

# STOP VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER

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WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER

No. 10 (2017)

Quarterly newsletter lists the activities of the Women's Law Center in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women within the period of July - September 2017.

## CONTENT:

Women's Law Center and Department of Penitentiary Institutions have signed a Cooperation Agreement.

We move Moldova forward. WLC participated in Civic Fest 2017.

Ms. Natalia Vilcu was appointed the Executive Director of the WLC.

The cooperation of WLC with the state authorities is a guarantee of a more efficient intervention in solving cases of domestic violence.

Women's Law Center organizes training sessions for the representatives of law enforcement bodies

The project initiated with the Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca continues with new activities for the women who were victims of domestic violence

More and more beneficiaries make use of the WLC services. Center's activity in figures.

WLC members took part in the exercise of Mapping the Objectives for Sustainable Development

WLC contributes decisively to the successful resolution of a case of sexual abuse.

We participate because we care. News in Brief.

Women's rights in the world. Women in Saudi Arabia will be able to drive the car.





# Women's Law Center and Department of Penitentiary Institutions have signed a Cooperation Agreement.

Women serving their sentences in the penitentiary institutions, who suffered from domestic violence, will benefit from free legal, psychological assistance provided by the Women's Law Centre ("WLC"). The cooperation agreement signed on 18 September 2017 between the Women's Law Centre, represented by the Executive Director, Natalia Vilcu, and the Department of Penitentiary Institutions, represented by the Acting Director, Aureliu Suhan, will be the ground for such assistance..

The DPI authorities have undertaken to ensure the participation of the penitentiary institutions' staff in the professional training programs, workshops or conferences organized by WLC, as well as the access of the Center's specialists to the penitentiary to provide legal and psychological services.

The WLC will carry out activities aimed at providing women, who suffered from domestic violence, both with legal and psychological assistance. After release, the WLC will contribute to their social reintegration, where appropriate. At the same time, the WLC specialists will organize training sessions for the DPI employees on issues related to domestic violence.

It should be noted that WLC started the information activities on the services provided to the women serving their sentence in the Penitentiary No 7 - Rusca in spring, this year, and the agreement is the cornerstone for the upcoming collaborations.







## We move Moldova forward. WLC participated in Civic Fest 2017.

The civil society festival - CIVIC FEST - was held in Chisinau for two days, gathering dozens of NGOs, success stories and active citizens from all over the country, who daily move Moldova forward.

The Women's Law Center took part for the first time in this event. It was an extraordinary experience, with motivational speeches and interactive activities. On the first day, the Director of the Center, Ms. Natalia Vilcu, took part in the discussion panel "Active women, prosperous communities", where she presented the activity of the organization, spoke about our success stories, the services provided to the domestic violence victims and the ongoing projects. On the weekend, Civic Fest continued with a Fair of NGOs. It was a great pleasure to share with our colleagues from the civil society our experience of working with the domestic violence victims, to inform and to interact with the visitors to the fair. The festival had a diverse program, with trainings, fairs and workshops, artistic performances and inspirational sessions.

CIVIC FEST is the most important event of the Republic of Moldova dedicated to the civil society, which promotes the activity of NGOs from the country and abroad.





# Ms. Natalia Vilcu was appointed the Executive Director of the WLC.

In August, this year, Ms. Natalia Vilcu was appointed the Executive Director of the Women's Law Centre. After ten years of experience in the field of justice sector reform, in projects funded by USAID and in the Norwegian Mission of Rule of Law Advisers (NORLAM), Ms. Natalia Vilcu has joined the WLC team to continue the mission of the organiza-

tion. We propose you to read the interview below to learn about the opportunities and challenges seen by Ms. Natalia Vilcu in preventing and combating domestic violence and about the objectives she intends to reach together with the team in the coming years.

*Dear Natalia, please tell us a bit about your activity so far.*

I started to work in the field of international development in 2007. It's 10 years already since I am contributing to changes in the country. I worked in USAID-funded programs aimed at judicial reform in Moldova. To this end, we developed an automated case management software and provided the judiciary with the necessary equipment, which allowed the court staff to automatically assign cases and civil complaints, to audio record court hearings, to publish court judgments on the website. All other projects were focused on further streamlining the courts activity and I am pleased that the citizens avail now of the results of our work by having online access to the information about the court activity and the cases under examination. Since 2016, I have worked at NORLAM, where I have had a nice experience of collaboration with the Department of Penitentiary Institutions and three pilot prisons. It was a novel experience, since few international assistance programs focus on a country's penitentiary system.

*What were the first impressions as the Executive Director of the WLC?*

First, I want to say that I was impressed by the WLC team. I have found here women committed to the goal promoted by the organization. I was happy to learn that the formalities are not excessive, and that



the Center's activity is based on and derives from the desire of each team member to help people in need.

***What does a day as a director of a non-governmental organization look like?***

The day schedule is very different. In international organizations, as a rule, the work you plan to do is accomplished on the basis of a predefined work plan. But here the day is very dynamic and different. Moreover, it is quite difficult to follow your morning plan, because the variety of activities and topics to be solved, sometimes immediately, mess up your whole program. At the same time, my work day is full of interaction with different people, non-governmental organizations, state institutions, which, in fact, makes it diverse.

***What motivates you in your everyday work?***

It's simple. My work in NORLAM consolidated my motivation. When at the end of the day you analyze the events and realize that you were able to help, to give hope or bring joy to at least one person, you understand the usefulness of the work you are doing. At the Center we help not just one person, but hundreds of people during a year and nothing else can motivate you more.

***Why is the WLC mission important?***

The WLC mission cannot be diminished as importance and value. The organization's contribution to improve the situation of domestic violence victims, as well as to ensure the respect of women's rights, is extraordinary. From the interaction with our beneficiaries, we learn how the state can improve its response to preventing and fighting domestic violence. We need to be heard when we discuss or alert a certain central

or local public authority about the issues in the system. Our work aims at adding value to the measures taken by the state institutions and we would be glad if these institutions would increase their awareness about the role of non-governmental organizations.

***What challenges could you identify in the WLC's area of work?***

The first challenge I was able to identify is the limited dialogue between the state institutions and civil society organizations. At least I would like that this dialogue be more constructive and the state institutions be more receptive to what the NGOs, which have practical work experience in a given field, are suggesting. We identify the issues more easily and see the gaps in the system based on the daily practical interaction with the beneficiaries of the Center. It is thus very important for us to be heard.

***What are the projects currently implemented by the Women's Law Center?***

We have several important projects underway. Now, at the end of September and in October, as well, we will organize, in collaboration with the National Institute of Justice, a number of trainings for the judges and prosecutors to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary and the Prosecutor's Office to respond to cases of domestic violence. We also carry out the monitoring project of the Chisinau courts, which will help us identify the main gaps and the good practices in hearing civil, criminal and contraventional cases related to domestic violence and trafficking in human beings. Basically, we want to see what the state's response is to these cases on the basis

of the analysis and monitoring of the courts. Last but not least, I would like to mention the project that we are implementing in partnership with the Department of Penitentiary Institutions and which aims at

continuing NORLAM's efforts, but using a different approach. The activity at the Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca targets the women who were victims of domestic violence. They receive free psychological and legal aid and, if necessary, we will also support them after release from detention.

***What do you intend to do together with the WLC's team in the next years?***

First of all, we have an ambitious strategy and to succeed, we need the support of several institutions, especially of the state ones. Secondly, together with the team, we intend to continue our efforts to create a holistic day care center, so that any person who suffered from domestic or gender-based violence coming to the Center benefits from the services needed to solve the problem in one place.

Our basic goal is to ensure that women's rights are respected and protected, as well as to prevent and combat the domestic violence phenomenon. We realize and are realistic that it is very difficult to achieve this goal and the change will not happen overnight. However, I do believe that diminishing, at least by a certain percentage, the gender-based violence and domestic violence phenomenon, regardless of how insignificant it is, as well as changing the perceptions and stereotypes about gender equality in the country, will already be a success.

*Our basic goal is to ensure that women's rights are respected and protected, as well as to prevent and combat the domestic violence phenomenon.*



# The cooperation of WLC with the state authorities is a guarantee of a more efficient intervention in solving cases of domestic violence.

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We want to help as many victims of domestic violence as possible. So, the working meetings with our partners are a good practice to urge the authorities to refer the cases of domestic abuse to the Women's Rights Center if the victims need legal and psychological support. This time we had a productive discussion with Police Inspectorate Buiucani. On the basis of the previously signed cooperation agreement, the parties agreed that training sessions will be organized for the inspectorate's staff on the manner to intervene efficiently in cases of domestic violence. Particular attention will be paid to methods of preventing the domestic violence phenomenon and the good practices identified so far.

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The Women's Rights Center, together with several representatives of the civil society, had a productive meeting with the General Prosecutor's Office, attended also by the General Police Inspectorate. During the meeting it was discussed how to implement Article 320/1 of the Criminal Code and the possibilities of making the work of prosecutors more efficient when examining cases of domestic violence. WLC called for the need to standardize the practices based on the existing laws, encouraging the organization of trainings for these specialists and identifying a number of tools to help prosecutors assess domestic violence cases. The colleagues from Promo-Lex Association, La Strada and NCCAP supported the need to review the way in which Article 320/1 of the Criminal Code is implemented, emphasizing that any intervention in the domestic violence cases should focus on the victim's best



interest. The representatives of the General Prosecutor's Office stated that they will take into account the submitted referrals and will monitor the domestic violence cases in order to respect the right to justice of the persons holding the Protection Order. There are currently cases where

domestic violence victims who have the Protection Order are recognized as witnesses and not as injured parties in criminal files related to violation of the Protection Order. Therefore, they cannot claim compensation for non-pecuniary damage.



## Women's Law Center organizes training sessions for the representatives of law enforcement bodies

In September, the Women's Law Center, in partnership with the National Institute of Justice, held a series of training workshops for key actors involved in eradicating the phenomenon of violence against women. Thus, judges, prosecutors and criminal investigative officers from several districts of the country participated for two days in the training workshops. The activities were aimed at strengthening the capacities of the specialists involved in preventing and combating the domestic violence. During the workshops the participants had the possibility to discuss the psychological aspects of the violence phenomenon, to better understand the reasons and trauma of the victims, the profile of the victim and the aggressor, the adjustments made

to the relevant legislation and how to act in accordance with the new provisions. All those involved in the trainings noted the usefulness and quality of the workshops, as being a good way to integrate the theoretical aspects in solving specific cases of domestic violence. The trainings are part of a greater effort by the WLC and its partners to prevent and combat domestic violence, which also included the development, in partnership with NIJ, of a course mate-



rial for judges, and the organization of other trainings in 2017. The workshops are organized with the financial support of the US Embassy in Moldova, the OSCE Mission to Moldova, the Embassy of Sweden and the OAK Foundation.

## The project initiated with the Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca continues with new activities for the women who were victims of domestic violence

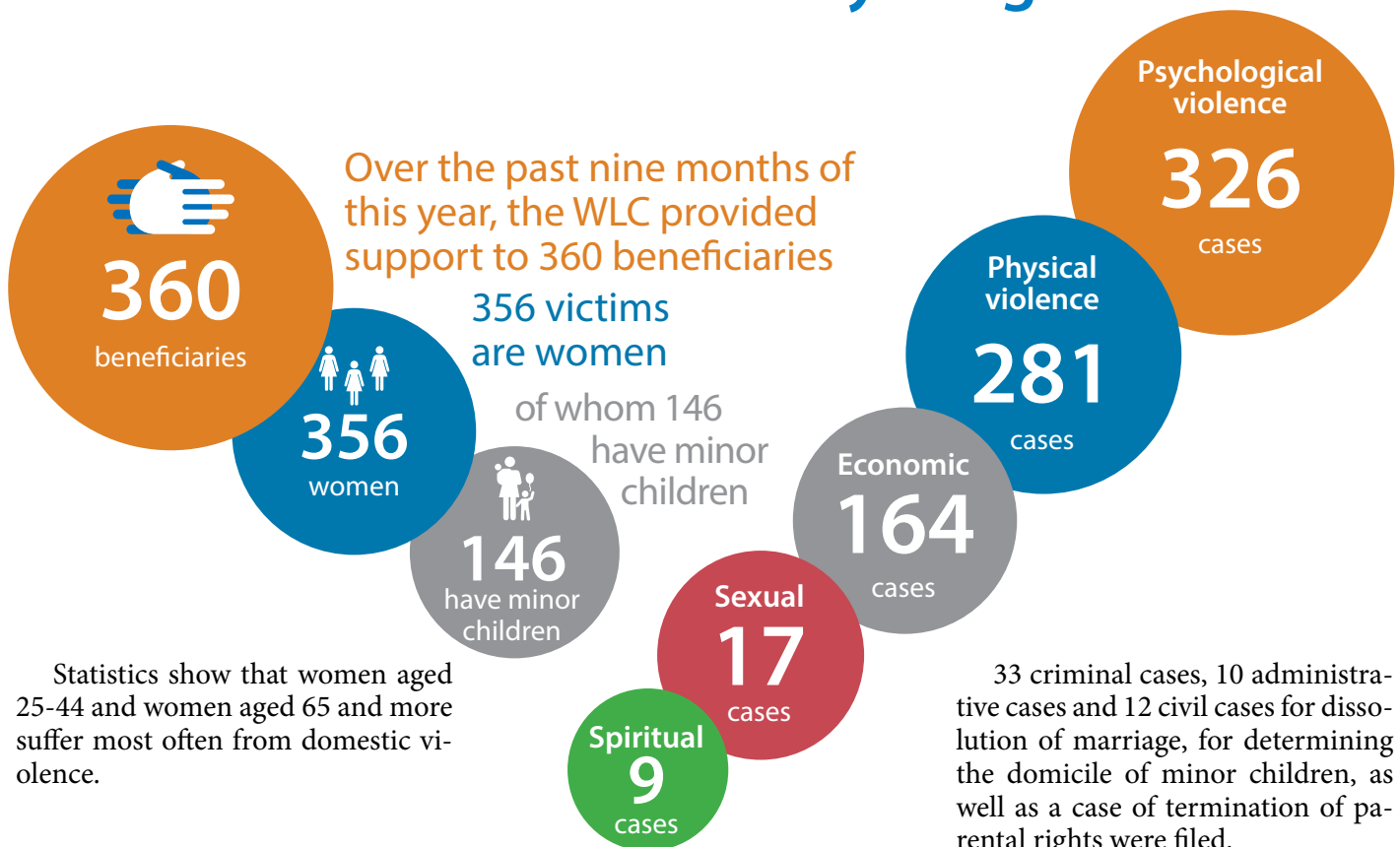
The WLC team held the second information session for the women of the Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca. This time, the activities were conducted in Russian, so that as many women as possible know about the Center's services. Each

participant from here has an impressive history behind. Domestic violence was common in their life. Having been beaten either by their fathers, lovers, husbands or brothers, for many of the women we have interacted with, the abu-

se accompanied them as a shadow throughout their life. Being in the penitentiary, all they wish is to serve the punishment and join their families. The longing for the children and grandchildren keeps alive their hope for future. The meetings with the WLC team were also regarded as a hope. From the start of the project, in June 2017 and by August, we provided counselling to 31 women, 25 of whom benefited from lawyer services and 10 from psychological aid. For the next period, a training seminar for the penitentiary staff and printing of a brochure containing relevant information on the rights of women in detention is planned. The project is carried out with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in the Republic of Moldova.



## More and more beneficiaries make use of the WLC services. Center's activity in figures



## WLC members took part in the exercise of Mapping the Objectives for Sustainable Development

The workshop, organized by the UN Country Team, provided an extensive consultation exercise with the business community, civil society, academia and development partners to identify policy priorities in reaching the SDGs. At the first stage, each working group had the task to identify three "visions", the so-called "green"

stocks, which would make Moldova an attractive country, in which you want to live in 2030. After each group expressed its views, a top three of "green" stocks was made:

- People having a good quality of life
- Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions



- Sustainable production

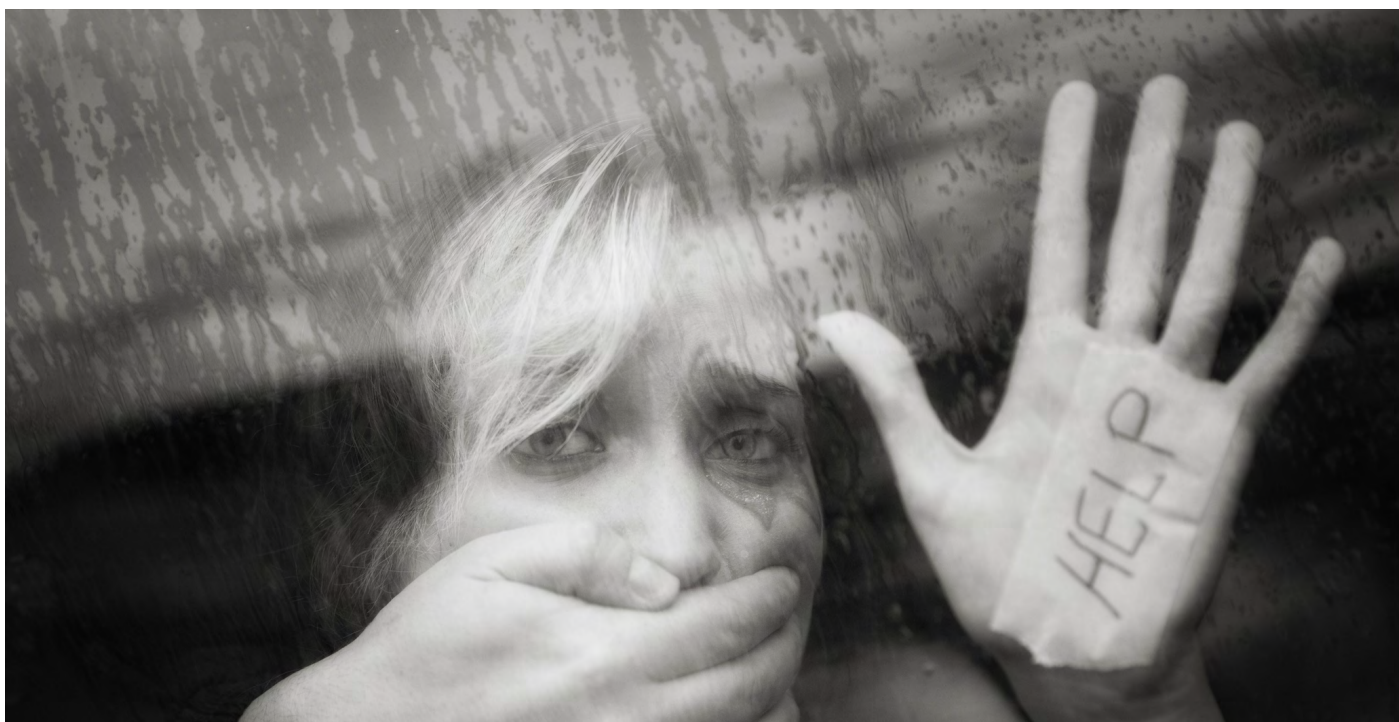
At the second stage, the groups had to identify three barriers that prevent the Republic of Moldova from achieving the country's vision - Moldova 2030. The first conclusions have shown that



difficulties arise from inefficient and irresponsible institutions, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and lack of social cohesion and citizenship empowerment.

And the last stage was to identify the accelerators needed to make a systemic change. By the end of September, the first draft Strategy shall be completed, whereupon it shall be consulted and endorsed by the relevant bodies.





## WLC contributes decisively to the successful resolution of a case of sexual abuse.

It was a summer day and nothing predicted a misadventure. In June 2017, on Sunday, A.I. was invited by a friend to go along with two men to the barbecue in the forest. Initially, A.I. was unsure whether to accept the friend's proposal, but the latter convinced her that the men were reliable and nothing bad would happen to her. They went to the forest, had fun, drank some alcohol. At some point, two boys, whom she did not know, but who were acquaintances of a boy from the group, joined them. After a while, one of the boys proposed her a cigarette. Having smoked her, A.I. felt bad and went into the woods to vomit. She noticed that one of the men from the group came after her. Taking advantage of her condition, the man immobilized and raped her. A.I. tried to resist the aggressor, she screamed desperately, refusing to have sex, but he continued to satisfy his sexual desire and left her in the woods. After she came to, she found that only two of the boys who joined them later were in the woods, her friend was missing. They drag-

ged her to the street and left her there. When she recovered, she was in shock, she felt ashamed to go home and went to her friend. She stayed there until morning, then she went to the police. She was initially ashamed and afraid that the policemen would make fun of her, however she decided to report the case. The police referred her to WLC, because A.I. needed urgent psychological counselling. The Center provided her with counselling, medical care and a lawyer to represent her before the court. On the day she reported the case, the aggressor was apprehended and later placed under arrest. A.I. had to undergo more examinations, including the psychiatric and psychological one, in order for the criminal prosecution body to be able to prove the aggressor's fault. During all proceedings, A.I. was always supported and assisted by the WLC lawyer and by the psychologist. So, the case was successfully resolved in a short time. It is worth noting the promptness of the collaboration between Ciocana Police Station and the WLC. The case was dealt with in

a prompt and professional manner, with maximum efficiency for A.I. We are now looking for the outcome of the psychiatric-psychological examination, after which the case shall be sent to the court.

However, the story of A.I. does not end here. After receiving medical care and psychological counselling for about 2 months, during a hearing, A.I. recalled that after the rape, when she went to her friend's place, she slept in another room and in the morning she was again forced to have sex with her friend's brother-in-law. Even if the second episode of rape was reported two months after it was committed, the prosecuting officer from Ciocana PS started a new criminal case and sent it to Riscani PS according to the competence. Now the investigation continues at Riscani PS. The victim was heard again. It is difficult for her to tell about what she went through, but she wants the aggressor to be punished for the committed offence.

# WE PARTICIPATE BECAUSE WE CARE.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

During July - October 2017, the WLC team attended several events organized by the partners of the organization and international institutions, whose activity is related to the WLC's mission and vision:

**USAID** through the Transparent Justice Program organized the workshop on determining the performance indicators that generate information of public interest. The event aimed at compiling a list of judicial performance indicators, which are of public interest and can be accessed by those interested. The provisional list of indicators presented at the event included: cost per case, judges' workload, age of pending caseload, time to complete a case. In the end, it was concluded that the list is not exhaustive and shall be supplemented by other important indicators. In the case of Women's Law Center, statistics on the cases of domestic violence will be helpful.

**The Ministry of Justice** organized public consultations on the draft Law on the Amendment and Addenda to Some Legislative Acts - simplification of the Civil Procedure Code. During the meeting, the Executive Director of WLC, Ms. Natalia Vilcu, fully supported the opinion previously sent to the Ministry of Justice, by which she opposed the exclusion of issuance of protective measures from the special procedure of the Civil Procedure Code and its inclusion in a new section of the Code. At the same time, during the meeting, the Ministry of Justice was requested to provide a clear justification of the intention to make such amendments.

The referral of WLC is an action taken together with the National



Coalition "Life without Domestic Violence" to raise awareness among the authorities that the proposed amendments are detrimental to the victims and international standards and undermine the efforts made so far to ensure the protection of the domestic violence victims.

### How can we eliminate violence against women?

This question was addressed to the participants of the workshop organized by UN Women, with experts from Denmark and Norway. The representatives of ministries, international and non-governmental organizations, including WLC, gathered

to develop a simulation model for eliminating the violence against women and girls in Moldova.

**The National Coalition "Life without Domestic Violence"** launched its website. WLC is a member of the Coalition and provides secretarial services to it. As of 27 September you will be able to follow our activity by visiting this platform - <http://www.stopviolenta.md/>. Statistics show that 60% of the services received by the domestic violence victims are provided by the civil society organizations.

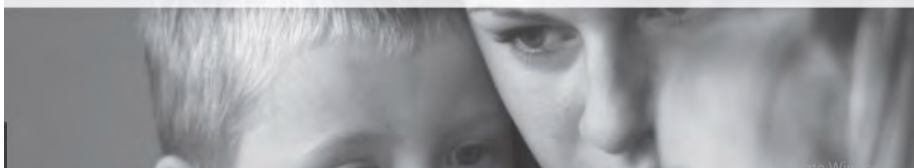


Suntem Coaliția Națională "VIAȚA FĂRĂ VIOLENȚĂ ÎN FAMILIE" - 21 organizații non-guvernamentale și instituții publice - și ne-am reunit într-o platformă pentru a promova drepturile femeilor și copiilor, victime ale violenței în familie și pentru a reduce violența în familie și societate.



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*să te informeze cu privire la drepturile tale!*





# Women's rights in the world. Women in Saudi Arabia will be able to drive the car.

Women in Saudi Arabia have been granted the right to obtain a driving license, which turns over a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's conservatism. Following the royal decree, women will no longer need permission of a legal guardian to obtain license and will not need a guardian in the car when driving.

The entire international community welcomed this action, bearing in mind that Saudi Arabia was the last country in the world where women were discriminated in this way.



## Who are we?

Public Association "Women's Law Center" (hereinafter – WLC) is a non-governmental organization, established in 2009.

The purpose of WLC is to ensure women's rights from gender perspective, both in the process of elaboration and implementation of the law.

WLC carries out activities aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence, provides direct legal and psychological assistance to the victims of domestic violence. WLC advocates for equal opportunities among men and women in public and private life, is a credible partner of the government and civil society and participates in elaboration of public policies.

WLC ensures Secretariat of the National Coalition „Life without Domestic Violence (hereinafter National Coalition). National Coalition comprises 18 non-governmental organizations and public institutions active in preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women.

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