



7th international EFJCA Conference and network meeting

Heraklion, Greece - 6 and 7 October 2025

From Vision to Implementation: Advancing Gender-Responsive Multidisciplinary Policies Towards Sustainable Family Justice Centers

The European Family Justice Center Alliance (EFJCA), the Union of Women Associations of Heraklion and the Regional Authority of Crete are pleased to invite you to a two-day international conference dedicated to strengthening multidisciplinary responses to gender-based and domestic violence.

This conference brings together professionals and organizations from Greece and across Europe working in the fields of policing, justice, social work, health-care, youth services, NGOs, and government. With a focus on exchange, networking, and learning, the event will highlight models such as the Family Justice Centers (FJC) and explore how to implement and sustain multidisciplinary approaches.

Special attention will be given to the essential role of governments and policymakers in ensuring the long-term sustainability of FJCs and related models. A diverse lineup of Greek and international speakers with deep expertise will share good practices and practical insights.

Participants will engage in interactive sessions on key themes critical to building and managing effective multidisciplinary responses. The conference offers space for meaningful dialogue and international networking, providing inspiration and concrete tools to strengthen daily practice.

Join us for two days of knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and connection.

Practical information

Participation **in person** and **online** is possible.

Language: English

Registration fee:

in person € 175

online € 75

Register on

www.efjca.eu



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the European Union

7th international EFJCA Conference

Program Day 1

Monday 6.10.25 • 9.30–17.30u (Greek Time)
Heraklion, Aquila Atlantis hotel

09.30 Registration

10.00 Opening
by *Nicholas Spetsidis, UWAH – Pascale Franck and Bert Groen, EFJCA*

10.15 Welcome
by *Mary Pachiadaki, President of Board Union of Women Association of Heraklion*

10.30 The role of tackling gender-based violence and the role of local authorities
by *Georgia Milaki, Deputy Regional Governor for Culture and Equality Region of Crete*

11.00 A bird's-eye overview of Family Justice Centers and Multidisciplinary Models
In a fast-paced overview, we explore how cross-sector collaboration transforms responses to gender-based and domestic violence, and how it unites professionals around a shared mission of safety, empowerment, and lasting change.
by *Dries Wyckmans, Policy Advisor 'Veilig Huis' (the Flemish FJC's), Agency for Justice and Enforcement, Flemish Government and Bert Groen, President of the European Family Justice Center Alliance*

11.30 Coffee break

12.00 Panel Discussion: Advancing Gender-Based Approaches in Multidisciplinary Responses to GBV and DV
This panel will explore the critical role of a gender-based approach in addressing gender-based and domestic violence, with insights drawn from international frameworks and monitoring reports. Special attention will be given to key lessons from GREVIO evaluations, the EU Directive, and the recent OECD report. The session includes time for questions from the audience.
Panel Host: Melina Daskalakis, Lawyer, Legal Advisor
Speakers: • *Maria Andriana Kostopoulou (GREVIO)* – Implementing the Istanbul Convention: Gender perspectives and multidisciplinary insights
• *Marijke Weewauters (Senior advisor on national relations and strategic policy advisor, Institute for the Equality for Women and Men Belgium, and Belgian representative in the COPA, the Council of Europe's monitoring body on the Istanbul Convention)* – The New EU Directive: Implications for GBV Policy and the Sustainability of Multidisciplinary Centers
• *Doron Wijker* – OECD findings: How governments are shaping multi-disciplinary responses to gender-based and domestic violence?

13.00 Lunch

14.30 Experiences of FJCs in Europe: Building, Sustaining, and Centering a multidisciplinary approach
In this session, speakers from several European countries will share how Family Justice Centers and related multidisciplinary models have taken shape in their local and national contexts. Through storytelling and visual impressions, we explore how these centers were built, how they strive for sustainability, and how they embed a strong gender-based approach in their daily work. Speakers will reflect on both the opportunities and challenges they face in their regions, offering inspiration and practical insights for professionals across Europe.

Contributions from:

- *Netherlands – Tanya Hoogwerf, FJC Filomena Rotterdam*
- *Italy – Giusy Barbara, FJC Milan*
- *Belgium – Lilith Roggeman, Veilig Huizen Flanders*
- *France – Violette Perrotte, Re#Start, Maison des Femmes*
- *Iceland – Jenny Valberg, FJC Bjarkarhlöð Reykjavík*



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Program Day 1 (continued)

Monday 6.10.25 • 9.30–17.30u (Greek Time)
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15.30 **The Development of the FJC in Heraklion**

Highlights of the process, structure, and key experiences in building a Family Justice Center in the Heraklion: the opportunities this journey has brought, as well as the challenges faced along the way.

by Nicholas Spetsidis, UWAH

15.45 **Coffee break**

16.15 **From Surviving to Transforming: Understanding Perpetrators and Strengthening System Accountability**

by James Henderson

Henderson brings a compelling and deeply personal perspective to the conversation on domestic violence. Drawing from his own experience as a survivor of family violence and his decades of work in offender accountability, probation, and system reform, he explores the complex profiles of perpetrators and the critical need for coordinated, informed responses. This keynote highlights the responsibility of institutions to not only hold perpetrators accountable but also to ensure safety and justice for victims. With clarity and passion, Henderson challenges professionals to move beyond victim-blaming and center their efforts on systemic change and perpetrator-focused strategies.

17.15 **Closure**

by Nicholas Spetsidis, UWAH



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Program Day 2

Tuesday 7.10.25 • 9.30–17.30u (Greek Time)
Heraklion, Aquila Atlantis hotel

09.30 Registration

10.00 Opening
by *Nicholas Spetsidis, UWAH – Pascale Franck and Bert Groen, EFJCA*

10.10 Empowering women through social awareness, care and solidarity programs
by *Vicky Arali*
Vicky Arali is the Founder & Communications Manager of the Non-Profit Company Immortaliting, which implements actions to support vulnerable groups. As a single parent with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by mothers without a support network, she has dedicated her work to empowering other women through social awareness, care and solidarity programs. With the aim of combating gender-based violence and strengthening single-parent families, she actively contributes to the creation of a more just and inclusive society.

10.40 Walking the Extra Mile for Victims
by *Valerie Swennen*
Valerie Swennen, police detective with extensive experience in cases of gender-based and domestic violence, serves as the liaison officer for the Flemish 'Veilig Huizen' and is a dedicated trainer with the EFJCA. Valerie highlights the critical need for a multidisciplinary approach and urges systems to adapt to the needs of victims – not the other way around. She speaks to the profound impact of coercive control and intimate terrorism on both adults and children, and underlines the importance of a truly victim-centered response. With conviction and compassion, she calls on all professionals to go that extra mile – because only then can we truly make a difference in the lives of those affected.

11.10 Coffee break

11.40 Information Sharing in Family Justice Centers and Multidisciplinary Models
Effective information sharing is a cornerstone of successful multidisciplinary collaboration in the response to gender-based and domestic violence. *Berte Van Heemst, Prosecutor at the Public Prosecutor's Office in Rotterdam*, and *Davy Simons, strategic coordinator of the City of Antwerp at the FJC Veilig Huis in Antwerp*, share their experiences and insights from the Netherlands and Belgium. The speakers will explore how information sharing is organized within their respective systems, including legal frameworks, protocols, and trust-building between partners.

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Risk Assessment and Digital Tools in Practice
This session explores how digital platforms support risk assessment and case management in domestic and gender-based violence.
• *Nienke Scholten (Belgium), Strategic Advisor Police, Prosecution and Intersectoral Cooperation of the department gender-based violence at the Flemish government* will present the WIDA-system, a brand-new model designed to improve interagency collaboration in the approach of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Flanders.
• *Leticia Matarranz (Spain), inspector of the Spanish national police, head of the VioGén System Service within the Secretariat of State for Security at the Spanish Ministry of the Interior* will introduce VioGén, the Spanish national tool for risk assessment and victim protection.

The session offers practical insights into the use, benefits, and challenges of digital systems in multidisciplinary settings.



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Program Day 2 (continued)

Tuesday 7.10.25 • 9.30–17.30u (Greek Time)
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14.40

Panel

Q&A with the speakers of the speeches about Information sharing, Risk assessment and digital tools, led by **Bert Groen**, EFJCA

15.10

Coffee break

15.40

Voices in the FJCs and Related Models

Survivors' voices are essential in shaping effective responses to gender-based and domestic violence. In this session, Ingrid Vermeiren en Triene-Mie Lecompte will speak from their lived experience about what is truly needed to stop the violence and support healing. The session will also introduce the Voices Committee of the EFJCA, an initiative that centers survivor perspectives in policy, practice, and evaluation. Participants will be encouraged to integrate survivor-led structures into their local multidisciplinary work, as a powerful step toward more responsive and impactful services.

16.10

Trauma-Informed Care and the Pitfall of Victim-Blaming

by **Sofia Thanasoula**

Sofia Thanasoula explores the principles of trauma-informed care in the context of gender-based and domestic violence. Her speech highlights how professionals can better understand and respond to victims' needs, while avoiding the common trap of victim-blaming. A powerful call to shift systems and practices toward empathy, safety, and true support.

16.40

The Hidden Force for Change: Why the Istanbul Convention Matters here and now Understanding the power of the Council of Europe's Convention to combat gender-based violence, and how it can guide local action

Discover how the Istanbul Convention shapes policies, protects victims, and holds governments accountable. Whether you're new to the Convention or already familiar, this session explores its real-life impact – from European frameworks to practical relevance in local communities.

Panel with Grevio members **Laura Albu** (Romania), **Pille Tsopp-Pagan** (Estonia),
Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou (Greece), Copa member **Marijke Weewauters** (Belgium)
Moderator: **Pascale Franck** (Grevio member and vice-president EFJCA)

17.10

Closure session

by **Nicholas Spetsidis**, UWAH – **Pascale Franck** and **Bert Groen**, EFJCA

