

National Report- Greece

WP_D2.2_KMOP_Greece



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1. Introduction

The present document corresponds to the national report on Greece part of Deliverable D2.2 'National and summary reports' of the project Prevent And combaT domesTic violEnce against Roma women with the acronym PATTERN and project number 881731 that started on June 1st 2020, for a duration of 24 months.

PATTERN addresses the call priority 'REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2019 – Call for proposal to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people and women'. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the prevention and combating of domestic violence against Roma women in Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain, and Romania.

In order to reach its overall objective, the project has set the following more specific objectives:

- Increasing access to knowledge/data on the phenomenon of domestic violence against Roma women.
- Developing Domestic Violence Protocols for Roma Women that enable professionals to respond to domestic violence comprehensively.
- Enhancing the capacities of at least 350 Roma intercultural mediators and professionals in community centres/other local community services on domestic violence against Roma women.
- Enhancing the capacities of at least 100-150 Roma women on how to recognize and report domestic violence and act as leaders of change in their communities.
- Raising awareness in Roma communities to building healthy & egalitarian relationships.

This deliverable D2.2 forms part of PATTERN WP2 "Research on domestic violence in Roma communities with the involvement of Roma women" which has the objective of increasing access to knowledge/data on the phenomenon of domestic violence against Roma women.

This report has the following structure: in section 2, the national framework (in brief) on domestic violence in the Roma communities is set; in section 3, the methodology adopted in the fieldwork is detailed; section 4 is devoted to the characterisation of the participants in the interviews; section 5 presents the main findings of the interviews; finally, section 6 summarises the key conclusions of the research on domestic violence against Roma women in Greece.

2. National framework (in brief) on domestic violence in the Roma communities

Roma constitutes the largest minority group in Europe, which is subject to multiple forms of social exclusion – in the areas of housing, employment, health and education. The greatest concentrations of the settled Roma population are to be found in the major conurbations and in rural regions, where there are most opportunities for employment. According to a study (Poulou & Lykovardy, 2009) based on a questionnaire sent to local councils in 2008, designed to map the main sites where Roma were living, the total Roma population residing in distinct and identifiable locations amount to approximately 12,000 permanently settled families, or 50,000 individuals. The major concentrations of Roma (over 1,000 families) are to be found in four (4) regions (Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, Thessaly, Western Greece and Central Macedonia). (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011).

Despite the Government's efforts to improve access to supportive services related to domestic violence for Roma women and girls through the National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion 2012-2020 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011), there are still high levels of discrimination, exclusion and negative views based on stereotypes. Roma women face serious barriers to accessing basic social services such as housing, employment, education and health care, including cases of educational barriers and poor living conditions (The Greek Ombudsman for Gypsies/Roma, 2020). Roma women have very limited access to labour market opportunities and employment due to early marriage and school dropouts (Asimopoulos, 2020). The above along with the stereotypical system in their communities have led women into a vicious cycle.

In conclusion, the above specifics seem to be vital in reinforcing violence among Roma communities. As there is no data available related to domestic violence against Roma women in Greece, most of the data available come from unofficial resources such as fieldwork and discussions with professionals in the field (social workers, psychologists, mediators, teachers etc.). However, this is not recorded information or official statistical data. As for the possibility of seeking help, abused Roma women find it difficult to ask for support, commit to the counselling and rehabilitation process, thus persisting in the abusive relationship (WCK, SURT, NAIA Association, 2016).

2.1 Law and policy

The Greek legislation for violence against women, as described below, provides for all women equally, regardless their legal, ethnic or social status. The law, however, recognizes the vulnerability

of some women as being in a greater risk of being victims of violence. These vulnerabilities are living conditions, limited access to health and social services and formal education. According to the above, Roma women are considered to be more vulnerable cases of victims of violence.¹

Law 4604/2019 on "Promoting substantial gender equality, prevention and combating gender-based violence"

Law 4604/2019 (Government Gazette A '50 / 26.03.2019) provides for the first time an independent institutional framework for gender equality and elimination of discrimination against women, which is governed by a comprehensive view of gender relationships and without treating women as a "special category". Regarding violence against women, the law provides that:

- General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) is responsible for coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the *Istanbul Convention (Article 3)*.
- The Municipal Equality Committees cooperate with the structures of the Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) Network for the prevention and fight against women violence, as well as with civil society actors (*article 6*).
- The Regional Gender Equality Committees cooperate with the structures of the Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) Network for the prevention and fight against women violence, in their region, as well as with civil society actors (*article 7*).
- General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) rewards public and private sector companies that are distinguished for implementing policies to promote their business

¹Law 4019/2011 (Government Gazette 216A)

- a) "Vulnerable Population Groups" generally means the social groups of the population whose participation in social and economic life is difficult, either due to social and economic problems or physical or mental disorders, or due to unforeseen events which affect the proper functioning of the population. of the local or wider regional economy.
- b) Vulnerable Population Groups are divided into two categories:
 - i) In Vulnerable Population Groups and ii) In Special Population Groups
- c) "Vulnerable Population Groups" means those groups of the population whose integration into social and economic life is hindered by physical and mental causes. These include people, especially those with disabilities, mental health problems or mental retardation, and people addicted or addicted to drugs,
- (d) "Special Population Groups" means those groups of the population which are at a disadvantage as regards their smooth integration into the labour market for economic, social and cultural reasons. These include in particular the unemployed young people, the unemployed over the age of 50, the unemployed women, the heads of single-parent families, the illiterate, the long-term unemployed, the inhabitants of remote mountainous and island areas, the former or current prisoner, juvenile offenders, people with linguistic or cultural peculiarities and immigrants.

products or services in a way that assists in preventing gender-based violence and discourages violence against women and sexism by awarding an "Equality trademark" (*Article 21*).

- *Articles 25 to 30* contain the operation system of the Network of Structures for the prevention and confrontation of violence and multiple discrimination against women.

Law 4531/2018 I) Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women of Domestic Violence and adaptation of Greek legislation. With *Law 4531/2018* (Government Gazette AD62 / 5-4-2018) the Greek parliament ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (*Istanbul Convention*), the ratification of which brought amendments to *Law 3500/2006* to address domestic violence, the Penal Code and other provisions. The regulations introduced for the implementation of the provisions of the *Istanbul Convention* include:

- The strengthening of the criminal legislation for the confrontation of crimes committed against women (*genital mutilation article 315B of the Penal Code, harassment of par. 1 of article 333 of the Penal Code*)

- The highly anachronistic provision of *article 339 par. 3 of the Civil Code*, that provided for the inadmissibility of criminal prosecution in case of marriage between the perpetrator and the aggravated minor, is abolished.

- *Law 3500/2006* on domestic violence is amended, aiming to its wider and more effective application.

- *Law 3811/2009* on the Hellenic Compensation Authority is amended, aiming to easier access of the victims to the compensation provided by this law.

- *Law 2168/1993* on weapons is amended, so that licenses are not granted to those who are prosecuted or have been convicted of crimes of domestic violence.

- Foreigners who are victims of domestic violence are protected from deportation and have the right to report violence at the authorities.

- The General Secretariat for Gender Equality is designated as the monitoring authority of the Convention

Law 3500/2006 "On the treatment of domestic violence and other provisions". With the ratification of the Convention of Constantinople with *Law 4531/2018*, amendments were made to *Law 3500/2006* which are the following:

- In case a of par. 2 of article 1 of Law 3500/2006, after the word "spouses" the phrase "or persons related to a cohabitation agreement" is added.

- The case c of par. 2 of article 1 of Law 3500/2006 is replaced as follows:

"c. the provisions of this law shall apply to both the permanent partners and the children, both or one of them, to the former spouses, to the parties to the dissolved cohabitation agreement, as well as to the former permanent partners".

- In case b of par. 2 of article 11 of Law 3500/2006, the last paragraph is added as follows: *"In case of non-completion of the monitoring of the program, paragraph 3 of article 13 applies".*

- Article 16 of Law 3500/2006 is replaced as follows:

"If the acts of Articles 6, 7 and 9 hereof are against a minor, the commencement of the limitation period shall be suspended until the victim reaches the age of 18 and for one year later, in the case of a misdemeanour, and for three years thereafter, in the case of a felony."

- Par. 1 of article 18 of Law 3500/2006 is replaced as follows:

"1. In the event of a crime of domestic violence, it is possible, if in these circumstances it is deemed necessary to protect the physical and mental health of the victim, to be imposed on the accused, and for as long as necessary, restrictive conditions, such as his removal from the family home, his relocation, the prohibition to approach the victim's place of residence and work, the homes of his close relatives, the schools of the children and other safe shelters. "Anyone who violates the restrictive condition imposed on him is punished with imprisonment."

- Par. 2 of article 18 of Law 3500/2006 is replaced as follows:

"2. The restrictive condition imposed in accordance with the provisions of the preceding paragraph may be revoked, replaced or amended by the competent court which imposed it, at the request of the person to whom it was imposed or of the victim, stating the reasons for which the revocation, replacement or modification of it, if the reasons for imposition disappear or a reason to replace of the term. The court decides after hearing the victim and the one to whom the final condition was imposed" (General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2020).

In conclusion, Greece has harmonised also with the European legislation related to domestic violence against women and has been trying to apply all the necessary measures to ensure protection for all women.

2.2 Statistics and research results

The existing research on Greek Roma women mostly focuses on Roma's difficulties in accessing health care services due to social discrimination, bad living conditions and also focuses on school dropout rates due to early marriage. It is remarkable, however, that research on domestic violence specifically among Greek Roma women, does not exist.

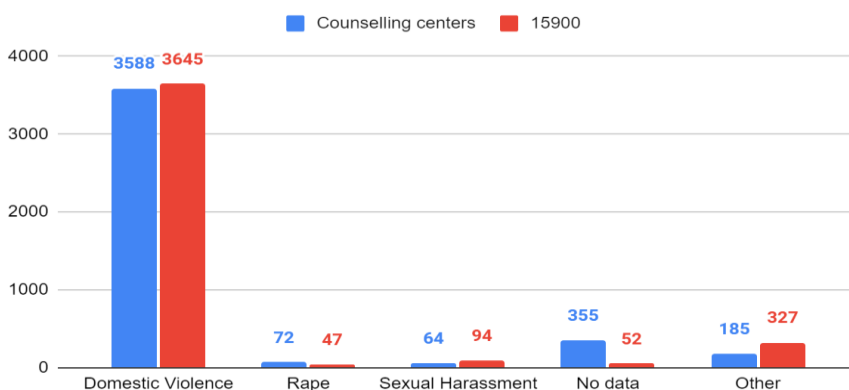
According to the published data (2020a) at the web page of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality the vast majority of women asked for support at the Counselling Centres, 20.289 (81 %) are Greek, 406 (3 %) are refugees, 131 (1 %) are disabled and 161 (1 %) are Roma, during 2012-2018. For the same period, from the total number of women hosted in the safe shelters, it appears that 767 (51 %) are Greek, 224 (14 %) are refugees, 13 (1 %) are disabled and 40 (2 %) are Roma.

The General Secretary of Equity published the *1st Annual Report against violence in November 2020* (General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2020) for the period 1st November 2019 till 31st of October 2020, in which there is no data available related to domestic violence against Roma women in Greece but for women in general. This could be either because Roma women do not seek support or because they do not mention themselves as Roma. The most possible scenario according to our research findings is that they do not seek support from the specific services, either because they do not trust to disclose or because they are not ready to leave their family and the broader Roma community.

According to the report (chart 1), from all recorded forms of violence in the Counselling Centres throughout Greece, the most prevalent form, for the reporting period, is domestic violence (84 %).

Counselling centers and 15900

Chart 1



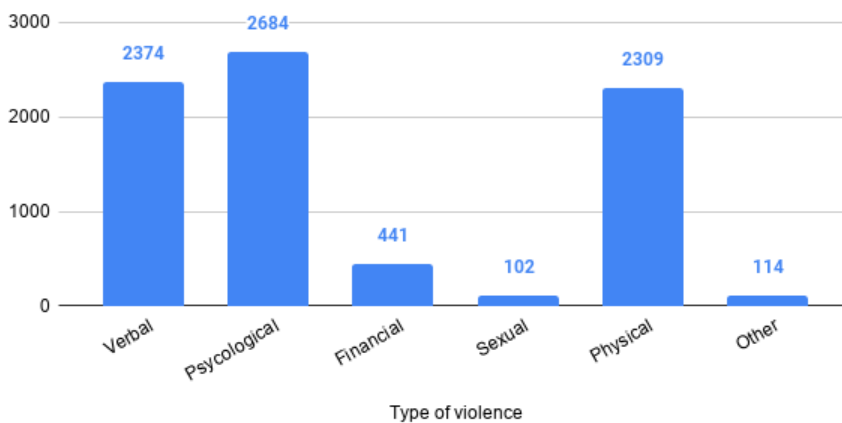
Following with lower rates are sexual harassment and rape 2 %, "Other" 4 %, while 8 % did not revealed these facts. During the same period, domestic violence accounted for the largest rate of 88 % of all

forms of gender-based violence recorded on the **SOS Hotline 15900**. In addition, 2 % of the beneficiaries reported sexual harassment, 1 % reported rape, 8 % of the total reported "Other" violence, and 1 % did not disclose this info. (General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2020).

More specifically, the main forms of domestic violence (Chart 2) during the reporting period were approximately 33.5 % psychological violence, 29.6 % verbal violence and 28.8 % physical violence

National line 15900

Chart 2

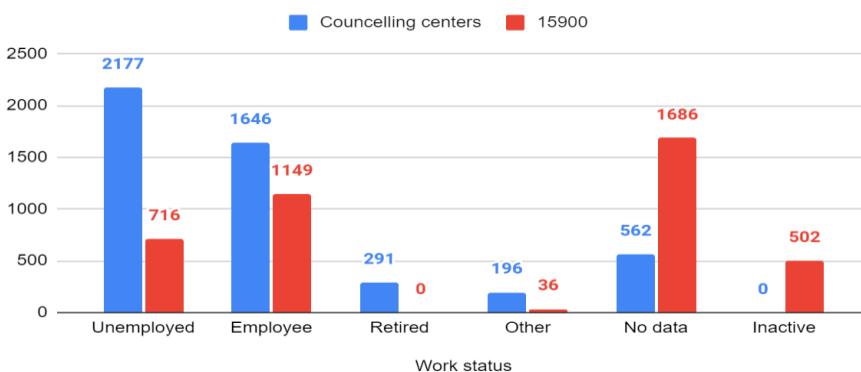


incidents. It is followed by economic violence against women with 5.4 %, sexual violence with 1.3 % and "Other" form of violence with 1.4 % of the total. Regarding children, of the beneficiaries who reported an incident of domestic violence, 62 % stated that they have children, 17 % that they do not have children while 20 % did not disclose these data. In

addition, pregnant women represent 1% of the beneficiaries who called the SOS Line 15900 and reported an incident of domestic violence (General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2020).

Counselling centers and 15900

Chart 3



Regarding the employment status (chart 3) of the recorded cases for the reporting period in the Counselling Centres across the country, 45 % seem to be unemployed, 34 % employed, 6 % retired, 4 % said "Other", while 12 % did not provide this information.

Regarding the employment status of the beneficiary women who called the SOS Line 15900 during the reporting period most of them are employed (28 %), while 18 % seem to be unemployed and 12 % inactive. An additional high percentage (41 %) did not disclose these figures while 1 % of the total answered "Other". It is worth noting that 19 % of unemployed women beneficiaries appear to be long-term unemployed, while 89 % of unemployed women said it was relatively temporary (General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2020).

2.3 Specifics of domestic violence in the Roma communities

Roma communities are characterised by a range of different languages, customs and means of ethnic self-identification. However, wherever they reside, Roma populations are more exposed to social exclusion processes than the general population. These social exclusion processes negatively influence access to resources, social opportunities and the exercise of basic rights, resulting in poorer outcomes in terms of health and well-being.

“In Roma families, women and men’s roles are strictly defined by patriarchal norms. The expectations related to being a woman and being Roma are intimately linked to one’s position in the family. The importance of marriage in addition to the fact that Roma women bear children at a young age (child mothers) can contrast with life aspirations in terms of education, the labour market and economic independence. Furthermore, the real possibilities of breaking with one’s traditional position can be impaired by the fact that the Roma population does not, in general, participate fully in the society” (Carmen Vives-Cases, 2017).

Briefly, the above form some of the most characteristic features of Roma communities. Both from unofficial data (as described above) and from our research findings, it can be derived that some characteristics of Roma communities can constitute factors that can lead to and reinforce domestic violence. These characteristics are analysed in depth below.

- **Education:** Education of Roma women is not a priority for Roma communities and is often disrupted by responsibilities towards caring for their family. The non-participation in school life deprives women from being aware of their rights and women's role in modern society as well as from developing critical thinking. This results in women remaining attached to old and outdated perceptions of their community about women's role in society, where that role is limited only to household care and is acceptable for males to behave violently against women in order to confront them.
- **Employability:** The vast majority of Roma women are unemployed and their main responsibility is to look after their children and keep their household. Family commitments

and lack of education can limit women's access to work and thus restrict financial independence. Financial instability has as a consequence that Roma women are more tolerant to domestic violence because they cannot survive alone.

- **Gender roles:** Roma women are subjected to patriarchal gender discrimination within their communities. This means that Roma women may not be allowed to express their opinion and choose according to their desires, in matters that affect their lives and their future. It is important to note that patriarchy operates very differently depending on the community. Gender role stereotypes have proven to play an important role in domestic violence against women (Artinopoulou & Farsedakis, 2003).
- **Living Conditions:** Roma often live in overcrowded, substandard and segregated housing conditions, with lack of access to basic services, including specialised services for preventing or combating domestic violence. The fact that most Roma women live in camps or Roma neighbourhoods isolates them from supportive services related to domestic violence issues.
- **Cultural blaming:** Violence against women is often portrayed as being part of 'a Roma culture'. This is in sharp contrast with violence against women within the majority populations, which is not similarly culturalized² (Pavee Point Traveler & Rom Centre, 2015, p.17). The fact that Roma women are faced with discrimination from the dominant population but also from the authorities, has as a result Roma woman hesitating to ask for support and disclose domestic violence. Domestic violence cases continue silently without being recorded.
- **Early marriage:** "Debates about early marriage are often surrounded by assumptions about arranged, forced marriages as a cultural tradition of Roma communities. Actually, early family creation is a patriarchal rather than 'a Roma tradition'. In paternalistic communities and societies family is the source of economic production, wealth, security and social status, making it important to marry and have children at a young age" (Pavee Point Traveler & Rom Centre, 2015, p.19). In fact, early marriages occur in some of the Roma communities in Greece, and are connected with beliefs that women must be virgin and get married only once during their life. In order to avoid pre wedding sexual intercourse, they prefer to identify the ideal spouse for their girls and force them to get married from an early age. This tactic is acceptable between Roma communities. When early marriage occurs, it has wider human rights consequences by exposing girls to the risk of domestic and sexual violence, increased school drop-out, future unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. In Greece early marriages are still the case; however, there is no available data because early marriages are not officially registered and reported. On the other hand, as shown by our field research,

² To cause, to adapt to, or become a part of a particular cultural environment; to subject to culturalization.

it is very positive that older people condemn early marriages and the new generation seems to be freer to decide who and when they will get married.

All the above specifics are considered to be connected with incidents of all types of domestic violence against Roma women and girls. The control over every aspect of a Roma woman's life (i.e., right of seeking work, attending school, having a cell phone or social media, going out etc.) further increases their isolation and dependency on the husband or further more on their community.

3. Methodology

It is of significant importance to mention that due to the excellent collaboration with members of the board of the Association of Greek Roma Mediators and especially with the valuable contribution of the President Mr. Konstantinos Paiteris, we successfully achieved the goal of 40 in-depth interviews with Roma women, living in different areas around Greece, in a very challenging period due to COVID-19, movement restrictions and at the same time insuring the needed social distance.

According to the agreed research protocol, we had to undertake at least 40 face-to-face interviews with Roma women. The first plan was to meet Roma women either at their place of residence or collaborate with the Municipality centres for Roma and conduct the interviews there, all in the region of Attica, so it would be possible for the researcher to conduct the interviews face-to-face. We started by having several meetings with the Association of Greek Roma Mediators to discuss the challenges and design together the field research. In order to obtain data from Roma women from different educational, social and financial backgrounds but also from different regions in Attica, we agreed on the areas which were safe and feasible to visit and also which of the mediators could provide support during the interviews. We agreed to visit women living in camps, in settlements where both mixed (i.e., non-Roma and Roma) population co-exists and in settlements where only Roma people live in order to be able to compare if the type of the settlement is a risk factor in domestic violence.

We managed to facilitate 28 face-to-face in-depth interviews but due to the second COVID-19 lockdown on November 7, 2020, and the movement restrictions that followed, we had to adapt our plan and explore alternatives. We agreed to conduct the rest of the interviews through communication applications such as Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and Viber in order to achieve some degree of human proximity. Unfortunately, when we contacted the Roma women, introduced to us by the Association of Greek Roma mediators, that could potentially take part in our research we came to the realization that these women either did not have access to the internet or did not have the necessary skills to use these applications. That led us to use the only viable alternative which was the phone. We managed to make only one interview through Zoom and 11 interviews via phone. This change enabled us to reach Roma women around Greece thus diversifying our dataset.

All the participants gave their consent either by signing the consent form or orally through audio record. All the interviews were in Greek, with the only exception of three women who asked for interpretation support during the interviews for specific words or meanings. The mediator was also a woman. For the needs of this report all the statements were translated in English.

The main challenge faced by the researcher in the camps was to be accepted and trusted by the community, in order to discuss such a sensitive topic. There were people that expressed from the beginning their concern about the results of the research and if Roma people will be presented as violent. This was resolved by having with us members and the president of the association of Greek Roma mediators who were explaining the importance of the research but also showing their trust to our work and their confidence that this project's goal is to identify and speak mostly for the necessary interventions to prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the researchers' work, previous to every visit, the mediators would contact the focal persons in the camps to inform them about the visit but also ask them to inform women about the research and make time arrangements. The researcher was always accompanied by the Mediators, in order to facilitate better communication.

Finding a safe place where the interviews could take place and keep a certain degree of confidentiality also posed a challenge. In the camps, it was difficult to identify such places because women preferred to have a group discussion or they had their children around. Two women voluntarily accepted the interviews to be done in their places, despite some interventions from children looking for their mother and people asking what is about this discussion we managed to have in-depth interviews with Roma women, respecting their way of living and their desires. Other factors that posed challenges were the social distancing and protective measures (i.e., face masks) taken due to COVID-19. Also, accessing some camps that are settled in the suburban area of Attica presented an issue.

The main challenge through phone calls was the creation of a trustful environment. The fact that the president of the Association of Greek Roma mediators had previously informed them about the research was the key element in order to trust the person behind the phone. The first 5-minutes of the phone interviews were assigned in getting to know each other, describe the project, explain what had already been done and what were the next steps, thank them for their participation highlight the importance of their contribution, but also give them the opportunity to ask questions. What was surprising was the fact that some women even felt comfortable enough to add stories and views beyond the researcher's questions.

However, some difficulties were also faced in contacting the interviews via phone. Again, finding a safe place for women to open up and share their experiences while keeping their confidentiality was challenging. At the beginning all women were asked if they had a room where they could talk with privacy. Finally, all the participants managed to find a separate room in the house and proceed with the interviews. Another important challenge concerning phone interviews was that non-verbal communication could not be recorded.

At the same time with the interviews, transcriptions from audio to written form were made. It is worth mentioning that only 2 women did not accept to audio record their interview. Transcripts of the statements and simple coding to analyse the data was used. Word-for-word evidence from the Roma women, to the extent possible, was ensured. All answers from the interviews were matched with answers with the relevant question, commonalities were identified, and any other unique information was taken into account. For the reporting of each thematic section (given by the research protocol) -apart from the statements- all main information was gathered and conclusions were provided. For the needs of this report all quotes were translated from Greek to English.

4. Characterisation of the participants in the interviews

Concerning the demographic characteristics of Roma women, relevant data that have been gathered are about “area of residence, age, education, marital status, number of children they have, age of marriage, if their husband is Roma or not, if they were married due to a matchmaking or because of love, with whom they cohabit, their occupation if any, whether they live in camps or in house and finally, whether the interview was conducted face to face or via telephone and online platforms.” On the table below the characteristics of the 40, in total, participants are presented in numbers.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants (N=40)

Characteristics		Values, n
Age (years)	20-29	17
	30-39	13
	40-49	8
	50-59	1
	≤ 60	1
Residence area	Attica	27
	Outside Attica	13
Education	Illiterate	14
	Compulsory education	17
	High school	5
	University level	4
Marital status	Married	26
	Engaged	3
	Single	8
	Divorced	2
	Widow	1
Number of children	1-2	15
	3-4	9
	≤ 5	3
Marriage age	13-17	21
	≤ 18	5
Roma husband	Yes	20
	No	3
	Half Roma- Half non-Roma	1
Type of marriage	Matchmaking	6
	Love	12
Person of cohabitation	Nuclear family	18

	Cohabitation with parents/extended family	6
	Couple with no other people	3
Occupation	Employed	18
	Unemployed	18
	Other (student)	4
Settlement type	House	21
	Camp	12
	Camp within residences	6
	Shack without electricity	1
Way interview conducted	Face to face	28
	Telephone	11
	Online platforms	1

5. Findings

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to identify the shared themes across the participants. An inductive form of thematic analysis was used in order to address the exploratory aims of the study. Five themes were identified that address the aim of exploring domestic violence among Roma women (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The five themes about the domestic violence against Roma women

5.1 Roma women's perceptions of domestic violence

In this section a special focus is going to be given on the prescriptions of Roma women against domestic violence. Relevant questions used to find out about their perceptions, briefly, include their opinion on what domestic violence is, what actions they think of as violent, whether they consider that domestic violence is a problem in our country, if they consider women as being responsible for domestic violence, if there are any situations that justify a man to insult or even beat a woman. Also, whether they think that the idea of what domestic violence is and how to solve it, varies from region to region or even among different communities.

To start with, we will explore what Roma women perceive as domestic violence. Most of them acknowledge verbal, physical, psychological, sexual as some types of violence. Let's explore their views:

“Violence upon a woman is not only to beat her. Violence may mean for her that she does not get much attention by her husband. Or that her husband has affairs with other women; this is violence too, a kind of psychological violence” (713_0163, 43 years old)

Another one argues:

“Verbal violence and economic violence exist as well. This is because a woman is not financially independent and she may remain in the house just because of economic reasons. And the most basic is bashing of course. Sexual violence is also a fact, which may happen even after 30 or 40 years of marriage” (713_0160, 45 years old).

Another type of violence recognized in Roma communities is that of forcing a child of 12, 13, 14 years old to get married; more specifically, Roma women name it a crime. However, there are many cases, where the daughters run off with their partner, whom they assume they love, so parents from both sides are forced to marry them and save their family from being discredited. Some of them can see the difference between the past and nowadays. For instance:

“If you asked me 20 years ago, I would say that this is one of the community's constants. As I was growing up and as I had my own opinion, I think that it is a crime to marry a child of 13 years old because it is just a child. When I had my own children, I saw that at 17 or 18 years old, the person has no critical thinking, [...] they don't act consciously” (713_0167, 45 years old).

It is remarkable that although many of them acknowledge the severe problems caused by these marriages still, some follow them, as part of their traditions and customs, in order to maintain their family honour. Below are some examples that demonstrate the current situation.

“There were many cases in which Roma have gone to the police because their child of 12, 13 years old was kidnapped by his partner [...]. The parents then get their daughter back; however, the daughter, because she was in love, ran off with the boy [...]. Then, there are not so many things you can do as it is your daughter's will to leave with the boy [...]. Then as a parent you do not go to any further action” (713_0157, 38 years old).

“Yes, they do (marry), no one intervenes (from the authorities) since the parents agree and the children want to get married, this is not happening by force, so, why should authorities intervene?” (713_0170, 41 years old)

“Yes, this is happening here, it is a form of violence because they are children, to tell them to drop out school, to get married at a very young age and to have children, this is violence. This is happening because they live in miserable camps, they have to stand out and create their own family, everyone acts according to what he is hearing from the other and that is why he continues acting like the others” (713_0173, 29 years old).

“Unfortunately, it is happening here (early marriages), it is the right of the children to refuse but is not taken under consideration. Usually, the authorities are not involved even when they are informed for such cases. We had a 13-year-old who gave birth and the hospital did not call the public prosecutor because they are gypsies, only money they want to receive” (713_0169, 48 years old).

“This is tragic. Tragic. This is a murder of a soul; a premeditated one. Not negligently.” (713_0160, 45 years old)

Maybe these obstacles have directed some Roma women to support that in cases where a child cannot be protected against such violent actions, “the state should take the child away from her/his parents and have the child's custody” (713_0173, 29 years old).

Concerning the percentage of violence suffered by men and women, Roma women acknowledge that is higher in women:

“Don't forget that Greece is a male dominated country, people are sexist so, at least officially, man's presence is dominant. Regardless that the woman rules the roost.” (713_0167, 47 years old).

As it can be easily observed, most of the women are aware of violence and its different types. However, the majority of them think that violence can be divided into serious and non-serious and that each type of violence is different and requires a different approach.

“Big” violence occurs when the husband beats the wife every day; also, “big” violence is assumed to be when the man does not go for work and does not bring money. Verbal violence is the worst kind of violence” (713_0162, 63 years old).

Another characteristic example, where violence is distinguished into serious and non-serious is between Roma and non-Roma women. In these cases, Roma women seem to argue that indeed, violence exists in their communities but it is not so serious and does not cause so much damage compared to violent actions that exist in non-Roma societies. Non-Roma people may cause harm, like murdering women, which does not happen in Roma communities:

“Violence occurs more in non-Roma people. [In Roma communities] there are no cases of drowning one’s wife, of killing her, of hanging her. [...] In Roma, I have not heard of anyone to have killed his wife. (The husband) can beat her but not kill her” (713_0148, 50 years old)

Additionally, many of these Roma women argue that violence exists everywhere, in all over the world and not only in Roma communities. However, some of them also argue that in Roma communities, violence is more common but that there are many blind spots about what violence is. For instance,

“Violence is different. Some people can tolerate it, some cannot. It is common that a woman may destroy her family because of a slap but my view is different. Because you are a housewife with two or three children and because of a slap or a problem that the husband has created, do you destroy your family? Violence is everywhere. In our communities, in Roma, a man can beat a woman. But in non-Roma communities, maybe this kind of assault does not exist but what may exist is sexual harassment. And they don’t speak up.” (713_0163, 43 years old).

The above example demonstrates that many of them acknowledge the existence of violence in their communities but they do not seem to recognize slap or beating a woman as violence at all; rather, they seem to acknowledge non-Roma people as more violent compared to them.

There is also another opinion among women that violence does not exist nowadays, but that it was the case many years ago.

“[...] The phenomenon was intense many years ago. Nowadays, nature has changed; women are doing whatever they want with the men.” (713_0153, 28 years old)

Others also report that women have to respect men because they go to work while women remain in the house taking care of the household and the kids. Also, men have the right to beat women just because they are men and it is natural for a man to hit a woman. This behaviour can be a good

excuse for women to accept their position as inferior just because they do not work and stay in the house.

Another woman argues:

“Yes, Roma women are more tolerant concerning violence. [...]. This is the way they have been taught to behave [...]. However, circumstances have changed but I also believe that it is no big deal if your husband slaps you. Just shut your mouth. This is what I think.” (713_0164, 38 years old).

Other women may focus on the fact that men have the right to slap women: “he can slap me because he is a man [...] Maybe it was my fault because of a mistake in the household, for instance. Respectively, it is a shame for a woman to slap a man.” (713_0154, 23 years old).

For example:

“In our communities, it is bad when a woman curses a man. We assume it as very bad. Women have to respect their husbands. And in case a woman speaks a lot and is being beaten, I will assume that it was right that she was beaten. So as not to speak too much.” (713_0155, 34 years old).

What makes matters worse is when comparing circumstances in camps and other areas of residence, the main issue is that:

“A Roma woman in the camp will accept violence easier although it depends. [...] It is difficult for these women to survive by themselves [...]; they may not have a family to go for a refuge. [...]. I think that a Roma woman living in a camp will accept violence easier.” (713_0163, 43 years old)

And then:

“In areas where Roma don't attend school, violence is easier to occur. Living in camps brings a certain way of life and mentality and maybe (residents there) are more violent.” (713_0164, 38 years old).

Another:

“Concerning people living in camps, given that they have not attended school, they do not know how to handle violent situations, where to address such issues. I assume that we (living in houses, not in camps) can handle such situations differently (meaning, more

efficiently) because we have attended school, we are more integrated compared to a girl who lives in a camp. I think that the difference is huge.” (713_0159, 37 years old).

One can conclude that living in camps means a more isolated life, not at all integrated, away from any kind of contemporary civilization, sometimes without electricity, without school or service provisions, which makes Roma's life more difficult and perpetuate their difficult living circumstances.

Concerning the question if they consider women as being responsible for domestic violence and whether there are any situations that justify that a man can insult or even beat a woman, there is a lot of fruitful data. The vast majority believes that in most cases, it is the woman's fault if she is treated violently. According to many of them, a big mistake that a woman can do is to have a sexual affair with another man. Also, to be neglectful with the household and the children. These are the basic reasons which cause men to be violent against them. Some examples can be demonstrated below:

“... (what can women do and cause violence against themselves) when a woman has not cooked for the husband and the kids. Also, when the husband is drunk, then they quarrel and then they have a fight with each other. The woman may also harm him a little; this is violence too but it is mostly the man who is violent against a woman, in case the woman has not cooked or because she did not take care of her children [...] I think that housekeeping should be shared between women and men.” (713_0157, 38 years old)

Along the same lines, another woman reports:

“Sometimes violence comes when the woman provokes it. [...] For instance, [woman provokes violence] when she sleeps with another man, when she beats the child, when she is not consistent with her responsibilities [...] concerning her behaviour. When a woman does not take care of her household and is just interested in going out for coffee, this is a bad thing for a man.” (713_0165, 47 years old)

What many of them report is that:

“Man beats the woman; he abandons her and the children and then the woman cannot cope with daily issues because she does not work. She is occupied with the household. The man is the person who is the breadwinner. So afterwards, the woman wises up and does not contradict the man any more [...] If the woman had had a job, she could also answer to the man.” (713_0147, 29 years old).

It may seem obvious that the idea behind the belief that most of the times it is women's fault when they are victims of violence, is a matter of tradition, inherited and transmitted intergenerationally and among families and relatives.

“All behave the same way. Their father, their uncles, their cousins. A woman may be beaten even because she did not wake up in the morning to offer coffee to her husband” (713_0158, 41 years old).

On the other hand, this inherited tradition embedded in their culture seems to provoke women to attract men to be violent towards them.

“I know that such women do exist. I have seen them. I have seen a woman to do her best to attract violence from her husband, this was her purpose. I have seen this in front of my eyes and I was astonished. And the man was saying to her “I know that you want me to beat you but I won't do it”. I have seen it.” (713_0174, 31 years old)

The results demonstrate some contradictory approaches among women concerning whether it is women's fault when they are victims of violence. Some women claim that they cannot excuse a man to beat a woman for any reason while others justify men's violent behaviours against them. Specifically, cases of women cheating on men and being neglectful of household and children, are the basic reasons for them to be violent against women.

5.2 The range of domestic violence commonly occurring in Roma families

The purpose of this section is to report whether cases and situations of domestic violence against Roma women exist in their communities, how such incidents were resolved, if they can offer any examples of cases of violence against women and what are the main difficulties that a Roma woman who is a victim of violence may face.

Some of them report violence from other relatives, except husband as well:

“I was beaten by my brother-in-law; I was kicked back hard because I didn't offer him coffee. I preferred to offer coffee to a neighbour who was older and I didn't offer to my brother-in-law who was 20 years old... A mother-in-law told lies to her sons that her daughters-in-law were not attentive to her upon her visit to their houses. This resulted in violent actions from her sons towards their wives. One of the sons then pulled out his wife's teeth and the other son broke her pelvis. However, these girls remained with their husbands.” (713_0148, 50 years old)

Another (713_0158, 41 years old) reports that her sister was sent to the hospital because of physical violence against her by her husband. “We had visited a coroner but we were not assisted from nowhere. Situation was the same, again and again. Do you know how a woman can be free from that? When her husband sleeps with another woman and decides to be with her”.

Some report that a change in the mentality as women know their rights:

“However, many men do not beat their women nowadays because they know that women have the same rights with men and the police will intervene. [There was a case where] the woman had been beaten by the man; they broke up. The woman with her mother denounced the case to the police, they went to the court and finally, before the court, the woman returned back to her husband.” (713_0162, 63 years old).

Some claim that violent actions happen in other camps, not in their resident camp (713_0153, 28 years old). Some of them think that in Roma communities, violence against women is more common (713_0156, 25 years old) and this is very common to happen when women have affair with other men and a few others (713_0157, 38 years old) think that in Greek women, violence is more common rather than in Roma ones.

A few women do not perceive verbal violence as violence but as an advice:

“If a man is shouting because the woman did something wrong with the household, this is not violence. It is a kind of right advice for her.” (713_0156, 25 years old)

Cases of violence that are reported include the kidnapping of young girls of 12, 13, 14 years old so as to get married at a very young age. This happens against the children’s will in most of the cases and afterwards the families from both sides agree to marry the young couple. As 713_0157 reports, a couple of 15 – 16 years old is getting married, and then they quarrel and then violence starts to take place. According to her these couples break up because the woman will sleep with another man. She also speaks about her sister who was a victim of violence by her mother-in-law and that now that she herself has become a mother-in-law, is violent against her own daughters-in-law.

The great majority of the participants acknowledge that cases of violence exist in Roma women. A woman reports that her father had been violent against her mother because everyone in his family

had the same behaviour: his father, his uncle, his cousins... and the cycle of violence continues. The vast majority also identify the great difficulties that a Roma woman victim of violence has to face.

The most common difficulties are the economic dependence from the husband so the woman cannot actually abandon him and live a better life. Circumstances become much more difficult when each woman has 3, 4 or 5 children and does not have a job to support herself.

Some of them claim that it is not always the case that social services or the police will help them. It is very common that Roma women have to face racism and discrimination when they denounce a violent action against them to the police. In many cases, the police officers are biased against them because they are Roma and thus violence is common among them. It is true that in many cases Roma women are ignored by the police due to the fact that many of them will eventually reconcile with their husbands.

“I had gone to the police with my sister because my sister was beaten from her husband and we denounced [the violent action], they asked us to describe all the process and they told us, well, we know you (the Roma people), you came now to the police and after one hour, you will conciliate with your husband again” (713_0157, 38 years old).

It is also very common that women are afraid of denouncing violent cases to the police; they are afraid that they will be facing violence again in the future and they also feel embarrassed to reveal their personal issues to a foreign person. Another important difficulty that they have to face is that these women have not attended school and therefore do not know how to support themselves. They are just tolerant to violence and hope that it will not happen again.

In case a woman is facing violence, it is very common that she will go to live with her parents for some days; afterwards, families from both sides will discuss what happened within the couple. However, such situations will be happening again and again, it is a vicious circle as the wife usually returns to her husband and it is very common that she will also be a violent mother-in-law in the future as many of the participants claim (for instance 713_0157, 38 years old).

There are, however, some cases where a woman can improve her life after breaking up with her husband but still, this is just an exception. For instance:

“[When a man abandons the woman], her situation is awful. However, she can improve her life if she desires to do so. She can get married again after one or two years. But she will be ugly because she may have 3 children, she has not a job, she does not receive

any child support from her husband like Greek people do. Roma women survive very difficult, at all levels. Imagine that a child at 14, 15 has her own child. And the young girl undertakes all the responsibilities of the household and has no support from anywhere. Her mother says, this is how men are. So, mind your business” (713_0158, 41 years old).

What is also very important in women’s decision to report a violent case or not, either to leave their home or not, is fear. They are afraid. *“I have seen many times the dread in their eyes and when the man beats you, he manipulates you so you are scared to go for any action.”* (713_0172, 40 years old). There are many cases of women who report fear as the basic factor which discourages them from reporting the violence incident. They are afraid of further violent actions in case they report anything to the police or to the social services.

To conclude, Roma women acknowledge the existence of violent actions against them in their communities. However, most of the times incidents of domestic violence are resolved or continue within their families, and not reported to the police or to social services. What is also the case, is that Roma women in fear of retaliation do not report any violent action against them. Another contributing factor for them not to denounce officially an incident of domestic violence is the fact that they do not have a safe place to go - a refuge after reporting the event. It is possible that they will reside with their parents in the meanwhile but they are still afraid of future violence exercised against them. In cases that violent actions are indeed reported officially, Roma women feel that they will not get the same treatment by the police or the social services due to racism and discrimination against them. In many cases, the police officers are biased against them due to prejudice that violence is common among Roma communities.

5.3 The level of knowledge Roma women possess in regards to domestic violence, their rights, and how to seek help for themselves

This section focuses on the level of knowledge that Roma women possess regarding domestic violence, their rights and how to seek help for themselves. In this section, the participants were asked to discuss their opinion on what they would advise a friend who is a victim of violence and to what extent they think that domestic violence is a violation of women’s rights.

“She has to go to a specialist to advise her. Because I am neither a doctor nor a psychologist” (713_0157, 38 years old).

“I would advise a woman victim of violence to go to her mother but not to the police. Because in case her husband knows that I advised her to go to the police, we will have a fight” (713_0155, 34 years old).

It is remarkable that some of them confess that they have friends who are victims of physical violence but that they cannot intervene in the couple because they are afraid.

“We have such friends (victims of violence) but we cannot intervene. I know that social workers exist, I know that police exist. We know where to address the problem but we don't say anything and do not go to further action because we are afraid. The first is this. If it is revealed that we advised a woman to go to the police, then the two families will fight with each other” (713_0158, 41 years old).

The above quotes are representative of what may happen in Roma communities. Many of them acknowledge the existence of social services and police and they also know that they can report violent incidents against them. However, many of them do not report such incidents or do not advise other women to do so because in case this is revealed, they will again face domestic violence. Of course, a small percentage of women indeed, do report such violent incidents. Many of them are advised by their families or friends to resolve violent cases inside their families. Below there are some relevant examples from both sides:

“(I would advise a woman) To be patient and tolerant, not to destroy her family [...] For me, it is wrong to destroy your family. It depends on the kind of violence” (713_0162, 63 years old).

“A woman should be patient, should discuss the issue with her husband and persuade him that he was wrong (to exercise violence against her). But if a relative of mine tells me that she is beaten, even if she has one or two children, I would say to her to denounce the case and abandon him. She is not compelled to tolerate all that.” (713_0162, 63 years old).

However, what this woman later explained is that usually Roma women do not report incidents of domestic violence except in cases where the incident is really violent. Otherwise, these kinds of incidents are being handled and resolved within the extended family.

“Women have the right not to tolerate violence. I think that many years ago, circumstances were worse. Now, we have social media, Facebook and there are also some social services where you can address the problem” (713_0159, 37 years old)

“I would advise her to abandon her husband and take care of her life and then, to go to a psychologist “(713_0165, 47 years old)

What may also happen in some of the cases is that there are women who do not want to help themselves.

“There are some women who seek help but do not want to be assisted. I have discussed with some of them and it seems that they excuse their circumstances. And then they are persuaded that it is their fault when they are beaten. I usually refer them to the social services so she will be aware how to handle it.” (713_0173, 29 years old).

To conclude, it is clear that the perceptions of what constitutes domestic violence are different among women in Roma communities. Some of the women support that extreme violence is a violation of women’s rights, however a slap may not be considered as violence. Some others recognize all the types of violence and believe that all should be reported to the authorities or at least do not be accepted and leave the perpetrator.

5.4 The experiences of Roma women in accessing or not accessing, support services

One could argue that in many cases of domestic violence, victims may feel alone, isolated and have no access to information or support services. However, nowadays, people seem to be more aware of domestic violence and this can be due to more awareness campaigns on the news, TV and social media. In this section, the potentially positive role that social media, TV, news can play in assisting Roma women in reacting to violence is going to be explored. Furthermore, the knowledge of Roma women in seeking help from social services if necessary and whether they have used any social services as well as their experiences of these services is going to be addressed. What is also explored is the role of the cultural mediators when dealing with cases of domestic violence incidents and their ability to intervene in such situations.

Concerning the role of TV, social media, support services and cultural mediators and whether they have access to them women, responded:

- “I know there are social services, I have heard on TV. Yes, I would suggest it” (713_0157, 38 years old)
- “Yes, there are social services” (713_0163, 43 years old)
- “Yes, there are services but I don’t know. There are some telephone numbers that we have seen on TV” (713_0164, 38 years old)

- “There are social workers but, in our network, we have not experienced violence” (713_0165, 47 years old)
- “I have some telephone numbers that I was offered from the programme” (713_0147, 29 years old)
- “I have no access to internet” (713_0155, 34 years old)

Most of the above quotes demonstrate that Roma women are fully aware of the support services available and the influence that TV, social media and the internet can have.

“Many Roma men do not allow their wives to have Facebook” (713_0154, 23 years old)

“I think that many years ago circumstances were worse because now we have all these media, like Facebook etc. where you can speak. And there are services such as social services where one can address her issues if you want to survive” (713_0159, 37 years old)

“Some women are not allowed to have Facebook etc. because their husbands assume that social media can potentially be a way that they will find another man. But men are allowed to have 100 girlfriends” (713_0159, 37 years old)

From the above statements we conclude that Roma women are not always allowed by their husbands to have mobile phones, access to Facebook and other social media because they believe that Facebook can be a way to flirt with other men. On the other hand, husbands can have access to all kinds of social media.

Concerning their experiences in using social services and the services of the police, it seems that the women interviewed have a lot to say:

“The police discriminate Roma. I had gone with my sister because she was a victim of severe domestic violence and the police just reported the incident. They said they know us, Roma women, and that we will conciliate with our husbands again. They directly told us that we are Roma” (713_0158, 41 years old).

“Social services are not objective; I am sorry to tell that. Because services know Roma’s problems and they assume that Roma couples will conciliate. And this is the truth unfortunately. So, the police will focus more on non-Roma women” (713_0159, 37 years old).

Additionally, Roma women acknowledge the very important role that cultural mediators play in assisting them in their problems, including violence. For instance:

“I was a mediator myself at schools. [...] Some people wish to get assistance and some not. [...]. Some people get assistance. We were taking kids from their house and were bringing them to school.... I think that all programmes for mediators can bring a result. But some people do not want to be assisted. This does not mean that you should burn all the others who want to get assistance. I have such experiences on the job.” (713_0159, 37 years old).

“You assume that there is an attempt with the social services (but this is not the case). [Concerning the tradition to marry children of 13, 14 years old] The State (she means the social services) has to take the child away from me. The State does not exist. [...] But it is not the children’s fault. The problem is because of the parents. The problem is the sexual contact. Parents assume that sexual contact in young people outside marriage means the end of life. But it is not. So, parents have the problem.” (713_0160, 45 years old)

Along the same lines,

“The State (social services) has to take the children away from the family that sends them out to beg.” (713_0161, 23 years old)

She also makes a very good suggestion:

“[The best would be] a combination of the two: social worker, social services and the mediator. Because both a person who knows the community from the inside and a person who knows how the problems are resolved, all this would contribute a lot [...]. So, I think that we should address the children because they are growing up with such mentalities. Parents will not change mentalities. And this is why this is perpetuated.” (713_0161, 23, years old).

Another interviewee suggests a more ambivalent perspective:

“Concerning the mediators, it is a double-edged sword. Roma people will either love mediators or they will hate them. There is no intermediate. You will be a model for those

who support you, and an example of avoidance to those who hate you.” (713_0167, 45 years old)

But in general terms, Roma women support the role of the mediators:

“With the advent of mediators, all children go to school. We gather them in the morning and send them to school. Circumstances have improved.” (713_0148, 50 years old)

“Mediators do help a lot.” (713_0152, 25 years old)

“Yes, we have the mediator who helps us.” (713_0156, 25 years old)

5.5 The skills Roma women may lack in order to claim their rights

Skills that Roma women may lack in order to claim their rights would include literacy, knowledge on how to access the cultural mediators and social services, knowledge on their rights and how to seek help for themselves. Most of the interviewees, if not all, support that school and education is the first and foremost factor that can help Roma communities having a better life. Also, employability and the economic independence that comes along are contributing factors for those women to put a stop on the vicious cycle of domestic violence. For instance:

“It is the school and education. Jobs for women so as to escape from all this situation. The child should attend school. Some educated people should speak about violence to Roma people, to schools. [...] I don't know what could change the mentality of parents. Maybe school? Maybe to be more human? [...] School and social services are important so we could speak [...] But we don't speak, we don't address our problems because we are afraid. [...] Mediators can intervene and advise families [...]. People respect them and especially when they are educated. People will ask for the mediator's advice even for an application they wish to make to the municipality (713_0158, 41 years old).

“School assists a lot. Also, it would be helpful if there were some social services in each municipality which Roma people could visit and receive advice on their issues. [...] It is also fundamental for the women not to think that it is their fault that they are victims of violence. Maybe men, who are manipulative, persuade women that it is their fault. I have seen it a lot” (713_0159, 37 years old).

“It would be useful for women to attend school adjusted to their needs and adopt a new perspective [...]. For men, it is different. I think that they imitate what they have been taught from family [...] Roma are assisted a lot because of the mediators, with social programmes and actions that help Roma people” (713_0159, 37 years old).

“If the mediators are familiar to Roma community, it is likely that they will trust him. [...] School; only school. It is the only thing that can change the mentalities of women. Nothing else. Without school and social education, we are nothing” (713_0160, 45 years old).

“I think that the right nurture would help women to be very strong. [...] And I think we should focus on childhood; it is very important. Parents are already saturated with their own mentalities. It is children who should be shown a different perspective” (713_0160, 45 years old).

“Integration would help against violence but not absolutely. Because people have been nurtured with violence [...] Violence comes from the family. Children are growing up with violence and sometimes s/he will express this. [...] It is not sure that a child will abolish violence when s/he attends school. If s/he has grown up with violence, s/he will exercise it as well” (713_0163, 43 years old).

“It is difficult for parents to attend school. They will not assume it as important. School so as Roma people will become civilized [...] They have their own stereotypes. It is a matter of habit. If the child does not want to go to school in the morning because they don't like it, the mother will not press them.” (713_0166, 23 years old).

“Education starts from home. Whatever you taught the child, it will remain until later age. But parents are not educated to educate their children.” (713_0167, 45 years old).

“Law against violence should exist; it is the basic, this approach can indeed bring significant results.” (713_0162, 63 years old).

To conclude, a summary of the main findings, as depicted from our in-depth interviews with the participants, on each theme is presented on Table 2 that follows.

Table 2. Interview themes and categories

Theme	Categories and subcategories
1. Roma women's perceptions of domestic violence	1.1. What domestic violence is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Verbal 1.1.2. Physical 1.1.3. Psychological 1.1.4. Sexual
	1.2. Violent actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1 Big and small 1.2.2. Serious and non-serious 1.2.3. Violence does not exist 1.2.4. Early marriage
	1.3. Domestic violence as a problem in Greece <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3.1. Worst situation in camps
	1.4. Women being responsible for domestic violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4.1. Women have to respect men 1.4.2. It is the woman's fault if she is beaten or treated violently
	1.5. Situations that justify that a man can insult or even beat a woman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5.1. Men have the right to beat women 1.5.2. A woman having a sexual affair with another man 1.5.3. Neglect household and children 1.5.4. Women have to tolerate violence because they do not work 1.5.5. It is a matter of tradition 1.5.6. No situation
2. The range of domestic violence commonly occurring in Roma families	2.1. Existence of cases of domestic violence against Roma women in Roma communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1. Violence from other relatives, except husband 2.1.2. Domestic violence does not exist nowadays 2.1.3. Violent actions in other camps, not theirs 2.1.4. Violence against women is more common in Roma communities

	<p>2.1.5. Violence against Greek women is more common than violence against Roma women</p> <p>2.2. Ways cases of domestic violence are resolved</p> <p>2.2.1. Discuss within the family</p> <p>2.2.2. If the husband leaves for another woman</p> <p>2.3. Examples of cases of violence against women</p> <p>2.3.1. Young girls kidnapping for marriage</p> <p>2.3.2. The circle of violence (a victim of violence becomes a perpetrator of violence)</p> <p>2.4. Main difficulties Roma women victims of violence face</p> <p>2.4.1. Economic issues</p> <p>2.4.2. Existence of children</p> <p>2.4.3. Lack of help from social services or the police</p> <p>2.4.4. Racism and discrimination</p> <p>2.4.5. Fear and embarrassment</p> <p>2.4.6. Low educational level</p> <p>2.4.7. Lack of access to information</p>
3. The level of knowledge Roma women possess to domestic violence, their rights, and how to seek help for themselves	<p>3.1. Advice to a friend, victim of violence</p> <p>3.1.1. Visit a specialist (doctor or psychologist)</p> <p>3.1.2. None intervention because of fear</p> <p>3.1.3. Not to report the incident</p> <p>3.1.4. Resolve violent cases inside their families</p> <p>3.1.5. Abandon husband</p> <p>3.2. Domestic violence as a violation of women's rights</p> <p>3.2.1. Extreme violence is a violation of women's rights. A slap maybe is not so important.</p> <p>3.3. Knowledge of how to seek help</p> <p>3.3.1. Existence of social services and police</p> <p>3.4. Knowledge of their rights</p> <p>3.4.1. They know that they can report the violent incidents against them</p>
4. The experiences of Roma women in accessing or not accessing, support services	<p>4.1. Role of social media, TV, news in assisting women to react to violence</p> <p>4.1.1. Existence of social workers form TV</p> <p>4.1.2. Women are not allowed to have access to social media</p> <p>4.1.3. No access to internet</p> <p>4.1.4. Usage of social media to speak out</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1.5. Women are not allowed to have mobile phones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2. Knowing where to seek for help if necessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.1. Existence of social services 4.2.2. Telephone numbers offered from a program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.3. Usage of any social services and experience of these services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.3.1. Hesitation to use social services 4.3.2. Social services can't do anything 4.3.3. Discrimination against Roma 4.3.4. Lack of trust to the state and authorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.4. Role of cultural mediators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.4.1. Important role 4.4.2. Cultural mediators should be cooperating with social workers
5. Skills Roma women may lack in order to claim their rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Education 5.2. Access to cultural mediators and social services 5.3. Knowledge on their rights and how to seek help for themselves 5.4. Jobs for women

5.6 Any other significant findings

Traditional gender roles, values, beliefs and attitudes in Roma communities stand in strong support of child and forced marriages. Roma girls are encouraged by parents and extended families to leave school and marry early. Due to social and economic exclusion and high rates of poverty, Roma women who live in Roma settlements have no other choice than to rely on their community and follow restrictive traditional rules and roles. According to our research 30 % of women participating in it got married between the age of 13 – 15 years old and 27 % between 16-17. More than 50 % in our sample got married before turning 18 years old.

Concerning the role of Roma mediators in raising awareness and preventing domestic violence, nowadays, Roma mediators are placed in more than 50 community centres around Greece in different Municipalities where Roma communities and residents are settled, in order to facilitate the communication between Roma population and authorities. Also, Roma mediators are appointed

for education issues in order to avoid school dropout but also mediate between Roma children and non-Roma children whenever necessary. The role and the contribution of Roma mediators had proved very helpful in improving better access to health, social, education, labour services. Roma mediators are key persons to establish the necessary communication environment for both Roma and non-Roma populations to achieve the necessary mutual understanding. Roma mediators' step by step have contributed to make small but of high importance changes on the mindset of Roma people and make a change related to domestic violence. They are the persons that provide all the necessary information to Roma women and they know from first hand why it is difficult for a Roma woman to say no to domestic violence.

During the interviews, women expressed their views about possible best practices on how to avoid or stop domestic violence. The majority believe that access to education is the key element in changing perceptions and fighting for gender equality in Roma communities. Access to school means access to better works and financial independence that makes them equal with men and also is a chance to broaden their social network but also live new experiences and share different thoughts about rights and gender-based roles.

6. Conclusions

The conclusions derive from our analysis of the field research with individual in-depth interviews and observations during the site visits. This analysis takes a holistic approach to domestic violence by focusing on the perceptions of Roma women towards violence, in relation with their living conditions, education level and access to labour market but also, how the existing support services (i.e., health & social services, law enforcement authorities etc.) assist Roma women when needed.

The **type of settlement and education level** seems to be of high importance concerning Roma women perceptions about domestic violence. Women that managed to integrate outside from a camp or a closed Roma community seem to be more autonomous and independent, and they succeeded not only to express their opinion but also to act differently from their community's and family's commands. The profile of those women consists of a higher educational level, financial independence and socialisation with the dominant population. On the other hand, women that live in camps or in closed Roma communities seem to follow the pattern that their family taught them, that girls should get married and have many children at young age, school attendance is not necessary because their main duty is to take care of their new family.

The *type of settlement* is also connected with access to support services but also to chances to create and develop a safeguarding social network of people that they could turn to for support or guidance, a social network consisting of non- Roma people, friends, colleagues, classmates, etc.

The *level of formal education* is also related with views about domestic violence types, level of acceptance or not and gender-based stereotypes. Women with a low educational level expressed their belief that women and men are different. According to them, women are responsible for keeping the balance in the family and when there is tension or an aggressive behaviour from the male side, women should make a step backward in order to avoid tensions and protect themselves from worse scenarios. Women are expected to be calm and give in, they should be respectful to males and try to make them happy. Women with lower educational levels declared that they could justify a man insulting or even beating a woman, if the woman cheated on him.

It also appears that despite various awareness campaigns concerning human rights and **access to services**, the vast majority of domestic violence incidents are not recorded because women do not ask for *support to the relevant authorities*. It seems that the majority of the women we talked with

are aware about those services either through television campaigns or through mediators. The reasons that they do not proceed in reporting are related to the common feelings of the victims of violence such as shame and guilt, the behaviour of the perpetrators such as threats and extortion, financial dependence on the perpetrator, social perceptions such as masculinity patterns, accusation of the victim. Roma women work on resolving their problems with the help of their parents and their parents-in-law who act as mediators. This type of mediation is used to resolve domestic violence issues mainly between families that are settled in Roma communities because Roma women tend to trust their family members much more than the authorities. From our research women also mentioned one more reason that they do not trust authorities and that is racist behaviours towards them.

What was described from many women we talked with, is that Roma communities are *closed communities*. Women have been raised under specific stereotypes for their role as women, limited to family care and with very limited access to the overall society, the chances for a woman to shape her own opinion are slim. For a Roma woman the first obstacle is to understand and recognize what is violence. For many Roma women violence is something acceptable, a typical way of communication between the family members, that usually males are those who are aggressive and women should respond with calmness and understanding.

For a Roma woman it is incredibly difficult to report her husband and ask for support because she already knows that she does not have chances to survive and stand up to her own feet. If she moves to a safe shelter for women victims of violence, it means that she loses contact with her broader family, with her friends and overall community, because it will not be safe to return back. She has to make a very challenging effort to integrate herself outside her community. This is quite hard, because usually Roma women lack the basic education skills and also, they have to fight discrimination and racism from non-Roma community. From the current experience Roma women that made the first step and asked for support finally returned back to their families, because there was no better choice for them. Additionally, returning back to their community and the violent husband, means extra punishment and judgment for her decision to report and assault her husband. This works as a deterrent to other women in the same situation to seek help.

Early marriages are still happening in Greece between Roma communities. For the vast majority of our respondent's early marriages is a crime, which must stop as soon as possible. Throughout this research we attempted to better understand this established common practice and it seems that it is strongly connected with closed community perceptions about gender-based roles and the *fear of losing the cohesion of their community and the current hierarchical system*, that males have an executive role in decision making. Early marriage is the only familiar way to maintain consistency,

either by force or by approving such relations between children. According to the transcriptions it seems that there is progress on this issue, especially for Roma women, outside Roma camps and settlements, with higher educational levels. It is also significant that women that got married at an early age expressed their opposition in early marriages and they advise their children to complete formal education and then think about getting married.

What can be concluded from this research is that **Roma women face multiple vulnerabilities** that put them at risk of experiencing gender-based domestic violence. Factors like living conditions, education level and access to labour market, social network to act as a support system, discrimination based on their class and ethnicity, not only contribute to the occurrence of domestic violence but also lowers the chances for a victim to escape this circle of violence.

Although important steps have been taken at multiple levels, Roma women are still facing domestic violence and it is also the government's responsibility to better understand the Roma communities so as to surpass obstacles in achieving gender equity for Roma women and thus combating gender-based violence.

In order to combat gender inequality and to prevent domestic violence in a comprehensive manner in Roma communities, few **recommendations** rose from the compilation of the present report: It is first necessary to understand the dominant gender norms in Roma communities and to take under consideration the aforementioned restrictions and specific social and cultural characteristics. Furthermore, special attention should be given to encourage communities to send their children to school; and educational programs should be created to empower Roma women, offering them the required skills to enter the labour market. Additionally, awareness-raising campaigns should be launched, to sensitize the majority community on Roma communities' rights and fight racism as well as inform Roma women about their rights and how to access them. Finally, the role of cultural mediators should be strengthened and advertised, to better play the important bridging role between communities.

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