

STOP VIOLENCE

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WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

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MESSAGES THROUGH ART – FIVE PAINTINGS OF SURVIVORS DISPLAYED AT THE PARLIAMENT

Twenty women survivors of domestic violence had the opportunity to experience the benefits of art therapy. In November, they participated in a series of workshops, culminating in five symbolic artworks that reflect their life stories and their journey from suffering to freedom and the recovery of confidence in a secure future.

The paintings were exhibited on December 10 during an event inside the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, attended by officials and representatives of local authorities, as well as by the beneficiaries of the workshops.

The five paintings have suggestive names – ***‘It is all in your hands’***, ***‘The bird of freedom’***, ***‘In your arms I feel protected’***, ***‘Stop violence’*** and ***‘Free’***. They convey the power to make decisions, the freedom to embrace changes and one’s confidence in one’s strength.



The event – ‘Messages Through Art’ was held in the context of Moldova having ratified the Istanbul Convention and of the international campaign ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence’. The initia-

tive was implemented by the Women’s Law Center in collaboration with UN Women Moldova and the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, with the financial support of Sweden.



DIFFERENT MODELS. DIFFERENT SPEECHES.

Gender stereotypes, gender equality and domestic violence are some of the topics that the eight special guests at 'Different Models. Different speeches' dived into. Their stories were told at the awareness-raising event under that same title, organised by the Women's Law Center in partnership with the Institute for Social and Family Initiatives, with the financial support of Sweden.

The speeches of the eight participants explored gender equality, the role and power of the community, family harmony, the role of the church in preventing domestic violence, as well as parental education and parent-child relationship. This was all meant to draw



attention to preventing and combating the phenomena of domestic violence and gender-based violence, given that there are preconceptions and stereotypes in the society, that hinder the harmonious development of such efforts.

The event pursued raising awareness about a different way of thinking and behaving. 'Different Models. Different speeches' took place in the context of the International Campaign '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' – held every year between 25 November and 10 December.



FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The first International Conference on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence, held at the end of the past year, was attended by 40 high-level speakers, international and national experts in these fields, donors, inspirational activists, people from the field of culture and by the mass-media.

Representatives of national authorities and of development partners delivered speeches at the opening of the International Conference on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence.

MAIA SANDU, President of the Republic of Moldova:

‘Combating violence against girls and women means more development opportunities for our country and for our society as a whole, because the more women have access to quality education, the more economically independent women can be, and the stronger our society can become. There are many brave women in Moldova who managed to become successful in a range of different fields. I



am glad that Moldova has finally ratified the Istanbul Convention, which is an excellent step forward and thus we will be able to make its worth more visible once it is implemented.



KATARINA FRIED, Ambassador of Sweden to Moldova:

‘This conference is a great opportunity to celebrate the successes achieved over the years, so that girls and women can fully exercise their rights and live in a society where violence is not tolerated. This conference is a good opportunity to discuss possible challenges and actions to end gender-based violence. I congratulate Moldova for ratifying the Istanbul Convention, a crucial pillar supporting the fight against violence. Sweden will continue to support state institutions, provide expertise and assistance, and encourage the involvement of girls and women in the economic, political and

decision-making fields.’

A topic discussed for the first time at this conference was the national study analysing the cases of femicide, developed by the Women’s Law Centre, with Sweden’s support. This study was meant to help us figure out where the measures taken by the authorities are insufficient and what the law system could do to prevent femicide.

The authors of this study – Diana Cheianu, sociologist, and Turcan Arina – lawyer, analysed the decisions pronounced in 50 cases and conducted interviews with professionals in the field in their attempts to spot the gaps in the system.

According to the data provided by the General Prosecutor’s Office, in most cases women are killed by their husbands or co-habitants. Most frequently the cases of murder take place at home. The main factor in these tragedies is the concealment of violence. Most women have never sought help, and have ever reported to law enforce-



ment bodies. Although 21 perpetrators were recorded with law enforcement bodies, this did not stop them from committing the crime. The punishments enforced on perpetrators did not deter their aggressive behaviour.

The first International Conference on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence was organised by the National Coalition 'Life Without Domestic Violence', the Women's Law Centre and the 'La Strada Moldova' International Center, with the financial support of Sweden.



MEDICAL EXAMINERS HAVE NEW TOOLS TO ASSESS CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Medical examiners from Moldova will be able to assess in fast and accurately the cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence. To make this work, guidelines were developed, describing all actions to be undertaken in victim-centered approaches.



„According to Vasile Șarpe, the head of the Centre for Forensic Medicine – ‘The Guidelines on the response of the Centre for Forensic Medicine (CFM) to domestic violence cases, including cases of violence against women, is meant to help CFM medical examiners provide consistent quality medical examination services. The role of medical examination services in preventing and combating this type of violence and, ultimately, in ensuring that fundamental human rights are observed, which is the CFM mission – is incontestable.’

The Guidelines were circulated to about 70 members of the CFM staff whose job duties are to examine cases of violence, including cases of domestic and gender-based violence, and are meant to be used as methodological directions for accurate and comprehensive assessments.

They were developed by Andrei Pădure, Head of the Analytical and Scientific Unit of the Centre for Forensic Medicine, and coordinated with the WLC, under the ‘Strengthening Efficiency and Access to Justice in Moldova’ Project, implemented by the UNDP Moldova, with the financial support of Sweden.



THE JOURNALISTS WHO TACKLED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WERE GIVEN AWARD

The journalists Leanca Lașco-Rață from Moldova 1, Felicia Crețu and Daniela Cuțu from the CU SENS media project, Natalia Munteanu from Gazeta de Chișinău, Mariana Ionel from the district newspaper 'Patria mea' from Făleşti, and Iuliana Volcova from BAS TV were the awardees of the contest 'Journalists on domestic violence territory'. The awards ceremony was organized by the Women's Law Centre (WLC) in partnership with the Independent Journalism Center from Moldova, with the financial support of Sweden.

The contestants were awarded for their professionalism, journalistic fairness and objectivity in relation to subjects on domestic violence, which were diverse, with the issues being approached from several perspectives. 'I kept reading over and over the materials submitted to the contest to comprehend the whole complexity of your ap-

proaches. We are glad that you joined our community that we can unite our efforts against domestic violence, since this is not something that anyone can do. The more people are sensitized to the phenomenon of domestic violence, the sooner we will be able to achieve results, including by determining the state to invest in this field', said **Mariana Buruiană**, Women's Law Centre CEO.

Mariana Tabuncic, program manager at IJC, underscored that journalists have an important role to play in preventing domestic violence, because through their work – they are often the ones who contribute to the formation of public opinion. 'Our society certainly needs positive examples that show that things can be done differently, without accepting violence, without tolerating it and, most importantly, without giving up. Positive examples of one saying NO and starting

over can serve as happy stories for other women in similar situations to be inspired by. And in this regard, the voice of journalists weighs heavy. We remain unyieldingly convinced that accurate, fair and, most importantly, solution-oriented journalism in the field of combating violence is of critical importance in reducing the level of domestic violence.' said Mariana Tabuncic.

The 19 pieces submitted for the contest addressed a range of issues related to the phenomenon of domestic violence: victims' success stories, their rehabilitation process, while also looking at the stories of perpetrators, at gaps and shortcomings in the system, calling attention to the importance of ratifying the Istanbul Convention, to gender stereotypes and gender bias.



THE OUTCOMES OF IMPULS PROJECTS

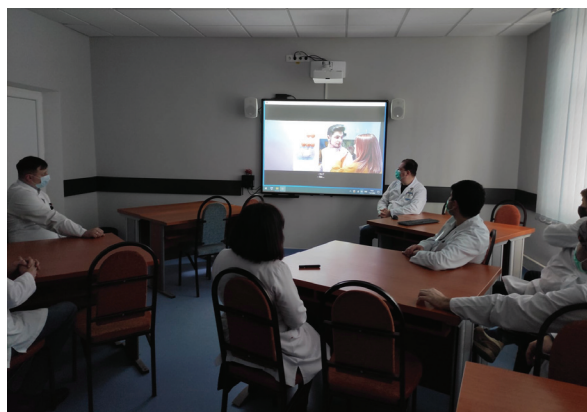
Four beneficiaries of the IMPULS Small Grants Program completed in 2021 their work planned for their projects that were implemented with the support of the Women's Law Centre, financially supported by Sweden. Andrei Pădure, Alexandra Martînenco, Vadim Țărnă and Mariana Carabanov each lent a helping hand to changing the mindset and attitudes around the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence.



ANDREI PĂDURE

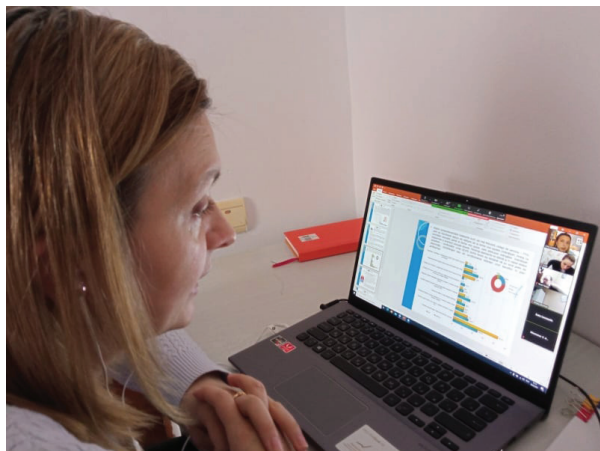
The project 'Methodological support for trainers training doctors for a more effective response to cases of domestic and gender-based violence' under the IMPULS Small Grants Program ended with a ToT for the Department of Forensic Medicine of 'Nicolae Testemițanu' SUMP. The participants went through the content of the methodological guidelines developed under this project, and engaged in thorough discussions about their

application and about the best practices in the field. The purpose of the training was to make the trainers familiar with all the tools that come along with the methodological guidelines, meant to support their consistent and accurate application in the course of the same name. The trainees were also introduced to another project output to be used for that course – the didactic film 'Sexual Consent'.



ALEXANDRA MARTÎNENCO

Alexandra Martînenco has successfully completed the implementation of the project dedicated to women's rights and legal measures of protection against domestic violence. In 2021, about 60 women from Tiraspol and Bender had the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge about protection measures in cases of domestic violence, as well as to discuss about economic empowerment opportunities. In their last meeting, they learned more about how physical health affects a woman's mental state. The participants engaged in discussions and asked the questions and even came up with the initiative to organise more such meetings.



MARIANA CARABANOV

A proportion of 43% of the participants in the study ‘Perceptions of sexual harassment among women police officers’ believe that the most effective way to prevent sexual harassment is to sensitize police officers to the phenomenon of sexual harassment.

Prompted by this finding, Mariana Carabanov began developing a course support material to be used by gender units, by the members of the gender coordinating group, and by staff in charge of professional training, as part of awareness-raising actions dedicated to preventing sexual harassment.

Mariana Carabanov: ‘Every employee who reads this course support material, regardless of their position or rank, will certainly find the answers to questions, such as: What is sexual harassment/sex-based har-

assment? How to recognise sexual harassment and what are its causes? What are the forms of sexual harassment? Consequences and costs of sexual harassment. We tried to include useful, up-to-date information and solutions on what one can do to prevent such situations.’

VADIM ȚĂRNĂ

The President of the National Association of Social Experts and Workers of Moldova concluded the project with two training sessions for social workers and specialists from the Florești Social Assistance and Family Protection Division and for the staff of the Family Doctors Center from Florești, thus giving the participants the opportunity to enrich

their knowledge in the field of prevention and response to cases of gender-based violence.

They discussed about changing social attitudes towards gender-based violence and about the complexity of this phenomenon. The participants strengthened their teamwork skills and learned how to make better use of the available tools when it comes to dealing with victims and perpetrators.

The project ‘Empowering community stakeholders to prevent and combat gender-based violence in Moldova’ helped build the capacity of community social workers in Glodeni, Ștefan Vodă, Bălți and Florești districts in pursuit of preventing and combating gender-based violence.



YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

At the beginning of the year we started reaping the benefits of the good work done by young people who participated in the Social Hub 2021 program. Briceni, Orhei, Hîncești, Ștefan Vodă, Sîngera and Chișinău are only some of the places where our young people organised and engaged in debates, discussions and awareness-raising activities alongside their peers, tackling gender stereotypes and domestic violence.

In this endeavour, they were guided and supported by teachers, specialists in the field and local initiative groups. While it was for the first time that some of them participated in planning and organising such activities, others had the opportunity to further hone their skills. All the young people were united, though, by the enthusiasm to be part of something and to contribute to changes in the society.

SOCIAL HUB is a platform for young people, launched by WLC in 2020, where they get to talk, share their views and their experience of action taken in their communities to prevent gender-based violence, domestic violence and gender stereotypes. Social Hub is an initiative financially supported by Sweden.



LIBRARIANS INVOLVED IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Young people and adults, friends, families and communities engaged in interactive activities focused on preventing domestic violence, alongside awareness-raising efforts, in a number of districts across the country. Librarians from Zăicana (Criuleni), Obreja Veche (Făleşti), Crihana Veche (Cahul), Gura Galbenei (Cahul), Sărătenii Vechi, Soroca, Ceadâr-Lunga, Comrat and Taraclia engaged with participants in discussions about the forms of domestic violence, about how to recognize an abusive relationship, what specialists one can seek the support of, and what services exist where they live, as well as at national level.

Alongside other specialists, such as police officers, psychologists and

social workers, they explained to women what domestic violence is, how they can realise if they are in an abusive relationship, what support women who experience it can receive. The participants improvised situations, discussed topics they were concerned with and learnt about the information support they can receive if they go to the library.

In each of those settlements, a special place was designed dedicated to domestic violence prevention, with topical, illustrative and accessible information for every visitor to read.

The purpose of such activities is to turn libraries into a community resource for domestic violence victims.

'I have personal reasons that made me join these activities. About 10-11 ago I was a victim of domestic



violence too. I have been humiliated, hit, isolated from the society. I did not know what to do back then. Now I realise I was a victim of all forms of domestic violence. Now I know where to seek help.'

The purpose of such activities is

to turn libraries into a community resource for domestic violence victims. These activities are carried out with the support of the WLC, in partnership with the Association of Librarians of of Moldova, with financial support from Sweden.





In October 2021, Moldova ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. The decision to this end was made in a meeting held on 14 October. By ratifying the Convention, the Moldovan authorities undertook to ensure that violence against women is properly punished, that resources are allocated to ensure the operation of crisis centers for victims of violence, that hotlines are available around the clock, that shelters for victims of gender-based violence are established, that psychological and legal aid as well as other measures are in place.

The Istanbul Convention has been ratified by 34 member states of the Council of Europe, Moldova being the 35th state to ratify it.

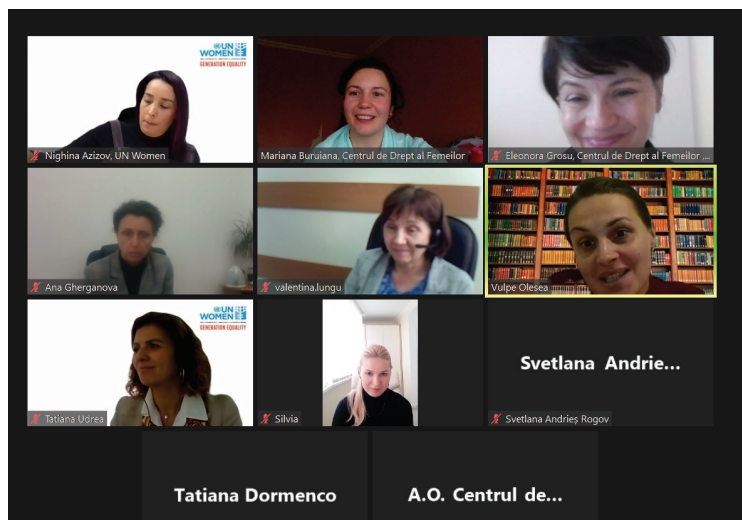
Violeta Andriuță, lawyer at the Women's Law Center, participated in the training 'Combatting violence against women and domestic violence by supporting the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights', where she talked about her experience and professional practices. This training was organised by the European Implementation Network (EIN).



This training is a key element of an EIN project supported by the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe. The project aims at providing support to organisations in the field, to ensure that they can effectively contribute to the ECHR implementation monitoring system.



The partnership with the Association of Librarians of Moldova is about communities that engage actively in domestic violence prevention. At the end of last year, we were delighted to be there with the National Library of Moldova at the inauguration of the information space that is meant to contribute to building knowledge and awareness around the seriousness of domestic violence. We were also glad to have signed a Collaboration Agreement meant to represent the foundation for future wonderful and useful initiatives.



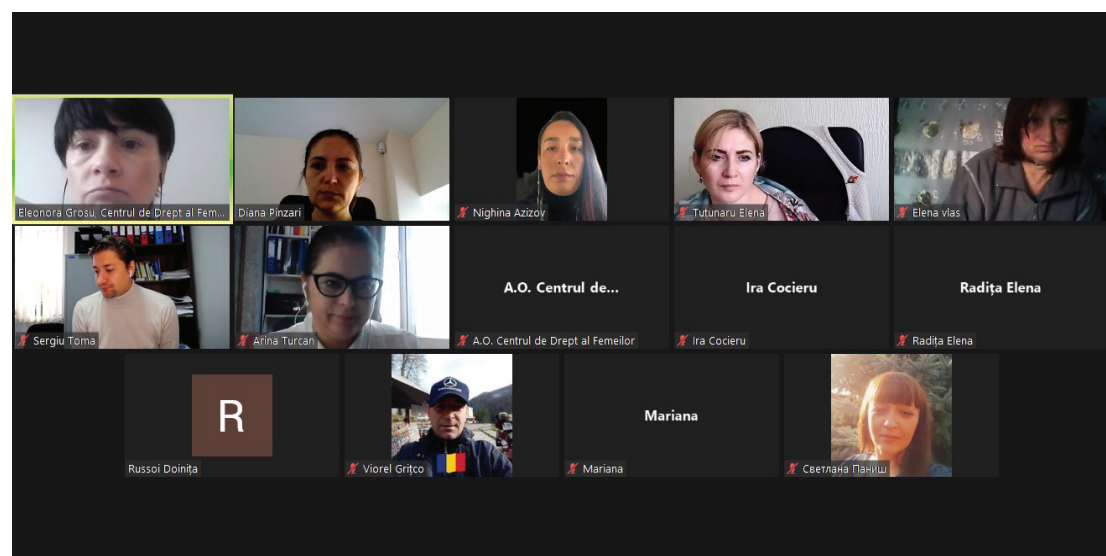
Around 100 women from 5 districts will learn more about their rights and about available services in terms of employment, economic empowerment, counselling, training and mentoring. Women's Law Centre and the National Platform of Women in Moldova are to develop 5 economic empowerment programs adjusted to the context of every district. The programs will be based on beneficiaries' needs and on the local infrastructure: business incubators, vocational education institutions, centres for women, NGOs, social and economic services. The activities will be carried out together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Employment Agency, the Organization for the Development of the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Sector and the local authorities from 5 districts.

The economic empowerment project is implemented in partnership with UN Women Moldova, with financial support from Sweden.

Moldovan paralegals attended mentoring sessions that improved their knowledge and enabled them to provide quality support to women who experience domestic violence. They discussed:

- the importance of a common vision with regards to this issue;
- the legislation of Moldova in the field of domestic violence;
- the peculiarities of response in crisis situations;
- the dynamics of the relationship between victims and perpetrators
- the package of essential services for domestic violence victims.

At the next stage, the participants will be guided by lawyers on how to provide a coordinated response and improve their primary legal aid for girls and women who experienced domestic and gender-based violence. The activities were organised by the Women's Law Centre in partnership with the National Association of Paralegals of Moldova, under the 'Capacity building of the justice sector representatives in the efficient application of domestic violence legislation' project, with the support of UN Women Moldova and Sweden.



OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR WLC ACTIVITY IN FIGURES

From **1 January to 31 December 2021, 859 victims of domestic violence** were provided specialised services. Because of the nationwide epidemiological situation due to COVID-19 pandemic, most of the victims were counselled by phone or online.

Of the total number of beneficiaries, **522 of the victims are from the urban area**, and **337 – from the rural area**. Most of the time support seekers are 35-44 years old, followed by the 25-34 and the 65+ age categories.

Peculiarities of domestic violence

The situation of domestic violence was assessed on the basis of a specialized assessment questionnaire filled in by **726 victims**, having also established the type of violence they experienced. The assessment revealed that in **512 cases** the beneficiaries were victims of some **combined forms of violence** and only in **214 cases** there was only **one form of vio-**

lence experienced by the victim at the hands of the perpetrator.

The victims experience the following at the hands of their perpetrators: *enforcing one's will or personal control, causing tension and mental suffering through offences, ridicule, swearing, insulting, nicknames, blackmail, demonstrative destruction of objects, verbal threats, ostentatious display of weapons or hitting of domestic animals; neglect; involvement in personal life; acts of jealousy; imposing solitary confinement through detention, including in the family home; isolation from family, community, friends; prohibition of profes-*

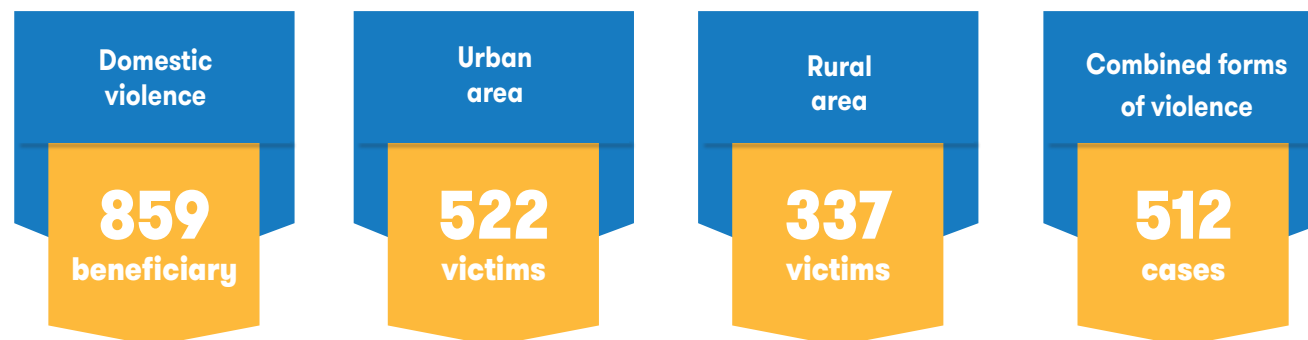
sional achievement, prohibition of attending the educational institution; dispossession of identity documents; intentional deprivation of access to information; other actions with similar effect;

In 75% of all registered applications, victims complained being subjected to aggression by their intimate partners (cohabitants, husbands, former husbands or former cohabitants).

Counselling and economic empowerment

In 2021, 12 victims benefited of economic empowerment. The vocational councillor identified the vocational needs of each ben-

eficiary. Thus, 7 people benefited of vocational education trainings (psychologist / psychotherapist, confectioner, nail artist). They were bought the needed equipment and devices (laptop, nail artistry equipment, professional clothing for massage, cooking equipment). Three people benefited from technical support for hand-made products and works (manufacturing wax candles, painting paintings on canvas, embroidery machine). Twenty-six victims were also counselled on the vocational segment, identified a job or sources of improving professional skills.



Eleven occupational therapy workshops were organised, attended by a total of 50 victims. Each workshop had a certain topic: Scrub booking, art quilling, manufacturing of clay objects, manufacturing of woolen items.

Damage collected

While representing the interests of domestic violence victims, the lawyers filed civil claims for compensation for pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage in criminal cases. In this respect, according to court judgments on the cases represented by WLC lawyers, the total amount obtained for compensation for non-pecuniary damage is MDL 252,315.



WHO ARE WE?

WOMEN'S LAW CENTRE (WLC) is a non-governmental organisation founded by a group of women-lawyers from Moldova. WLC advocates for equality between women and men in the public and family life and helps prevent and combat domestic violence and gender-based violence against women.

This newsletter is Founded by Sweden and OAK Foundation



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