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VIVIEN - Victim Violence Educational Network

*An educational project to improve the ability to assist women victims of violence*

## MAPPING BEST PRACTICES

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The present deliverable was supposed to present the results of the mapping of the best training courses AIMED AT PROFESSIONALS TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE in Europe, in particular in the 4 countries involved in this project. The final objective was to highlight, for the geographical areas, the most important experiences and therefore to suggest their replicability.

Unfortunately, the scarcity of available information and the difficulty of finding it made it necessary to partially redefine the objectives of this work, as explained in the following methodological issues.

### Methodological issues

The drafting of this report immediately raised some important methodological challenges that required, at least in part, a redefinition of how to proceed. Initially, it was considered that the first source of information should have been the literature available on this topic, which was the subject of the previous report ([https://vivien-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report-research\\_UNIPR.pdf](https://vivien-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report-research_UNIPR.pdf)). We expected, in fact, in view of the wide literature on victims of violence, on one side, and disability, on the other, to be able to access substantial information on women with disabilities who are victims of violence and on consequent training for professionals. Based on this literature we should have selected the critical issues, challenges and needs that specified these trainings. Unfortunately, as we noted in the previous report, the literature that addresses the issue of how to train professionals to support victims of violence is poorly represented and the literature that takes into account women with disabilities is practically non-existent.

It was also planned to collect information starting from the websites of the European institutions dedicated to violence against women and/or women with disabilities. But here again, the results following a first research among them appeared not very fruitful and very chaotic. We turned, then, directly to the "Wave Network" and to the EDF. Both the Office Administrator of the first and the Human Right Officer of the second informed us that they have no specific projects or programs on this issue. Both of them, however, suggested that we get in touch with some centres located in different European countries.

At this point, we have proceeded on two levels. On the one hand, we got in touch with the indicated centres and/or searched for information about them. On the other hand, we attempted a systematic search for online training material on the subject. The only very valuable



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data bank, despite not being immediately identifiable, is The Daphne Toolkit which archived projects funded between 1997 and 2014.

For the following years we proceeded in a somewhat more random way by looking for material produced in the framework of more recent projects and available on the net.

Finally, we consulted the two reports produced by GREVIO for two of the partner countries of this project (the only ones available). The aim was to see how much the topic of our interest was considered in those documents.

In reporting the results of this work, we will begin with 1) a description of what is mentioned in the GREVIO reports relating to Italy and Finland (the other two partner countries have not yet been evaluated by GREVIO). Subsequently we will present 2) the material found in the projects that we have been able to find. Finally, we will present 3) a description of the dedicated centres and their activities.

## 1) Finland and Italy: The place of disability in the GREVIO's reports

Among the priority issues identified by GREVIO (2019) that require further action by the **Finnish** authorities to comply fully with the convention's provision there are the ones concerning specifically "barriers which women from national minorities, women with disabilities and other women exposed to intersectional discrimination face in seeking quality interventions for any of the forms of violence covered by the convention" (pg.12). Although the National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women 2010-2015 included measures to protect women with disabilities from violence, GREVIO observed a lack of recognition and that shelters and other counselling services, particularly online, are often inaccessible to women with disabilities. These include the lack of timely transport to shelters, inaccessible sanitary facilities and the fact that most shelters do not admit personal disability assistants (pg.34). Moreover, lawyers and women's specialist support services have brought to GREVIO's attention concerns regarding **the use of myths and negative stereotyping of women by law enforcement and prosecution services** when assessing the credibility of victims of sexual violence. One example mentioned was the belief that **women with disabilities are viewed as not credible** and therefore not making good witnesses, which contributes to decisions to drop such cases (pg.51).

In the **Italian** report, GREVIO notes that the latest national action plan on violence against women incorporates the issue of intersecting discrimination affecting disadvantaged groups of women, such as women with disabilities, Roma women, asylum-seeking and migrant women.

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However, the references in the plan to these groups of women remain fragmented and do not include concrete operational targets and commitments in all the areas of prevention, protection, punishment and co-ordinated policies.

GREVIO complains the lack of the establishment of an independent national human rights institution operating in line with the Paris principles, as well as from the creation of a complaint mechanism for victims (pg.16). GREVIO strongly encourages the Italian authorities to strengthen measures to prevent and combat violence which affects women who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination, including women with disabilities (pg. 17). In particular, GREVIO noticed that Italian policies in the field of disability is marred by a general lack of focus on the specific needs of girls and women with disabilities, including their vulnerability to various forms of gender-based violence such as domestic violence, forced abortion and forced sterilisation (pg. 19). The report highlighted also a severe impact on victims made vulnerable by particular circumstances, such as women with disabilities: **staff lacking the necessary training are not adequately prepared to detect the violence** and when victims approach services and report the violence, they are at risk of being prejudiced (pg.48). GREVIO suggested also the intensification of efforts to ensure that professionals of all relevant institutions take a more proactive approach towards informing victims. The information provided should be adequate and accessible to victims, including foreign victims and victims with disabilities (pg.47).

## 2) UE Projects

Of the 86 EU-funded projects identified through the data bank Daphne Toolkit (Annexe 1), using the words "training + professionals + violence", only 5 are aimed directly at women with disabilities.

The oldest of these (1997), "**Disabled girls and women - Prevention of sexual violence**" was aimed at preventing sexual violence against disabled women and children by increasing understanding among the target group of prevention strategies, and by training disabled women to become trainers.

In 2000, the project "**Disabled Young Girls and Women - Victims of Violence - awareness raising campaign and call for action**" wanted to give disabled girls and women the right information and tools to organize and fight violence and abuse (both inside and outside the home) they suffer, very often without realizing what it is and to which they are particularly vulnerable. This has been achieved through the distribution of an information kit, presentations, training and workshops.



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Two years later (2002), the project “**Visually handicapped women - Preventive measures to struggle against violence - Questionnaire - Workshops - Dissemination of good practices**” involved blind women from 15 countries of EU to set up transnational actions aiming both at making public opinion aware of the violence suffered by women with disabilities of all ages and at adapting the existing results to visually impaired women, with a view to carrying out the widest possible dissemination of good practices relating to self-help for the victims of violence and the resources aimed at preventing attacks.

Aimed to protect people with learning disabilities from sexual abuse through the provision of education on sexual health, sex and relationships, the project “ **Protect people with learning disabilities from sexual abuse - User-led pilot sex education peer education project**” (2003) developed of a user-led training programme to help people with learning disabilities to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

Finally, in 2012, “**KEEP ME SAFE: The empowerment of young people with learning disabilities (YPWLD)**” aimed to empower these young people to protect themselves from sexual abuse and violence. The project, which was primarily aimed at young people, also involved the people who cared for them and their families. It was assumed that the protection of children required adults to recognize and respect their sexuality, as well as guidance on protection and appropriate behaviour.

As anticipated, the search for material for the following years was not easy. Among the EU-funded projects, the only document that was found was the report of a 2018 research, entitled “ **Main Aspects Of Violence Against Women and Girls With Disabilities**” conducted by the Association of Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children “DEA” in Georgia. The report gives a brief description of the European context on the topic and the outcome of a research conducted in the city of Zugdidi. At the end of her work, the author argued that “Qualitative research revealed that the problems of **persons with disabilities are not on the political agenda**. The experts discussed the most critical and unresolved issues regarding the protection of rights of women with disabilities. Existing barriers, which impede disclosure of cases of violence against women and provision of equal opportunities, were also identified. Experts believe that state support policies and programs do not meet the special needs and requirements of persons with disabilities” (pg.62).

Published in the same year (2018), the document produced by the association *Inclusion Europe* and entitled “ **Life after violence. A study on how women with intellectual disabilities cope with violence they experienced in institutions**”, reports the narratives of women with disabilities who have suffered various forms of violence in their private life, in the care relationship or in institutions. In this work, too, **the gap emerges between what is stated in legal texts and**

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international documents **and the translation of these statements into concrete actions and political choices.** Little recognized, considered unreliable and seen mainly because of their dependence, disabled women victims of violence are still struggling to find spaces for recognition and protection.

### 3) Dedicated centers or associations

Below is a brief description of the main "experiences" concerning violence against women with disabilities in Europe. The contents described below derive both from the analysis of documents (manuals, brochures, toolkits, etc.) published by Associations, Organizations, Services and European Centers dealing with the reception and care of women with disabilities who are victims of violence and from direct exchanges with some of their representatives.

The quantity and quality of the information reported for each center depends on the information available on their site and their willingness to answer our questions directly or by e-mail. Only a few centers have made themselves available, this have created an information imbalance between them.

It is important to note that on the European territory, at least as far as we could find, there are few specific structures in which work is done on the protection of disabled women victims of violence. The majority of them are centers dealing with gender violence (usually anti-violence centers, organizations or associations) that activate projects aimed at the protection of disabled women victims of violence. Among the objectives of these centers there is the training of operators on the subject in question, which is usually implemented through training aimed at various professional figures. The centers mentioned below are obviously not representative of the existing ones, but only those we have been able to identify and/or contact based on the accessibility of their websites and the language they use. It is important to note that the descriptions of the following centers are not all equally detailed. This depends on the different amount of information we have been able to find from each "experiences". From some of them, after a first contact by email we received more detailed information than those available from the website (UK); with others (France) it was also possible to have a telephone conversation. For the rest, however, we relied on the content published on the relevant websites.



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## AUSTRIA

Ninlil (Wien)

<https://www.ninlil.at/zeitlupe/index.html>

<https://www.ninlil.at/kraftwerk/index.html>

*Ninlil* is a counselling organization for women with disabilities. They have two areas of work, one does peer-counselling (*Zeitlupe*), and the other one (*Kraftwerk*) is specialized in sexual violence against women with learning disabilities.

So, they are a specialized counselling center for women with disabilities who have experienced violence. *Zeitlupe* is the first peer counselling center by and for women with disabilities in Vienna aimed at encouraging other women with disabilities to realize their wishes, needs and dreams. They usually consult women and girls with disabilities, friends or relatives and individuals or teams from the everyday life of women with disabilities (e.g. caregivers, supporters, personal assistants, etc.). Inside the area *Kraftwerk* a lot of empowerment seminars were organized. The goal of the *Ninlil* seminars is the prevention of violence against women with learning difficulties or multiple disabilities, based on the strong belief that violence can only be stopped, if these women develop more self-determination in their everyday life. Their experiences, needs, and desires are the focus of these seminars. The organization includes the views and opinions of these women in its planning process by: (1) using feedback-sheets from the seminars as a starting point for developing new seminars or deciding which seminars will be offered again; and (2) collecting direct and indirect feedback to find new topics. The various approaches enable the participants to have individually structured empowerment experiences. Further, the seminars are kept small, each with up to just seven participants and two seminar leaders, so that every woman, regardless of her disability, has plenty of time and space for discussion. The website, although only in German, is designed to be used for women with disabilities. In the "help" section, in fact, it is possible to find all the indications to access the areas of the site itself, through facilitated commands of the pc keyboard.

## FRANCE

Femmes pour le Dire, Femmes pour Agir (Paris)

<http://fdfa.fr/>

FDFA brings together mainly women with disabilities, whatever their singularity, but also men with disabilities and able-bodied women and men who share the same goals. It is a small



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association composed of 2 employees and a few volunteers. It was founded in 2003 by Maudy Piot, and was born as an association against the double discrimination (gender and disability) suffered by women with disabilities, for the promotion of their place in society and for their protection.

In 2010, FDFFA organized a conference on "Disability and violence", at the end of which a questionnaire was given to the public. The results showed that 36% of women able-bodied stated that they had suffered some form of violence (not only IPV), compared to 70% of those with disabilities. The women of the association started to work on the topic, looking for information on the relationship between women/disability/violence. They realized that there was no official data available and that, at that time, the only institutional document, that mentioned the specific issue of violence suffered by women with disabilities was a resolution of the European Parliament, which stated that about 80 % of women with disabilities in Europe had been victims of violence or mistreatment.

After 5 years, the FDFFA has succeeded in launching a specific line of listening on violence which offers both listening and, for those who so wish, a legal, psychological and social assistance.

Since 2015, the service has been operating three half days a week. The reduction in hours is due to the fact that the service works thanks to voluntary work. With this availability, the two people employed can still guarantee the service. The most stable volunteers are women who have already retired. These women guarantee good constancy over time. Younger women, still of working age, are obviously subject to inevitable changes such as starting a new job, changing jobs, becoming pregnant, etc.

### **Selection and training of volunteers**

The volunteers come mainly from the medical and health sector, but this is not a request of the association. For the FDFFA, the indispensable qualities that aspiring volunteers must have are "benevolence" and their ability to listen. According to the FDFFA, people must already possess these basic skills, without which further training or practice would be useless. For example, some psychologists and psychiatrists, who may have the necessary skills for this activity, have been more inclined to make a diagnosis than to listen. This orientation is an important barrier to welcoming women who ask for help and the possibility of maintaining contact based on trust.

The training takes place in 4 or 6 days with the following structure:

**1. day:** ½ day: Disability and different forms of disability

½ day: Focus on psychical disability. They do not deal with psychical disability because they do not receive appeals from these people. In these cases, it is the third parties who call.

**2. day:** Violence and psychological trauma.

**3. day:** Legal fundamentals: With regard to legal training, the FDFFA has changed the content



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and objectives of training over time. Over the course of time, it has become apparent that through training could lead to false hopes for the women in care. For example, proposing to the woman a list of all the possibilities that arise without being able to define the limits and conditions for implementation may lead the victim to imagine strategies that will ultimately prove impractical. Instead, it is necessary for the volunteers to be able to give more "practical" information, knowing how to distinguish, for example, the modalities and consequences of an alert rather than a complaint and knowing which judge intervenes at a given moment in the process and with what purposes.

### **4. day.** Techniques and difficulties of telephone listening.

The contents of the other two days may vary depending on the circumstances. In general, the topics concern.

### **5. day:** Sexual assaults and "reporting" techniques

**6. day:** Knowledge of the resources available on the territory in order to orientate in the most effective way possible the women who ask for help.

At the end of the training, the volunteers take part in the listening sessions together with the experienced operator.

The time of accompaniment varies greatly from person to person and also depends on how the first interventions are carried out. If the first listening sessions are particularly difficult, it is likely that the volunteer will need a longer period of time before she will be able to handle the calls independently.

Training takes place in a network with other associations. The training days are conducted by associations specialising in the topics of the various days and FDFA in turn offers training of its own specific competence to the other associations.

In the coming months FDFA will activate a website entirely dedicated to violence against women with disabilities, which will also serve as a documentation centre.

In 2019, FDFA published a report on its 2018 listening activities. The document is full of information, not only on the number of calls, but on the types of people calling, the needs they express and the proposals made to them. (<http://fdfa.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rapport-annuel-Ecoute-Violences-2018.pdf>)

## ITALY

Association Differenza Donna (Rome)

<https://www.differenzadonna.org/>

Differenza Donna, since its establishment in 1989, has been committed to fighting violence



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in Italy and in any other country, convinced that women can be a great social resource only when their rights and dignity are fully respected. DD's mission is to support each woman to become economically independent, influential, rich in dignity and wisdom. As a strategic tool of intervention DD has chosen the women's shelters, conceived as places of protection, empowerment and re-planning of life for women and children affected by violence.

Differenza Donna has long been involved in the fight against violence against women with disabilities, having a specialized division dedicated to this issue for over six years. In recent years Differenza Donna has worked with projects and initiatives to raise awareness about the perception and awareness of social services, often victims of a common prejudice against women with cognitive disabilities. The association has also dedicated itself to raising awareness of women and girls with disabilities, having found that many of them are not aware of the existence and functions of Anti-Violence Centers and Shelter Homes or that, in some cases, they cannot reach them or ask for help on their own.

The Association also created the *National Observatory on violence against women with disabilities* aimed to collect and return data on the phenomenon of gender-based violence against women with disabilities, every year in November. Data collection will be carried out through questionnaires, projects and specific focuses. The elaboration of the results will allow a better understanding of the mechanisms of violence, developing reflections that will make the tools to combat it more and more effective. It will be particularly important to collect the testimonies of the survivors, in order to understand what cultural barriers, stereotypes and prejudices they encountered when they reported the violence suffered. This will bring to light the cultural, social and political obstacles to the emergence of violence, on which there are no specific studies to date.

The Observatory also aims to make an important contribution to a cultural change leading to a new way of thinking about social policies: a more scientific analysis of the phenomenon is crucial to build, think and implement gender policy interventions more correctly and to monitor the impact on quality of life. Among the objectives is also that of being a tool for dialogue and networking among the realities involved in this issue, encouraging comparisons, exchange of information and collaboration.

### VERA Project - Violence Emergence, Recognition and Awareness

<https://www.fondazionezero.org/disabilita/ultime-notizie-disabilita/fish-presenta-vera-ricerca-sulle-donne-disabili-vittime-violenza-abusi/>  
<http://www.fishonlus.it/vera/>

VERA Project, realized by the collaboration between FISH (Italian Federation for overcoming the Handicap) and the Association Differenza Donna, dealt with the theme of violence against women with disabilities in Italy. Data collection was carried out through the administration



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of an on-line questionnaire to 519 women with disabilities who were victims of violence. The research analyzed various aspects related to this theme including: the frequency of the phenomenon, the types of violence suffered, the perpetrators of violence, the different forms of violence depending on the type of disability, economic condition, housing, etc. The final report of the complete research is available at the website reported below. From the data of the VERA research emerged that to prevent forms of violence against women with any form of disability is important "training and awareness of being the holder of rights" and for this reason: "Access education is fundamental because it conditions the life project, a work project that is not only in a subordinate position. Awareness and training actions are necessary for professionals who work with people with disabilities and also for those who work in anti-violence centers, who must be able to recognize the complaints that also come from women with disabilities".

*Association Frida - women who support women* (San Miniato – Pisa)

<https://www.associazionefrida.it/>

Frida acts to prevent and combat violence against women, carries out awareness and training actions on gender issues. The main purpose is to make every woman a valued, authoritative, economically independent person, rich in dignity and wisdom, a woman who knows the value of gender difference and who works in solidarity with other women. Frida was born in March 2008 in San Miniato (Tuscany), where it opened the first anti-violence counter. In 2012 it activated 4 other anti-violence branches in the various municipalities of the Lower Valdarno (now open by appointment). In June 2013, thanks to funding from the Equal Opportunities Department, the Frida Kahlo anti-violence center was inaugurated. Through the anti-violence center and the counters, the association supports women on their way out of violence. It offers various services: 24-hour telephone reception, support, advice and legal support in civil and criminal matters, self-help groups, hospitality. The association collaborates with local and national institutions, has signed memoranda of understanding and operational lines, participates in local and regional tables and commissions. Frida also carries out awareness actions, training, meetings and cultural events, on the theme of violence against women and gender-based violence. Frida works by taking up the methodology of the internationally recognized anti-violence centers and bases her work on the woman-woman relationship. The ultimate aim of the association is to promote social change, the enhancement of differences and new relationships between genders capable of fighting violence against women and gender discrimination.

### The Aurora Project

[https://www.agenziatura.it/allegati/documenti/7/ProgettoAurora\\_ViolenzaGenereDisabilita.pdf](https://www.agenziatura.it/allegati/documenti/7/ProgettoAurora_ViolenzaGenereDisabilita.pdf)

The association is also committed to the issue of violence against women with disabilities



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through the implementation of the *Aurora Project*, a highly innovative project aimed at understanding and combating gender-based violence against women with disabilities. The project has foreseen the realization of a pilot research on the phenomenon and the opening of a specific desk, in order to create a space in which to inform, listen and support women with physical and sensory disabilities who live conditions of violence, abuse and violation of human rights. The ultimate goal is the acquisition of awareness of their rights, by women victims of domestic violence, and the consequent removal from the "dependence on care" in all fields. The main activities of the project included a qualitative survey included the administration of a semi-structured interview with social-healthcare and educational operators, in order to detect existing norms, practices and services, and interviews with disabled and non-violent women in order to highlight their problems and needs. Also training for women workers and operators on violence, health and disability were carried out.

## SPAIN

*Fundación Cermi Mujeres* (Madrid)

<http://www.fundacioncermimujeres.es/en>

The Foundation is a non-profit organization whose main objective is to favor the conditions for women and girls with disabilities, as well as women and mothers who assist persons with disabilities, to enjoy fully and on equal terms all the human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Foundation was born in 2014 from the concern expressed by a large part of civil society organized around the gender inequality that also occurs in this sector of the population and the need to deepen knowledge and articulation of answers to these situations of discrimination. The Foundation defends the effective equality of women and girls with disabilities from a human rights perspective, applying the content of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with special emphasis on the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, inclusion in the community, independent life and positive action and in turn promoting the individual and collective empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. The Foundation aims to give continuity to training programs and promotion of the human rights of women and girls with disabilities, in the field of social organizations, public administrations and universities. The general objective of this program is to strengthen and develop the skills of motivated and committed students from various professional disciplines who wish to specialized in human rights, disability and gender equality issues, offering the opportunity to put into practice and develop their knowledge in a real working environment and facilitating their subsequent integration into the labor market. In addition to the university itself, these internships can be carried out in collaborative bodies, such as companies, institutions and public and private bodies at national and international level. Very interesting and useful is also the development of a digital library in order to promote the knowledge and

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documentary base related to the global reality of gender and disability. The goal of the foundation is that everyone, regardless of disability, age or access to the web by unconventional technologies, can navigate the pages of this website without encountering difficulties of access. To this end, a number of features have been implemented that allow people to access all web content more easily such as the visual characteristics of the portal (font type, font and background color, etc.), font size, clear content structure. Website is available in Spanish and English.

### SWEDEN

*“Double Exposure Center”* (Gothenburg)

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/resources/sweden/development-center-double-exposure-mens-violence-against-women-disabilities>

The Development Center “Double Exposure” is a project within Bracke Diakoni (Swedish non-profit welfare association) with the purpose to develop and spread knowledge about men’s violence against women with disabilities. Their aim is that women with disabilities subjected to violence will receive the support they need and are entitled to. Their target groups are professionals in social services, health care, justice, education, research, women’s shelters, victim support centers, schools and NGOs. The center started in 2007 and was initiated by Bracke Diakoni and representatives from Young Disabled in Gothenburg.

### UNITED KINGDOM

*Women’s Aid Federation of England* (Bristol)

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Women’s Aid Federation of England is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. They are a federation of nearly 180 organizations which provide just under 300 local lifesaving services to women and children across the country. They provide expert training, qualifications and consultancy to a range of agencies and professionals working with survivors or commissioning domestic abuse services, and award a National Quality Mark for services which meet their quality standards. They hold the largest national data set on domestic abuse, and use research and evidence to inform all of their work. Their campaigns achieve change in policy, practice and awareness, encouraging healthy relationships and helping to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated. Their support services, which



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include their Live Chat Helpline, the Survivors' Forum, the No Woman Turned Away Project, the Survivor's Handbook, Love Respect (their dedicated website for young people in their first relationships), the national Domestic Abuse Directory and their advocacy projects, help thousands of women and children every year. They also offer help and support to woman with disability who experienced domestic abuse. Many domestic abuse services are able to support disabled women and have outreach services or independent advocacy services which can help victims. If they need safe accommodation many refuges now have full wheelchair access, and workers who can assist women and children who have special needs such as hearing or visual impairments, and some Women's Aid organizations offer BSL interpreters. With regard to these issues, a special section of the association's website has been created: The Survivor's Handbook: Support for disabled women (<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/>).

Women's aid offers, for a fee, training courses for operators ([https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIh9K-I-X-6AIV2Od3Ch0r1QTbEAAAYASAAEgKpfvD\\_BwE](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIh9K-I-X-6AIV2Od3Ch0r1QTbEAAAYASAAEgKpfvD_BwE)).

Other Women's Aid federations in the United Kingdom with the same mission and organization are:

*Scottish Women's Aid*

[www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk](http://www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk)

*Welsh Women's Aid*

[www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)

*Women's Aid, Republic of Ireland*

<https://www.womensaid.ie/>

*Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland*

<https://www.womensaidni.org/>

(The information referred to *Women's Aid Federation* refers to an experience built up at a time when United Kingdom was still a full member of the EU).

## Conclusions

The 20th century was marked by the fact that it was, at the same time, the bloodiest century in the history of humanity and the one in which women, at least those of the industrialized countries, and much later men, became citizens (Thébaud, 2007).

In the second half of the century, under the aura of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), there was an unprecedented upheaval in gender relations on the political and social level.

Despite the hesitant and sometimes contradictory progress of the normative translation of



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the principle of equality, the social and political recognition enjoyed today by the female human being is unprecedented in human history.

Among the many discriminations that sanctioned - and sanctioned - the dominated position of women, the issue of violence against women was one of the last to be redefined by international and national legal frameworks that sanctioned its unacceptability.

It has come after the right to vote, after access to paid employment, after equal pay, after equal rights within and outside family, but today violence against women, in all its forms, is not acceptable, either because of particular existential conditions or in the name of an alleged cultural value. Over the last two centuries, the commitment of feminist movements, through the reform of the norms, has made it possible to move from a "rivendicative" register of the principle of equality of the right to an "applicative" one. Today, the centres, associations and public services dedicated to the reception and protection of women victims of violence are an effective reality in most industrialized countries and numerous projects and interventions are implemented in the rest of the world.

So, what's left to do? Considering the amount of public investment still dedicated, not only to strategies and methods of intervention, but also to the need to inform people, develop awareness, fight against stereotypes and prejudices, it would seem that the implementation at the regulatory level is severely invalidated by the harsh reality of human facts and behaviour. Would, therefore, the advocates of women's rights, generation after generation, be modern Sisyphus forced to claim, confirm remember, time after time, the principle of equality between men and women?

However, this work suggests some avenues for reflection. For example, except in a few cases, the system of reception and protection of women victims of violence is not an integral part of the welfare system. The associationism, at the origin of struggles and interventions, is until now, the backbone of the whole system, but its activities are strictly subordinated to funding that is difficult to program and the methods of intervention are left to the creativity and commitment of individuals, despite worthy attempts to create second level associations.

Moreover, the "issue of violence" remains a matter for committed or experienced people and is not yet considered as a "matter for everyone". Thus, knowledge about gender-based violence is not part of the training curricula of any professional category. The countless trainings that are offered from year to year reach, from time to time, a limited number of people randomly and are not the object of study or research; therefore, all these repeated experiences can't assume the status of a shared and systematized knowledge.

In this perspective, and in a seemingly paradoxical way, the issue of gender-based violence remains a social and political minority issue.



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This condition of substantial marginalization and fragmentation emerges even more clearly when addressing the issue of intersectional discrimination, when in addition to being a woman victim of violence one is also a migrant, belonging to ethnic minority communities, women in prostitution, women with disabilities, elderly women and LGBT women.

In general terms, it emerges from the specificities of this work that most of the structures established for the reception of victims of violence have not integrated systematic procedures for the reception of women with disabilities (or other categories). Despite the "correct political" language for which the condition of disability is only a contingency with respect to the fact of being "woman", in practice, as will be described below, disability is considered a "special condition" and for specialists.

At least as far as we could find, it was possible to note the substantial dichotomy, at European level, between institutions and programs dedicated on the one hand to gender-based violence and on the other to disability. In fact, as previously described, it has been possible to find only few realities that deal mainly with gender-based violence that organize or participate in projects aimed at disabled women or implement training for operators on this issue.

As we have seen, even in the pages of GREVIO's reports, **disability is mentioned in a few lines** and mostly together with other conditions of vulnerability.

The 5 projects identified in the Daphne database are mostly aimed at **working directly with women and girls** (or young people in general) with disabilities, for, ultimately, a one-to-one intervention. Only a part of the training in these projects marginally involves adults.

In this regard, it would therefore be necessary **to create integrated services within which professionals trained in gender-based violence in situations of disability would work**. What is currently present is, instead, a collaboration between institutions that deal with gender violence on the one hand and disability on the other, as there is no real integration.

The second important aspect concerns the **accessibility to information** of women in fragile conditions, first of all disability in all its forms, which aggravate the situation of violence. The research highlighted, in fact, how websites and, in general, information systems were designed for abled and "normally endowed" women. Regarding this, it would be absolutely necessary that all the information provided by websites dealing with violence in general and violence against women with disabilities be accessible to everyone. Every disabled woman in need of help should immediately and easily find all the information needed to obtain help and protection. This service could be provided using facilitated information systems, such as for example facilitated reading systems, audio guides, video with sign language explanations. It would therefore be important that access to information be made possible taking into account the different types of disability (physical



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or mental) and their severity.

Another limitation that is an obstacle to the request for help is that the information available on the websites are often only in the original language. Therefore, if a disabled woman who is a victim of violence lives and suffers violence in a foreign country and therefore has to find help in that country, she may find it difficult to understand the exposed content and therefore to find the necessary help.

Another important aspect would be to include in the websites a **section dedicated to “third parties”** (family members, caregivers, personal assistant) because in situations of violence in general but even more so in cases of violence against women with disabilities, requests for help very frequently are not direct but come from people close to the victim. Women with disabilities often have reduced access to the request for help due to their condition, especially in cases of severe disability or impairment. It would therefore be necessary to create a systematic listening space for these third parties with important indications on what to do and how to do it to help victims.

Moreover, in case of help to disabled women, it is essential to have **very clear how to intervene**, to have **useful strategies of action and answers** to questions such as: “If the woman needs to be moved from her home, are there any shelters adequately equipped to accommodate her?”; “Can these places guarantee her safety and appropriate assistance according to her specific needs?”.

Finally, it would be very useful to create a European **database**, available in different languages, **containing a list of good/best practices**, distinguished by professional area, which professionals should follow in assisting women with disabilities who are victims of violence.



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**Annexe 1**

Project on Dafne Toolkit (1997-2014)

List of projects meeting the “violence + training + professionals’ criteria

In boldface projects involving people with disabilities

1.	1997-034-W	Sensitization of Greek police officers in protecting women from violence Seminars, conference and publication to create awareness among Greek police officers of the need to improve services to women victims of rape and other forms of violence.
2.	1997-039-WC	Joint work against sexual abuse - Training courses - Gaia Training courses to provide civil servants, employment agencies and medical services with a common platform of knowledge to assist cooperation in supporting child and women victims of sexual abuse.
3.	1997-066-WC	Help families facing drug-related violence against women and children - Grain de sable Pilot project to help families facing drug-related violence against women and children to cope with such violence and reintegrate into the mainstream economy and society.
4.	1997-133-W	Domestic violence in rural areas : educate children and teachers This project aimed to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence in rural areas and to educate children and teachers through programmes on sexual equality.
5.	<b>1997-182-WC</b>	<b>Disabled girls and women - Prevention of sexual violence</b> <b>This project aimed to prevent sexual violence against disabled women and children by increasing understanding among the target group of prevention strategies, and by training disabled women to become trainers.</b>
6.	1997-235-WC	Networking of combating male violence against women in the judiciary and police Project to raise public awareness of violence against women. Also research, training and creation of a network of professionals in the judiciary and police.
7.	1998-040-W	Prevention of violence against women throughout Europe. Research and seminar for volunteers. Bringing together volunteers to prevent violence against women throughout Europe. Research and seminar, including training and exchange of good practice.
8.	1998-115-W	Information campaign on violence against women - Training, guidelines for the general public and professionals - The ALCIPE project The ALCIPE Project sought to disseminate information on the issue of violence against women targeting the general public, victims and potential women victims, as well as professionals working with these issues. It also sought to establish guidelines on assistance to victims in order to contribute towards the standardisation of a code of good practice within the European context.
9.	1998-117-WC	Multi-agency approach to domestic violence - Sensitise decision-makers and policy-makers - Conferences The main aim of this project was to find a common approach to assist all women in the European Union who are victims of domestic violence.
10.	1998-121-W	Counselling services for women affected by domestic violence and support activities Creation of counselling services for women and girls living in rural areas affected by violence. Data gathering.

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		networking and awareness raising.
11.	1998-127-WC	Action against domestic violence - Transnational network of experts from NGO women's projects To increase the quality of the preventative work carried out with women and children victims of domestic violence.
12.	1999-051-WC	Breaking the cycle of violence in poor socio-economic conditions - The role of women Investigation of the role played by women in breaking the cycle of violence against children in poor socio-economic conditions. Production of information and training materials

13.	1999-066-WC	Women, children and young people victims of violence - Training to service providers and standards of good practice - The SOPHIA project
14.	1999-096-W	Domestic violence - awareness raising, training and information for professionals and victims Addressing the problem of domestic violence against women through the production of a CD-Rom prototype for awareness, training and information for professionals and victims.
15.	1999-163-W	Domestic violence - Training and on line working support for health professionals Provision of training and internet-based working support for health professionals on the issue of domestic violence throughout Europe.
16.	1999-232-WC	Research and information campaign on violence against women, children and teenagers in the county of Ioannina (Greece) Study and dissemination of information relevant to the maltreatment of women, children and adolescents in the Prefecture of Ioannina (Greece)
17.	1999-285-W	Awareness raising in the workplace of the issue of domestic violence - Training module and information/publicity packs The GMB Daphne project was developed following several motions from GMB Congress calling for the Union to address the serious problem of domestic violence in our society. These concerns were shared with local support and government agencies serving the Black Country area and a Steering Committee. A Working Party drawn from representatives of the steering group was set up to provide the necessary expertise to launch the pilot project.
18.	1999-288-WC	Prevention of violence against women and children - Training, sensibilisation of professional groups in the framework of WAVE The project carried out by the WAVE Office / Austrian Women's Shelter Network focused on the prevention of violence against women with the publication of a training manual and brochures on prevention of domestic violence against women in Europe, including a European Survey and Good Practice Models.
19.	2000-012-WC	Domestic Abuse Strategy Initiative - Promote the benefits of a multi-agency to other European countries - The DASI project
20.	2000-022-C	Evaluation and treatment of victims of intra family sexual abuse and their sexual aggressors - The KALEIDOS project
21.	2000-052-W	<b>Disabled Young Girls and Women - Victims of Violence - awareness raising campaign and call for action</b> <b>This project aimed to give disabled young girls and women the right information and instruments in order to organise and fight the violence and abuse (both within the home and without) that they experience,</b>
22.	2000-066-WC	Battered women and their children - Local collaboration between agencies, organisations, popular movements and companies in the community

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23.	2000-072-W	Women who are victims of physical and psychological violence in High Normandy  This project aimed to create a listening point (helpline) for women who are victims of physical and psychological violence in High Normandy, France; and to establish a support structure to provide long-term psychological and social support and guidance to these women.
24.	2000-129-WC	Analysis of the phenomenon of domestic violence - Guidelines for good practices, bibliography  Mobilisation of partners in the field of analysis of the phenomenon of domestic violence in order to break the silence and undermine taboos that still prevent the issue from being discussed in public, and stop women seeing violence against them as a source of shame and embarrassment.
25.	2000-190-W	European network of health care relating to conjugal violence  Promoting understanding and reporting of indicators of domestic violence in women presenting at clinics and hospitals.
26.	2000-234-W	Combat domestic violence - preventative training through existing local educational organisations or groups - The POMBA project
27.	2000-241-WC	Violence in the home and mental illness - Comparative analysis, training for practitioners involved with parental mental illness  This project focused on violence that occurs in families where a parent suffers mental illness.
28.	2000-252-W	VIOLETA 1 - Prevention of domestic violence - network of institutions, bodies and public administrations from EU  Creation of a network made up of institutions, bodies and public administrations from various European territories, to promote and coordinate activities intended to identify women victims and prevent domestic violence.
29.	2000-332-W	Creation of a European Information Centre on Violence against Women - Europe-wide database  The project's purpose was to establish the Information Centre as a key contact in the field of combating violence and give it a high profile within the EU and the rest of Europe.
30.	2001-020-WY	Rape crisis centres, public bodies, rape survivors - Strengthening the linkages - Consolidating the European Network  This two-year project sought to develop further a sustainable European network acting as a resource to national networks, local rape crisis centres, public bodies, rape survivors and others. Resources were to include information on response models of good practice, accredited training, and current research.
31.	2001-079-C	Sexual abuse - Multi-disciplinary distance training - The JOCASTE project  Multi-disciplinary distance training on issues around sexual abuse, and creation of a distance training centre.
32.	2001-101-W	Sexual violence against girls and women in rural areas  Training of counsellors, support for self-help groups, and public awareness raising to combat sexual violence against girls and women in rural areas.
33.	2001-165-WYC	Women victims of domestic violence - Resources, methodologies for professionals - CESI
34.	2001-202-WYC	AWARE I - Sexualized and gendered violence - Increasing awareness in educational organisations
35.	2001-214-W	Addiction work with women who have experienced violence - Models of good practice, courses  Developing general criteria and methods for gender-specific addiction work with women who have experienced violence.
36.	2002-047-WY	<b>Visually handicapped women - Preventive measures to struggle against violence - Questionnaire - workshops - dissemination of good practices</b>

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		<p>Preventive measures to struggle against violence in respect of visually impaired women in the 15 countries of the EU. On the one hand the action will use the results obtained by other NGOs (DPI, ENABLE...) within the framework of Daphne, and on the other hand, the data collected by the UEA with the help of the questionnaire filled out in February 2002 by a representative group of visually impaired women in the 15 countries of the EU, to set up transnational actions aiming both at making public opinion aware of the violence suffered by women with disability of all ages and at adapting the existing results to visually impaired women, with a view to carrying out the widest possible dissemination of good practices relating to self-help for the victims of violence and the resources aimed at preventing attacks. The action will affect both the general public (press conferences) and blind women in the 15 Member States at the national level (workshops, discussion groups, networks) and at European level (seminars).</p> <p>One in five visually impaired women in the EU is confronted with physical or psychological violence. This project set out to investigate and combat violence against women who are blind or partially sighted by raising awareness of it and helping to put it on the public and political agendas. The project included surveying the issue, setting up discussion groups, self-defence training for women at risk and setting up a network. It also included two seminars in which violence against women with visual disabilities was discussed, ways to combat the violence were investigated and good practice ideas were exchanged. The seminars were also seen as a way to make the project visible and to promote it. A website was set up and regular reports were included in the EBU Newsletter and the EBU Women's News Bulletin.</p>
37.	2002-066-WY	<p>Domestic violence in rural environment - HER STORY</p> <p>The project 'Her Story' treats the theme of domestic violence in rural environment. Based on a methodology of investigation and action, aims to create an intervention plan, divided in five axes: Research, Accompanying, Prevention, Training and Evaluation.</p>
38.	2002-215-YC	<p>Dissemination action teenagers against violence in 7 countries - communication tools in schools - ATAV video booklet</p> <p>Increasing teenager's awareness of different aspects of violence using audio-visual tools and discussion groups. Enlarging and strengthening an international network established in an earlier Daphne project.</p>
39.	2002-249-WYC	<p>Violence to women - Training of future teachers for non-sexist education</p> <p>Training of future teachers in non-sexist education with a view to combating violence against women.</p>
40.	2003-008-WYC	<p><b>Protect people with learning disabilities from sexual abuse - User-led pilot sex education peer education project</b></p> <p>Further development, based on pilot-project experiences, of a user-led training programme to help people with learning disabilities to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Tools to accompany the programme.</p>
41.	2003-108-WY	<p>Help The Helper II - European Trainings on health symptoms caused by sexual violence against women and girls (PTSD)</p> <p>Developing and sharing tools and training materials to help social workers, medical staff, advisory and public authorities to identify symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and provide appropriate advice.</p>
42.	2003-243-WC	<p>Computerised assessment of risks of spousal assault in Europe - Assessment Guide SARA Canada</p> <p>Assessment of a Canadian model for assessing risks of spousal assault, with a view to determining its validity for Europe.</p>
43.	2003-120-Y	<p>Intimate partner violence (IPV) - Module for training medical students</p> <p>This Daphne Project aimed to develop a training IPV module for future physicians in order to improve their knowledge, reinforce their skills in addressing and dealing efficiently with abused people, to pilot test and to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention</p>
44.	2003-136-W	<p>Guidelines for setting up and running a women's refuge - WAVE</p> <p>Development of EU-wide standards in working with abused women and their children in refuges. Development</p>

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		of a manual with guidelines for setting up and running a women's refuge.
45.	2004-1-160-W	Pilot project in providing integrated service for victims of violence against women
46.	2004-2-030-WYC	BALTIMEDIA - Prevention of violence - training for victims and professionals
47.	2004-2-031-W	Sexual violence: dissemination of material for education and training on health symptoms
48.	2004-2-065-WYC	V-Day Europe: Use of results - Global movement to end violence against women and girls
49.	2005-2-070-WY	Health care providers and Intimate Partner Violence - Training module
50.	2005-1-006-W	Development of pilot training programmes and piloting services to support victims of sexual violence
51.	2005-1-041-WY	Date rape cases among young women - Development of good practices for support and prevention
52.	2005-1-075-WC	Breaking the cycle of intra-family abuse of children and women: The European multi-family therapy Best Practice Model
53.	2006-1/211	ProTrain: Improving multi-professional and health care training in Europe – building on good practice in violence prevention
54.	2006-1/279	IMPROVE – Quality services for victims of domestic violence
55.	2006-1/300	ISA: Increasing Self-Awareness - Victims of Intimate Partner Violence Assessing Risk of Repeated Victimization and Enhancing Resiliency Strategies  Women victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are at risk of being revictimised by their partners.
56.	2007-1/059	JoinTheNet (IV) – All Over Europe
57.	2007-1/110	Violence Intervention in Specialist Health Care (VISH)
58.	2007-815-W	JoinTheNet (IV) All Over Europe – Dissemination of material for education and training on health symptoms caused by violence (PTSD)
59.	2008/JUST-1/110 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 110	Development of an Intimate Partner Violence module within the harmonised European Health Interview Survey – EHS from Eurostat: IPV_EHS
60.	2008/JUST-1/190 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 190	PROTECT – Good practice in preventing serious violence, attempted homicides, including crimes in the name of honour, and in protecting high risk victims of gender based violence (PROTECT I)
61.	2008/JUST-1/199 - JLS/2008/CFP/DAP/20 08-1	WOSAFEJUS – Why Doesn't She Press Charges? Understanding and Improving Women's Safety and Right to Justice (Target=professionals)
62.	2008/JUST-1/246 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 246	Iris – Intervention sur les violences envers les femmes: recherche et mise en service des guichets spécialisés
63.	2008/JUST-1/258 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 258	Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence (GEAR against IPV)
64.	2008/JUST-1/263 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 263	Breaking the Taboo II Developing and testing tools to train the trainer
65.	2008/JUST-1/345 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1 345	Maintien au travail ou insertion professionnelle des victimes de violences domestiques

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66.	2008/JUST-1/346 - JLS/DAP3/AG/1346	REACT – React to Domestic Violence: Building Support System for Victims of Domestic Violence
67.	2008/JUST-1/377 - JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1377	Implementation of Multidisciplinary Support to Victims of Violence at home and School
68.	2009/JUST/DAP3/1AG/95	Multi Family Training pack for professionals working with abusive and violent high risk families
69.	2009/JUST/DAP3/AG/1082	Empowering Women and Providers: Domestic Violence and Mental Health
70.	2009/JUST/DAP3/AG/1167	HERA Project aimed to improve the processes of policing in relation to gender violence by creating European standards and training police officers and victims on the basis of these protocols and best practices.
71.	2009/JUST/DAP3/AG/1344	LEXOP: Lex-Operators all together for women victims of intimate partner violence
72.	2009/JUST-2010/DAP3/AG/1226	Mind the Gap - Improving Intervention in Intimate Partner Violence against older
73.	2009/JUST-2010/DAP3/AG/1233	EU Comparative: Counselling survivors of domestic violence
74.	2009/JUST-2010/DAP3/AG/1348	Empower: Empowerment of Women, Environment, Research
75.	2010/JUST/DAP3/AG/1130	Train, Improve, Reduce! Diminish the mental health and psychological consequences of violence against women by dismantling prejudices of law enforcement agents
76.	2010/JUST/DAP3/AG/1253	PROTECT II - Capacity building in Risk Assessment and Safety Management to PROTECT II High-Risk Victims
77.	2010/JUST/DAP3/AG/1365	MuTAVi Project - Multimedia Tools Against Violence
78.	2010-1/395	COSAI: Comparing Sexual Assault Interventions aimed to ameliorate the quality of sexual assault services provided to victims in Europe, by improving their effectiveness, appropriateness and humanity. COSAI focused on reviewing and understanding the different policies, practices and services for victims of sexual assault across European countries, in order to decrease the often very serious social, mental and health-related harm caused to the victims of sexual assault
79.	2012/JUST/DAP/AG/3092	<b>KEEP ME SAFE: Empowering Young People with Learning Disabilities (YPWLD)</b> <b>The empowerment of young people with a learning disability (YPWLD) as a way to protect themselves against sexual abuse and violence was the overall aim of this project</b>
80.	2012/JUST/DAP/AG/3176	GAP Work: Improving gender-related violence intervention and referral through youth practitioner training
81.	2012/JUST/DAP/AG/3531	EPOGENDER - Gender Violence: Protocols for the protection of victims and effectiveness of protection orders. Towards an efficient implementation of Directive 2011/99/EU
82.	2013/JUST/DAP/AG/5325	NEW START-Life coaching and mentoring empowerment for women for a new start
83.	2013/JUST/DAP/AG/5361	IMPLEMENT – Specialized Support for Victims of Violence in Health Care Systems Across Europe
84.	2013/JUST/DAP/AG/5408	Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence - II (GEAR against IPV - II)
85.	2014/JUST/RDAP/AG/VICT/7401	Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence (USVSV): Training for Sustainable Student Services
86.	2014/JUST/RDAP/AG/VICT/7450	FIRST – Capacity Building for First Points of Contact for Victims of Domestic and Gender-based Violence



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