



INTERACTIVE PATHWAY FOR (RE)INTEGRATION AT WORK OF WOMEN FACING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Learning toolkit



Co-funded by the
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of the European Union



#ACTIVproject
www.aktivproject.eu



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Introduction

The ACTIV project

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, the ACTIV project's – for "Acting and collaborating to tackle intimate violence" – main objective is to improve the socio-professional (re)integration of women facing domestic violence.

Through the various products developed within the framework of the project, the ACTIV partnership strives to improve synergies between the actors, raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence and improve the conditions for a better pathway to socio-professional (re)integration. The overall result of these resources is to improve the support, guidance and integration that the different actors offer to the women concerned.

Firstly, the project developed a [guidebook¹](#) putting into perspective the definitions, the national and European contexts, and the legal frameworks (Belgium, France, Romania, Spain); identifying the limits and positive initiatives that can help the socio-professional (re)integration of women facing domestic violence and proposing a framework of common indicators facilitating mutual understanding between the actors involved in the return-to-work process.

This second outcome is a learning toolkit for the structures involved in the latter process. Based on its experience, the ACTIV partnership has identified the lack of collaboration between actors when it comes to providing effective help, assistance and support to women. Thus, this paper focuses specifically on two groups: field workers and companies, both of which are considered fundamental in the pathway to socio-professional (re)integration. The latter is because ACTIV strongly believes that guidance structures and enterprises should work hand in hand and not separately as is, unfortunately, most often the case at present. Through this learning toolkit, several resources will be offered to you. You can consult and download them freely on the website www.active-project.eu.

The third publication is a white paper for policymakers, business actors and all organisations working on the subject with concrete recommendations to improve the support of women in their pathway.

¹ <https://activproject.eu/resources/guidebook/>

ACTIV partnership

The European collaboration allows crossing experiences, filling gaps and learning from what is done in Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe. The ACTIV partnership is therefore based on the complementary knowledge and expertise of the different actors in the field.

POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS (BELGIUM)

Founded in 2002 by the Belgian economist Denis Stokkink, POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS is an independent European think & do tank committed to promote solidarity and sustainability in Europe.

POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS takes action to defend and strengthen the European Social Model, which consists of a subtle balance between economic development and social justice. PLS's team is composed of members with multicultural and interdisciplinary backgrounds and works in the public space alongside socioeconomic actors, having as its motto: 'Understand to Act'.

 <https://www.pourlasolidarite.eu/>

LA MISSION LOCALE POUR L'EMPLOI DE BRUXELLES VILLE (BELGIUM)

Mission Locale pour l'Emploi de Bruxelles-Ville (Mloc) is a non-profit organization that helps job-seekers in Brussels to overcome any difficulties they face to find a job. The objective is to ensure their social and professional reintegration through a holistic approach. Mloc provides individual coaching and guidance with opportunities for training and qualification.

 <http://missionlocalebxlville.be/>

LA FONDATION FACE (FRANCE)

The Foundation Act Against Exclusion (FACE), recognized as a public utility, brings together public, private and associative actors in the fight against exclusion, discrimination and poverty.

For 26 years, it has been a unique meeting place for companies and public actors acting in these fields, constituting the largest French network of socially committed companies. FACE is an original ecosystem made of the Foundation, its Network - around fifty local structures run by hundreds of employees and patrons, as well as around forty foundations under its aegis. Its work benefits more than 350,000 beneficiaries.

 www.fondationface.org

ASOCIATIA TOUCHED ROMANIA (ROMANIA)

Touched Romania is supporting women and their children who are victims of domestic violence, poverty and social exclusion, to remain together and reintegrate into society as independent and productive citizens, through three of its programmes: Hagar Home Maternal Centre, Centre for Counselling and Social Reintegration and Transitional Apartments.

 <https://touchedromania.org/>

CEPS PROJECTES SOCIALS (SPAIN)

CEPS Projectes Socials is a non-profit organization based in Barcelona working on EU wide projects. CEPS is responsible for the management and implementation of socio-educational activities for children, young people and adults, and further training for professionals. Expert staff research and develop innovative projects and practices. CEPS promotes a strategic and social view of the use of new technologies, and through participatory practices, new models for strategic partnerships are developed at local and international levels. Social impact and creative activities are blended together into inspiring solutions for the community.

 <https://asceps.org/>



A tailor-made pathway to ensure the socio-professional (re)integration of women confronted with domestic violence

1. Socio-professional (re)integration and job retention are essential

The countries of the ACTIV partnership used different methodologies with different groups of actors, including women survivors of domestic violence², field workers and companies, to discuss issues related to the socio-professional (re)integration of women facing this type of violence. Although each country takes into account the specificities of its context, the general results are transversal and raise key points such as the lack of investment and support for care structures and the lack of interest of companies in this issue. For example, socio-professional (re)integration was highlighted as an essential step for the recovery and empowerment of women.

On the one hand, the professionals working with survivors of domestic violence are considered the only ones to have enough knowledge about gender politics, which causes them to be left to deal with every issue that has to do with gender. Thus, the lack of gender-focused trained professionals causes specialists to be overworked, making it impossible to tend to all the victims that need their services. They ask for more trained professionals or a more significant economic investment to coach more people in gender-related issues.

On the other hand, empowering survivors of domestic violence and giving them back their agency and independence was stated as fundamental. To accomplish this, women need to find ways to support themselves, and the best way is for them to get training in specific areas in which they can work, which brings the following issue: companies are not aware enough of it. Most companies only want to employ survivors of domestic violence for a certain amount of time to get economic benefits – if there are – but

² Research across countries, with different cultural and language contexts, brings difficulties in the translation of words as well as their connotations. In projects concerned with gender and violence, there are many such difficulties which need to be addressed in order to allow the sharing of research and resources. A primary concern is the varying understandings of the main terms used, such as 'gender violence', 'gender-based violence', 'violence against women', 'intimate partner violence' and 'domestic violence' (Guizzo, 2018).

The ACTIV project partners will be using the most widely understood terms in each country, to refer to intimate partner violence suffered by women at the hand of their partner or ex-partner. We will use "domestic violence" (DV) in the French, English and Romanian translations, whilst in the Spanish translations we shall refer to "gender-based violence" (GBV), which is the term used in Spanish law, and the most commonly accepted.

For more information, you can check the section "[Definition](#)" on the ACTIV project web page or read the chapter, "A story of definition(s)" in the [Guidebook](#).

don't care enough about them to build a healthy and lasting employment relationship. For this reason, companies and employers must be sensitised and trained in gender and violence topics to understand the situation in which women have been, and are still, going through.

Lastly, since this type of violence affects women in different ways and there is not a specific and defined profile of a woman who has suffered it, there is no linear path to follow to help them in their socio-professional (re)integration. Plus, most policies focus on survivors of domestic violence (re)integration but don't account for external factors such as mental health issues or children. For instance, employers and companies need to give women the flexibility to recover and sort out their lives (e.g. without needing to still keep up with a regular work schedule, for instance). Specific needs might arise depending on every situation. For this reason, it is vital to create tools and resources that might contribute to empathising, understanding, and offering better conditions, putting women at the centre.

The socio-professional (re)integration and job retention are essential for the holistic recovery of women confronted with domestic violence.

As mentioned above, field workers facing many difficulties and companies lacking knowledge and resources in the socio-professional (re)integration of women confronted with domestic violence persist. However, as stated during the ACTIV case studies and focus groups developed, for women confronted with this type of violence, access to employment and job retention is one of the steps that might help them to stop the circle of violence they are embedded in, and it is needed for their holistic recovery.

For women confronted with domestic violence, the possibility of having a job helps them to achieve financial, social, psychological, and emotional independence. It permits them economic independence and gives them agency and strength so they can stop their link with the aggressor. It also helps them in their emotional, psychological, and physical recuperation. Besides, leaving their house permits them to enhance personal relations and promote self-esteem, security, and stability. For their recovery, the support, autonomy, and income provided by labour reinsertion are essential. Thus, labour (re)insertion and job retention are key factors in their life and relation normalisation. However, this is a difficult process they have to go through. It is a non-linear and intermittent pathway women must face.

2. Companies are key players

Companies are fundamental actors on this path as they are key players in achieving justice, equity and better conditions for women facing domestic violence. In order to combat domestic violence, it is vital to create a support network where every stakeholder is involved. Furthermore, it must be understood that domestic violence is not a private issue but a public and state issue of collective responsibility and that everyone must participate in improving the conditions of this population of women. Thus, the role of society, especially in the business sector, in achieving justice and equity is fundamental. Sustainability, social cohesion and a type of management that responds to this issue in accordance with an ethical commitment and national, European and international legal requirements and frameworks should be the objective.

Companies have great potential to raise social awareness and can strengthen internally, within their organisation, and externally, with customers and suppliers, a healthier ecosystem that promotes and continues to build a society free of domestic violence. In addition, women survivors have developed emotional capacities to cope with reality and overcome many obstacles. This last point is a great strength as they show great resilience and strength to face the professional market.

How to use the toolkit?

For whom?

This pathway targets different profiles:

1. Field workers who are already involved in the topic or field workers who are new to the topic and who may encounter women facing domestic violence in the course of their work. By field workers, we mean people who are in contact with women who are confronted with domestic violence in their socio-professional (re)integration process, i.e. social workers, people working in shelter organisations, NGOs, socio-professional integration organisations, etc.
2. Companies that are already aware of the issue and wish to go further in their commitment or companies that do not have tools at their disposal and wish to engage with their employees. Within companies, we specifically address human resources, inclusion and diversity units, and social action departments for companies that have one, but also colleagues who wish to be informed and made aware of the issue.

The aim is to guarantee the return to employment of women facing domestic violence by promoting collaboration between field workers - trained to work with this particular public - and companies - which have become a safe place to keep these women in employment.

For what?

Domestic violence and the need for a better network and infrastructure to improve the socio-professional (re)integration of women who have experienced this type of violence should be a public concern, and the ACTIV project aims to contribute to this issue.

We have developed this toolkit to draw on the knowledge and expertise of field workers and companies in the fields of domestic violence and socio-professional (re)integration. It aims to guide field workers and enterprises by giving them tools to raise awareness and improve their involvement in this field. It also aims to create synergies between the different actors involved in the process.

The guidebook provides recommendations for research and practice. We encourage field workers and businesses to use the information in the guide to support their daily work with the women victims of domestic violence they serve.

The main objectives of the ACTIV project and this toolkit are:

- To increase synergies between stakeholders and improve their collaborations.
- To provide learning tools to improve the services provided by stakeholders, so that they can develop a caring environment.
- To leverage the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders and companies by involving them in the socio-professional (re)integration of women facing domestic violence.

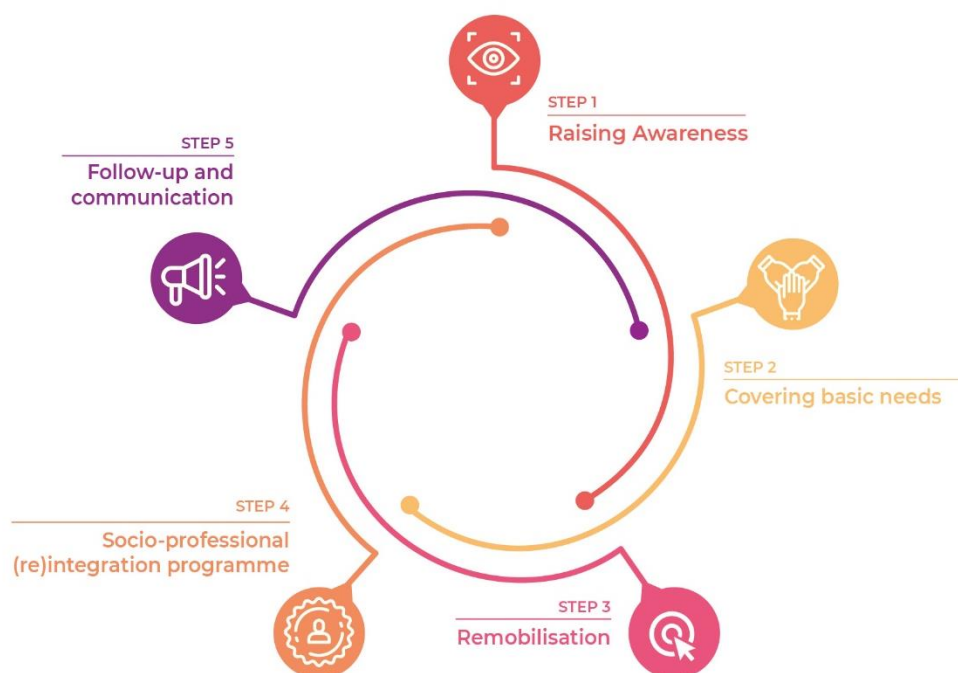
How?

Many different pathways are depending on the country, the person, the situation, etc. However, based on the experience of the partners, we have identified five main challenges in the process of socio-professional (re)integration of women facing domestic violence.

This toolkit will help companies to better understand these challenges and get involved in their professional (re)integration. It also aims to help NGOs, shelters and field workers to offer better support.

The interactive tool is built in five steps, each responding to a challenge. However, it should not be followed as a linear pathway but, depending on the life experience of each woman facing domestic violence, the route may be different.

The toolkit consists of five steps necessary for the successful socio-professional (re)integration of women who have experienced domestic violence. These steps were defined based on the indicators identified by the field workers themselves. They are aimed at both field workers and companies, the aim being to strengthen synergies and collaboration between these actors. Resources dedicated to these two target audiences were developed at each stage.



Step 1: Raising awareness

Domestic violence is not only present in the private sphere. It affects us all. Yet stereotypes about women survivors of this type of violence persist. This is why it is so important to promote a women-centred perspective, which puts women and their experiences at the centre. It is also essential to improve the tools for recognising and identifying women survivors of this type of violence so that they can be approached and supported in their process.

The ACTIV project aims to raise awareness of available information by providing companies and field workers with tools to implement in their daily practice. Companies play an essential role in the reintegration of women survivors. It is therefore essential to promote greater cooperation and synergies between the actors in the field in order to create more employment opportunities.

Step 2: Covering basic needs

In order to make a fresh start in life and look to the future, women need to cover their basic needs and know their rights. They need to know that there are specialised social services to accommodate them and their children. The challenges are to ensure women's safety, privacy and anonymity, and to provide a caring and supportive environment.

The ACTIV project aims to raise awareness among field workers and companies, so that they can understand the particular experiences, always putting the women at the centre. Each case of domestic violence has its own particularities and the environment must be flexible, caring and understanding.

Step 3: Remobilisation

Women facing domestic violence have lost their confidence in themselves and in the world around them. They have lost their bearings and are very often isolated. Assessing themselves on a CV and selling themselves at an interview can seem overwhelming. So, before developing a professional project, these women need to regain their self-esteem and their confidence in others.

The ACTIV project aims to give tools to those working in the field and to companies so that they can listen to women, take in their words and above all believe them. Later on, when the women are ready, the practitioners can think about coaching them, and building places where they can exchange with each other and acquire new skills. In particular, field workers and companies can encourage remobilisation by organising empowerment workshops.

Step 4: Socio-professional re(integration) programme

Supporting women victims of violence in their professional projects means giving them the opportunity to achieve professional fulfilment and regain sustainable financial independence.

The ACTIV project aims to offer an innovative support programme for these women, to be implemented by local players and companies. Through orientation, learning professional codes, creating tools, finding training courses or preparing for interviews: these women regain control of their lives. We support them in their dream of a professional life and guide them step by step to achieve this goal.

Step 5: Follow-up and communication

It is not only a question of facilitating the return to the employment of women facing domestic violence. It is also necessary to help them keep their jobs (job retention). Domestic violence is not a private matter. Violence has an impact on work. In this sense, companies can provide a safe place where women can talk about their problems and find resources.

The ACTIV project aims to support companies and strengthen their involvement in providing a welcoming environment for employees facing domestic violence. We want to help companies to develop an action plan: communication, training of employees, and development of measures such as geographical and time flexibility are practices that can be put in place by companies.



STEP 1

Raising Awareness

Domestic violence is not only present in the private sphere. It affects all of us. Yet, stereotypes about women survivors of this type of violence still persist. This is why it is so important to promote a women focus perspective, which puts women and their experience in the centre. It is also vital to improve tools to be able to acknowledge and identify women survivors of this type of violence and thus be able to approach and be supportive to them in their process.

ACTIV project aims to raise awareness of the information available providing companies and field workers with tools to be implemented in their daily practice. Companies play an essential role in the reinsertion of women survivors. Thus, it is fundamental to promote more cooperation and synergies between field actors to create more job opportunities.

Objectives

To raise awareness of the cycle and continuum of violence to:

- Identify women facing domestic violence;
- Ensure that they are cared for in the best possible way;
- Help these women to get out of the cycle of violence;
- Propose a structural and anti-blame approach to the care of women victims of domestic violence.

Challenges for the field workers involved

Often, field workers are in contact with a woman facing domestic violence without even knowing it. With little training, they do not always know how to react when the woman tells them her story or when they suspect a situation of violence. In the survey we carried out among field workers³, there is a need for more training in the following topics:

- Knowledge of the cycle of violence
- Continuum of violence
- How to detect a situation of violence?
- How to establish an equal, caring and trusting relationship?
- What are the basic needs of women that must be met?

³ ACTIV project, "Key aspects for a successful back-to-work path of women confronted with domestic violence", 2021. Available on: www.activproject.eu

Raising awareness of the information available, the existing initiatives in the field is needed to promote more cooperation/synergies between field actors. The questions field actors often ask are the following:

- Whom should I contact if I meet a woman facing domestic violence?
- What are the existing resources?



The basic strategy followed to take stock of the situation and identify the resources. The idea is to empower the person, to take power in their life. For example, to go through administrative hurdles, get information from the right place, gain respect, etc. »

SOCIAL WORKER

Resource 1

Key aspects for a successful back-to-work path of women confronted with domestic violence

This guidebook highlights the main steps of a successful return to work, puts definitions, European and national contexts and legal frameworks (Belgium, France, Romania, Spain) into perspective, and identifies common indicators facilitating mutual understanding between the actors involved in the return-to-work process.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 2

The violence meter

This easy-to-understand tool allows you to recognise what is acceptable or not in a relationship.

→ Click [here: https://www.paris.fr/pages/lutter-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-18035](https://www.paris.fr/pages/lutter-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-18035)

Challenges for companies

In Europe, one woman in three has been physically or sexually abused, most often by a partner or ex-partner. This means that every employer has been, is or will be in contact with an employee who has experienced gender-based violence, whether it happens at work or in the private sphere.

However, it is not easy for a company to talk about domestic violence. It is often assumed that this is a private matter and that an employer cannot intervene in this area. Yet female employees spend more than a third of their time at work (sometimes their only place of social interaction outside their domestic environment). This is a time that they spend away from their abuser. During this time they can take steps to get away from the violence.

Beyond the personal and social impacts, violence also has economic consequences. Multiple surveys show the extent to which such violence affects the victim's ability to work, as well as her colleagues: reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, turnover, resignation without notice, etc.

It is therefore important to communicate widely on the role of the employer and on the place that companies can take in the fight against this violence. Indeed positioning the workplace as a safe place where victims can find support and referrals greatly increases the impact of initiatives.



We would ask for more companies involved in the social and professional reintegration of women, more funds to develop these kinds of projects and more housing to stabilise the situation of these women. »

FONDATION AGIR CONTRE L'EXCLUSION

Resource 3

National studies to understand the impact of domestic violence in the workplace

To raise awareness of the importance of socio-professional reintegration and job retention, it is important to understand the impact that employers and companies can have in this struggle. The studies will make it possible to have figures and to convince employers to commit themselves to the fight against domestic violence, which goes beyond the private sphere.

→ Available on [ACTIV website](#)

Resource 4

CARVE project

The project entitled “Companies Against gender-based Violence – CARVE” aims to raise awareness and prevent gender-related violence committed against women through a comprehensive European campaign involving companies. The main resources of the project are: 1) National qualitative studies that aim at presenting the legal and social background as well as the way violence committed against women is treated in each partner country 2) A compilation of best workplace practices.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 5

CEASE posters

These posters are addressed to every employee at every level and can be used independently from each other and be put up in the company's premises

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 6

Digital resources to go further

These resources can be shared with every employee at every level to raise awareness among them.

→ Available on ACTIV website



STEP 2

Covering basic needs

In order to make a fresh start in life and look to the future, women need to cover their basic needs and know their rights. They need to know that there are specialised social services to accommodate them and their children. The challenges are to ensure women's safety, privacy and anonymity, and to provide a caring and supportive environment.

The ACTIV project aims to raise awareness among field workers and companies, so that they can understand the particular experiences, always putting the women at the centre. Each case of domestic violence has its own particularities and the environment must be flexible, caring and understanding. Women must have access to comprehensive support, safe shelter, free psychological counselling, medical assistance and legal support. Free access for children to crèche, kindergarten or school is also important to have time to have a job.

Objectives

In order to enable women to project themselves into the future and envisage their socio-professional (re)integration, basic needs must be taken into account from the beginning of the process:

- Emotional recovery,
- Learn to be independent,
- Access to housing,
- Secure the children,
- Solve mobility issues,
- Know and activate social rights/aids,
- Access to protection order,
- Access to legal representation,
- To be accompanied in legal or administrative procedures.

Challenges for the field workers involved

Field workers who work with women facing domestic violence must be specially trained to provide holistic assistance to women and their children. They must be able to properly assess the risks women face, know the legislation, the services available and communicate openly and honestly with them. Most field workers who assist women facing domestic violence have previous experience in social work.

They need to develop know-how-to-be skills:

- Show tolerance,
- Know how to listen,
- Be empathic and caring,
- Be flexible,
- Respect anonymity if requested and manage professional confidentiality,
- guarantee the protection of women.

They also need to develop know-how skills:

- Know the local ecosystem,
- Define a contact person who acts as a link between the different stakeholders,
- Define a trusted person (as a mentor) to communicate with and/or who can discreetly keep important documents,
- Consider women facing domestic violence through their resources, and value women's knowledge and skills,
- Benefit from information to orient women facing domestic violence.



Most of the women want to work again. Then there are many who also put aside their emotions, so they cut themselves off from all emotion, they can pretend. But going back to work is a whole process, its childcare, etc. »

SOCIAL WORKER

Resource 7

How do I act when faced with a victim of domestic violence? Guide for field workers

This brochure gives action keys to address and act correctly when a field worker is faced with a victim of violence.

→ *Available on ACTIV website*

Resource 8

Who to refer a victim of domestic violence to? List of relevant associations and structures

If you are confronted with a victim of domestic violence, this list allows you to know which specialist structures to refer them to in your country.

→ *Available on ACTIV website*

Challenges for companies

In order to cover basic needs, companies need to be able to recognise domestic violence and know the cycle of violence and the impact of this violence on their employees. These elements are the first key to knowing how to recognise a woman facing domestic violence, how to talk to her and how to act.

Beyond recognising domestic violence and its impact, it is also essential for companies to provide a safe space where women feel secure and free to talk about the violence they experience. Having a safe workplace allows women facing violence to feel better in the workplace, to have a place of "escape", and to be able to talk about it if they wish, but also contributes to their empowerment, increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem.



A professional qualification / job stability is important to get out of the cycle of violence because it can increase the self-esteem of the abused person, it can increase the perspective on a normal life, and it can at some point communicate the situation confidence at work, to guide her to specialised help or even to help her get out of this situation. »

A WOMAN CONFRONTED WITH DV

Resource 9

Domestic violence does not stop at the house door

This booklet provides information on how to recognise domestic violence and how it manifests itself in the working environment, how to welcome the voices of victims and, above all, which services to refer them to.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 10

How to become a safe place?

This tool provides the essential keys to establishing a safe place for women who are facing domestic violence.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 11

List of companies already involved in the fight against domestic violence

Find a company in your country that is already sensitive to the issue of domestic violence and its impact on the workplace.

→ Available on ACTIV website



STEP 3

Remobilisation

Women facing domestic violence have lost their confidence in themselves and in the world around them. They have lost their bearings and are very often isolated. Assessing themselves on a CV and selling themselves at an interview can seem insurmountable. So, before developing a professional project, these women need to regain their self-esteem and their confidence in others.

The ACTIV project aims to give tools to those working in the field and to companies so that they can listen to the women, accept their words and above all believe them. Later, when the women are ready, those involved can think about support and the construction of places where they can exchange with each other and acquire new skills. Field workers and companies can promote remobilisation by organising empowerment workshops. For example, giving them the means to express their opinion, teaching them to manage a budget, self-defence activities, etc.

Objectives

Empowerment and remobilisation are very important steps in the socio-professional (re)integration of women victims of domestic violence. Indeed, it is a process of transformation that will result in a better self-esteem; women will learn new things and acquire new skills that will help them to break the social, professional and family isolation and give them the tools to be part of a group, of the community, to relearn how to live on a daily basis and to envisage a future in which they will be able to secure financial stability.

Empowerment and remobilisation take place in two ways: firstly through participation in psychological counselling sessions, but also through group coaching sessions where women develop independent living skills.

In the group coaching sessions, women are encouraged to express their opinions, to determine their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and for others. They will eventually become aware of their self-worth and understand that they can achieve more than they think.

Different topics can be covered to develop independent living skills. Please note that these activities do not replace the counselling they need to deal with the deeper issues related to the violence they have experienced. The main topics covered are the following:

- Benefits and support for people in difficulty, specific to each country,
- Managing your own budget,
- Health and nutrition,
- Assisting to parenting,
- Sexual education,
- Prevent abuse,
- Values, citizenship and public space,
- Mobility issues.

Challenges for the field workers involved

Women who wish to enrol in the programme (group coaching sessions) must be willing and able to work in a group. They must feel ready (psychologically but also in terms of availability) to commit to a process for a relatively long period of time. For this reason, the field worker needs to have a checkbox or selection grid to assess priorities and motivations.

Depending on the funding of these activities, the number of women accepted into the group should be limited. Therefore, the selection process must result in a balanced group of women who will be able to successfully complete the programme.

The programme aims to meet the needs of women. Therefore, although the content is predefined, it should be flexible enough to adapt to the group.

The duration of the programme should also be adapted to the reality of the women. It should be long enough to allow each participant to develop at her own pace.

Finally, to be successful, women must attend the programme until the end and participate in all the activities offered. The challenge for the field workers is to motivate and convince the women to stay until the end.



I'm going to tell you about a situation that I know well, for example, a young woman of 25 years whose husband forced her to leave its job, she was a sales assistant in a bakery, so she ended up staying with us because there was a lot of violence. It took her almost a year and a half to get out of the situation and today she is ready to return. Even though she is very well integrated that she had all the skills to do so, she still had to take a break of a year and a half to rebuild herself and regain her self-confidence. These are very long paths to reintegration.»

SOCIAL WORKER

Resource 12

How to help empower a woman confronted with domestic violence?

This tool helps to define the concept of empowerment. It is intended to help those working in the field to apply this concept to the support of women victims of violence.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Challenges for companies

In order to help companies to develop more actions in favour of women facing domestic violence, it may be necessary to create a broad movement, to communicate widely and externally about the actions they are implementing in order to encourage other companies to get involved. Being part of a network can help companies to collaborate on a peer-to-peer basis, share good practice, etc. Two types of employers will be discussed here:

- Companies that are already aware of the issue and wish to go further in their commitment.
- Companies that do not have any tools at their disposal and wish to commit themselves to their employees.
- The aim is to establish an action plan with them and explain how they can make a difference in supporting their employees.

It is important to define an action plan with the company to explain the first steps to be taken. To do this, the company can turn to a specialised player (OneInThreeWomen network, CEASE network) or to other peers (sharing good practices). Different kinds of actions can be initiated:

- training of strategic personnel (social worker, manager, HR, staff representative, etc.).
- introducing special measures: geographical flexibility, flexible working hours, financial aid, housing support, etc.
- collaborating with other stakeholders: trade unions and staff representatives (taking account of domestic violence in company agreements), partnerships with associations
- providing training (for all staff) or financial support, etc.

It could also be relevant to define a trusted person within the company who will act as a link between the woman and the organisation/management of the company. This person should have the following skills:

- Be tolerant.
- Be a good listener
- Be empathetic and caring.
- Be flexible.
- Respect anonymity if requested and manage confidentiality.
- Ensure the protection of women.



In addition, it is important to offer practical and psychological support to staff who are in direct contact with women confronting DV, and may hence be in risk of suffering indirectly or directly from that violence e.g. absenteeism causing added stress for colleagues and line managers, or indeed the danger of a perpetrator showing up at the workplace with aggressive behaviour. »

A WOMAN CONFRONTED WITH DV



This is not just theatre, it is a transformative experience. One of the keys to the model is the tandem formed by the artist who leads the creative process and the social worker who accompanies the process of empowerment. We both have a complementary and essential role to help create a safe space in which participants can express themselves freely, and build a commitment with the group that materialises in the stage. »

SOCIAL INTEGRATOR RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROJECT, GABRIELA RIPARI (FROM A [PRESS RELEASE](#))

Resource 13

How to implement an action plan?

This guide can help employers and companies to:

- Lift the taboo of domestic violence in the workplace.
- Welcome women who are confronted with domestic violence.
- Develop good practices to respond, at your level, to this societal issue.

→ Available on *ACTIV website*

Resource 14

What skills and knowledge should the trusted person in a company have?

A trusted person or resource person listens to and advises workers on well-being in the workplace and the prevention of psychosocial risks. Find out more on their skills on this booklet.

→ Available on *ACTIV website*





STEP 4

Socio-professional (re)integration programme

Supporting women victims of violence in their professional projects means giving them the opportunity to achieve professional fulfilment and regain sustainable financial independence.

The ACTIV project aims to offer an innovative support programme for these women, which will be implemented by local players and companies. Through orientation, learning professional codes, creating tools (CV, LM), searching for training or preparing for interviews: these women regain control of their lives. We support them in their dream of a professional life and guide them step by step to achieve this goal.

Objectives

The objective of this phase is to help women to (re)define a professional path taking into account their areas of interest, current skills and past experiences. It is also aimed at assisting them in the implementation of this plan. At the end of this phase, they should be ready to find a job or enrol on a vocational training programme.

Challenges for the field workers involved

When designing a socio-professional (re)integration programme, the actors in the field should bear in mind these two main challenges:

- Giving women the time to think about what they want to do and exploring different career paths in line with who they are. The aim is to achieve a sustainable career plan that allows women to achieve financial stability and professional fulfilment.
- The women who enter the programme have different backgrounds and levels of professional experience. Some have never worked before. The programme must therefore take this reality into account.



I think there is a lack of these kinds of CV or motivation letter writing workshops. We have a lot of women who don't know how to do that kind of thing and women don't know how to sell themselves.»

SOCIAL WORKER

Resource 15

How to set up a socio-professional orientation programme?

This tool provides an outline of the main steps to build a socio-professional orientation programme for women confronted with domestic violence, including the main topics to be covered.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Challenges for companies

Now that the company has been able to develop a caring environment, it can invest more in other issues because it will be easier for it to understand domestic violence and therefore welcome women who are confronted with this violence.

Indeed, the company is now aware of the issues surrounding domestic violence and has removed the taboos surrounding the subject.

There are several ways in which companies can become involved:

- developing a mentorship programme with employees trained who want to share their experience;
- offering company visits;
- proposing training/internships.

Resource 16

What state financial assistance is available to hire vulnerable publics?

Although there are not always employment subsidies aimed directly at women experiencing domestic violence, here you will find the main employment subsidies that you can use to employ a vulnerable and/or unemployed group, which may include women experiencing domestic violence.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Resource 17

What socio-professional (re)integration programmes for women facing domestic violence exist?

This resource is a non-exhaustive list of socio-professional integration organisations or specific professional integration projects for women facing domestic violence in Belgium, France, Spain or Romania. If you know of a similar structure, please contact us to add it to this list.

→ Available on ACTIV website





STEP 5

Follow-up and communication

It is not only a question of facilitating the return to the employment of women facing domestic violence. It is also necessary to help them keep their jobs (job retention). Domestic violence is not a private matter. Violence has an impact on work. In this sense, companies can offer a safe place, where women can talk about their problems and find resources.

The ACTIV project aims to support companies and strengthen their involvement in providing a welcoming environment for employees facing domestic violence. We want to help companies to develop an action plan: communication, training of employees, development of measures such as geographical and time flexibility are practices that can be put in place by companies.

Objectives

The main objectives at this stage are to ensure that every woman:

- Participated in career counselling or/and to a training course or educational programme
- Know to find employment or they already have a job
- Are supported to maintain their jobs
- Those who are not employed or engaged in an education programme will receive further guidance to meet their personal objectives.

At the end of step 4, women could participate in Support Groups, where they are offered help to overcome personal, financial, and professional challenges, through specialised help provided by a psychologist or by helping each other.

Challenges for field workers

The main challenge for field workers is to identify any issue that limits or prevents women from successfully implementing their professional plan (basic needs, self-esteem, etc.).

In order to consolidate the results achieved during the socio-professional reintegration, field workers can continue to communicate regularly with the women and meet them once every month or so. This way women can be advised and helped to overcome daily challenges such as kindergarten or school for children, finding a new home or even to maintain or find a new job.

Coordination with other field workers might be needed.



Breaking the silence is not easy, it requires a lot of mental strength and accompaniment. Having people who care about you, seek the best for your future, and also speak from experience, as they have been through similar situations, is priceless.»

ANA BELLA FOUNDATION

Resource 18

Setting up a support group for women victims of violence: why and how?

The support group for women confronted with domestic violence is a therapeutic intervention that involves their voluntary and structured participation in the debate and identification of solutions to certain common problems.

→ Available on ACTIV website

Challenges for companies

The pathway and resources show why domestic violence is part of gender-based violence. Once the company is aware of this issue, the employer must continue to raise awareness of domestic violence and its impact on the workplace to make the company as safe as possible. The CEASE e-learning is available for this purpose.

But it is also necessary to include the fight against domestic violence in gender equality plans and in internal company policies in order to sustain the actions implemented.

Finally, it is important for the company to ensure that its employees remain in work and feel good at work by taking preventive action and tackling all other forms of violence to which they may be subjected.



I think that a job is important for any responsible person, but I think that for women who come from a violent environment it is even more important because it is the only solution to become financially independent, to develop confidence in your own forces, and to move forward despite the past and problems. »

A WOMAN CONFRONTED WITH DV

Resource 19

CEASE e-learning

Designed to be short and accessible, this e-learning aims to make it easy for anyone to learn about domestic violence, its impact on the workplace and initial advice on how to deal with a colleague experiencing domestic violence. For the moment, the e-learning is available in French, English and Dutch.

→ Available on <https://cease-violence.eu/e-learning-domestic-violence/>

Resource 20

How to integrate domestic violence within companies' global policies?

The purpose of this tool is to provide companies with the information they need to integrate domestic violence in company agreements, in particular by proposing a clause template.

→ Available on ACTIV website

#ACTIVproject
www.aktivproject.eu



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