions with all relevant stakeholders. This is achieved by setting up inter-institutional steering committees, interdepartmental working groups or other ad hoc bodies and networks/working groups/local committees set up by the Regions (based on Prime Ministerial Decree of 4 December 2019).

The *collaboration methods* to make interaction at local level a reality aim to:

- improve the use of places where government bodies and already established social partners (conferences, working groups, etc.) can discuss, exchange content and good practices, and share methods and interventions;
- engage the relevant central government bodies and Regions in targeted agreements, memoranda of understanding, inter-institutional working groups, with the aim of jointly addressing all aspects of male violence against women;
- engage municipalities, provinces and metropolitan cities in the planning and mapping processes, promoting the relaunch of cooperation with the National Association of Italian Municipalities and the Union of Italian Provinces (ANCI and UPI), by signing memoranda of understanding on new bases and rule systems, in order to establish – where necessary – local ‘councils’ or agreements to ensure optimal supervision of interventions as part of the local governance model set out at regional level;
- foster relations between local authorities, Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters.

## 4.2 Means of implementation

The Plan is characterised by a process of adjustment aimed at ensuring the upmost consistency and adherence to the requests made by government bodies and organisations which act in various capacities as representatives of civil society and female members of society.

The process will be implemented through a broad and in-depth consultation activity that will consolidate and expand the Plan’s governance through schemes for sharing policies to combat male violence against women, and potentially also when finalising the intervention tools set out for the next three years.

In terms of **procedure and method**, the Plan’s inspiring principles will be:

- **to speed up the processes that make new resources and opportunities directly available to local areas, with the aim of keeping time and bureaucracy to a minimum:** the urgency of the interventions, based on the seriousness of the phenomenon, context data) and the urgency to provide help also for victims of gender-based violence to overcome the pandemic with a positive outcome, make is necessary to speed up the processes of identifying the targets, needs and methods on which the actions are based;
- **to concentrate economic and financial resources from several EU, national and regional intervention programmes** – the main ones being: Next Generation EU, NRRP, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), with regard to interventions aimed at migrant women and asylum seekers/asylees and those granted international protection, in an effective and efficient manner so as to provide responses that can truly bring about significant positive change to people’s lives, respecting the rights that the Constitution grants all citizens, without distinction;

- **to ensure constant monitoring and assessment of the interventions implemented and their effects**, as well as the processes and public and private stakeholders involved, adopting an analysis method based on shared quality standards and indicators that can be measured in the medium to long term;
- to ensure transparency, by subjecting the Plan to public assessment (including by way of an online, structured and target-based consultation system), enabling the recipients of the measures to participate in the processes of growth and development and help improve government action at all levels.

In light of these principles, the Plan will make it possible to pursue and enhance a path of joint action to establish the commitments and concrete actions to be adopted for the next three-year period 2021-2023 in a recognisable and clear manner. Specifically, interventions must be based on a time-scale that is compatible with the three-year strategic Plan, guaranteeing – also through various commitments undertaken by the individual actors involved – full time coverage. Alongside the Plan, which establishes the Italian strategic lines, goals and priorities on male violence against women, a dedicated and purely executive Operating Plan will then be drawn up, as per usual practice, containing all of the actual interventions and actions needed in order to translate the content of the National Strategic Plan into tangible operations, based on the procedures outlined above.

## 5 | INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In order to ensure Italy's intervention in the fight against violence is effective, the Plan – again in line with the strategic planning of the previous three-year period – contains a section dedicated to the commitments that Italy will undertake both nationally and internationally, with specific regard to Development Cooperation.

Given the nature of the intervention, the main actor in the Priorities, Areas and Measures will be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, which will ensure its commitment in the Plan to the protection and promotion of women's rights and the fight against all forms of violence set out in the Istanbul Convention, as well as in possible situations of conflict in multilateral and bilateral relations with other countries.

The work of Italian Development Cooperation in this area helps to create a favourable setting in partner countries to strengthen women's rights from a social, cultural and legal perspective, and to boost the capacities of local governments. A concrete example of this commitment is the project launched in July 2021 in Iraqi Kurdistan with UN Women entitled "Supporting local government capacities to deliver effective and appropriate services in response to gender-based violence". In Iraq, as early as December 2020, funding of €1 million was allocated to civil society organisations that support victims of gender-based violence, serving Syrian refugees and host communities.

Activities to foster women's emancipation by including them in local educational and work contexts are equally important.

With regard to the part of the Plan on the international regulatory context, it should be noted that the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) updated its "Code of Ethics and Conduct" following the adoption of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance of 12 July 2019. AICS' new Code of Ethics and Conduct – supplementing the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 62/2013 – was adopted by way of AICS Director Determination No. 311 of 17.12.2020, and published on the Agency's website on 22.12.2020.

An integral part of AICS' new Code of Ethics and Conduct is the Code of Conduct for preventing and combating harassment, abuse and sexual exploitation to protect the dignity of the beneficiaries of development cooperation interventions and persons working and operating in AICS facilities and with the Agency itself (Code PSEAH - Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment). The Code is addressed to individuals working and operating at the facilities of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and with the Agency itself. Indeed, the Code must be upheld by all AICS staff (both managerial and non-managerial), as well as its collaborators or consultants, with any type of contract or assignment, serving in any capacity at the national headquarters (Rome and Florence) and offices abroad, collaborators in any capacity of the Civil Society Organisations and non-profit entities (Article 26, Law 125/2014) and companies supplying goods or services or carrying out work for AICS, as well as all public and private entities (Article 23, Law 125/2014) that participate in development cooperation activities benefiting from government subsidies.

The Code sets out rules, recommendations and practical guidance to prevent all forms of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, retaliation, persecution, violence, abuse or exploitation or any other conduct of a sexual nature which is contrary to the legislation applicable to the individual case and/or contrary to the principles of the Code and, where these occur, to counteract them and prevent recurrence.

The new Code of Ethics and PSEAH Code have also been translated and published on the AICS Transparency Portal in the other vehicular languages (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic) to help promulgate the principles contained therein with partners and local communities.

Moreover, on 15 December 2020, AICS established the “Central Guarantee Committee [Comitato Unico di Garanzia – CUG] for the promotion of equal opportunities, workers’ welfare and non-discrimination”, which is also responsible for preventing and combating the phenomenon.

## 5.1 International commitments

In this regard, the Priority is to step up Italy’s commitment to combating male violence against women in an international context. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation undertakes to enact the following Measures:

- to promote women’s rights at international level, including the fight against all forms of discrimination and violence towards them, working in the relevant multilateral fora (Human Rights Council and Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, European Union, Council of Europe, etc.), in bilateral relations with other countries, as well as through development cooperation programmes;
- for Development Cooperation to promote development and humanitarian aid programmes for gender equality, female empowerment, full female participation in development processes and for the fight against all forms of violence, harassment, abuse and sexual exploitation against women and girls, with particular regard to harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and early/forced marriages;
- to support cooperation programmes against violence on women in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Iraq, Kenya, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Senegal and Sudan, plus voluntary Italian contributions to UNFPA and UN Women and the UNFPA/UNICEF programmes against female genital mutilation and early/forced marriages;
- to take into account the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) with the aim of supporting humanitarian actors and communities affected by emergencies, by coordinating, planning, implementing and monitoring essential actions to prevent and mitigate the risk of gender-based violence in all sectors of the humanitarian response;
- for Italian Development Cooperation to ensure a cross-cutting approach (through gender mainstreaming) to gender equality and equal opportunities policies in all initiatives, including those not specifically tied to this sector, in line with the provisions of the 2030 Agenda.

## 5.2 National commitments

The Plan’s Priorities in terms of International Cooperation are to be implemented at national level through:

- the implementation of the Guidelines on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, Girls and Children (2020-2024);
- the contribution from Italian Development Cooperation to emergency initiatives in line with Italy’s commitments in this area.