



Time for needs:  
Listening, Healing, Protecting. A joint Action for an  
Appropriate Assessment of Special Needs of Victims of  
Torture and Violence  
HOME/2014/AMIF/AG/ASYL/7836  
*A project co-financed by the European Commission*



## Main outcomes and challenges for the protection of survivors of torture and/or serious violence

Daniela Di Rado

Monica Luci

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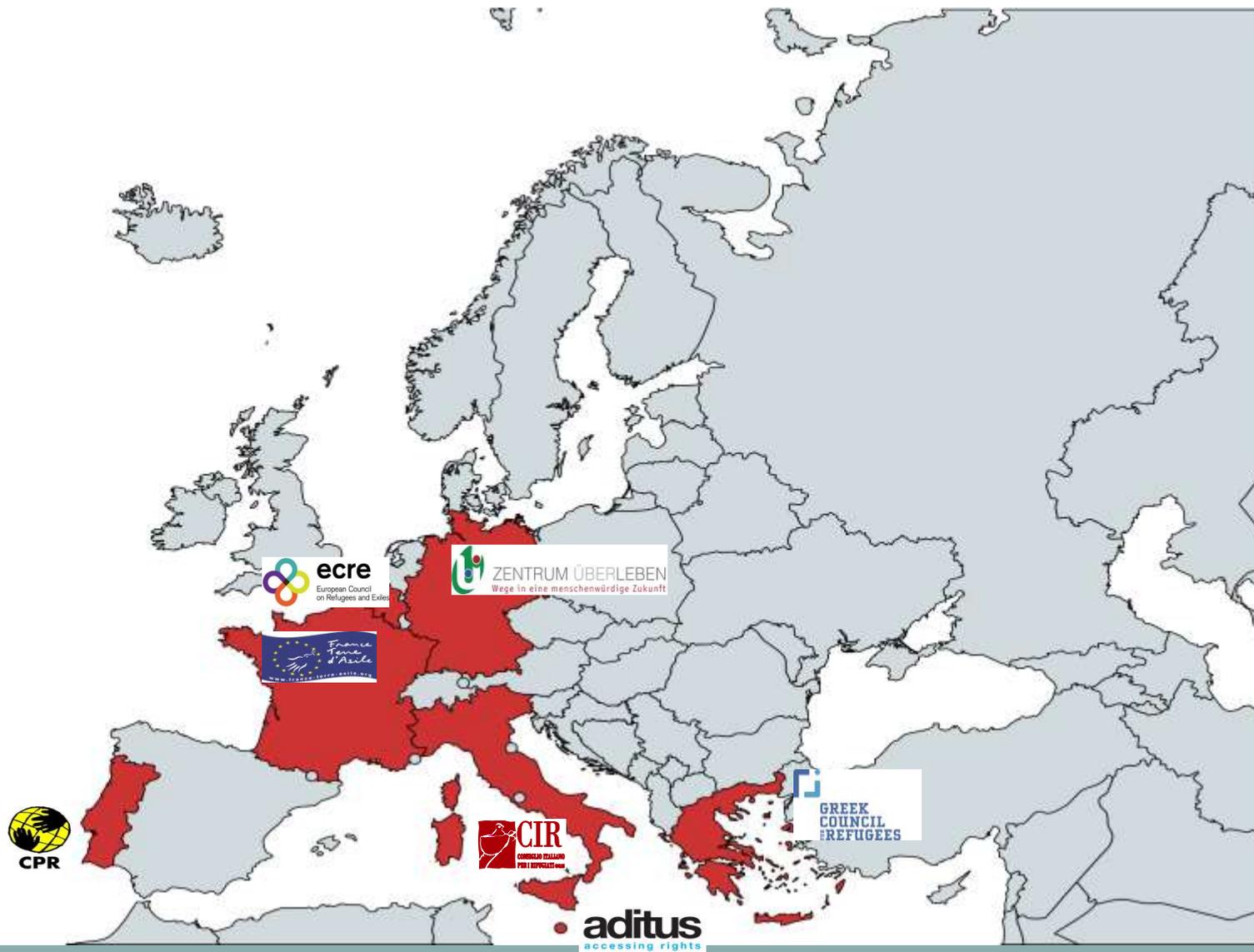


# Project aims



- To contribute to the identification of the special needs of survivors of torture and/or serious violence in relation to the asylum procedure, as well as reception conditions;
- To develop harmonized protection standards and practices across the European Union for this vulnerable target group;
- To facilitate the improvement of the effectiveness and the fairness of both the asylum system and the standard of protection of survivors of torture and/or serious violence, making the procedural guarantees and tailored services for this target group more likely and efficiently used.

# Project partnership



# Research Methodology



- Desk research
- Field research: 68 Interviews to stakeholders + 30 Focus groups with beneficiaries
- Development of a tool for the assessment of the special needs of survivors of torture (*QASN – Survivors*) and its administration (*Pilot Initiative*)
- Feedbacks from stakeholders using the tool and roundtables with experts, both institutional and non-institutional

# Findings at transnational level



## Access to territory and identification

- Fast-track procedures at the access to territory impede the identification of SoTV.
- Only the obvious, visible and/or overly reported vulnerabilities are recorded during the asylum claim registration. *This excludes the recognition of traumatized asylum seekers as people with special needs.*
- The shortcomings or the lack of trained personnel may jeopardise the identification of SoTV or makes it serendipitous or, eventually, delays it to a later stage.
- Obviously, this problem with identification has a huge knock-on effect on all the aspects of procedure, reception and assistance to survivors.
- **Recommendation:** SoTV should always be exempted from border and accelerated procedures both in law and practice. Trained personnel should always be present in identification procedures and in a number that is commensurate to that of asylum seekers.

# Findings at transnational level



## Information

- Many efforts have been made in providing information on asylum procedure, especially at port/airport disembarking areas and in hotspot, but still there are many problems and critical issues.
- Complicating factors: language barrier, scarce availability of interpreters, different educational level of asylum seekers, their difficulty to concentrate on the information provided because of trauma and its symptoms and the new and unstable living situation.
- **Recommendation:** The information about asylum procedure should be provided (and repeated) in written and oral form and with the help of an interpreter during all the stages of access to territory, procedure and reception.

# Findings at transnational level



## Procedural guarantees

- The legislations of the MS provide procedural guarantees for SoTV, (among others, the possibility of prioritizing, omitting or postponing the interview, as well as requesting an extend period of time to present evidence for the decision-making by the asylum authority).
- Procedural guarantees can be applied if the person has been taken in charge from services, being them external or internal to the reception centre or other asylum system accommodation. Those victims not identified as such, and/or not accommodated in a reception centre, and/or not taken in charge from a specialized NGO, rarely benefit from them.
- **Recommendation:** An adequate system of identification and assessment of the special needs of SoTV should be set up and be conducted in a timely and effectively manner. Such identification should initiate as soon as the asylum application is lodged, but it should be also guaranteed that it continues in the following stages of procedure and assistance, possibly with the support of targeted tools for identification.

# Findings at transnational level



## Reception

- No adequate standards exist in the asylum reception systems of project partners' countries for SoTV. Many reception centres are overcrowded, placed in isolated areas like mountains or islands, with no or complicated connections to more served areas, provided only with basic services, and any or totally insufficient legal and health services.
- Weaknesses: lack of standard operating procedures and tools to identify and monitor the special reception needs of survivors; insufficiency and even absence of services internal to the reception centres; limited access to multidisciplinary support service for SoTV; difficulties in the communication between internal and external services; lack of safe and private accommodation; lack of gender sensitive accommodation in case of sexual violence; language barriers in the provision of services.
- **Recommendation:** Conditions of safety and privacy should always be guaranteed in reception. Accommodation of SoTV should be in places that offer or are easily connected to specialised services. Multidisciplinary and holistic approach should be applied by all professionals ensuring that they work in a coordinated manner among internal and external services.

# Findings at transnational level



## Services

- Legal, health and social services that try to respond to the special needs of SoTV are mostly provided by NGOs. A rare exception to this are a few specialized health services that are guaranteed by the NHS, which have the necessary medical, psychiatric, and psychological know how to treat SoTV and to provide with certification of torture sequelae.
- The general situation of the public health system is one of lack of specialized expertise in terms of professional knowledge (for example, about the standards of *Istanbul Protocol*) and ad hoc services for SoTV.
- NGOs services, although better prepared to deal with the special needs of SoTV, depend on discontinuous external funding for their activities and this creates conditions for instability and discontinuity of health (medical and psychological) care.
- **Recommendation:** Health care should not be restricted to emergency treatments but fully covered by States. Certification and treatment of the consequences of torture and serious violence should be carried out by public qualified services able to guarantee the continuity of care. It is strongly advised the adoption of Guidelines for planning and coordination of assistance, rehabilitation and treatment of SoTV.

# Findings at transnational level



## Other cross-cutting relevant issues

- **Training of staff**
- **Professional interpreters and cultural mediators**
- **Tailored approach to survivors' children assistance**
- **Staff psychological well-being**

# Project products



- Operational tools for staff working with SoTV (*QASN-Survivors; 30 Common Basic Standards*)
- Inspirational tool for policy makers and stakeholders (*10 Best Practices*)
- Tools for advocacy activities (*Video; 6 National Toolkits*)

# *Questionnaire for the Assessment of the Special Needs of Survivors of Torture and/or Serious Violence*



- The questionnaire aims at identifying the special needs of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection who are SoTV and hosted in EU countries;
- *QASN-Survivors* can be used by any professional who has an overall picture of the assistance provided to a survivor;
- It is meant to guide the professional in the assessment of the beneficiary's needs, while understanding if the service provided is sufficiently tailored to respond to such needs or a referral is needed;
- The questionnaire covers four fields of assistance and contains questions addressed to either beneficiary or the professional:
  - 1) Special Procedural Needs;
  - 2) Special Reception Needs;
  - 3) Special Health Needs - a) Medical Section and b) Psychological Section;
  - 4) Special Social Needs.

# *Common Basic Standards*



- The CBS are pivotal criteria, based on *QASN – Survivors*, written as a guide that professionals working with SoTV should take as a reference in order to respond to their special needs to ensure them proper protection and assistance.
- CBS are meant as an **operational tool, written in a direct and simple way**, to be applied in whatever context. The aim is to support the work of staff with eventually different educational background and levels of expertise, to assist SoTV.

# *QASN - Survivors & Common Basic Standards*



With an emphasis on the assessment of the *special needs* of SoTV, the project tools meet not only the aims of the project, but partially address most of the points found as critical in our research at transnational level, with the exception of those needs that require a systemic approach by MS or EU:

- They emphasise the importance of a correct information about the asylum procedure;
- They facilitate the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach to assistance;
- They provide indications about appropriate conditions of living and assistance for SoTV;
- They guide to a complete offer of the type of services needed by SoTV and/or in making an appropriate referral;
- They provide warnings about possible blind spots in the way of providing assistance about sensitive issues for SoTV.

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FINAL REPORT

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**Thank you!**

[dirado@cir-onlus.org](mailto:dirado@cir-onlus.org)

[luci@cir-onlus.org](mailto:luci@cir-onlus.org)