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**Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women of
RM-ESE**

St. Maksim Gorki No. 20-1-4, Skopje

Tel. (02) 3298 295; 3298 296

Fax. (02) 3211 453

www.esem.org.mk

For the publisher:

Jasminka Friscik, Executive Director

Authors:

Marija Galevska

Stojan Misev

Jasminka Friscik

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INSTEAD OF A FOREWORD

Appropriate, timely and comprehensive protection of the victims of domestic violence is essential in overcoming and dealing with the violence suffered. The implementation of this analysis is a continuation of our efforts over the years to establish and develop protection systems for the victims of domestic violence in our country. This time, it is an analysis of sheltering as one of the protection measures for victims of domestic violence.

This analysis is a first attempt to address the situation regarding the sheltering in our country from the viewpoint of the providers - the shelters, and the recipients - the sheltered victims. In the presentation of these considerations, we have not forgotten the victims who have not been provided such protection. Hence, their experiences regarding the unavailability of this type of protection are presented to you through a two-case study.

In that sense, this analysis offers general information regarding the shelters, which may help you get an overall impression of the number of shelters and the time at which they were set up; the number of beds and sheltered victims; their organizational layout, as well as the financial and human resources they have at their disposal. Also, it offers information and conclusions regarding the sheltering approach and procedure, the protection and effects of the protection provided, as well as the improvement possibilities from the perspective of the employees in the shelters and the Inter-Municipal Centers for Social Work (IMCSW), from the sheltered victims' perspective.

The preparation and publication of this analysis is a part of the activities implemented within the project "*Prevention and Elimination of Domestic Violence in Macedonia*". ESE implemented the Project in partnership with Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of RM, and with the financial aid of the Government of the

Republic of Austria, namely the Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Consumer Rights Protection of the Republic of Austria.

In the preparation of this analysis, especially in the part of conducting interviews with the employees in the shelters and the sheltered victims, ESE worked together with its long term partner - the Citizens' Association Akcija Združenska.

The collection of the required information by the Inter-Municipal Centers for Social Work and the security of the victims sheltered in the state shelters and the shelters managed by the civil society organizations would not have been possible without the cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Inter-Municipal Centers for Social Work, the Transit House of the National SOS Line at the Women's Organization of Skopje and the Crisis Center Hope. We would like to express our gratitude to all of them for their cooperation.

Also, we would like to express our gratitude to the victims who were interviewed for the purposes of this analysis, i.e. for the opportunity to see the victims' perspective regarding the type of protection-sheltering they need the most.

Jasminka Friscik, Executive Director
Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women of
RM-ESE

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INTRODUCTION

Sheltering, i.e. necessary accommodation of the victims of domestic violence is one of the protection measures provided for in the Law on Family. To ensure operationalization of this measure, the state founded shelters for women-victims of domestic violence, which provide accommodation for the victims and their children in a situation of serious danger and threat against their health and lives, and in absence of resources in their family environment for their acceptance. It is important to point out that, even in the past, when there was no formal reaction to the problem of domestic violence, this kind of protection, i.e. sheltering of victims was provided by the citizens' organizations.

The aim of this assessment is directly linked to the nature and role of the measure "necessary accommodation" in the domestic violence protection system. And that is providing security and protection of the victim against future violence, i.e. overcoming the consequences of the violence suffered and creating conditions for their integration in the social life. The basic aim of the assessment, i.e. the subject of analysis was the following:

- analysis of the existing facilities as opposed to the demand for sheltering;
- analysis of the working standards in the shelters.

On one hand, we wanted to find the answer to the question whether the existing sheltering facilities in our country are sufficient as opposed to the demand for sheltering, i.e. the number of beds versus the demand for sheltering.

On the other hand, our efforts were directed towards getting a detailed picture regarding the working standards applied in the work of the shelters, regardless whether in the state shelters or those operating within the citizens' associations. Besides the technical conditions, i.e. the

equipment of the shelters and the compliance with the minimum technical standards in accordance with the Rulebook for Establishment and Operation of Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, we were especially interested in the type and quality of services provided for the victims in the shelter during their stay. The latter was of our special interest due to the significance of the expert work with the victims and their children on their integration in the overall social life.

Sources of findings in line with the nature of the analysis were the Centers for Social Work (regarding the sheltering approach and procedure), the employees in the shelters, and the victims of domestic violence, all in regard with the sheltering and the quality of services provided in the shelters. The subject of our analysis was the work of all shelters operating on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia - namely 7 state shelters and three shelters under the informal protection system.

What is especially important to mention is that the results, i.e. the findings of this analysis present a solid ground for improvement of the situation of the shelters in our country. Our hope is that it will serve as the basis for undertaking concrete activities in the direction of improving the existing capacities for sheltering the victims of domestic violence, as well as the quality of the services provided therein.

I. General Information on Shelters

Number of Shelters

10 shelters have been opened and operate in the Republic of Macedonia since its independence to the present day (by and inclusive of 2009).

Sheltering, as a protection measure for the victims of domestic violence has until today been provided in continuity by the citizens' organizations working in the field of domestic violence, through the operation of two shelters for temporary sheltering - 24 to 48 hours (the Transit House of the Women's Organization of the City of Skopje, opened in 2005 and the Crisis Center Hope, opened in 2001) and by the one shelter for long-term sheltering - up to one year (the Shelter Center opened in 2001).

The regulation of this issue in the law created the legal basis for setting up Centers for victims of domestic violence (hereinafter: state shelters).

Thus, in the period between 2004 and today, seven state shelters were opened. The first ones were the shelters in Skopje (2004), Kocani (2004), Strumica (2004) and Bitola (2004), followed by the state shelters opened in Ohrid (2006) and Kumanovo (2006). In 2009, a shelter was opened in Prilep.

Number of places

The total number of places for accommodation in the ten shelters is 93¹.

The breakdown of the number of places in each shelter is as follows: state shelter Skopje-12 places; state shelter Kocani-7 places; state shelter Ohrid-8 places; state shelter Kumanovo -7 places; state shelter Strumica-6 places; state shelter Bitola -8 places; state shelter Prilep -13 places;

¹ According to some of the minimum set European standards for the needed number of beds/ shelter places, one bed/shelter place should be available per 10.000 citizens.

Crisis Center Hope- 5 places; Shelter Center -20 places, and Transit House -7 places.

In accordance with the provisions prescribed in the Rulebook on the Norms and Standards for Establishment and Operation of the Center for Victims of Domestic Violence², each of the analyzed shelters has a lounge for daily activities, a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and at least two bedrooms. Also, none of the shelters, with the exception of the shelter managed by the citizens' organization (Shelter Center), exceeds the planned number of beds/places in one bedroom (four beds/places, i.e. 5m² per user and 3m² for children at pre-school age). The number of five (5) beds/places in one room at the above shelter is probably due to the larger rooms.

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Number of Sheltered Victims

All in all, 330 victims were sheltered in the course of 2008 (last available data) in all shelters (temporary and long-term).

The breakdown of the number of sheltered victims in each shelter is as follows: state center Skopje - 40 people (20 victims and 20 children); state center Kocani - 15 people (6 victims and 9 children); state center Ohrid - 5 people (3 victims and 2 children); state center Kumanovo – no sheltered victims this year; state center Strumica - 4 people (1 victim and 3 children); state center Bitola - 4 people (2 victims and 2 children); Shelter Center - 52 persons (52 victims).

As regards the temporary shelters during 2008, 30 people (28 victims and 2 children) were sheltered in the Crisis Center Hope, and 180 people (victims and children) in the Transit House.

Funding of Shelters

² Official Gazette No. 103/07.

In 2008 (last available data), the annual budgets for the shelters range from the lowest allocated amount of 180,523.00 MKD (the state shelter in Kocani) to the highest allocated amount of 3,075,000.00 MKD.

The individual breakdown of the funds allocated for the operation of the shelters is as follows: 260,000.00 MKD for the state shelter in Bitola; 310,000.00 MKD for the state shelter in Strumica; 1,645,512.00 MKD for the state shelter in Ohrid; 1,683,593.00 MKD for the state shelter in Skopje; the Crisis Center Hope was granted 477,896.00 MKD and the Transit House received 250,000.00 MKD. The breakdown of the funds shows that, in 2008, the state allocated 4,079,628.00 MKD for the operation of the state shelters, while the three shelters managed by the citizens' organizations allocated 3,802,896.00 MKD.

The state shelter in Kumanovo did not submit information on funds allocated for the operation of the shelter; while the state shelter in Prilep did not have a financial plan prepared yet, as its opening coincided with the conduct of this analysis.

The total funds available to each of the state shelters correspond to the size of the Inter-Municipal Centers for Social Work –IMCSW- within which they operate. Thus, the highest amounts of funds are available to the IMCSW Skopje and Ohrid, followed by Kocani, Strumica, Bitola and Kumanovo. Upon comparison of the funds available for 2008 and 2009, the figures show increases in some, and yet decreases in other shelters. The increases/decreases in funds are not due to utilization/non- utilization of the shelter facilities. This is especially in view of the fact that, with the exception of the one in Skopje, all other state shelters disclosed that their facilities were not fully utilized in either 2008 or 2009.

The uncertainty of in raising funds by the citizens' organizations and, therefore, in the sustainability of the shelters managed by them, is a real problem, which affects the quality of and the continuity in providing

shelter. The funds allocated by the state to these shelters are minimal and insufficient for meeting the basic needs in these shelters.

Organizational Setup

Out of the ten shelters operating in the country, according to the sheltering period they provide, two are characterized as temporary shelters, i.e. they provide shelter to persons for a period between 24 and 48 hours (Transit House at the National SOS Line and the Crisis Center Hope). The remaining eight shelters provide sheltering for a period of up to three months, six months or one year. Namely, State shelters provide sheltering in accordance with the legal regulations on sheltering (three months with a possibility of extension for additional three), while the Shelter Center provides sheltering for up to one year.

Regarding the shelters' operation as separate organizational units, all shelters managed by the citizens' organizations and one state shelter (Skopje) operate independently. All other shelters operate by nominating experts employed in the Centers for Social Work as responsible for the work and operation of the state shelter. These shelters do not have permanent staff with job responsibilities related solely to the work of the shelter.

The shelters are not linked as a single system for protection, i.e. joint utilization of all available facilities. As a result of the coordination efforts in 2005, the Transit House at the National SOS Line is responsible for providing shelter to victims within the first 24 hours, after which their sheltering continues in the state shelters. The 24-hours available services allow for accommodation of victims during the night and the weekends, when such accommodation is not available at the state shelters. During the victim's accommodation in this temporary shelter, the National SOS Line contacts the competent Center for Social Work, which undertakes further action in the case, i.e. ensures sheltering of the victim in one of

the state or citizens' shelters that provide long-term accommodation. For that purpose, the National SOS Line has information regarding the number of free beds in the other shelters.

II. Sheltering from the Protection Providers' Perspective

Methodological Approach

This part of the analysis is intended to determine the manner and approach of sheltering from the perspective of the employees in the shelters for victims of domestic violence, regardless whether state or citizens' organizations managed shelters, as well as the expert work done in them. The second analyzed segment was the facilities at these shelters' disposal (in terms of space and manpower), their location and the safety measures they apply in accordance with the legally prescribed norms and standards in this area.

For the purposes of this analysis, we used two sources of information: information from the interviews conducted with the employees/engaged persons in the shelters, and information collected by way of filling-in a questionnaire by the Inter-Municipal Centers for Social Work (hereinafter: IMCSW).

To this goal, two questionnaires were prepared, i.e. one for the employees/engaged persons in the shelters, and another, general questionnaire for IMCSW. The questionnaires were prepared in accordance with the European Shelter Standards.

A questionnaire with 75 questions was prepared for the employees/engaged persons in the shelters. In terms of its content, the questionnaire was divided in several sections, i.e. working principles; sheltering procedure; protection provided to the victims and their children; living conditions and other aspects for normal operation of the shelters, and possibilities for improvement. In total, 10 employees/engaged persons were interviewed, i.e. one employee from

each state shelter (Skopje, Kocani, Ohrid, Kumanovo, Strumica, Bitola and Prilep) and one employee/engaged person from each shelter managed by the citizens' organizations (the Shelter Center at the Macedonian Center for Women's Rights –MCWR; the Transit House at the National SOS Line of the Women's Organization of the City of Skopje and the Crisis Center Hope).

The general questionnaire intended for IMCSW comprised 60 questions and was structurally divided in two parts - establishing the sheltering procedure at IMCSW and the institutional response of the Centers for Social Work, i.e. their actions in cases of domestic violence in the period between 2008 and 2009. The questionnaire was filled in by 21 IMCSW, as follows: Berovo, Delcevo, Gevgelija, Kavadarci, Kocani, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Krusevo, Negotino, Prilep, Probistip, Radovis, Resen, Skopje, Struga, Sveti Nikole, Tetovo, Valandovo, Veles, Vinica, and Debar.

Working principles of the Shelters

Having in mind the basic working principles of the shelters, i.e. their 24 hour-availability, as well as the free services, the subject of this part of the analysis is the application of these principles in the shelters throughout our country.

One of the basic working principles of each shelter is its availability 24 hours a day throughout the year. The collected data suggest that the availability and accessibility of the shelter for the victims is limited to a certain period of time, as opposed to the need of providing shelter at any time during the night.

Namely, not one of the shelters, state or managed by a citizens' organization, has staff working 24 hours in the shelter.

This lack of provision of 24-hour admission by an on-duty person in the shelter for urgent sheltering of victims is partially compensated by the establishment of the emergency SOS lines or the emergency mobile

phone numbers answered by a responsible person. In that sense, the established emergency SOS lines or mobile phone numbers at the shelters enable mobilization, i.e. initiation of the system for protection of the victims of domestic violence as from the moment of their calls in case of urgent need of accommodation of the victim, above all in the afternoon and during night hours and weekends.

Due to because the serious threats to the life of the victim, even reporting in those hours to the police station and, therefore, further accommodation of the victims would be impossible without the existence of such emergency lines/mobile phone numbers.

The question is where will the victim reporting domestic violence at such hours be sheltered if there is no shelter in the city in which the victim lives? It seems that the only solution for these women is to contact the National SOS Line in Skopje, which would then contact an emergency line at the state shelter (Center for Victims of Domestic Violence), which, in accordance with the region it covers, would be able to shelter victims from cities in which there are no such shelters.

The situation is even more aggravated by the fact that, apart from Skopje, other cities do not have shelters which provide temporary accommodation (24-48 hours). In Skopje, this type of sheltering is provided by the Transit House at the National SOS Line and the Crisis Center Hope.

The issue of accessibility was also analyzed by considering a portion of the information collected from the general questionnaires submitted by 21 IMCSW. Namely, 12 IMCSW responded to the question: "*What is the accommodation procedure you practice if the victim needs to be sheltered during the night or the weekends?*", out of which 6 stated that they had not had such a case so far and that they do not have resources for immediate accommodation. IMCSW within which shelters operate and which submitted their responses to the general questionnaires – namely the ones in Kocani and Skopje - stated that "*sheltering during the night*

and weekends is provided by the Transit House at the National SOS Line in Skopje, and Kocani, acting through the existing SOS line, immediately reacts to any need of immediate accommodation; in case of no other secure place for accommodation, they shelter victims in the shelter and re-review the case the next working day”.

The other IMCSW - within which there are no shelters - reported that sheltering in those hours is provided: with friends and relatives, the family, at the nearest shelter, *professional intervention sheltering family*, or, as the last resort, at the Residential Home for Elderly People.

The following IMCSW were the only ones to point out the difficulties they encounter upon such sheltering:

- *“We do not have accommodation facilities” (a statement by an employee in IMCSW –Negotino)*

- *“There are no vacancies in shelters in the other cities.”(a statement by an employee in IMCSW - Prilep)*

- *“In both municipalities, we do not have a shelter or a vehicle in good technical order.” (a statement by an employee in IMCSW -Radovis)*

- *„It is necessary to open a Shelter Center for domestic violence in Veles, as we are faced with the problem of no vacancies in the available shelters. The expenses incurred during the accommodation cannot be compensated”.(a statement by an employee in IMCSW - Veles)*

- *„Although we have not had the need so far, it may occur in the future. We do not have an emergency service in IMCSW, nor an emergency office phone available. The officer uses his personal phone, intervenes upon calls from the police during the night, but gets paid for none of this.”
“There have been initiatives to solve the problem, but unfortunately it still exists and, if it is not solved in the future, it may pose as a huge problem for the victims.” (a statement by an employee in IMCSW –Tetovo).*

The victims sheltered at the analyzed shelters do not pay for the services, which is essentially the basic working principle of each shelter for victims of domestic violence. Regarding the question whether there are expenses covered by the victims themselves, the data collected show that all

shelters provide free services to their users (women and children), such as: free accommodation, food, toiletries, as well as free health care. There are exceptions when, if the victim comes from another city and her ID, Health Booklet and GP remain unchanged, certain health care services are covered privately. In such cases, IMCSW within which shelters operate provide a one-off financial assistance, so that the victim can cover these additional expenses. Unfortunately, this right to a one-off financial aid is often unavailable for the victim of domestic violence who are not accommodated in one of the state shelters.

Regarding the sheltered victims who are employed - although these are in insignificant numbers - they are responsible for providing their own food, i.e. they have to pay for these services themselves.

Information on the Existence of Sheltering Possibilities

The availability of sheltering was also analyzed with regard to whether victims have information about the existence of this protection measure and how to contact the shelters.

The general conclusion was that the victims receive initial information about the sheltering possibility when they ask for help at the IMCSW within which a state shelter operates, as well as by the police. Only three of the state shelters undertake additional measures in the direction of promoting the overall protection measures, amongst which "Provision of necessary accommodation of the victim of domestic violence". These activities include organization and participation in media campaigns, as well as preparation and distribution of information materials.

On the other hand, this manner of operation is common and often practiced by the citizens' associations. Additionally, they promote their SOS lines in the printed media.

Location of the Shelters

All analyzed shelters are located in residential areas and can be reached by use of public transport. All shelters are located near a health center,

police station, and school/nursery, excluding the shelters in Bitola and Kocani, where there is no police station in the vicinity.

Living Conditions in the Shelters

Regarding the question: "Is there a separate room for every woman with children?", 6 (six) shelters responded that they have provided a separate room for every woman with children. It was reported that there were no separate rooms for each woman in the state shelter in Skopje, the temporary shelter at the Crisis Center Hope and the Shelter Center. The shelters which responded that they had a separate room for each woman stated that this was a result of the non-utilization of their facilities, and if the number of victims increased, then they would have to accommodate more women in a single room.

Regarding the sheltering of women with special needs, all shelters stated that they did not have appropriate conditions for accepting such persons, nor did they have appropriate staff to work with them.

Replying to the question: "Are the shelter and its premises comfortable and appropriately heated?", all shelters gave a positive answer.

Regarding the provision of activities which include mutual support (self-help groups, debate clubs, regular therapy meetings, etc.), 4 of the total 10 shelters stated that they did not provide this service, one shelter answered that this service was provided by means of improvisation, while one shelter did not answer. The other 4 shelters stated that this type of activities were organized in the form of joint cleaning of the shelter, food preparation, knitting competitions, or that it was left to the women to organize their own time, which is completely inconsistent with the basic aim of this service.

Regarding the organization of entertainment, the experts from the shelters stated that such activities were never performed. Namely, they

were realized incidentally and most often in the form of organizing a joint picnic in nature.

Security Measures in the Shelters

The subject of this analysis was also the extent to which shelters have an established security system for the women during their stay in the shelter. The shelter is obliged to establish a system of security protection measures which would result in women gaining confidence in the institution and losing the sense of fear for themselves and their children. Each of the analyzed shelters applies various measures for provision of appropriate protection and security of the victims. Namely, five shelters have a single main entrance, two shelters have one main and one emergency entrance, the shelter in Skopje has a direct telephone line to the nearest police station, one main entrance, an emergency entrance and an outside security guard during the night; the temporary shelter Crisis Center Hope has strong security doors and one main entrance, while the Shelter Center in Skopje has the following security measures: strong security doors, one main entrance, direct security telephone line to the nearest police station and an outside security guard during the night.

The data collected show that each of the analyzed shelters has created a different and unique manner of security protection of the women-victims of domestic violence.

The responses received to the question regarding the manner of ensuring security of the women in the shelter are as follows:

- *„There is a person on duty 24 hours, two persons in two shifts, and a guard after 8 pm. However, we and the women would not be safe during the working hours, should someone wanted to enter by force” (a statement by an employee in IMCSW -Skopje);*
- *„The Police reacts immediately upon a call from a victim” (a statement by an employee in the Transit House at the National SOS Line);*

- „We have a special telephone line for direct contact with the police. They act immediately upon a report from us.” (a statement by an employee in the Shelter Center);
- „Just a regular patrol occasionally patrolling around the shelter upon notification of the Chief of MOI” (a statement by an employee in IMCSW - Kocani);
- „Almost none; they are all alone, we give them a key, we have our passwords and we give them instructions not to respond to the bell, and we tell the children not to bring any friends”(a statement by an employee at IMCSW - Ohrid);
- „We have good cooperation with the Inspector, but it always depends on the person, and we sometimes have difficulties in the cooperation with the police” (a statement by an employee at IMCSW -Kumanovo);
- „The outside gate is locked, as well as the entrance door and the door on the floor. If a woman senses danger, she calls us and we call the police to send a police officer on patrol within that period of time” (a statement by an employee at IMCSW -Strumica);
- „Self-protection” (a statement by an employee at IMCSW -Bitola);
- „With the police, they are right next to us”....(a statement by an employee in the Crisis Center Hope)

The nearest police station is informed about the existence of the shelter, and that is the case with all shelters, except the one in Bitola, which stated that only one of the inspectors had been notified, but not the police station.

For urgent actions by the police in cases when the health and safety of women and their children are threatened, there must be a positive practice, i.e. an agreed manner of providing security amongst the shelter experts and the nearest police station.

Unfortunately, this practice is not implemented in an organized and agreed upon manner. It is a general conclusion that such cooperation and manner of acting has only been initially agreed upon and varies depending on the case. Namely, there is no developed security plan with clear instructions in any of the shelters (the shelter in Skopje- yes, we agreed

that if someone knocks at the door, a woman who does not know the person is to appear at the window and ask them what they want, while the woman in danger is to hide in the garage).

Procedure for sheltering in centers providing long-term protection (6-12 months)

Regulation of sheltering as a protection measure

The protection measures for domestic violence victims which include the "Provision of accommodation necessary for persons – victims of domestic violence" are regulated under the Family Law (Official Gazette of the RM No.83/04) and the Rulebook on the manner of enforcement and monitoring of the protection measures imposed for protection of families and persons – victims of domestic violence undertaken by the centers for social work and on the manner of monitoring temporary measures imposed by the court (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Official Gazette No.103/07, Article 6). The legal term used to refer to shelters is *Centers for persons- victims of domestic violence*.

Namely:

"Accommodation in centers for persons-victims of domestic violence is enforced as a protection measure in cases where there is reasonable grounds to suspect that the life and health of the person – victim of domestic violence is seriously threatened and jeopardized, because of the use of force, threat, or intimidation by another member of the family, in circumstances when there are no resources in the family environment for the victim and victim's children to be accepted.

The enforcement of the measure of paragraph 1 of this Article is carried out in accordance with the conclusion made by the team of experts and the decision of the locally competent center for social work for referral of the person – victim of domestic violence to a center for persons - victims of domestic violence.

The accommodation of the person – victim of domestic violence in a centre for persons – victims of domestic violence is carried out by a professional from the center for social work, who - in addition to the

decision for accommodation - submits expert team findings and opinion and a plan for individual assistance for that person.

Following the accommodation of the person – victim of domestic violence in a center for persons – victims of domestic violence, the professional of paragraph 3 of this Article drafts a plan for taking other protection measures as to create conditions for sooner returning of the person accommodated back to the previous environment.”

In addition, the manner of implementation of sheltering as a protection measure is regulated under the expert and methodological guidelines drafted by the Social Affairs Institute, particularly in the Guidelines for operation of the Centers for Social Work in relation to the domestic violence problem and in the Guidelines on the manner of organization and work with victims of domestic violence in Centers for persons – victims of domestic violence.

The norms and standards for premises, equipment and expert staff are given in detail in the Rulebook on Norms and Standards for setting up and launching institutions for social protection - Center for persons - victims of domestic violence (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Official Gazette No. 33/07).

The issue of availability of the protection measure “Provision of necessary sheltering for persons – victims of domestic violence” was analyzed from the perspective of whether the bylaws, i.e. the methodological expert guidelines are implemented in a single and consistent manner by the experts and whether they represent a solid framework ensuring that the expert work with the domestic violence victims, and hence, appropriate assessment of the need for sheltering is carried out.

The data received from the analysis conducted show that in four (4) IMCSWs of the total 21 submitted and analyzed questionnaires, there is no procedure envisaged for sheltering victims. It seems that they haven't had a case of sheltering, and hence, their response to this question was negative. Additionally, two (2) more IMCSWs failed to describe the steps

in the sheltering procedure, one of them giving the explanation that they never had such a case, and the other that they had no sheltering case in 2008 and 2009. Two (2) IMCSWs stated that they had only one sheltering case, and other two (2) IMCSWs gave no answer to the question of how long it takes between the first contact and the actual sheltering of the victim.

The comparative data analyzed show that 10 IMCSWs have no experience at all in carrying out procedures for sheltering domestic violence victims.

On the other hand, the data received from the 11 questionnaires for IMCSWs show a uniform pattern in the steps taken for accommodation of domestic violence victims, having in mind the initial risk and needs assessment for the victim, collection of relevant documentation, preparation of findings and expert team assessment, and the drafting of the decision for accommodation once the statement for consent has been given by the victim. The pattern as such complies with the procedure provided for working with victims in the Methodological guidelines of the Social Affairs Institute.

The same can be concluded from the responses given by the IMCSW employees in relation to the question "*On the basis of which criteria is the need for stay determined*". Namely, most of these 11 IMCSWs point out the parameters envisaged in the Rulebook on the Manner of Enforcement and Monitoring of the Protection Measures Imposed..., such as serious danger and threat for the victim's life and the second parameter - lack of resources for acceptance in the victim's family environment. Only two IMCSWs underlined one of these parameters.

The question arises whether the parameters established as such are a good enough basis for appropriate determination of the need for accommodation, particularly with regard to determining what represents "serious danger and threat for the victim's life". Given the lack of other developed assessment mechanisms, the determination of the risk for the life and health of the victim and the victim's children is almost impossible.

The above conclusion substantiates the fact that, unfortunately, and in spite of the numerous individual types of forms of domestic violence prescribed by the Social Affairs Institute, there is still a lack of appropriate instruments for assessment of the risk posed to domestic violence victims.

As for the fact that the initial admission and risk and needs assessment are essential in determining the best form of protection for the domestic violence victim, and hence, the need for sheltering, the introduction of such instruments is more than necessary.

On the other hand, there is a rather concerning fact that none of the expert professionals working with domestic violence victims never mentioned the lack of these instruments as a serious drawback and difficulty in practicing their work.

Provision of protection measures within the shelter

The provision of all protection measures within the shelter is carried out in a manner provided under the Individual plan for working with the person – victim of domestic violence, which the IMCSW expert professional drafts following the assessment.

The individual plan, in accordance with the *Rulebook on the manner of enforcement and monitoring of measures imposed for protection of families and persons – victims of domestic violence carried out by the Center for Social work and the manner for monitoring the orders imposed by the court*, envisages the order of protection measures, their duration, manner of monitoring and assessment of the protection measures by the responsible IMCSW professional, regardless of whether the protection measures have been carried out by the IMCSW or by another competent institution, counselling office, or associations of citizens, or whether other measures are undertaken in accordance with the Family Law. Following the admission of the domestic violence victim in the shelter, the professional from the Centre is to prepare an additional plan for other protection measures to be taken, so as to create the conditions necessary for the sheltered person to return back to their previous environment.

In addition to the legal provisions regarding the protection measures in the Family Law, the Methodological Guidelines of the Social Affairs Institute include an obligation of the Centers for persons-victims of domestic violence to provide other protection measures, such as:

1. Stay and existence (accommodation, food, hygiene);
2. Psycho-social intervention and emotional support for the victims;
3. Sharing and exchange of experiences and mutual support (self-assistance group, debate clubs, regular therapy meetings, acquiring skills through creative workshops, etc.);
4. Legal aid for the activities related to the domestic violence act (informing, legal advice and representation before the competent courts);
5. Informing the victims about the relevant institutions and the individual rights they can exercise there (health care institutions for the purposes of providing health protection, educational institutions offering courses which would improve their employability, work engagements, self-employment, as well as other services upon request of the victims);
6. Provision of additional financial support in the form of food, clothing, medicines, medical aids, additional education, etc. in cooperation with association of citizens; and
7. Organizing cultural – leisure time activities.

The services thus determined to be provided by the Centers for persons – victims of domestic violence, i.e. shelters lead to the conclusion that the services provided for these victims differ from the services, i.e. protection measures provided for victims that are not accommodated in the shelters.

The protection system should, however, be uniform and should not limit women-victims of domestic violence in using it, irrespective of whether they are in or out of the shelter. Moreover, the expert staff working in the shelter is the same professional staff working with the victims in the IMCSW and is responsible to take the appropriate protection measures.

For the purposes of determining which of and to what extent the said protection measures are really provided, several aspects were subject to analysis. One of them is whether expert associates in the shelter can professionally respond to both the duty to ensure the undertaking of appropriate protection measures, on one hand, and the other professional obligations at the IMCSW, on the other. Namely, the expert associates from the state shelters have underlined that, in addition to the work in the shelter, they have other additional professional obligations, such as: dysfunctional marriages and families, reconciliation procedures, children visits, guardian families, financial allowances, etc. (*"We work with all possible categories, i.e. everything the Center is competent for; for example, the Head of the Social Care Department (social worker) works on marriages, custody, adoption, juvenile justice, and the Head of the Department for General and Joint Affairs is responsible for socially disadvantaged people, Drugs Center, people's kitchens, the overall financial operation, and in addition as a legal expert in the Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings Department, and she is responsible for the preparation of all decisions passed by IMCSW"*).

It seems that, in addition to the first protection measure, which represents a precondition to successful "Provision of the necessary sheltering", all other listed protection measures are implemented in a non-unified, inconsistent manner. The conclusion that the quality and scope of the protection measures provided most often and to a great extent depends on the professional approach of the experts and their dedication, and to a much lesser extent on the lack of time available, is rather unfavorable.

This conclusion is further substantiated by the fact that, although the psychosocial intervention and treatment of victims constitute the most frequently provided protection measure, every interviewed expert gave different explanation in terms of what this service involves. Namely, some believe that this simply means listening to the victim; some think this should involve strengthening their self-confidence and psychological

exercises; assessment of the overall situation; working with the victim to empower and help the victim become aware of what is going on; counselling appropriate to the problem; assessment of the victim's needs; and some even show ignorance about the basic mandate of the experts in the shelter, i.e. *"We (the social workers) do not provide such services"*

On the other hand, the data analyzed give a positive picture of the effects of this protection measure. Namely, the data show a direct relation between the effect of the psychosocial intervention and treatment of the victim sheltered and the length of their stay in the shelter. Thus, the experts, in deciding upon the length of the stay in the shelter, in addition to the other parameters, such as the context of the domestic violence, ongoing court proceedings, and the danger of violence, also take into account the effect, namely: the potentials and capacities of the victim to become stronger and integrated in the social environment, the victim's psychological readiness (whether in condition of trauma/stress), their professional capacities and possibilities for employment and ensuring their existence after leaving the shelter.

Nevertheless, what remains hard to understand is the manner in which the effects of the psycho-social intervention and treatment carried out are measured and monitored and, accordingly, the manner in which the experts at the IMCSWs make their decisions for shortening, continuation, or interruption of the period of stay in the shelter. The data received from two of the state shelters show that there are clear parameters for implementation and monitoring of the effects arising from the individual plan for work and, consequently, the protection measures (*"We define the objectives, results and indicators for risk monitoring, and at the end we conduct our evaluation because we do not have any of them defined in the Ministry. However, in order to determine the condition of the victim at the beginning and at the end, we envisage the steps depending on the victim's capacities, needs assessed in terms of what would be most purposeful for the victim."*

On the other hand, the shelter operating within the civil organization Shelter Center underlined that individual strategic programme and plan, as well as exit strategy are developed for each victim, in accordance with which the protection measures are implemented and the duration of the stay is determined.

As long as the protection measure of "provision of health care" is concerned, most of the experts stated that this service infers escort to a health-care institution, provision of health-care documentation and, only in exceptional cases, general health checks.

The responses of the experts are consistent in relation to what each of the measures "assistance in continuing regular education", "provision of legal aid and representation", "lodging a complaint in the court for ordering TIM" infers. Stating other measures taken by them as needed, the mentioned *assisting in looking for a job* is mentioned.

Specialized services for children of sheltered victims

None of the analyzed shelters provides specialized services for children accommodated in the shelters that would be provided by a person with relevant qualifications.

„We do not have specialized services, but usually when there are children the psychologist is here, and she works with them“ (stated by an IMCSW employee in Kocani)

Expert work with children involves the work of a pedagogue and psychologist, within the appropriate departments at the IMCSWs, however it does not involve any work on a continuous basis with them within the shelters.

"The pedagogue comes as necessary, but we only help them with their homework and, if they are young, we draw pictures..." (a statement by an employee of IMCSW Skopje)

According to the data received, only the Shelter Center - Skopje has a person with special qualifications (employed person) who works with the children.

Possibilities for promotion of the work in the shelters

For the purposes of obtaining data in relation to the perspectives for further work in the shelters, we asked for the opinion of the expert staff as regards the difficulties they face in performing their work and possibilities for improvements in their work.

According to the data analyzed, all expert staff working for state shelters listed the same difficulties that they face in their work such as: too many work tasks and, consequently, impossibility to do all of them in a professional fashion, as well as a lack of regular professional staff and a 24/7 security person in the shelter. The other difficulties include administrative barriers in providing personal documentation and lack of funds. As opposed to them, the persons working in the shelter of the civil society organization pointed to other difficulties they face, such as: no funds received on a regular basis for overheads, provision of expert staff, as well as no solid cooperation with other institutions.

Most of the experts at the shelters stated that the capacities of the shelters generally meet the needs of the women-victims of domestic violence. In addition, some of the shelters stated that, apart from the basic needs, psychosocial and legal aid are lacking.

The experts were asked to share their opinions, ideas, and suggestions for improvement of the working conditions in the shelter, as well as for improvement of the overall protection of victims. In this regard, several suggestions were given, as follows:

- Employment / engagement of an expert team (social worker, psychologist and pedagogue) in the shelter (24/7);
- Engaging a physician who would come once a week;
- Engaging volunteers as necessary;
- Engaging a security person / service in the shelter;
- Employment of a lawyer;

- Introducing measures to help the victims find employment;
- Organizing group counselling treatments;
- Increasing the capacities of the shelters (increasing the number of bedrooms, leisure-time room for children, room where the experts will work with the women-victims domestic violence);
- Security measures taken in the shelters;
- Continuous and multi-agency training sessions aimed at sharing experiences (governmental and civil sector);

The same questions were analyzed using the data received from the general questionnaires submitted by the IMCSWs. Namely, in addition to the already listed, they put forward other measures/proposals for improvement such as: provision of budgets appropriate to the needs for protection of domestic violence victims by establishing a separate domestic violence fund; mobile expert team for interventions in case of urgency; ensuring better financial security in addition to the one-off allowances by developing programmes for economic empowerment; and adoption of protocols for coordination and cooperation between the institutions.

III. Sheltering as (un)secure protection – perspective of the sheltered ones

Methodological aspects

This part of the analysis presents the findings from the interviews conducted with women victims of domestic violence, who are accommodated in the state shelters and the shelters of the non-governmental organizations, primarily focusing on the protection provided for these victims by placing them in shelters, but also generally on the protection provided following the violence suffered.

A total of 17 women victims of domestic violence were interviewed for the purposes of this analysis; those are women who were sheltered at the time of conduct of this analysis, i.e. in the period between July and December 2009 in all the shelters established by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (hereinafter: state shelters) and the ones set up by the civil society organizations (the Shelter Center and the temporary shelter Crisis Center Hope). Out of all the victims interviewed, 13 were accommodated in the state shelters – six in the one in Skopje, two in Bitola, two in Strumica and one in the shelters in Kocani, Kumanovo, and Ohrid each. Four victims accommodated in the civil society organizations' shelters took part in the interviews – two from the Shelter Center and another two from the temporary shelter Crisis Center Hope. The analysis did not include the victims accommodated in the Transit House of the National SOS Line for Domestic Violence Victims, as there were no victims accommodated there at the time of conducting this analysis.

During the period of conduct of the interviews, 12 out of the 17 victims interviewed were accommodated in the shelters when the interviews took place (2009), as opposed to the five victims who were sheltered at different periods until the completion of the analysis. The reason behind this is that - while the analysis was being conducted - there were no victims accommodated in the state shelters who could be interviewed,

and, therefore, the interviews included victims who had been accommodated in these shelters in the period preceding the study. The largest portion of the victims interviewed, however, were sheltered at the time of conducting the analysis, which leads to the conclusion that the findings herein will adequately reflect the situation of the victims accommodated in the shelters in the period in which the interviews took place, that is in 2009.

Namely, an analysis of the period of stay in a shelter – as found in the interviews conducted – shows that the women victims of domestic violence interviewed were sheltered in the period between August 2003 and October 2009. Out of the total of 17 victims, 10 were given shelter in the course of 2009, two in 2007, and one in 2006, 2005, 2004, and 2003 each. Out of the six victims who were not sheltered in 2009 – i.e. when this study was being made – five were accommodated in state shelters and one in the temporary shelter Crisis Center Hope in 2003 (prior to the introduction of the legal basis for setting up state-owned shelters). One of the victims interviewed refused to provide an answer to the question about the time spent in a shelter.

A questionnaire containing 45 questions was prepared for the purposes of this part of the study. Content-wise, the questionnaire was divided into several sections, as follows: profile of the sheltered victims and the type of violence suffered by them; sheltering procedure; protection provided for the victims and their children while in the shelters; victims' perception of being sheltered; satisfaction with the living conditions in the shelters and mechanisms for expressing dissatisfaction; effects of the achievement of the basic and additional objective of this protection measure and plans for further integration of the victims.

Profile of Sheltered Victims of Domestic Violence

In an effort to identify the profile of the sheltered victims of domestic violence, this part of the analysis presents the findings related to a series of features, including age, nationality, marital status, education, employment status, and level of income generated by the victims.

In terms of their age, the victims of domestic violence accommodated in shelters are women between 26 and 72 years of age. They are almost equally divided into various age groups: three victims in the 26-30 years age group, three are in the 31-35 years age group, two in the 36-40 years age group, two in the 41-45 years age group, three in the 46-50 years age group, one in the 51-55 years age group, one in the 56-60 years age group, and two in the 60+ years age group.

In terms of nationality, the majority of the victims sheltered are Macedonians (14), and the rest include an Albanian, Roma and a Bosnian victim.

Most of the victims sheltered do not live in a marriage community (four are separated from their spouses, four are divorced and one is a widow). Eight of them do live in a marriage.

In terms of their level of education, the majority of the victims in the shelters were women with a high- and elementary school diploma (eight have graduated from high-school, and six are elementary school graduates). One has a college education, and two have university degrees.

With regard to their employment status, most of the victims (12) in the shelters are unemployed. Of those, five said they worked in the informal sector, i.e. they do earn income, but are not registered with the authorities. Five of the total of 17 sheltered women victims of domestic violence do earn income – four of them are employed and one is in retirement.

As regards the level of monthly income generated by the sheltered victims, the eight of them who did give an answer to this question are divided in the following categories: two earn between 3,001 and 5,000 MKD; one earns between 5,001 and 7,500 MKD; one has an income of 7,501 to 10,000 MKD; and two earn between 10,001 and 12,500 MKD.

Only two of the victims earn more than 15,001 MKD (one between 15,001 and 20,000 MKD and one more than 20,000 MKD). A comparison of the employment status and the monthly income level leads to the conclusion that those working 'on the black market' earn less than 10,000 MKD, unlike the employed ones and the one in retirement, whose income exceeds 10,000 MKD.

Accommodation in shelters and violence suffered by the victims

Attempting to analyze and thus identify any relation between the degree of violence suffered by the victims placed in a shelter, on one hand, and the decision to have the victims accommodated in a shelter as one of the protection measures, on the other, we interviewed the sheltered victims on several key areas about the type and scope, duration and reporting of violence (when and where it is reported).

The largest number of the victims sheltered (15) are there for the first time. Only one of them is accommodated in a shelter for the second time, while one refused to answer to the question about the number of times she was sheltered.

Regarding the individual types of domestic violence suffered by the victims in the shelters, the most frequent one is the physical violence (reported by all victims interviewed) and the psychological one (16 out of the 17 women interviewed reported this form of violence). Unlike these two forms of violence, only 6 out of the total of 17 interviewees reported to have suffered a sexual form of violence.

The violent person is in most of the cases (16) their husband. In only one case the violence suffered by the victims was done by the victim's son and daughter-in-law. These findings coincide with those in the study entitled "Life in a Shadow", which showed that the most frequent perpetrator is the husband (current and former).

In order to identify the duration of the violence, i.e. how long they had endured the violence, we asked the women interviewed to state the time

of the occurrence of the first and the last instance of domestic violence. The analysis of the answers confirmed the already known fact that the victims of domestic violence seek protection following a certain time period during which they put up with the violence. The time span during which the sheltered victims endure the violence is between 12 months and 39 years (the longest period of violence suffered was reported by one of the victims in the shelter). The analysis of the time period during which the victims put up with violence shows that the largest number of victims accommodated in shelters are those who have been subjected to violence for more than 20 years (5 victims). These are followed by women who suffered violence over a period between 10 and 20 years (4 victims); between 6 and 10 years (3 victims) and between 1 and 5 years (4 victims). Only one of the victims sheltered suffered violence less than 12 months. These data of the analysis differ from those found in the study "Life in a Shadow", where the period of violence reported by most victims was between 1 and 5 years, followed by currently suffered violence (over the past 12 months), then by violence in a period of 6 – 10 years, in a period of 10 -20 years, etc.

These findings were also confirmed by the responds to the questions about when and where they had reported the violence. According to the statements of the victims in the shelters, half of them reported the violence immediately, i.e. within a time period of one year following the first violent incident. Three of them reported the violence after 1-5 years since the first violent event; three did so after 6-10 years, and five after 10-20 years. This leads to the conclusion that the victims either report the violence immediately following the first violent incident or do so after an exceptionally long period of enduring violence – 10 to 20 years following the first incident.

"30 years ago, I put up with everything, so that my kids may be independent. Beaten up, I still ran around seeking social care and reporting to the police. I reported him about a hundred times; they would detain him, only to let him come back home again." (a statement of a woman in the shelter)

"It started at the beginning of the marriage. At first, it was a psychological violence, which is much harder than the physical one. How long have we

been married? For seventeen years.” (a statement of a woman in the shelter)

“Over the last 10 years, it began with usual arguments, and I believed I had done something wrong and caused them. But, from those ordinary arguments, the situation grew more and more into violence. Besides in a psychological way, he also started maltreating me physically.” (a statement of a woman in the shelter)

In terms of who the violence is reported to, the largest number of victims (10) reported it to the police, follow by those (5) who did so at the Social Work Centers. One of them reported the violence at the Crisis Center Hope, also seeking accommodation assistance, and one of the victims interviewed did not answer this question. According to the statements of the sheltered victims of domestic violence, they have more confidence in reporting the violence to the police as opposed to the Social Work Centers. A comparison of these percentages with those in the “Life in a Shadow” study shows that the trust in the police is twice as that identified by the latter study, i.e. only 20% of the victims interviewed in that study trusted the police, whereas this analysis found that 59% of the victims included in it did so. Unlike these data, those on reporting violence by the victims sheltered at the Social Work Centers vary significantly from those in the study “Life in a Shadow”. A comparison of these results with the number of victims reporting violence to the civil society organizations shows a higher number of victims who reported violence to the civil society organizations than the number identified in the “Life in a Shadow” study (the latter found only three women who reported such incidents to the civil society organizations).

Information on the existence of possibilities to become sheltered

The victims learnt about the possibility to be sheltered from various sources. Still, the information given by the relatives and friends of (5) victims, as well as those obtained from the media (4 victims) played a significant role in informing victims about the existence of this protection measure. The civil society organizations working on this issue were also a source of such information (in the case of 2 victims). Unlike these victims – who learnt about the possibility before they turned to the relevant institutions and sought assistance – the remaining seven sheltered victims were informed about it only after the violence was reported to the police officials and the Social Work Center staff, who provided such information.

Procedure for deciding on sheltering as the protection measure needed

Having in mind the primary objective to be achieved by sheltering as a measure of protection – provision of security for the victims and the children in cases when it is established that there is serious danger and threat to the life and health of the victim and children due to use of physical force, threats or intimidation, and in the absence of resources in the family for accepting the victims – we analyzed a series of aspects of the procedure for deciding on providing shelter for victims as a protection measure.

Thence, the procedure for deciding on the need of this type of protection was evaluated from several aspects that might affect the speed of and way in which this protection measure is decided upon, to identify any shortcomings and room for improvement of the procedure itself.

One of the aspects analyzed was the profile of the officials/persons in charge who received and worked with the victims on the provision of the protection needed. The answers of the women interviewed indicated no unified approach/procedure in conducting the initial interview and the preliminary assessment, in terms of the individual who conducted the initial interview and assessment and of whether it was an individual or a team of experts who assess the situation. Thus, two women were interviewed by teams of experts working at the appropriate units in charge of the issue of domestic violence; two were received by the director of the Social Work Center, and four talked to authorized officials in the police. Unlike the state institutions and their approach to the conduct of the initial interview, this interview and assessment was done by one and the same individual at the shelters run by civil society organizations. Their professional qualifications/profile was not known to the victims sheltered there.

The decision to be placed in a shelter as a manner of providing the protection necessary is in most cases in the hands of the victims. Namely, the majority of them (11) made the decision to be sheltered on their own; two of them were assisted in making such a decision, while in four cases it was the social worker in charge of the case who made the decision that

the women are to be accommodated in shelters. In the last four cases, the victims were placed in state shelters.

As to whether the time of reporting plays any role in the provision of a shelter as a protection measure, i.e. whether this protection is available for the victims at all times, the analysis found that the established ways of operation of certain institutions, such as the Social Work Centers, are decisive in terms of the time at which this type of protection is provided. Thus, the largest number of victims (15), knowing the usual working hours of the centers, reported the cases of domestic violence in "a usual day and within the working hours". This group of victims includes those who are accommodated in the state shelters and the two victims placed at the Shelter Center. Only two of the victims interviewed reported the violence on a business day in the afternoon/night hours (both reported the violence at the temporary Crisis Center Hope). None of the victims reported the violence on a weekend. The fact that a significant number of the victims report violence on a business day and the usual working hours indicates a need of developing rules and procedures for the creation and establishment of a complete protection system that would ensure the needed protection of victims at all times.

In addition to the time of reporting, the analysis also attempted to identify the speed in making the decision to provide this type of protection, as one of the key factors in the provision of protection and safety of victims of domestic violence. The answers of the victims lead to the conclusion that this type of protection – in the case of the majority of victims (15) – was provided on the same day on which violence was reported. Unlike the victims who were sheltered on the day of reporting violence, a portion of them (4) said that they had been sheltered after a certain period following the reporting, as follows: several days after reporting (1 victim); 4-5 days after reporting (1 victim); two weeks afterwards (1 victim), and two months after reporting (1 victim).

Analyzing the statements of the victims who were sheltered on the same day when reporting the violence in terms of the hours passed before they

were sheltered, we found that the duration of the accommodation procedure is between 30 minutes (this was a case that had already been known to the officials and there was no need of additional assessments) and 23 hours. In the case of the largest number of victims, however, the procedure only took between 30 minutes and 5 hours (7 cases), with only two victims having been provided shelter in a period of 12 and 23 hours, respectively. Three of the victims interviewed who said they had been sheltered on the same day could not estimate the duration of the procedure.

In parallel to the analysis of the data in terms of the time needed to provide shelter, regardless of the type of the shelter provided, we also looked into this parameter in terms of the shelter type, to check for any differences. This analysis showed that, out of the total number of 13 victims placed in the state shelters, the majority of them (10) were given shelter on the day of reporting violence, three were sheltered after a certain period of time, i.e. one was sheltered after a period of several days, one after 4-5 days, and one after two weeks, which was the longest period needed to place a victim in a shelter. The victims gave no reasons for these delays, with the exception of the case in which it took two weeks; this – according to the victim herself – was due to the fact that the state shelter was being relocated.

The testimony of the two victims accommodated at the Shelter Center showed that one of them was given shelter on the same day when she reported the violence, and the other one two months afterwards. According to the latter, this long period was due to the shelter's being fully occupied. The two of the women victims interviewed at the Crisis Center Hope said they had been accommodated instantly.

Feelings of victims of domestic violence upon being placed in shelters and during their stay there

The act of accommodating victims in a shelter causes various feelings of the victims. For most of them (10), the first impression is linked with a feeling of safety, being protected and pleasant memories.

"Freedom, I cannot even describe the feeling to you." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

"At that moment, I had no idea where I was and how I felt; I only wanted to have a shelter for myself and my children, to have a roof over our head. All of a sudden, you realize that the stress and fear are behind you." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Unlike these, the first impression of seven of the victims of violence was related to the violence and the trauma suffered. Thus, they relate this initial impression they had with the feeling of trauma, psychological devastation, sorrow, uncertainty, etc.

"No dignity, psychologically and physically hurt." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

"Sad... you are being separated from the children and your home, to go to an unknown place." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Ten of the victims describe their state during/after their stay in the shelter as good, and four of them as better.

"A feeling of self-confidence I never had in life. In these two years since I am separated from my husband, I felt that I could have left him even earlier, but simply did not feel capable of doing something like that. Now, I see that I can do it on my own, that I am capable of earning money and raising my children." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Two of the sheltered victims felt worse. One of them felt so because of the inappropriate protection provided for her, and the second one because of being away from her children during her stay in the shelter.

"Worse than before, because my situation did not become better after my stay at the shelter, but only worse. My daughter lives away from the

home, I live in a small part of it – as though in another people’s house. I have no right to heat water to take a shower. I cannot rent a place of my own, it requires money.” (a statement of a sheltered victim)

“Difficult, as the children are not with me.” (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Duration of the stay in shelters as a protection measure

The duration of the stay in the shelter is one of the essential aspects in the attainment of the goal of this measure of protection, i.e. the provision of safety and security. Due to its importance, we analyzed this aspect separately. For the purposes of this analysis, the remaining protection required includes the provision of the other protection measures defined in the law and the implementation of the legal solutions needed to resolve the issue of domestic violence (possibilities postulated in the civil and penal protection system). It is exactly because of this, as well as for the purpose of achieving the fundamental objective, that the issue of deciding on the duration of the stay of victims in shelters is of special importance.

According to the testimony of the victims sheltered, their stay in the shelter varies between 1 months and “until such time as they get back on their feet”. Less than half of the total number of victims interviewed (7 victims) were sheltered for a time period of up to 6 months, and some of them (4) stayed there over a period between 6 months and a year, which coincides with the legally defined possibilities of staying in a shelter. Namely, by regulating the domestic violence in the family legislation, i.e. in the Family Law³, sheltering as a protection measure was introduced as a possibility to last not more than six months, with the possibility of an extension of yet another six months. Accordingly, the Law on Social Protection, i.e. its amendments and addenda⁴ of 2004 introduced the possibility of setting up a Center for Victims of Domestic Violence. The latest amendments to the law of 2009, introduced by the Law on Social

³ Family Law, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 83 dated 24 November 2004, article 101

⁴ Law amending the Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 65 dated 29 September 2004, article 71-e.

Protection⁵, brought about changes in the possible duration of the stay in a shelter, so it is now not longer than three months, with the possibility of extending it for another three months. Under exception, the legislator foresees a possibility for certain, specific cases as assessed by the Social Work Center, of extending the accommodation/sheltering for not more than six months. The Family Law is not harmonized with these latest changes in the Law on Social Protection, and the possibility to shelter victims for not more than six (and an additional six) months is still there.

A portion (4) of the victims did not give an answer to this question and one of the victims interviewed said that she would be sheltered "until she got back on her feet". The victims accommodated in the temporary shelter Crisis Center Hope were not included in the analysis of this aspect, due to the temporary nature of their accommodation (24 – 48 hours).

In terms of the differences in the period of sheltering victims in the state shelters and the one run by a civil society organization (the Shelter Center), it is evident that the duration of the stay of victims in the state shelters is dictated by the legally prescribed deadlines, whereas this period in the Shelter Center is between one year (in the case of 1 victim) and an unlimited period – "until they get back on their feet" (1 victim).

The victims' perception of whether the time spent in a shelter was sufficient for the provision of their protection is as follows: seven of the victims (two from the Shelter center) said that the time was sufficient; five said it was not and three did not know whether it was. The victims at the Shelter Center were not interviewed on this issue, due to the temporary nature of the shelter. Similarly to the discrepancies in the duration of the stay in a shelter between the state-owned ones and the Shelter Center, there is also a difference in the level of satisfaction among the victims interviewed with the period of stay there being sufficient. The majority of those accommodated in the state shelters believe that this period is not sufficient or do not know whether it is (5 victims stated it

⁵ Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No.79 dated 24 June 2009, article 144.

was not and 3 said they are not sure whether it is), as opposed to the five victims who said that, in their opinion, this time period is sufficient.

The legally defined conditions for deciding on shelter accommodation as a protection measure (especially in the state shelters) motivated us to analyze the issue of who and how makes the decision on the duration of the victims' stay in the shelters. As to how decisions are made in terms of the duration of their stay, please see the part of the analysis of the answers of the state shelters personnel. We found that the fact of whether sheltered victims are consulted in terms of deciding on the duration of this protection measure (including in terms of shortening and extending the measure) was of particular importance for us. We were given the following answers to the question who decides on how long a victim will stay in the shelter: one (1) victim said she made this decision herself, seven (7) said that the decision is in the hands of the Social Work Centers (individual employees or the team of experts), three (3) said that the decision is made upon joint consultations with the victim and three gave no answer. It seems that the decision on how long the victim will be able to enjoy the benefits of this protection measure is in the hands of the Social Work Centers, whether individual employees or a team of experts. The victims protected in the temporary shelter were not interviewed on this aspect, due to the temporary nature of their stay at this institution.

Services provided for victims of violence at the shelters

Sheltering victims of violence, i.e. their indispensable accommodation in shelters, is one of the measures of protection that may ensure timely and appropriate protection of victims. To establish the type of protection, i.e. which measures of protection are provided for the victims in addition to the needful accommodation, we interviewed the victims sheltered on the issue of whether any of the other legally prescribed measures of protection were also provided for them or whether some of the legal possibilities defined in the civil and penal legal system were put in place. At the same time, it was the intention of this analysis to also find which type of actions (as defined in the Guidelines on Activities of Professional

Structures in Cases of Protection against Domestic Violence⁶) were undertaken as part of the protection measures for the victims sheltered and who were those actions undertaken by.

Out of the existing types of protection, i.e. the protection measures available for women victims of domestic violence while in a shelter, the survey – based on the victims' statements - identified that the most frequently provided measures is that of psycho-social interventions and treatment (15 of the total of 17 interviewed victims reported to have received such assistance). The majority of the victims said that this protection measure was provided by a psychologist or a social worker (at the state shelter in Skopje, this measure was provided by the shelter staff) and that it included interviews, support and provision of information for the victims on all the possibilities at their disposal. This led to the conclusion that it was only the measure of counseling assistance that was provided, but that no counseling work was done to include continuous and structured work with the victims.

The following measures were also provided for the sheltered victims, although to a lesser extent: appropriate health care (in the case of 9 victims); referral to an appropriate counseling service, i.e. to a psychological counseling center (8 victims); provision of any type of legal aid and representation (7 victims) and support in ensuring continuation of the regular schooling of their children (6 victims).

The victims were also interviewed on the contents of the protection measures provided for them. In terms of the health care provided, the victims said that this measure usually included assistance for the victims to obtain the documentation – health insurance cards - required to have

⁶ *The Guidelines for actions of professional structures in cases of protection against domestic violence* is the first attempt to gather in one place content including the theoretical concepts, solutions related to protection against domestic violence in the Macedonian civil legislation, as well as the directions for their practical application. The Guidelines were published by the NGOs *Akcija Združenska* and the *Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESE*, in 2008.

health care provided to them (for both the victims with and without health insurance). The other types of protection, such as regular monitoring of the health situation by control examinations on every 3 months, escorting victims to health institutions in cases of urgent medical interventions, and health checks upon entry and exit were not mentioned at all by the victims in the shelters. Some of the victims stated that they were provided with medicines for their children during their stay at the shelter.

Answering to the question related to referral to an appropriate counseling center, i.e. psychological counseling, the victims said that they had been provided with counseling by psychologists employed at the Social Work Centers or psychologists engaged by the shelters, but only upon their own initiative and request. In fact, the answers point to the fact that this protection measure, which includes referring to an appropriate counseling center that may provide specialized expert assistance and treatment is not provided for the sheltered victims at all.

It may be concluded from the victims' statements related to the provision of all types of legal aid and representation that, when it comes to this type of measure, what they had been provided with in the shelters was mainly legal aid in terms of information on the procedures regarding divorce and custody of the children, as well as the possibility to propose temporary protection measures. This measure was provided by the legal staff at the Social Work Centers, the attorneys engaged by the shelters and the civil society organizations that provide such type of aid. The victims' statements indicate that the representation in terms of initiating certain court proceedings that would mean a step towards overcoming the situation were used by the sheltered victims to a lesser extent.

The worst is the situation regarding the use of the temporary protection measures (TPM) and undertaking of other necessary measures (we stated assistance in finding employment and solution for the living arrangements). Initiation of a TPM was suggested to only three of the sheltered victims, and two were informed of the existence of this

possibility. The other 12 victims were neither informed about, nor offered the possibility to initiate a TPM.

To assess the practice of undertaking other measures assessed as needed for resolving the situation, we asked the victims whether they had been offered any type of assistance in finding employment and solution for the living arrangements. Only five of them confirmed that assistance or information on possible employment had been offered to them, while the rest (12) explicitly stated that they had been offered no such assistance. With regard to the assistance in finding a solution for their housing issue, it may be concluded that the victims considered the possibility of renting a place and becoming independent on their own.

The initiation of proceedings before a competent court⁷ and notifying the prosecution, as measures of protection, were not included in our analysis, due to their specific nature and the fact that these measures are usually undertaken prior to their being accommodated in the shelter. The subject of our analysis was the provision of escort for the victims during court proceedings and to the police station or another institution. The majority of them (7 victims) said they had been escorted during the court proceedings, with a lesser number of them (4) stating they had been escorted to the police of another institution.

In the implementation of the protection measures, i.e. in the provision of those by the shelters, especially in the case of the state ones, there is no cooperation and use of the capacities/services offered by certain civil society organizations in the county. Thus, despite the existence of specialized services for the victims of domestic violence, such as legal aid and representation and psychological counseling, only one of the victims'

⁷ When the personality, rights and interests of a victim of domestic violence or another family member is to be protected by supervision of the exercise of their parental rights or by protecting the rights and interests of a person placed under custody and of adopted individuals, the protection measure is implemented by initiation of a procedure before a competent court, in pursuance of the Family Law.

statements on who provided protection for them pointed to civil society organizations.

In addition to inquiring about the types of protection measures, we also asked the victims whether any of the experts in the shelter worked with them on a continuous basis. On the basis of the statements of the victims of violence who have been or are being accommodated in shelters, it may be concluded that there is a lack of continuous work with them. Namely, all of the six victims who said that someone worked with them at the shelter also stated that the intensity of the visits by those in charge of their case was high at the beginning of their stay in the shelter, but later on took place as needed, i.e. that the work with the victims in most of the cases depends on their own initiative.

"Yes, at the beginning they do talk to us. Afterwards, it only happens as needed." (A statement of a sheltered victim)

"No, they do not talk to us. Only if we ask them to." (A statement of a sheltered victim)

"No; when we need to, we ask what to do and how to do it. The employee at the shelter said to us: "If you need to, come and talk to me about anything, in case you need to ask me something about the children or yourselves, anything you want to." Since I have been here at the shelter, I have not contacted the Social Work Center; the shelter employee contacts the social worker who is in charge of my case." (A statement of a sheltered victim)

With regard to who worked with the victims, their answers indicate that – in the shelters in which the Social Work Centers' personnel is in charge of running the shelters – this includes individual experts working with the victims, while in the shelters in which they have employees assigned with this task, it is those employees.

Sheltering children of victims of domestic violence

In addition to having the ensuring of safety and security of victims as its goal, sheltering as a protection measure also aims at providing safety and security of their children. It was because of this that we conducted an analysis of several issues related to the children of sheltered victims, in

terms of their number, sex, age, arrangements for the children to see the victim or the perpetrator during the time victims spend in the shelter, as well as in terms of whether the decision to introduce such a measure helped in achieving the fundamental objective.

With regard to the number of children they have, the victims may be divided into four categories: those with five children (1 victim); those having three children (6 victims); those with two (7 victims, and victims with only one child (3 victims). Out of the total number of children (40) of the victims sheltered, 23 are boys and 17 girls. As regards their age, 15 of them are of age, and the remaining 25 are minors.

In addition to the question on the number of their children, we also inquired about whether the children were accommodated together with them in the shelters and whether the children saw their fathers during the stay there. Out of the total of 17 victims, 11 stated that their children were with them in the shelters. With no exception, the children at the shelter are accommodated with their mothers in separate rooms. As regards visits by their fathers, in five (5) of the cases the children did have contacts with their father, while six (6) of them did not. In six of the cases, the victims' children were not sheltered together with them, mainly due to their being of age. Two victims, however, were placed in a shelter without their underage children. One of these two cases (which include underage children) involves a 10-year old boy who was not sheltered with his mother, as were not his 18- and 20-year old brothers; the second case involves five underage kids who were not placed in a shelter with their mother, who sought accommodation in the temporary shelter. In both of the cases, the underage children remained at the home with their father. In none of them were visits of the mothers by their children organized during their stay at the shelter.

Out of the total of 17 interviewed victims, 12 stated that they felt safe and secure in the shelter with their children. Two of them said that they felt partially safe and secure, and three did not give an answer to the

question. It may be concluded from this that the sheltering did achieve its primary goal in terms of ensuring safety of the children.

Services provided to the children in shelters

We also analyzed the operation of the shelters in terms of their work with the children of the victims who were accommodated and stayed in the shelters.

From the victims' description of the services provided within the shelter, it may be concluded that either no one works with the children in the shelters or that working with them is not done on the basis of a previously unified and established way in terms of the way in which the consequences of the violence they had witnessed are overcome. In some of the cases in which this type of assistance was offered, one of the victims stated that she had refused the assistance and support offered for her child, but said that she did visit the Mental Health Institution to seek help in overcoming these problems; in three other cases, pedagogues and a psychologist did work with the children. Describing the services, most of the victims mentioned toys given to the children, entertainment activities, food, hygiene items, schoolbooks, clothing, notebooks and pencils and other things they need for school, etc.

Level of satisfaction with the living conditions in the shelters

The living conditions, i.e. the issues related to the stay of the victims in the shelters, such as the comfort of the rooms (including their being adapted to women with special needs), food preparation, adequate heating, as well as organizing informal group activities were the subject of investigation of this part of the analysis.

According to the statements of the majority of the victims, the living rooms are comfortable and pleasant. This was stated by 14 of the 17 interviewed victims. Only three of them said that they did not feel in this way, i.e. that they were partially satisfied, stating the following as reasons: no washing machine, no sundries, organized joint

accommodation of the victims, only one bathroom, etc. Shelters in the country have no special conditions and aids required for sheltering victims with special needs. This may easily be concluded from the statements of the victims (14) who said there are no such conditions, while three of them said that they do not know whether there are such conditions or not.

As regards the possibility for the victims to prepare meals on their own adequate to their needs, the conclusion is that there is no established principle in the shelters when it comes to this issue. This is especially true for the state shelters. Namely, in these shelters only those victims who have their own means may prepare their own meals and these are excluded from the category of victims having prepared (pre-cooked) food provided by the line ministry (the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy). On the other hand, victims who do not have means of their own have the right to prepare their own meals only on weekends, when there are no ready-made ones. Out of the total of five victims who said they had prepared their own meals during their stay in the shelter, three were accommodated in the state-owned ones (Kocani, Ohrid, and Strumica) and two in the Shelter Center. One of the victims even stated that the owner of the premises in which one of the state shelters is located prepared the meals for her. The victims accommodated in the temporary shelter were not included in this aspect of the analysis, due to the temporary nature of their accommodation.

The heating systems ensure adequate heating of the space, as confirmed by the victims' statements (10 of them); three victims, however, said they did not know whether this is so, as they had been sheltered in a period in which no heating is needed. In one of the state shelters (Kocani), the rooms are heated by wood, and the state shelter in Kumanovo has no radiators installed. Two of the interviewed victims gave no answers to this question.

With regard to the question of whether informal activities are organized in the shelters to help strengthen the domestic violence victims' self-confidence and to establish mutual solidarity (group meetings, joint

running of certain household chores, other group activities, etc.), most of the victims (10) gave negative answers. Five victims said that some sort of informal activities are organized in the shelters, describing those activities as joint cooking, joint meals, talking to one another, cooking competitions, plays organized by the kids for representatives of the ministry, and so on. The analysis of this issue did not include the victims sheltered in the Crisis Center Hope, due to the temporary nature of their accommodation there.

Level of satisfaction and room for improvement

Besides about their satisfaction with the previously described living conditions in the shelters, we also asked them whether the capacities and conditions of the shelters satisfy the needs of the victim and, if they are not satisfied, to state how these might be improved.

According to the statement of the majority of the victims, the capacities and conditions in the shelters do satisfy the need of the victims (12 such answers). Five of them expressed dissatisfaction, saying there is a need to improve the capacities and conditions in the shelters. Of those five, four were placed in the state shelters in Kocani, Kumanovo, Skopje, and Strumica. One of them had been accommodated in the Shelter Center. The victims put forward a series of proposals as to how things may be improved, including improvement of the living and staying conditions, but also of the services, especially the need to provide various types of assistance and support, such as psychological and legal aid, program for working with children and health care.

"They are partially satisfactory. The space needs to be expanded, and the level of working with the victims also needs to be higher. Victims need help in their efforts to become independent; they need guidance for their further life. They also need assistance in finding employment, financial assistance to pay their rent at least during the first 6 months following their leaving the shelter, as well as follow-up assistance in terms of monitoring their cases even after they leave." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

"I am not satisfied, as there are no personal hygiene conditions and no sufficient space. The space needs to be expanded; more bathrooms need

to be built, as well as more rooms, etc.” (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Mechanism for expressing dissatisfaction

The statements of the victims lead to the conclusion that the shelters have no clear rules on the existence of an individual/service to which the domestic violence victim may turn in case of dissatisfaction with the manner in which sheltering is done or with individual services as part of the shelter accommodation. Thence the various opinions and practice in expressing the dissatisfaction. Thus, out of the victims placed in the state shelters, five (5) said that, in case of dissatisfaction, they are to turn to the Social Work Centers; five (5) victims said that they expressed their dissatisfaction to the shelter personnel (the state one in Skopje); four (4) victims are not aware of any such mechanism, and one stated that there is no such mechanism. At the Shelter Center, the victims expressed their dissatisfaction to the staff and the director of the shelter.

Exposure to expenses related to the accommodation in a shelter

A part of the victims (7 of them) accommodated in the shelters are exposed to additional expenses, such as costs for purchasing food, diapers, medicine, travel costs and costs related to obtaining the documentation required.

Plans for further integration of victims

We analyzed the plans for further integration of the sheltered victims in terms of whether and who works with them on this issue, i.e. whether such plans are based on and resulting from the protection provided during their stay in the shelters.

As to who talked with the victims about the plans for their integration following their stay at the shelter, most of them (10 victims) responded that this would be the teams, i.e. the social workers responsible for their cases. Six of them replied that no one talked to them on the issue, and one said that she made her own decisions about her future plans.

The responds regarding their plans seem to lead to the conclusion that the future of the sheltered victims is rather uncertain. Namely, their plans usually focus on divorcing the marriage, gaining economic independence by finding a job, and renting a place in which they can live on their own. Some of them count on the support from their primary family, where they would live when they leave the shelter. Unfortunately, for some of them the period following their stay in the shelter does not mean a period of safety and security, as there is still risk and possibility that these would be endangered. Four of the victims gave no answer to this question.

A part of them are still unable to decide what their future plans are.

"No, I still cannot make any decision as to my plans for the future. We talked with the social worker about initiating a divorce procedure, but she said to me: 'But, divorce means nothing in your case. What's the point in getting a divorce if he keeps coming to you and abusing you wherever you are?' She suggested that I stay here, saying to me "stay here and give it some more thought." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Some of them go on living with the violent person, with no solution to their problem.

"I knew that it would be unbearable; my children were there and you cannot avoid going back, for their sake. It is more for their sake; I do not even know what to say. I do not know and I feel as though I was in some kind of a maze, not being able to find a solution for my situation." (a statement of a sheltered victim)

Case studies

Having in mind the meaning of the issue of availability of being accommodated in a shelter, the analysis – in addition to the knowledge gained from the victims sheltered – we wanted to also give you the experiences of those victims for whom this type of protection was not provided, despite the fact that they did and still do need such protection.

The experiences of these victims of violence point to the weaknesses and inability of the protection systems to ensure the safety of the victims and their children by placing them in shelters. Thence, the inclusion of the following cases in this paper aims to underline the need of considering all possibilities and finding the solutions needed to overcome such situations in the future.

Case number one

This involves a 45-year old victim, who asked to be accommodated in a state shelter in November 2009. She is a victim of violence that she has been suffering ever since getting married to her husband, to whom she is still married. She has been a victim of all forms of violence, which has lasted for 27 years. Following the most recent outburst of physical violence that she reported to the police, she required to be sheltered, but was unfortunately not provided with this type of protection. The reason given to her for not placing her in a shelter was that there were no vacancies in the state shelter in Skopje. The fact that her request to be accommodated in a shelter was refused caused the victim to feel frustrated, furious and disappointed. As a result, she was forced to stay with her two children of age at their neighbors and, once the violent person calmed down, to go back home. The Social Work Center provided no other measures of protection for her. The only thing it did was to invite her husband for an interview, but he refused to show up.

"I am nervous. I fight alone to support the children. I have two jobs to repay the debts that we have. I only pray to God to keep me healthy."

Case number two

This is a 37-year old woman who was a victim of domestic violence practiced by her husband. She has been a victim of all forms of violence that has been there since she gave birth to their first child or approximately six years. When she reported the violence in the competent Social Work Center in her area, she was advised not to endure the violence and to leave the husband immediately. Leaving the violent environment in a smaller town, she and her two children went back to live with her parents in Skopje. Unfortunately, her going back to her primary family did not mean a life free of violence. She and her children became victims of violence inflicted by her parents, that is her father and mother. The father of the victim physically maltreated her in front of her children, upsetting and scaring the kids. She reported the violence to the police, but her parent only replaced the physical with psychological violence. Moreover, both grandparents then began practicing physical violence on the children. This may be seen from the visible bruises on their bodies. To help overcome the consequences, i.e. the trauma that the two minor kids suffered both during the violence against their mother by their father and the violence against themselves by their grandmother and grandfather, a psychologist worked with the children. He wrote a report, warning that the children are not to be exposed to any further violence and must be relocated to a non-violent environment. As a result, their mother decided to seek shelter in a state shelter in Skopje. Her request was, however, denied, with the explanation that the shelters were overcrowded and that she was "not in that great a danger". This decision of the team at the Social Work Center in Skopje made the victim feel disappointed and unpleasant. Furthermore, the victim was redirected from Skopje to the Social Work Center in the smaller town, which again instructed her to go back to Skopje and seek help there. Thus far, the Social Work Center has not undertaken any other protection measure. Having no choice, the victim also sought shelter in an NGO-run shelter, but this one was also fully occupied.

"I am disappointed. My problem is still not resolved; I am still wandering what to do. My father stopped hitting me in front of the children, but told me that I have two more months before I leave their home and find a way to cope with the situation on my own."

IV. Conclusions

Approach

- placing victims in a shelter as a protection measure is not available for all victims in need, despite the obvious underutilization of the capacities of most of the state-run shelters
- there is no coordination in using the shelters' capacities to the full, due to which a number of victims in need of such protection may not receive it, in spite of vacancies in some of the shelters
- the victims are insufficiently familiar with the possibility of being accommodated in a shelter

Procedure of sending victims to shelters

- Sheltering as a type of protection may still be only provided during business days and during the working hours of the competent institutions, and is not available at night and during weekends
- There are no shelters of urgent and temporary nature (24-48 hours) throughout the country, except the one in Skopje
- The duration of the procedure of sending victims to a shelter is not standardized; despite the large number of cases in which victims have been placed in a shelter within one day, there are still cases of victims unable to get shelter accommodation even after two weeks or two months following the identification of such a need

Protection provided in the shelters

- there is no specially developed plan for safety in the shelter, with clear instructions
- there are no prescribed appropriate instruments for assessment of what constitutes "serious danger and threat to the victim's life", as one of the basic parameters that are decisive in terms of whether a victims will be placed in a shelter or not

- the experts are in no position to professionally respond to their responsibilities in the shelter, on one hand, and the additional duties in their corresponding inter-municipal social work center, on the other
- no continuous program for working with the victims and their children has been established at the shelters
- there is no unified and established way of providing the protection measure
- a part of the legally prescribed measures of protection are not provided at the shelters
- there are no unified and clearly defined indicators on the basis of which the effects of the implementation of the individual plans for working with the victims may be monitored and the desirable duration of their stay at the shelters may be determined
- the duration of the victims' stay in the shelters, in particular the foreseen deadlines of three months with the possibility of extension of another three months, combined with the lack of continuous work with the victims, additionally worsens their situation
- there is a lack of support and assistance for the victims in their successful reintegration following the end of their stay at the shelter, especially in terms of their gaining economic independence and renting a flat or a room to live in
- cooperation with the civil society organizations that provide specialized assistance for the victims is unsatisfactory and the victims are, therefore, deprived of adequate and specialized assistance and support
- there are no mechanisms for expressing dissatisfaction in the shelters

Conditions for placement in a shelter

- there is an unequal treatment of the sheltered victims, especially in terms of their exposure to costs during their stay there (the employed victims bear the costs for the meals themselves, and part of the victims face certain additional costs)
- there is a need of improving the living conditions in the shelters, such as more space, equipment and better hygiene maintenance conditions, etc.
- the shelters are not adjusted to accommodate victims with special needs
- no informal activities are organized in the shelters, such that would enable strengthening of the self-confidence of women and their mutual solidarity

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