



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

Analysis of the Provisionally agreed text by the Belgian Council Presidency of the EU and the EU Parliament on the Directive on Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

The key provisions in relation to the rights and protection of deaf women and girl victims of gender-based violence are as follows:

Recital 10:

- Says that this Directive supports the CRPD, the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

Recital 11:

- Specifically mentions “*intersectional discrimination*” recognising that people who experience this, e.g. deaf women, are at a heightened risk of GBV.

Recital 24:

- Removed mention of sign languages.
- But it refers to reporting incidents of GBV to “*trained police officers*” or “*any professional trained to assist victims of violence against women and domestic violence.*” – although this is only mentioned in a recital, it still is important to highlight as the point about training was a key one made by our focus group. There is a gap in the Directive in this regard, that there isn’t an article that mentions the importance of training for victims of intersectional discrimination e.g. persons with disabilities. For deaf women, this would mean that they are trained to engage with deaf women and either learn some of the national sign language or provide national sign language interpretation.

Recital 48:

- Information websites at the Member State level should follow “*accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities*”.



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

Recital 56:

- Recognises the victims who experience intersectional discrimination are a heightened risk of GBV and explicitly mentions “*women with disabilities*” who should therefore receive specific support. This is very important for the support of deaf women and girl victims of GBV as it recognises that support should be provided on a case-by-case basis with regards to the victim’s specific layers of identity. (**Article 18, paragraph 4**, mentions the same)

Recital 57:

- “*Women with disabilities disproportionately experience violence against women and domestic violence and due to their disability often have difficulties in accessing protection and support measures.*”
- This begs the question, however, that if the EU is aware of this fact, why isn’t there more effort into data collection on the situation of women with disabilities and GBV?

Recital 58:

- Awareness-raising campaigns should take into account “*language barriers*”.
- The importance and lack of awareness-raising campaigns was raised by our members in the focus group, so this recital is important to note as it recognises the reality that some women are not being reached by this crucial information because of language e.g. communication barriers which is directly relevant for deaf women as none of these campaigns are accessible in the national sign language.

Article 16 – Reporting of Violence against Women or Domestic Violence:

- Removed the mention of sign languages and persons with disabilities that was included by the EP but the new text does say that reporting of GBV must be through “*accessible channels*”.



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

Article 27 – Specialist Support for Victims:

- Paragraph 2 – specialist support in person – *“tailored to the needs of the victims”* and should be *“accessible”*.
- Paragraph 5 - Includes mention that support guidelines and protocols for healthcare and social service professionals should also *“indicate how to address the specific needs of victims who are at an increased risk of such violence as a result of their experiencing discrimination based on a combination of sex and other grounds of discrimination.”* – this is a crucial point made in this article with regards to deaf women as their support needs will be different from a woman without a disability for instance. Furthermore, due to their dual belonging to the disability and cultural-linguistic minority groups, they face a disability- and language-based discrimination, leading to communication barriers which are crucial to remove in support settings following being victims of GBV. Ultimately, although this article doesn't explicitly mention women with disabilities, it is still taking an intersectional approach which is excellent.

Article 31 – Helplines for Victims:

- There is one mention of “interpreting” in article 31, paragraph 2a – *“Member States shall strive to ensure the provision of those services in a language that victims can understand, including by means of telephone interpreting.”*
- Article 31, paragraph 2 - makes specific reference to persons with disabilities with regards to the accessibility of services and that they should be in line with accessibility requirements under Annex 1 of the Directive 2019/882/EU on Accessibility Requirements of products and services. Annex 1 includes one specific mention of accessibility in sign languages. However, mostly the types of accessibility are vague such as *“other sensory channels”, “speech to text”, “SMS”, “one mode of operation that doesn't require hearing”*. In this way, we must read Article 31, paragraph 2 in light of Annex 1, meaning the services must be made accessible to deaf women.



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

- Article 31, paragraph 4a – *“Member States shall ensure that the end-users are adequately informed of the existence and numbers of helplines, including through regular awareness-raising campaigns.”* – this is important as it alludes to a crucial part of the combatting of GBV for deaf women however it does not oblige Member States to make these campaigns accessible to persons with disabilities, let alone to deaf women in the national sign language.

Article 35 – Targeted Supports for Victims with intersectional needs and groups at risk:

- This includes women with disabilities.
- Paragraph 2, *“The support services under articles 27 to 32 shall have sufficient capacities to accommodate victims with disabilities, taking into consideration their specific needs.”*

Article 36 – Preventative Measures:

- In article 36, paragraph 3, the inclusion of the mentions of persons with disabilities and relevant languages were removed by the Council.
- Paragraph 4 – *“targeted actions shall be focused on groups at heightened risk, such as those referred to in article 35, paragraph 1...information shall be presented in formats accessible to persons with disabilities.”*