

## Cases of GBV survivors: Police and Judicial authority Practices in Greece.

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Method: Ice-Breaking Introduction - Lecturing combined with participatory methods

**Police** officers are usually the first line professionals who may receive complaints from women who have suffered violence. Their response capacity is crucial, regarding the next steps of the victim and her danger to be re-victimized. Thus it is important to assist her- in an empowering manner - to take an informed decision, applying and following the basic principles of safety, respect, non-discrimination and confidentiality.

### Good/recommended practices:

- Provision of information and reference to Public Structures against VAW (counselling centres for women, Shelters). Such a response constitutes an alternative protection pathway for GBV survivors, who may hesitate to file a complaint against the perpetrator.
- Stressing the importance of the forensic examination (police provide the relevant order, however the examination is presented as an “option” or “recommended” to the victim, although it is absolutely necessary for the penal process, or else the perpetrator would be acquitted on grounds of “doubt”).
- Safeguarding the confidentiality of Shelters’ address (regularly police officers require to know the exact address of the Shelter).
- Zero-tolerance to violence: Victims should be treated equally, irrespective of their age, education level, economic situation and origin. (Police officers tend to reproduce stereotypes about VAW, e.g. violence connected to poverty, illiteracy, culture.)

### Bad practices:

- Discouragement of the victims, by “informing” them about the right of the perpetrator to file also a complaint against them, for “false complaint”.
- Demand for fee.
- Attempt of mediation – ignorance of automatically prosecuted crimes.

*The role and competence of the **judiciary** is crucial for the arrangement of all pending issues of GBV survivor and her protection and durable safety. Judicial authorities should actively handle GBV cases, empowering the victim and avoiding masking the relevant crimes.*

### Good/recommended practices:

- Application of interim measures in penal process, pursuant to art. 12 L. 3500/2006.
- Increased probative value of documents and statements provided by public structures against GBV. (I had handled a case, where the court found the accused guilty of rape, despite poor forensic evidence and lack of other evidence, based on the statements provided by the counseling centre.)
- Involvement of Social Service of competent Municipalities.

### Bad practices

- Not taking into account the sociological theories about VAW (e.g. the reluctance to file official complaints against the perpetrator of GBV, there was a case where the Juvenile Prosecutor assessed the mother's attitude as improper as she did not take any legal action against the perpetrator of GBV, which occurred in front of the minor children and this resulted to deprivation of her custody rights.).

*In case of victims of foreign origin, there are additional challenges, e.g. lack of supporting net, language barrier and uncertain legal status. There are cases of foreign women who ended up in detention due to lack of residence permit. The list with certified interpreters is not used by police officers in receiving complaints. However no legal stay needs to be proved in case of appearing before Greek judicial authorities.*

**Conclusion remarks:**

The lawyer's contribution and involvement in civil and penal cases can be really constructive, regarding the proper application of the relevant legal framework, as well as the guidance to the victim to the direction of her empowerment and combat against any dependency factors (by referral to public structures, accurate information).