

Contribution by Romania for the Secretary General's Report on *Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations* (A/RES/77/195) to be presented during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly

Romania is the 14th state that ratified the Istanbul Convention in March 2016, by Law 30/2016. The Convention entered into force in Romania on 1 September 2016.

Over the last years, Romania has embarked on an ambitious and comprehensive reform of domestic violence legislation and has consistently taken steps to prepare for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention provisions.

Thus, within the Law nr.178/2018 was introduced the notion of "gender-based violence" representing *"the act of violence directed against a woman or, as the case may be, a man motivated by gender. Gender-based violence against women or violence against women is violence that affects women disproportionately. Gender-based violence includes, but is not limited to, domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilization, sexual harassment, trafficking in human beings and forced prostitution"*.

Romania adopted the national strategy for preventing and combating sexual violence "*SINERGY*" 2020-2030, an important public policy document (Government Decision no.592/2021), which stipulates that *sexual violence can take different forms, not limited to acts of non-consensual sexual contact, but can include a wide range of sexual conduct, including attempts to obtain intercourse, sexual harassment, humiliation, blackmail, coercion, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.*

In line with this strategy, through the predefined project "*Support for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania*" with total value of €2.5 million (2019-2024), financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, within the "Justice" Programme, managed by the Ministry of Justice, as Program Operator, was created a network of 10 intervention centres for sexual violence victims. This project represented a strategic action to support the Romanian public administration authorities for the adoption of a coordinated action in addressing the challenges posed by the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

The centres were created within the emergency hospitals, in the sense of an integrated approach to cases, by ensuring services appropriate to the immediate needs of victims, respectively: medical examinations, post-traumatic care, guidance and counseling for support services, provided in the same place and as close as possible to the crisis situation, through a multidisciplinary team consisting of doctor, nurse, forensic doctor, psychologist, social worker, police officer.

The new approach of integrated intervention is a signal that the authorities are giving to victims of violence and sexual abuse to encourage them to seek the help of specialized personnel and to file a complaint for the act to be punished.

Integrated intervention aims at involving professionals with a decisive role in addressing cases of sexual violence: doctors, psychologists, social workers in hospitals and/or social services, specialists in the outpatient department and the Emergency Department, forensic doctors and police officers.

The Intervention Center is dedicated to all victims, without discrimination, the services being offered at no cost.

Access to services is done through a circuit of intervention that begins in the Emergency Unit, where the specific medical protocol is initiated for victims who need assistance. The staff of the Emergency Reception Unit is the first to intervene to provide medical care to the victim and then she is taken to the office where the Intervention Center operates.

Intervention Center for Victims of Sexual Violence it is a specially arranged space, where the victim can benefit both from the restoration of emotional security, protection and primary counseling, in order to identify the immediate needs and start the next stage of the intervention, depending on the case.

Within the intervention center the victim is protected from new situations of stress and revictimization generated by bureaucratic procedures that involve trips to the police and forensic services to prove the aggression acts.

Through the integrated intervention provided in the Center, the victims of sexual violence are supported and encouraged to take all necessary steps for the aggressor to be held accountable.

The center is equipped with adequate endowments, instruments and medical supplies, as well as kits for biological sampling, in the format approved by the Superior Council of Legal Medicine by Decision no.6/2017 on “Standard Methodology for the sampling of biological samples in sexual assaults”.