



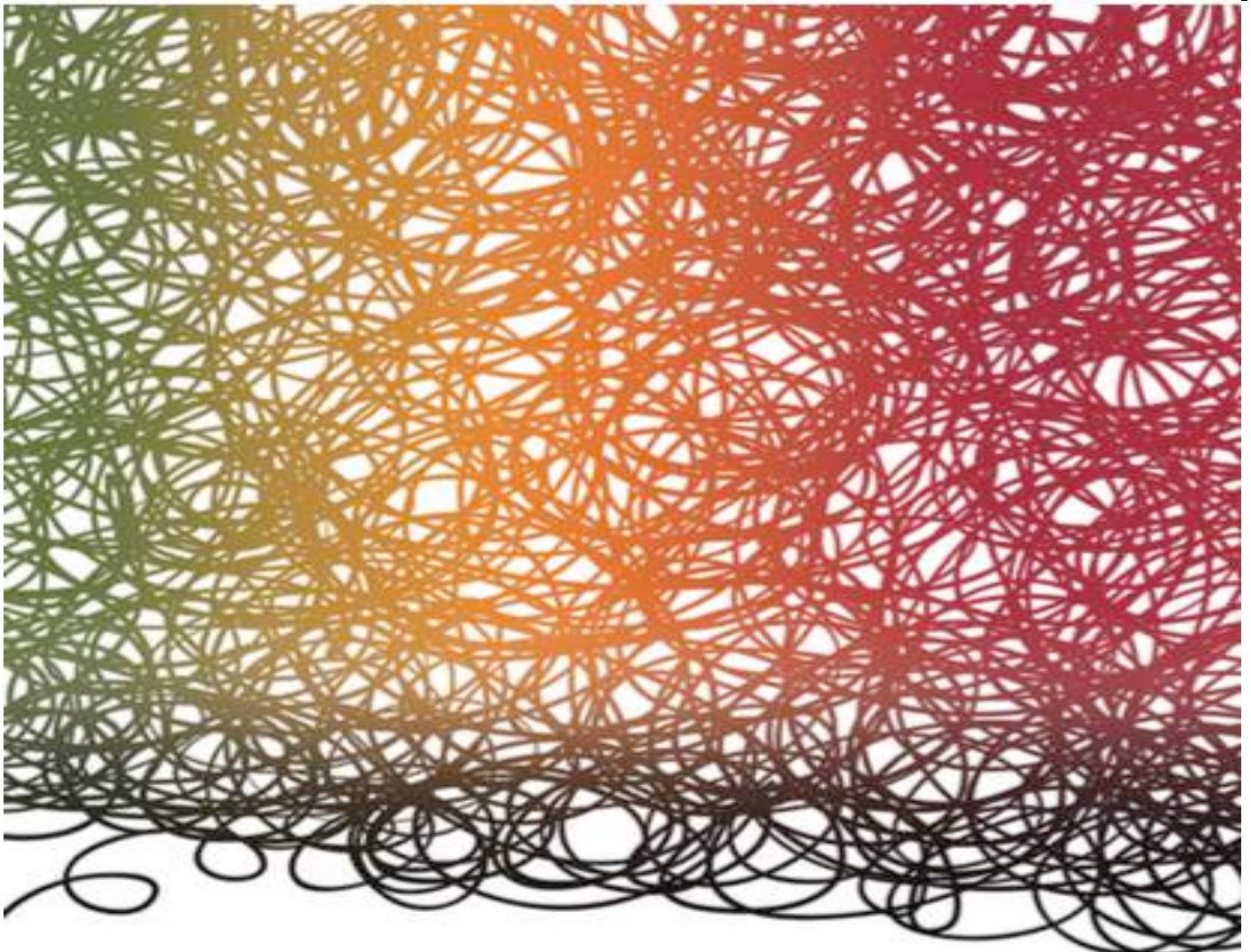
Summary Report











In Easy Words and Pictures



**Violence Against
Disabled Women Project**



<p>What is in this summary report?</p>		
<p>Information about this project</p>	<p>Page 3</p>	
<p>What did we do?</p>	<p>Page 4</p>	
<p>What did we find out?</p>	<p>Page 7</p>	
<p>About Violence Against Disabled Women</p>	<p>Page 10</p>	
<p>Barriers to good services</p>	<p>Page 15</p>	
<p>What helps disabled women to live safely?</p>	<p>Page 19</p>	
<p>What should services do to get better?</p>	<p>Page 21</p>	
<p>Good things that some women's groups already do!</p>	<p>Page 24</p>	

About the project



What? The project was called “Access to Specialised Victim Support Services for Women with Disabilities who have Experienced Violence”.



When?

The project was from 2013 until 2015.



Where? This project happened in 4 places in the European Union:

- Austria (the red country on this map)
- Germany (yellow country on this map),
- Iceland (green country on this map)
- United Kingdom (the blue countries on this map are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).



The money came from a European fund called Daphne 3. This is money that is used to protect women, children and young people from violence.



What did we do?

Universities, disabled or Deaf women, service providers (including shelters or refuges, counselling services and victim services), victims and survivors all worked together. We did three things:



1. We looked at the law and policies in the different countries in the project. These are books and papers that say what must happen or what should happen in different places.



2. We asked disabled or Deaf women about the violence that happened to them. They talked in groups and interviews. We asked staff who work with victims (in refuges and support services) questions about what there is for disabled women. We asked them online or at interviews.



3. We found out what works and shared it with people. We have said what should be better about services for disabled women after violence or abuse.



Who took part in the project?
The project was in four countries.



106 women came to focus group discussions.



59 women were interviewed.



602 service providers did a survey.
Most were were refuges, women's advice centres, helplines and places for women survivors)



What does research say?

People are violent to disabled women two or three times more often than they are to other women. It is a big problem.
There are barriers to access in support, information and services after violence.
We have said what we think should be done to improve services.



What does the Law do about violence against disabled women?



There are lots of laws in Europe and the four countries we looked at. There are important laws that say violence against women is wrong. There are lots of laws to protect disabled people.



But there are big and important gaps in laws to protect disabled women who had violence against them.



Even where there are laws, there are barriers to access justice for disabled women.



What we found from this study



**There is a big gap between:
The high number of victims of violence
who are disabled women
AND
The small number of disabled women
who get access to justice.**



**Disabled women should have equal
rights to justice.**



**Some Police, Courts and social workers
do not believe disabled women when
they say they have been abused or
attacked.**



**Sometimes people say disabled women
did not understand what was happening
to them, or that the victim or survivor let
it happen.**



Police, Courts and social workers can look down on victims and not understand that disabled women have human rights.



People with power sometimes have the wrong attitudes about disabled people, sex and relationships.



Sometimes the barriers are too much. Because of these barriers, some women do not ask for help at all.



Disabled or Deaf women are not always told what will happen in Court. Disabled women do not have enough accessible information or support to get fair justice.



Abusers and attackers make their victims feel scared on purpose. The violence goes on for a lot longer and is a lot worse for disabled women. So, lots of disabled women do not want to ask for help and support.



Many disabled women in the four countries experienced serious violence.



Many disabled women were attacked in institutions, by carers, or at home by partners or men in their families.



Some men want to hold power over disabled women. They do not want their victims to tell people what happened. Sometimes, disabled women are too scared about losing the support they need to say anything about what is happening to them.



Many disabled women have been deliberately threatened or isolated by the person who was violent. Many violent men take away mobility or communication aids to stop their victims seeing or talking to other people.



All of these things are against disabled women's human rights. They are against the Law and they are wrong.



Types of Violence Against Disabled Women



Violence happens to disabled women all through their lives – as babies, girls, teenagers and adults.

You might find this part of the booklet upsetting. But what happened is never your fault. We can make things better and safer by speaking up.



Violence is wrong. It can be:



- **Mental violence** (hurting how you feel about yourself, making you feel worthless or making you scared).



- **Physical violence** (hurting your body, by kicking, hitting, bruising, spitting on you, choking, slapping or punching). Hurting you by throwing you against a wall or floor.



- **Emotional violence (threatening you or someone you love, or keeping you away from people).**



- **Sexual violence (touching your genitals in private places between your legs or your breasts, making you watch videos where people are doing things that you don't want to see, making you have sex when you have said no, or making you do things you don't want to a man).**



- **Abuse in institutions (where someone who is paid to care for you in a home or centre is violent, cruel or neglects you).**



- **Domestic violence (when your partner, husband or the person you live with hurts you).**



- **Impairment-specific violence (this is violence against disabled women). The abuser could take your chair away, or not take you to the toilet when you need to. They might make you take strong drugs, or sterilise you so you cannot have children).**



- **Forced marriage (this is where you do not want to be married, or you are made to get married because a person abused you and you were so scared that you had to get married).**
- **Some disabled women or girls have forced marriages because they do not understand their rights or what is happening to them.**



Some men use threats or steal money to control the women they abuse.



Who is violent to disabled women and girls?

In institutions or care homes, service staff, drivers, doctors, therapists or even other residents were targeting disabled women for violence or abuse.



Fathers and sometimes brothers, uncles, grandfathers or step-fathers were violent to disabled women when they were girls and teenagers.

Sometimes it was teachers, neighbours, care staff, therapists or doctors who abused the disabled girls or teenagers.

Then when the women grew up, fathers sometimes abused them but mostly it was care staff, boyfriends, partners or husbands.



It is harder for disabled women to leave violence, when they need the person for their support. This makes the risk of violence bigger and makes it last longer than for other women.



Violence hurts everybody.

It doesn't matter where disabled women are from, what their religion is, how much money they have, whether they are a lesbian or live with a man – violence can be done to them. Women of different ages and disabilities can all experience violence.



Disabled women can have worse violence against them that is targeted, because of social isolation and segregation by abusers and institutions. This isolation helps abusers and harms disabled women's life chances.



Disabled women might not have thought it was violence or abuse at the time, it can seem like just part of normal life.



But disabled women must have the right services, information and to choose their own support and independent living.



Barriers to good services for disabled women after violence and abuse



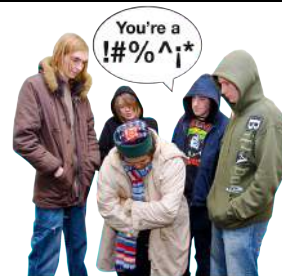
Not many women went to the police. Some went but were not believed. Some women met one or two police officers or judges who helped them.



There were bad attitudes to disabled or Deaf women. Some services did not believe women or ignored them.



Violence against disabled women is because people have power over disabled people. Attackers and abusers have power over disabled women.



Institutions, residential care homes and people who run services in society also have power over disabled women. This means victims and survivors do not get the help or equal treatment that they should do.



How accessible are services for disabled women after violence and abuse?

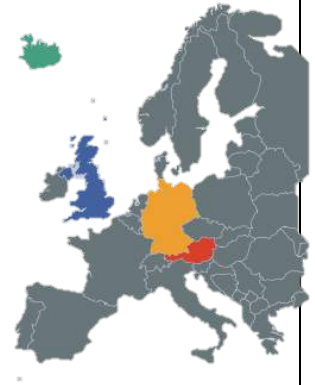


602 service providers told us about their services and barriers.

77 of them were in Austria. 442 were in Germany. 73 were in the United Kingdom. 10 services were in Iceland. (This does not sound like many from Iceland, but the country is only very small).

They all did a survey that was online. The questions asked about access to their services for disabled women.

Most groups that helped us were refuges, women's advice centres, helplines or places that worked with survivors of violence. 54 of their workers were interviewed as well.



Most blind, visually impaired, Deaf and hearing impaired women are barred from access to women's services because of barriers in the services. Hardly any services (between 0% and 4%) were for Braille signage, lights for doorbells or signs for blind women.

Women with mobility needs are also excluded. In the four countries, only between 2% and 13% of services were very accessible to these groups.



For women with the label of learning difficulty or intellectual disability, only 9% to 13% of services were accessible.



In Iceland 40% of services said they could support women in hospitals or residential institutions. It was 29% in the UK, 13% in Austria and 6% in Germany.



More services were accessible to women with physical disabilities. In Germany, 9% were accessible, in Austria and the UK 46% were accessible and in Iceland 66% of services were accessible.



Services had best access for women who need mental health services (27% to 70%).



Most services do not have their adverts or campaigns in accessible formats.



Lots of services say they do not have:

- Enough money
- Extra time or people
- Enough knowledge



to deal with disabled women after violence. Some services thought they could not do it so didn't bother to try.



Some services worked with other groups (like health services or counselling). A third of groups talked to disability services, but only 20% talked to Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), led or staffed by disabled people.



Some women's groups thought they should deal with domestic violence, but not hate crime. Some didn't want to talk about abuse against disabled women at all because of the stigma about it.



What helps disabled women to live safely?



Women in the research told us three things that help them after violence or abuse:

1. Good relationships and support from people they can trust, who believe them.

This might be family or friends, but sometimes these people stopped women or girls from getting help; this had a big impact on disabled girls especially.



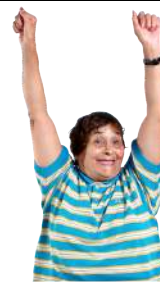
2. Help from services. Good support was important.



3. Groups helped disabled women after violence. Peer counselling (from other disabled women who have experienced violence), advocacy, self-help groups or self-defence classes helped get self-confidence. Writing, dance classes, yoga and getting training or a job also helped.



Some women got personal assistants instead of the abusive people who pretended to care for them.



The project asked people to say things that work well. We asked:

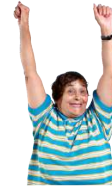
- **Specialised victim support services (like women's groups and refuges)**
- **Advisors in each country**
- **Disabled women who had experienced violence**



What should services do to get better?



- Disabled victims or survivors are important! Talk to us about what you can do better! Employ disabled staff and volunteers to be more inclusive.



- Believe disabled women when they tell you what happened to them.
- Make your information accessible.



- Do great assessment of women's needs and access requirements. Think about the violence that happened to us carefully.



- Understand that women have been through violence when groups help them to live independently. Think about our safety and recovery after violence in plans for us.



- **Look at the disabled woman as a whole woman. See the whole picture.**



- **Make groups that help women after violence accessible and include disabled women.**



Police, politicians and people who run women's services must make sure we can take our rights.



When we work together..



We can guarantee safety and a life with no violence..



For disabled women in the future!

All the disabled women in this project want to live in an inclusive society.

We want safety to live the lives we want.



- **Come and talk with us!**



- **Employ disabled or Deaf staff and volunteers.**



- **Police, courts, victim services and refuges need more disabled people working for you. This could make you more accessible and welcoming.**



- **If you give Deaf women a job, you will not need interpreters. This will be cheaper, help you be safe and keep our details private.**



- **Information and support is better from a person than the internet. Not everybody can use a computer. Come and see us!**



Refuges need more spaces to stay that are accessible for disabled women.



Good things that some women's groups already do!



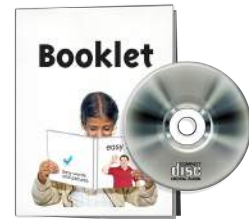
- **One Violence Against Women (VAW) group works with a disabled people's organisation and a university.**



- **A group built an accessible refuge for disabled women after violence.**



- **A violence against women group and a disabled people's group made easy read information.**



- **Services that work for black or Asian disabled women, older disabled women and other groups are good. They understand our cultures and religions.**



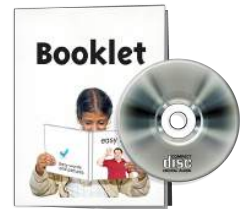
- **Some services work with women with learning difficulties who were targeted by men.**



The reports from this project are free.

They are in Easy Read, British Sign Language and audio at this website:

**women-disabilities-
violence.humanrights.at/publications**



There are contacts for help and support in the booklet for disabled women.



This booklet was written from the summary by the project partners by Sonali Shah, Susie Balderston and Sarah Woodin. It was made into Easy Read by Vision Sense. We used Photosymbols for the pictures.



The research was done by this project: “Access to specialised victim support services for women with disabilities who have experienced violence” with funding from the Daphne 3 Programme of the European Union. It cannot be seen to reflect the views of the European Commission.



The partners in this project were:

