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Self-Advocacy & Freedom Enhancement – Strategic Training for Equality,
Protection & Support

Project Number: 2025-1-SE02-KA210-YOU-000350432

Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces – Sweden, Romania, Turkey



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Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) in public spaces restricts young women's freedom of movement, participation, and sense of safety. It ranges from normalised boundary violations (comments, staring, unwanted contact, persistent attention) to harassment, coercion, stalking, assault, and sexual violence. While GBV can occur in any setting, the Safe-Steps project focuses on how public and semi-public environments, often connected to digital spaces, shape everyday risk experiences and influence whether support is accessed.

This report provides a comparative analysis of Sweden, Romania, and Turkey. It maps risk settings, outlines legal and reporting pathways, describes support landscapes, and identifies barriers to access. The report is designed as an evidence base for the Safe-Steps learning modules and Digital Resource Portal, ensuring that project activities respond to real risks, real barriers, and real access gaps across partner context



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a structured overview of GBV in public spaces across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, and to identify implications for prevention, awareness, and access to support.

Objectives

- Map typical risk settings and how risks show up in everyday life for young women.
- Summarise legal and reporting pathways in each country in brief, with attention to "protection in practice."
- Describe support landscapes and the most relevant contact points for young women.
- Identify barriers that still prevent survivors from seeking or receiving help.
- Present comparative findings and a shared framework that informs the design of Safe-Steps learning modules.

Scope and definitions

This analysis focuses on GBV in public and semi-public spaces, including:



Streets and parks, public transport, nightlife venues and events



Educational environments (campuses, youth settings)



Digital spaces as a connected risk area (e.g., online harassment that affects offline safety)

The document provides a comparative overview rather than a full legal review. It does not aim to replace professional legal advice or specialised survivor support guidance. While patterns overlap across countries, the report highlights differences in risk settings, protection-in-practice, and access barriers.

Intended audience and usage

This document is intended for:

- Safe-Steps partner organisations and project staff.
- Trainers, youth workers, educators, and facilitators.
- Local stakeholders supporting young women (NGOs, services, community actors).

It is designed to be used as:

- An evidence base for designing training modules and awareness activities.
- A reference for support pathways and key contact points.
- A guide for adapting project activities to each national context.

Overview of the Report Structure

Across the three countries, the analysis highlights five themes that are central to

- 1** GBV in public spaces often begins as normalised boundary violations and can escalate.
- 2** High-risk settings repeat across contexts (transport, nightlife, campuses, streets), with digital spaces increasingly connected to offline safety.
- 3** Emotional impacts (fear, anxiety, hypervigilance, avoidance) restrict freedom and participation over time.
- 4** Help-seeking is shaped not only by laws and services, but by trust, stigma, safety concerns, and practical barriers.
- 5** Effective prevention and response require competence-building that supports emotional regulation, coping and recovery, and safe action (including bystander intervention).

Methodology and Criteria of Analysis

Sources and Partner Inputs

This comparative analysis is based on a mixed set of sources in order to capture both formal systems (laws, reporting channels, institutional support) and lived realities (how risks and access barriers show up in everyday life for young women). The evidence base includes:

Partner country inputs and contextual observations

Each partner contributed national-level information and practical insights from their work with young women and youth settings. These inputs helped identify typical risk environments, common barriers to help-seeking, and the "real-life usability" of reporting and support pathways. Partner contributions also supported the interpretation of national data in light of cultural norms, patterns of stigma, and trust in institutions.

National crime statistics, survey results, and publicly available institutional reports were used to illustrate trends in prevalence and reporting patterns. Where relevant, national statistics were treated with caution due to differences in legal definitions and reporting practices across countries. The analysis, therefore, considers official data as one indicator of the situation, rather than as a full measure of lived prevalence.

Official statistics and public reporting

Monitoring reports from NGOs and international organisations

Reports from women's rights organisations, victim support structures, and international bodies were used to understand gaps between formal frameworks and practical protection. These sources were particularly relevant in contexts where official data are limited, fragmented, or not disaggregated in a way that effectively captures public-space and digital harassment.

Peer-reviewed studies and EU-level comparative resources were included to support cross-country comparison and to contextualise national trends. Academic sources helped strengthen the analysis of recurring risk settings (e.g., transport, nightlife, campuses, online spaces) and the psychological and behavioural impacts of harassment and violence (e.g., avoidance, hypervigilance, reduced freedom).

Academic research and comparative EU- level studies

National helplines and service directories for contact point mapping

National helpline portals, service directories, and institutional resource pages were used to identify key contact points most relevant for young women. This mapping focused on services that are accessible, low-threshold, and realistic for young women to use, especially when they are unsure of what to do next.

Criteria Used for Comparative Analysis

To ensure consistency across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, all information was reviewed using the same analytical lens. The criteria below were applied across each country section and again at the comparative stage:

Risk visibility and typical settings	Where risks occur and how they manifest in everyday life (e.g., public transport, nightlife, campuses, streets, parks, digital spaces). This includes the "continuum" of harm, from normalised boundary violations to more severe violence, and the ways in which risk affects routines and freedom of movement.
Protection pathways	Key legal concepts, reporting routes, and protection measures were reviewed, with attention to their practical application. The analysis considers not only what the law provides on paper, but also what survivors may realistically experience when attempting to report or seek protection.
Support capacity and accessibility	Availability and reach of support services, including low-threshold entry points (anonymous contact, helplines, online channels, walk-in services), multilingual options, and the extent to which services are youth-friendly and trauma-informed. Special attention was given to whether services are practical for young women in the moment of need.
Barriers to access	Factors that prevent or delay help-seeking include stigma, fear of escalation, fear of not being believed, distrust of institutions, unclear pathways, social consequences, and practical constraints such as transportation, childcare, and financial dependence. Digital risks were considered as a cross-cutting barrier.
Vulnerability factors	The analysis considered which groups may face higher exposure and fewer safe pathways, including migrant women, women with insecure legal status, women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ youth, women in economic dependence, and those experiencing isolation, digital exclusion, or limited language skills.
Implications for learning needs	Each theme was assessed against the competences that the Safe-Steps learning modules should develop. This includes emotional regulation, resilience, coping strategies, safety planning, bystander decision-making, assertive communication, and practical navigation of initial support services.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Limitations of cross-country comparison

Cross-country analysis is valuable for identifying common patterns, but several limitations apply:



Different legal definitions and reporting cultures

Countries differ in how GBV and sexual offences are defined and recorded, and in the likelihood that survivors report incidents. This affects the direct comparability of official figures.



Underreporting and data gaps

Public harassment and digital violence are widely underreported. In many systems, incidents may not be recorded in a way that captures the full continuum of harm (particularly "everyday" harassment, intimidation, and online abuse).



Variation in service capacity and quality

Support availability varies by location and can change over time due to funding, staff capacity, or policy shifts. The report, therefore, describes support landscapes as indicative rather than exhaustive.



Differences in source types across countries

The evidence base relies on different mixes of sources depending on availability. In some contexts, NGO monitoring and international reporting may carry a greater share of the evidence due to limited official data or limited disaggregation relevant to public-space GBV.

Ethical considerations



The reports do not include survivor-identifying information and avoid descriptions that could enable identification. Examples and interpretations are framed with respect for survivors' safety, dignity, and confidentiality. The report is intended to support prevention, empowerment, and access to help, and it avoids language that may blame or undermine survivors. Where sensitive issues are discussed (e.g., severe violence, migration-related vulnerability), the text is framed in a respectful and protective manner consistent with trauma-informed practice.

Quality assurance

To strengthen reliability and consistency, the report will follow a simple quality assurance process. Partner inputs will be reviewed to ensure shared terminology and a comparable structure across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey. Key statements and figures will be cross-checked against the source materials where possible, and the full draft will be reviewed to confirm that each section reflects all three partner contexts (including both common patterns and context-specific differences). Particular attention will be given to using clear, non-stigmatising language and to aligning conclusions with the evidence base, so the report can be used confidently as the foundation for the SAFE-STEPS learning modules and Digital Resource Portal.

National and Local Landscape: Cultural, Societal, and Legal Dimensions

Responses to gender-based violence (GBV) are shaped by each country's socio-legal context, cultural norms, and the degree of trust people have in institutions and support services. This section provides a brief overview of the situation in Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, highlighting the patterns most relevant to understanding risk in public spaces, reporting realities, and access to protection and support for young women.

Sweden is often described as a country with strong gender equality policies and relatively high levels of institutional trust. Many people feel safe in daily life, yet GBV and sexual violence remain persistent concerns, including in streets, public transport, nightlife venues, university campuses, and digital environments. When interpreting Swedish statistics, it is important to consider that legal definitions are relatively broad and reporting rates are comparatively high, meaning that recorded figures reflect both the prevalence of incidents and the likelihood of reporting.

Even with this consideration, official data illustrate the scale of the issue. In 2024, Sweden's National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) recorded 25,879 reported sexual offences, including 10,167 reported rapes. Survey findings further indicate that young women are particularly affected. In the 2025 Swedish Crime Survey, Brå highlights higher self-reported exposure to sexual offences among women aged 20–24, an age period strongly linked to independent mobility, study/work transitions, social life, and increased digital presence. These everyday routines can also contribute to the normalisation of risky environments and boundary violations.

Romania has made legislative progress in recent years, yet GBV remains a significant challenge in both public and private contexts. A recurring issue highlighted across sources is underreporting and uneven implementation, which can weaken trust in protection and reporting pathways. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) reports that in 2022, Romanian police recorded 57,783 victims of domestic violence, with women representing 76% of cases. EU-level surveys suggest that around one-third of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, and Romania's rates are close to the EU average; however, reporting remains low, with only around one in four women reporting incidents to authorities.

In Turkey, monitoring reports indicate severe levels of violence against women and highlight the strong role of private and relationship-based contexts in many of the most serious cases. A key difference compared to Sweden and Romania is that home and close relationships are often described as primary sites of severe violence. According to the annual report of the We Will Stop Women's Crimes Platform, 394 women were murdered by men in 2024. The report further notes that many victims were killed by men close to them, and that a majority of cases took place in women's own homes.

This does not reduce the relevance of public-space GBV. Rather, the Turkish context often shows a close connection between public and digital harassment and wider patterns of control, surveillance, and escalation risks within relationships and families. In addition, access to support is constrained by structural factors, including limited service capacity in some areas and significant barriers for women experiencing economic dependence, displacement, or insecure legal status. These factors influence whether protection mechanisms are reachable in practice, particularly for women who may fear consequences when contacting authorities.

As in Sweden, young women in Romania face heightened exposure during their academic years and early adulthood, especially in everyday mobility and social settings such as public transport, educational environments, and nightlife. Research also shows that women's fear of harassment in public spaces is widespread across Europe, and patterns suggest that Romanian women likely experience and anticipate public harassment at rates comparable to the European average, even where incidents are not formally reported.

Cross-country framing

In this context, the Safe-Steps project is designed to respond to both shared patterns and national differences. The report provides an overview of how GBV affects young women across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, with particular focus on how risks manifest in everyday public and digitally connected spaces, which reporting and support pathways exist, and which barriers prevent survivors from accessing help. The analysis also supports the project's competence-based approach: strengthening emotional intelligence, resilience, safety skills, and community-based solidarity so that young women can increase their safety, restore confidence, and reclaim freedom of movement and participation in public life.



Typical risk settings and manifestations

In both Sweden and Romania, GBV in public spaces often appears as a continuous and normalised part of daily life, and its manifestations vary. On the one hand, there are everyday boundary violations: comments, sexualized stares, persistent and incessant flirting, unwanted touching in a crowd, or being followed from a bus stop. On the other hand, there are more direct threats, coercion, harassment, assault, and sexual violence. In Romania, a 2024 study by the Legal Resource Center (CRJ) revealed that more than 50% of Romanian high school and university students reported having suffered some form of sexual abuse,

including harassment and assault. It is worth noting that all incidents, whether minor or severe, can have a lasting impact on the lives of those who experience them, such as anxiety,

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avoidance, hypervigilance, changes in route planning, and a reduced sense of freedom.

In Turkey, GBV risks also affect everyday mobility and public life, but available data and monitoring reports highlight an important difference: violence is very often linked to private and relationship contexts, and many of the most severe cases occur in the home. According to the 2024 annual report of the We Will Stop Women's Crimes Platform, a majority of femicides were committed by men close to the victim, and over half took place in women's own homes. This does not reduce the importance of public-space risks, rather, it shows that for many women in Turkey, public and digital harassment can be closely connected to controlling relationships, economic dependence, and safety concerns that extend across both private and public settings.

The environments most commonly associated with fear or vulnerability for young women include:

Public Transport and Transit Areas



- Partners report that bus stops, subway stations, commuter trains, nighttime journeys, and quiet platforms can be frightening, especially when there is low light, few people around, and limited opportunities to intervene. Furthermore, the situation can worsen when someone repeatedly invades personal space or refuses to end the interaction.
- Reports from the European Parliament indicate that more than 55% of women in the EU experience some form of sexual harassment on public transport, and global academic studies show prevalence rates of 40% to 89% among female passengers.
- In Turkey, similar vulnerabilities are heightened in certain contexts where women face additional safety barriers (e.g., limited safe transport options at night, social pressure not to "cause problems," or fear of escalation if harassment is linked to a partner or family member). Post-disaster and displacement contexts can further increase risk: monitoring reports note that in temporary housing areas after the 2023 earthquakes, shared toilets/showers and poor lighting made women more vulnerable to harassment and violence.

Nightlife, crowded events and social venues



- Sweden and Romania report that venues such as bars, clubs, festivals, concerts, and house parties create widely recognised risk factors: crowds, alcohol, social pressure, and a reduced ability to interpret signals or intervene safely. Global research shows that nearly half of women who frequent nightclubs report having experienced sexual comments, groping, or forced kisses, indicating widespread harassment in nightlife settings. Many survivors describe the most difficult part afterwards as not just what happened, but how quickly their social circle dismissed it as "normal nightlife behavior."
- In Turkey, public social venues and nightlife can also carry risks, but reporting and help-seeking may be affected by stronger stigma, fear of blame, and worries about family/community consequences. These barriers can make harassment feel "unreportable," even when it causes significant fear and restricts movement.

University campuses, academic and youth environments



- It is reported that within schools, youth groups, sports environments, and universities, the risk extends beyond physical safety to encompass social security as well. For example, academic institutions in Romania face serious security challenges. A CRJ study revealed that 55% of surveyed students experienced sexual abuse in educational settings, yet official ethics complaints remain very low, with only 15 cases of sexual harassment reported across all Romanian universities over five years. This stark discrepancy between the harassment experienced and the reported cases reflects systemic barriers to reporting, power dynamics between faculty and students, and fear of academic repercussions. People may hesitate to speak out for fear of gossip, accusations, not being believed, or "complicating things" within a closed community.
- In Turkey, education-related risks intersect with broader structural pressures. Monitoring data also underline "hidden" forms of gender-based violence affecting girls and young women, including child and early marriage. Figures published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) show substantial numbers of official marriages involving girls aged 16–17 in recent years, while observers note that unregistered religious marriages are likely to make the real scale higher in some regions. These patterns matter for public-space safety because early marriage and school drop-out can increase isolation, economic dependence, and vulnerability to control.

Digital spaces

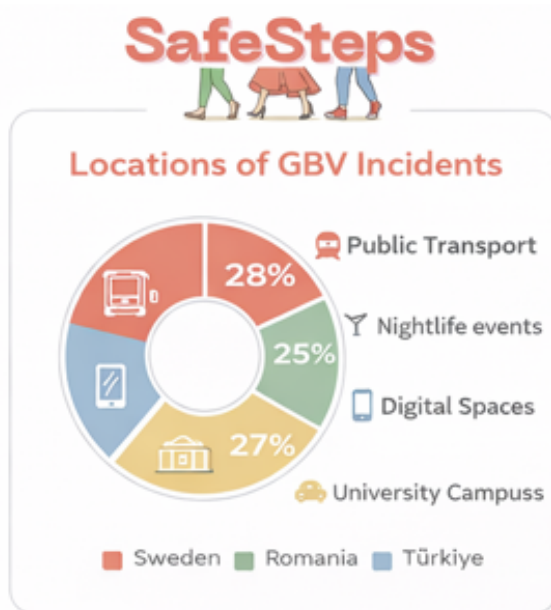


- Online harassment, stalking, threats, sexualized messages, image-based abuse, and "aggressive" behavior can be persistent and invasive. Furthermore, online harassment often extends into public spaces through location tracking, monitoring based on social media posts, and online threats that generate fear in physical environments.
- It is important to highlight that some groups face even greater barriers and vulnerability. In Sweden, for example, young women from migrant backgrounds who are not fluent in Swedish, women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ youth, and people experiencing housing insecurity or dependency are particularly vulnerable. Additionally, Sweden is reported to recognise the challenges related to honour-related violence and oppression, where safety planning and support pathways may need to be adapted to prevent escalating risk. In Romania, digital violence has been recognised through legislative amendments, with Law No. 202/2002 defining harassment and sexual harassment to include online spaces.
- In Turkey, technology-driven violence has become a growing threat in recent years. Cyberbullying, the unauthorised distribution of intimate images, and online harassment have become widespread forms of domestic violence. Research shows that in the Turkish context, it is common for ex-partners to use social media and other apps to maintain control over women after a separation. Because law enforcement lacks the technical capacity and legal training to classify online threats as serious precursors to physical violence, these actions often go unpunished. As a result, women feel unsafe in digital spaces, leading to severe psychological trauma and even social isolation for many.
- Across all three countries, online harassment increasingly blurs the line between virtual and physical safety, reinforcing the need for integrated digital literacy and safety tools as part of GBV prevention strategies.

Streets, parks and other public spaces



- Across all three countries, streets, parks, pedestrian areas, shopping zones, and other open public spaces are frequently described as environments where gender-based harassment becomes “part of normal life,” especially for young women moving alone or at night. Pan-European surveys indicate that a large share of women have experienced catcalling or unwanted sexualised comments in public spaces, showing that this is a widespread pattern across Europe and not limited to a single national context.
- **In Sweden**, public-space harassment is often associated with everyday mobility, including walking home, waiting outside stations, moving between campus/work and home, or travelling through quiet areas in the evening. Young women may describe repeated boundary violations such as sexualised comments, staring, being followed, or men “testing boundaries” through persistent attention. Even when incidents are not reported, the impact is evident in behavioural adaptations, such as taking longer routes, avoiding certain streets or parks, sharing live locations, planning journeys around daylight hours, or limiting participation in social life. For some groups, including women with migrant backgrounds, women facing language barriers, and those at risk of honour-related control, the experience of harassment in public spaces may also connect to fear of consequences within family or community settings, making both movement and help-seeking more complex.
- **In Romania**, academic research suggests that women likely experience public harassment at rates similar to the European average, even if formal reporting is low. At the same time, gaps in data collection remain a challenge. The Council of Europe’s GREVIO assessment (2022) noted that, while Romania has improved its legislation, further improvements are needed in data collection on all forms of GBV, including harassment in public spaces. This matters because when harassment is not consistently documented, it is less likely to be treated as a serious safety issue, and survivors may feel there is “no point” in reporting.
- **In Turkey**, harassment in public spaces is also part of many women’s everyday risk experience, but it is often shaped by wider structural pressures, including stigma around reporting, limited trust in protection, and the overlap between public harassment and private control. For many women, “public space risk” cannot be separated from fear of repercussions at home or from a partner or family member. This can increase silence and isolation, even when incidents cause significant distress and restrictions on daily mobility.



Overall, this setting highlights a common Safe-Steps challenge across the three countries: public-space harassment is both frequent and normalised, yet it produces real harm through fear, avoidance, and reduced freedom, reinforcing the need for skills-based prevention, emotional regulation tools, and clear support pathways.

This reinforces the cross-country pattern that everyday harassment, although often minimised, has cumulative effects on freedom of movement, emotional well-being, and participation, and therefore requires both prevention competences and clear access to support.

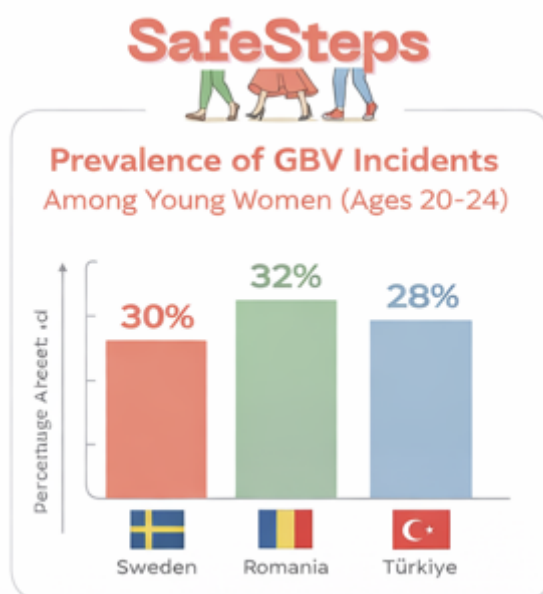
Key cross-country patterns

Across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, young women face GBV risks that restrict freedom of movement and everyday participation, even when the most visible settings differ. In all three contexts, harm often begins with behaviours that are socially minimised, such as comments, staring, repeated attention, unwanted contact, persistent messaging, and can escalate into intimidation, coercion, stalking, assault, or sexual violence. Over time, these experiences contribute to fear, hypervigilance, avoidance, and reduced confidence in public life.

Two differences are important for interpretation. Sweden and Romania exhibit a clearer pattern of public-space risk (transport, nightlife, campuses), in which risk is closely linked

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to everyday mobility and social environments. Turkey shows a stronger overlap between public-space risk and private or relationship-based control, where severe violence is frequently reported in the home and often involves men close to the victim. At the same time, digital spaces connect all three countries: online harassment and monitoring can extend into physical risk through location tracking, threats, and coercion. Young women facing language barriers, economic dependence, disability, insecure legal status, isolation, or digital exclusion often have fewer safe pathways to support.



Legal and reporting pathways in brief

After mapping where risks occur and how they affect everyday life, this section summarises the main legal and reporting routes available in each partner country, with attention to how protection works in practice and what young women are likely to experience when seeking help.

It is reported that regarding legal aspects and reporting, the Swedish legal framework is clear on one central principle: sexual acts require voluntary participation. The reform enacted in July 2018, based on the principle of consent (*samtyckeslagen*), shifted the legal focus from proving violence or threats to proving the absence of consent. Additionally, it introduced the crime of negligent rape, which addresses situations where a person should have understood that the other party was not participating voluntarily. As for reporting

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methods, Sweden offers relatively straightforward channels:

 Sweden	
112	Emergency number for imminent danger or ongoing crime.
114 14	Swedish Police number for non-urgent matters, such as reporting a crime or requesting guidance.

While reporting is understood to be a personal decision, and people report at different times or not at all, the Swedish Police also emphasise that prompt reporting can help preserve evidence and identify witnesses. In cases of harassment or stalking, Swedish law allows for restraining orders (kontaktförbud). These orders are issued by the public prosecutor's office and can restrict contact and presence near specific locations, even including electronic monitoring if necessary.

Romania is reported to have significantly strengthened its legal framework and to have improved legislation on domestic violence and national strategies. Romanian Law No. 202/2002 establishes clear definitions of harassment and sexual harassment, including in public spaces. The main reporting channels in this country include:

 Romania	
112	Emergency situations requiring an immediate police response.
0800 500 333	ANES national helpline, available 24/7

Despite the above, significant implementation shortcomings persist in Romania. EIGE data shows that, in 2022, while 49,254 men were reported for domestic violence, only 235 convictions were recorded, indicating difficulties in the judicial system's response to cases of gender-based violence.

In the case of Turkey, legal measures exist to protect women from violence, stipulated in Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women. However, this law has faced setbacks during its implementation. For example, it has been reported that the duration of protection and expulsion orders issued by the courts is now shorter than in previous years. In many cases, instead of six-month orders, orders of one month or less are issued. Furthermore, judges often demand concrete proof of physical violence before issuing protection orders, further endangering the lives of Turkish women.

On the other hand, Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has also had a negative impact on the fight against women, as a statistically significant increase in the rate of suspected femicides has been demonstrated since the decision to withdraw. The withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has led to significant changes in judicial practice and fosters a sense of impunity that benefits perpetrators. One example of this is that the mere fact that offenders wear suits in court or express remorse is used as grounds for reducing sentences. Furthermore, the stricter evidentiary standards applied post-withdrawal have contributed to a 15% increase in the rejection of women's protection requests compared to 2023.

Support landscape in partner countries

Support systems vary widely across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey in terms of capacity, accessibility, and quality. This section outlines key national-level resources available to young women facing GBV and highlights how support is experienced in practice. In Sweden, many women prefer to start with anonymous, low-threshold support, especially when they are unsure of what to do next. National helplines and victim support services, together with local women's shelters, youth clinics, school health services, municipal social services, and healthcare professionals, play an important role in providing guidance, referrals, and practical protection. In Romania, support is provided through a combination of government agencies and NGOs, alongside legal protection mechanisms; in 2022, 19,442 applications for protection orders were filed, and 11,695 were granted, indicating active use of formal protection pathways. In Turkey, support services exist but are widely described as insufficient in capacity and uneven in accessibility, particularly for women facing economic dependence, displacement, or legal insecurity. Reports highlight a limited number of shelters relative to need, concerns about quality and confidentiality in some facilities, and gaps such as a lack of specialised rape crisis centres. At the same time, a mix of NGOs and emergency tools provides crucial entry points for assistance, including the widely used KADES emergency application; however, access can be restricted for women who lack smartphones, stable internet, or a safe way to use a private device. Post-disaster conditions and the situation of refugee and undocumented women can further reduce access to support, as safety infrastructure may be weaker, and fear of consequences (including deportation risks) may discourage contact with authorities.

Across all three countries, accessible “first-step” support (anonymous, multilingual, low-threshold) is often the deciding factor for whether young women reach help early or cope alone. When a first contact feels safe and practical, especially for someone who is unsure whether “it counts,” afraid of escalation, or worried about being judged, it can reduce delay, support emotional stabilisation, and guide the person toward the next step (healthcare, police, shelter, counselling, legal support). This shared pattern directly informs SAFE-STEPS: the learning modules and portal will not only raise awareness but also strengthen confidence and decision-making and support navigation, enabling young women and youth workers to act earlier and more safely.

The key national contact points that are most relevant for young women

The contact points below are indicative and focus on national-level or widely accessible entry points. Local services and specialised support may also be available depending on the region and municipality.

The main points of contact most relevant to young women in **Sweden** are:



Sweden

National Helpline for Women (Kvinnofridslinjen)	Available 24/7, free and anonymous. Contact them by calling 116 016 (or 020-50 50 50).	Home – Kvinnofridslinjen
Swedish Victim Support (Brottsofferjouren / BOJ)	National support line 116 006 , with local victim support centers and trained volunteers.	Brottsofferjouren – Stöd för brottsoffer, vittnen & anhöriga
BRIS (for children and young people)	Support line 116 111 , which includes phone, SMS, and chat.	Bris
Terrafem	Helpline +46(0)920-52 10 10 , known for its multilingual support and support for women of migrant origin.	Startsida – Terrafem
Brottsoffermyndigheten (Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority)	Provides information on compensation and support for injuries caused by crime. Contact number: +46(0)90-70 82 00 (information available in English).	Välkommen till Brottsoffermyndigheten Brottsoffermyndigheten
Swedish Police – Emergency and Non-Emergency Numbers		Anmäl brott Polismyndigheten
Support groups for young people in Sweden		Ungas jourer
Platform for Sweden's girls, trans and youth shelters		Hem Förenade Jourer

In addition to these national structures, local support is also commonly offered through women's and girls' shelters, youth centers, student health services, and municipal or regional counselling services. In Sweden, where a person first turns to usually depends on what feels safest: anonymity, language, trust, and the need for practical help (accommodation, legal guidance, accompaniment, or access to medical care).

The main points of contact most relevant to young women in **Romania** are:

 Romania	
ANES National Helpline	Available 24/7, free and anonymous: 0800 500 333 . Provides assistance, counselling, legal information, and referrals to competent institutions
ANAIIS Association (Bucharest)	0736.380.879 (Monday–Friday, 09:00–17:00) or office@asociatia-anais.ro Specialised support for sexual harassment, gender-based violence, psychological counselling, legal assistance, and protection orders.
Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate (CPE)	0314 273 499 or 0723 221 196 , email: info@cpe.ro Focus on gender equality, workplace sexual harassment, and violence prevention research and advocacy.
A.L.E.G. (Romanian Association for Freedom and Gender Equality)	Provides free information, psychological support, and counselling with accredited psychologists
Helena Helpline	Free within Romania: 0800.070.017 or emergency +40787.878.806 Available in Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, and English.
University Ethics Committees	Following legislative amendments, universities now have mandated reporting mechanisms for harassment complaints, though implementation varies across institutions



The contact points below are indicative and focus on national-level or widely accessible entry points. Local services and specialised support may also be available depending on the region and municipality.

Emergency Contacts and Support Mechanisms in Turkey

If someone is experiencing violence, the following hotlines and applications provide immediate assistance, legal aid, and shelter support:



Turkey

112 Emergency Call Center	The unified number for Police, Gendarmerie, and Ambulance services. It is accessible 24/7 free of charge.
KADES (Women's Support Application)	A mobile app provided by the General Directorate of Security. It allows women to summon police to their location with a single tap in case of emergency
ALO 183 Social Support Line	Run by the Ministry of Family and Social Services. It provides 24/7 psychological, legal, and economic counselling for women and children facing violence. Services are available in Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish.
ŞÖNİM (Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers)	State-run centers operating in every province (81 cities) that provide shelter, psychological support, and legal guidance. They can be visited in person.
Federation of Women Associations of Turkey (TKDF) Emergency Helpline	Provides support for victims of violence and guides them to appropriate legal and psychological resources. +90 (212) 656 96 96 E-mail: tkdfederasyon@gmail.com
Mor Çatı (Purple Roof) Women's Shelter Foundation:	Provides solidarity center support, legal advice, and access to independent women's shelters. +90 (212) 292 52 31 (Available weekdays 09:30 – 17:30). Email: morcati@morcati.org.tr
KAMER Foundation: (Critical for Earthquake Region & Southeast)	Specialised in working with women in Eastern/Southeastern Turkey and earthquake zones. +90 (412) 503 77 70 . E-mail: info@kamer.org.tr / d.kamervakfi@gmail.com
Istanbul Bar Association Women's Rights Center	+90 (212) 444 26 18
Ankara Bar Association Gelincik Center	+90 (312) 444 43 06

What makes support still hard to access



Sweden

- It is reported that in Sweden, even with strong institutions, seeking help can be very difficult.
- In this country, survivors often describe barriers such as shame, self-blame, fear of escalation, uncertainty about whether their story "counts," and worry about not being believed. Also, fear of social consequences can be a major reason for remaining silent.
- Language and trust are also important. People who are not fluent in Swedish may not know which services are available to them, may fear not being understood, or may worry about the consequences for family or community relationships.
- For some young women, economic dependence, housing instability, or controlling relationships reduce their options and make seeking help even more difficult.
- In Sweden, digital abuse adds another layer: harassment can follow the person home, and abusers may use screenshots, fake accounts, threats, or persistent messages to intimidate or control.
- Even in a high-capacity welfare state, individual and cultural barriers such as internalised shame or fear of not being believed persist as major obstacles to seeking help.
- Emotional support and practical guidance are essential, not only to know what to do but also to cope with stress and regain control, especially in situations where platforms offer reporting tools but do not always provide timely or effective responses.



Romania

- In Romania, despite institutional improvements, seeking help remains a challenge.
- European studies show that only one in four women reports incidents of gender-based violence (GBV) to the authorities, reflecting broader systemic barriers.
- Additionally, data collection is inadequate, particularly regarding harassment in public spaces. In this regard, official statistics exclude acts not classified as such, such as insults or defamation, creating significant gaps in understanding the prevalence of harassment.
- Furthermore, barriers to reporting persist in educational settings, and the judicial system's ineffective responses in Romania can discourage reporting and erode trust in legal resources.
- Finally, in Romania, harassment in public spaces often lacks clear reporting channels and may not be recognised as a serious form of GBV.
- The Safe-Steps project addresses these challenges by strengthening young women's emotional intelligence, practical safety skills, and confidence in public spaces, while fostering cultures of mutual care and safe intervention among bystanders that promote European values of human dignity, equality, and human rights.



Turkey

- In the Turkish context, it is reported that the current economic crisis and poverty are among the main factors reinforcing domestic violence. This is because economic dependence makes it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships and seek support, as the rising cost of living prevents them from building independent lives.
- Post-disaster contexts, such as the 2023 earthquakes, have exacerbated vulnerabilities for women and girls, particularly in displacement camps, where safety infrastructure is lacking. For example, the shared use of toilets and showers in the camps makes women more vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence.
- Furthermore, surveys conducted in Şanlıurfa and the surrounding area have shown that child marriages have increased since the earthquake. This is due to family disintegration and the resulting economic hardship, leading parents to marry off their daughters at a young age under the pretext of protecting them or relieving them of the financial burden.
- Furthermore, migrant women from other countries also face serious difficulties accessing support mechanisms due to legal barriers, as women without legal residency permits are subject to a negative social investigation report. In addition, the law prohibits their admission to state-run shelters.
- Moreover, undocumented migrant women often do not contact the police or other support services for fear of deportation, which contributes to the impunity of their abusers.

Implications for SAFE–STEPS learning modules and operational framework

SAFE–STEPS Cross–Country Mechanism: From Risk to Reduced Freedom

Across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, the analysis identifies a shared mechanism by which GBV in public and semi-public spaces constrains young women's freedom. Even when contexts differ, the chain is similar: boundary violations are often normalised, uncertainty delays action, emotional distress accumulates, and barriers to support make help-seeking harder.

Over time, this can lead to avoidance, isolation, and reduced participation in everyday life. This matters for SAFE–STEPS because it shows that awareness alone is insufficient, young women and youth workers also need practical competencies that help them respond under stress, recover, and navigate support safely.

Common mechanism observed across partner contexts

Exposure in everyday settings

Risk repeatedly occurs in public transport, nightlife/crowds, campuses/youth environments, streets/parks, and digital spaces.

Normalisation and uncertainty

"Everyday" boundary violations are socially minimised, making it harder to recognise harm or seek help early.

Access barriers shape outcomes

Fear, stress reactions, hypervigilance, route changes, and reduced confidence limit mobility and participation.

Normalisation and uncertainty

Stigma, safety concerns, trust issues, unclear pathways, language/legal obstacles, and limited capacity influence whether support is reached.

Normalisation and uncertainty

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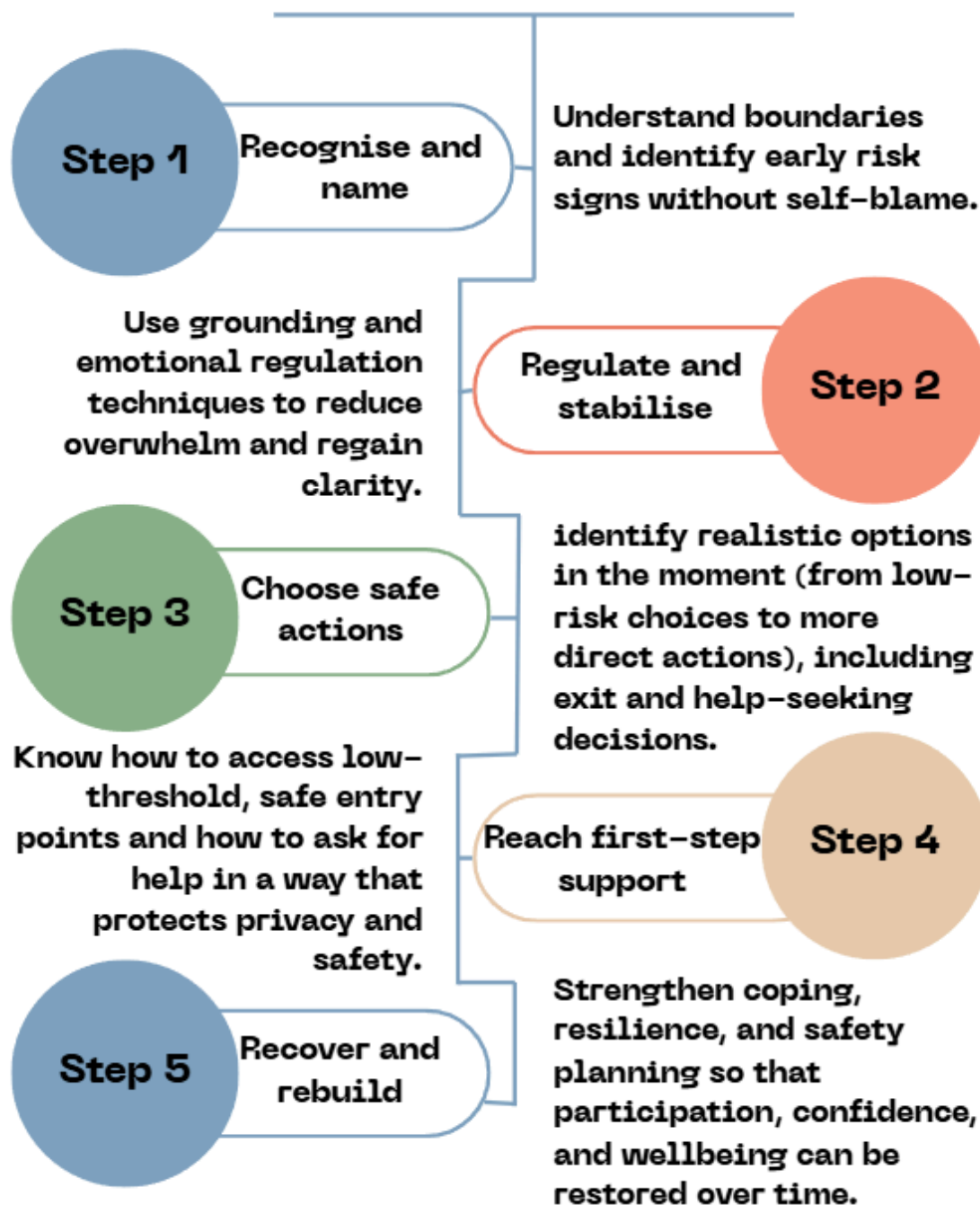
Long-term restriction of freedom

When support is delayed or inaccessible, harm can accumulate, increasing isolation and reducing freedom of movement and social participation.

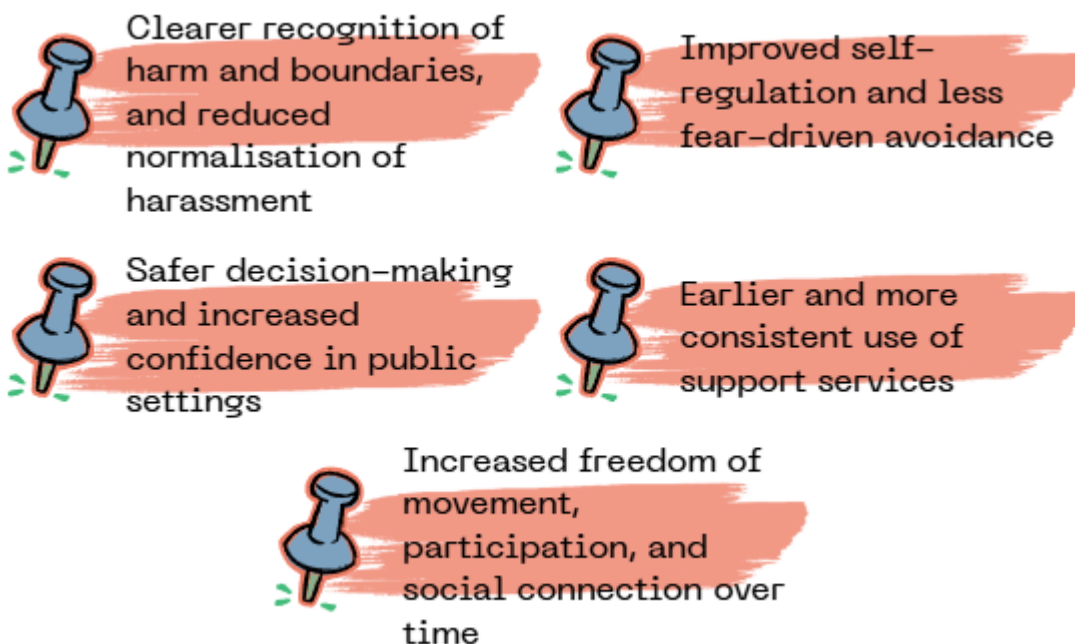
SAFE-STEPS Access Pathway: Key Steps and Expected Results

To address the shared patterns identified across Sweden, Romania, and Turkey, SAFE-STEPS will translate evidence into a simple access pathway for everyday use. The aim is to clarify "what to do next" before escalation, in the moment of distress, and during recovery, and to ensure that the learning modules provide practical, step-by-step support for both young women and youth workers.

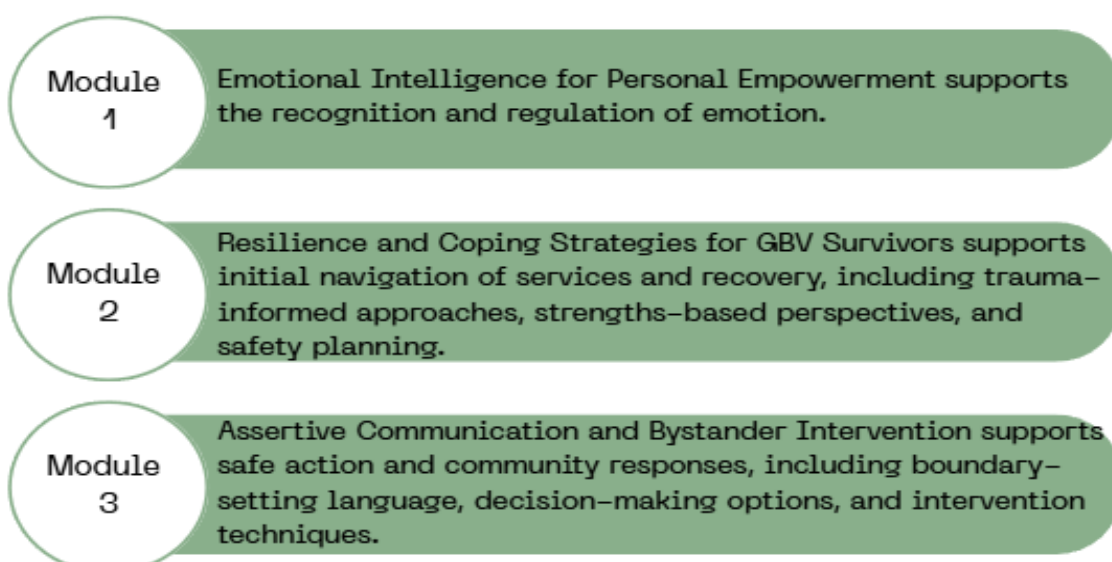
Key steps



Expected results



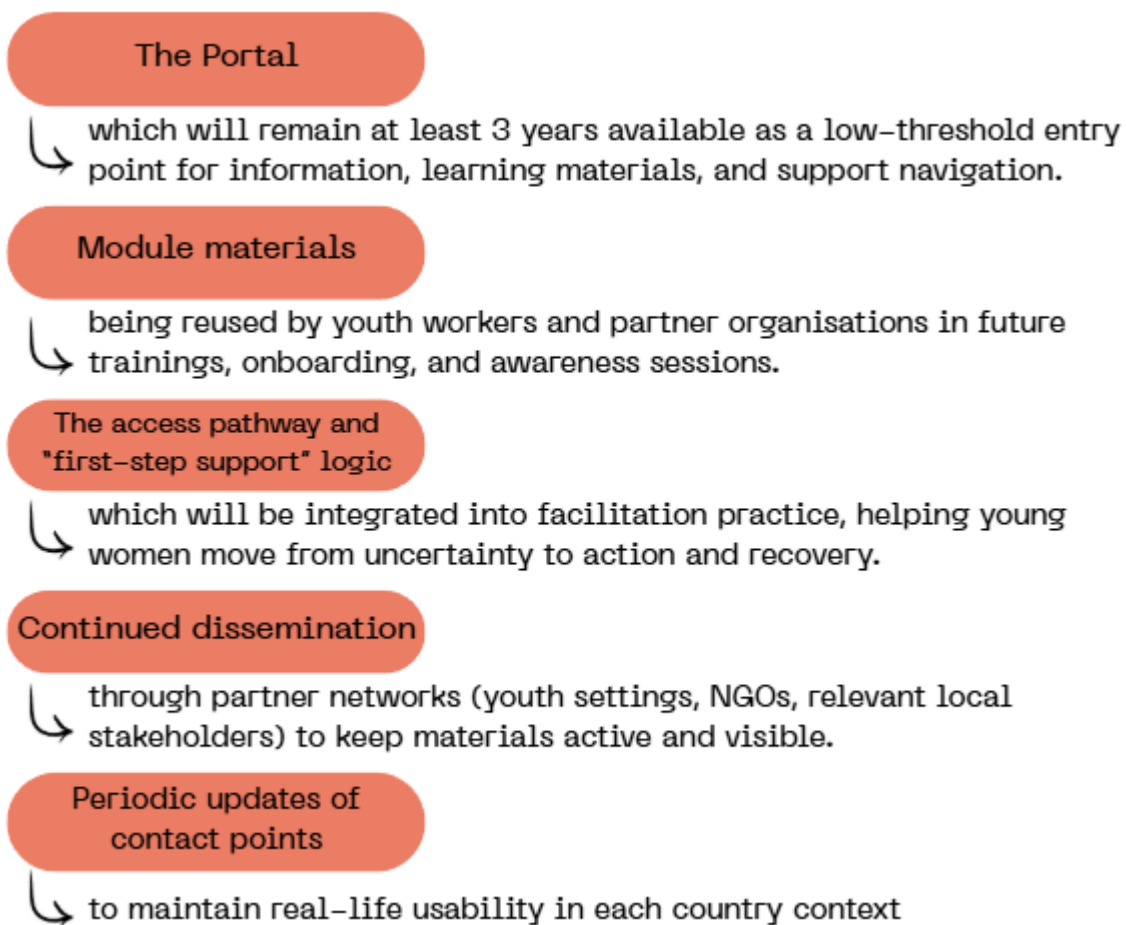
How the Three Modules Respond to the Evidence



Sustainability and long-term impact

SAFE-STEPS is designed to ensure that the value of the analysis and learning materials continues beyond the project period. Sustainability will be supported through the Digital Resource Portal, the practical module structure, and the continued use of contact-point mapping and access pathways in partner organisations' daily work.

Sustainability will be strengthened through:



Conclusion

Summary of Key Insights

The report shows that, despite the different contexts in Sweden, Romania and Turkey, young women face persistent gender-based and sexual violence in both public and private spaces, with particular vulnerability during studies, early working life and everyday mobility. Common risk settings include public transport, nightlife, campuses, digital environments and other public spaces, where boundary violations and more severe abuses generate lasting fear and reduced freedom. While all three countries have developed legal frameworks, reporting channels, and support services, the gap between laws on paper and protection in practice remains substantial, due to underreporting, weak implementation, limited capacity, and, in the case of Turkey, setbacks such as its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and insufficient shelter provision. Survivors still encounter major barriers to accessing help, including shame, fear of not being believed, dependence on perpetrators, language and legal obstacles for migrants and a lack of clear, trusted pathways for reporting harassment in public and digital spaces.

In response, Safe-Steps positions itself as a project that not only maps these risks and obstacles, but actively seeks to strengthen young women's emotional intelligence, resilience, safety skills and community-based solidarity, so that they can claim safer, more inclusive public spaces and contribute to cultures that uphold dignity, equality and human rights.

By amplifying youth voices, building capacity for peer support, and encouraging intersectional awareness, the Safe Step project contributes not only to localised safety but also to a broader European agenda of inclusion, equality, and dignity for all.

Closing note

This report is intended as a practical evidence base. It should be used to guide learning design, ensure consistent quality across partner contexts, and support adaptation of Safe-Steps materials to local realities.



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