

FILIA Center final statement

This statement is delivered on behalf of FILIA Center, one of the most prominent feminist organizations in Romania, that makes women's voices heard through direct work in vulnerable communities, advocacy activities, activism, and research. The statement is delivered based on the VAW Network joint submission. This submission addresses preventing and combating gender-based violence, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and equality and non-discrimination.

Issue no. 1: preventing and combating gender-based violence.

To improve the data collection, the legislation and the quality of GBV's current services with a focus on domestic violence were among the recommendations several states made to the Romanian government.

Unfortunately, in all the above areas, we encountered less progress than we expected in the past four years.

The state doesn't collect disaggregated data regarding sexual violence or any other GBV-related crimes outside family relationships.

Romania still does not have a minimum age for valid consent in cases of sexual intercourse with minors. Judicial practice showed that school performance, family environment, and whether the minor victim was scantily dressed or was physically developed are considered to determine the minor's capacity of valid consent, including at very young ages of 10-12 years old. Furthermore, the report of the Judicial Inspection highlights racist justification for the dismissal of an investigation into sexual crimes against Roma minors.

The lack of budgeting for social services for the victims of DV is a serious problem and there are no functional services for survivors of sexual violence. The lack of clear procedures to monitor the aggressors who have POs put victims at risk and many victims were re-victimized by the aggressor and even killed although they had a protection order.

In Romania, young women may be subjected to virginity tests on request by their parents or under pressure from their partners. After one year of advocacy actions and public campaigns, the virginity tests are still being performed in medical offices.

Therefore, we recommend **to the Romanian Government:**

- to introduce 16 as the minimum age for valid consent in cases of sexual intercourse with minors;

- to allocate adequate financial resources for the integrated centers for victims of GBV to function at recommended standards;
- to invest financial and human resources in continuous training for specialists to better understand victim's response to sexual trauma and to provide a coordinated response in cases of sexual crime to avoid re-victimization;

Also, we recommend **to all the responsible public authorities** for preventing and combating GBV to collect disaggregated data on all forms of violence

Issue no. 2: access to sexual and reproductive health services

Mongolia recommended to the Romanian government to focus more on improving the quality of health services.

Romanian citizens do not have access to sexual education, free contraceptive methods (not even for vulnerable groups), or safe abortions. More than 300 women underwent abortions in unsafe conditions in the past 3 years. Abortions on request were not performed in the public system last year in 13 out of the 41 administrative counties of Romania. More than 1/3 of the public hospitals in Romania are refusing to perform abortions invoking religious and moral grounds.

Despite the protests and advocacy efforts of civil society, the situation only worsened in the past 4 years on the matter of access to safe abortions

We recommend to the Romanian government:

- To include on-request abortion on the list of procedures covered by the National House of Insurance - this will lead to a partial or total cover of the cost, at least for vulnerable persons;
- to offer access to medical abortion through telemedicine;

Issue no. 3: equality and non-discrimination

Uruguay recommended to the Romanian government to *eradicate social exclusion and statements of public figures that hamper the sexual health and reproductive rights of women.*

However, several new pregnancy crisis centers and anti-abortion hotlines were opened in Romania in the past 4 years. Their discourse is rooted in shame, fear, and false medical information. New anti-abortion actors are emerging, even working at the border with Ukrainian refugees.

Several attempts to forbid the discourse about gender, discrimination, and homosexuality were blocked under pressure from civil society.

Therefore, we recommend to the Romanian Government:

- to forbid any form of sharing false medical-related information through medical offices, pregnancy-crisis centers, hotlines, online content, or websites;
- to put in place a system to monitor the existent pregnancy-crisis centers and explicitly forbids collaboration between them and public health units;
- to create mechanisms to inform the public with adequate and accurate information about accessing sexual and reproductive health services;