



Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género
Presidência do Conselho de Ministros

TELEASSISTANCE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

TELEASSISTÊNCIA

A VÍTIMAS DE VIOLÊNCIA DOMÉSTICA





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- This program arose from the need to ensure protection and security to victims of domestic violence and decrease their risk of revictimization and is coordinated by the **Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)**, which is the Government agency responsible for installing, securing and maintaining technical systems in operation.
- This program aimed to increase the protection and security of the victim, **ensuring 24 hours/a day and free of charge adequate response to emergency and crisis situations.**
- Victims of domestic violence had access to this program whenever they were at-risk of revictimization, had specific security needs and a **Criminal Court decided** her/his protection by Teleassistance. **The decision could only be taken after the victim's consent.** The psychosocial support and protection by Teleassistance were operated for a period of time **not exceeding six months**, renewable by Court decision.

Teleassistance to domestic violence victims: what is it?

The program appealed to appropriate technology, **ensuring victim support a 24H/ day, 365 days/year to the following needs**: information, emotional support and, if necessary, police protection. In addition to a telephone service, the technological support system allowed the **victim's geographical tracking**, fundamental in emergency/crisis situations. Equipment given to victims consisted of a mobile voice and GPS device **connected directly to a call-center**, with technicians specifically prepared to give an appropriate response to every situation. This call center accessed the victim's signal via a web platform, obtaining real-time information on the victim's position.



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Main Goals

- The **overall objective of the Teleassistance** program of protection was the **prevention of situations of revictimization of domestic violence victims, after filing a formalized complaint for this type of crime.**
- In order to ensure a 24H/a day and free of charge increased security and protection, an adequate response to emergency situations of crisis, psychosocial support and provision of information –the following **specific objectives** were established:
 - 1) **Ensure appropriate and immediate action in emergency situations**, through an expert team and the mobilization of adequate technical resources (police, medical emergency) to the sort of situation presented;
 - 2) **Reduce anxiety levels**, increasing and reinforcing the feeling of safety and protection of the victim, providing support and ensuring communication 24H/ a day with a call-centre;
 - 3) **Increase the self-esteem and the quality of life of the victim**, stimulating the creation of and/or strengthening a social support network;



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Main Goals – cont.

- 4) **Minimize the situation of vulnerability** in which the victim was, contributing to increase his/her autonomy and his/her (re)insertion into society;
- 5) **Mobilize police resources proportionate to the type of emergency:**
- 6) **Build a network of partners** to ensure the full implementation of the program of protection;
- 7) **Ensure the training of the technicians** involved on the various phases of the program of protection.

How was the project implemented?

- In early 2009, CIG presented an application to Potential Human Operational Program (EU funds), with the aim of fulfilling the goals described in the III National Plan Against Domestic Violence (2007-2010), notably in the 2nd strategic area of intervention – “Protect victims and prevent Re-victimization” . This measure was considered as a priority and started on a trial basis in the regions of Coimbra and Porto and it ran between 4/15/2009 and 4/14/2012.
- With the publication of law No. 112/2009, on September 16th 2009 (which approved the legal regime applicable to the prevention of domestic violence), **domestic violence victim’s protection by Teleassistance became strictly a judicial measure.**
- In February 3rd 2011, Order n.º 63/2011 was published, thus enabling the implementation of the program in other regions (in addition to the regions defined in the nomination – Coimbra and Porto).
- The project was budgeted for a total of **81 623.34 €, for 36 months of duration.**

Partners involved

In order to implement the program, a number of partners were asked to join a working group with the aim of defining procedures and forms of articulation in order to implement the protection program. Both **security forces** (GNR and PSP), the **Investigation and Criminal Action Department** (DIAP) of Porto and Coimbra (Public Prosecutor Office), the **General Director- of Internal Administration** (DGAI) and yet the contract partner, **CVP**, made part of this working group.



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Main results

- During the period the project ran, 43 protective measures by Teleassistance were imposed (42 women and a man). The first decision dates from March 2011.
- Only 7 counties rendered decisions of implementing this measure of protection and most decisions (44%) were in Lisbon. These data pointed out the need to invest in publicizing this protective measure to magistrates throughout the national territory.
- Victims who have been integrated in the program were a disparate group with regard to age, level of education and the employment situation. Mostly had ages between 36 and 45, were employed and their level of schooling was , mostly, between the 2nd and 3rd cycles (6 to 9 years of schooling).



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Main results – cont.

- Regarding the period of protection, it was found that was predominantly of 3 or 6 months; with regard to extensions, these were applied, mostly, for periods of over 3 months. Concerning the termination of the measure, this took place, mostly, by reaching the time limit set by the magistrate.
- Within this program, one of the assumptions of the implementation was the importance of allowing the introduction and implementation of restriction orders judicially imposed to offenders. Nevertheless, of all 43 decisions to apply the Teleassistance Program, only 19 measures of coercion were imposed to the aggressor and not all banned contacts with the victim.
- Between March 2011 and April 2012, the call-centre received/made a total of 7129 calls (4896 in 2011 and 2233 in 2012). This volume of calls included both routine contacts (scheduled in advance with the users and which correspond to about 78% of all contacts), or those made by victims initiative (about 22% of all calls), including also contacts in emergency situations



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Main results – cont.

- From January to April 14th 2012, there have been 10 occurrences that required police intervention, through CVP, 3 police interventions resulting from direct contacts with victims in their area of residence and a situation that entailed the intervention of INEM.
- The more positive aspects pointed out by the victims were: the increased sense of security and protection, the availability of the call-centre staff, the importance of periodic communications from the call-centre and the ease of use of the equipment and service.
- As negative aspects of the program, victims referred to: the difficulty, in some cases, of adaptation, the feeling of lack of privacy and also the awareness of the reduced knowledge by courts and security forces about how the protection program worked.



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Teleassistance: Highlighted Points

- **Good relationships / articulation between the various entities involved in the process:** regular attendance at scheduled meetings; active involvement in the definition of operational procedures; ability to reset procedures, in light of the changes that were being required; fluidity of channels and forms of communication, increasing streamlined and decreasing bureaucracy
- Due to the above mentioned synergy, a particular highlight must be given to the **speed of the process**, since the judicial decision until the actual victim's entry in the protection program (average times between date of the judicial decision and mobile equipment delivery to the victim: Porto (City)-**1 week**; Lisbon (city)- 1 week; Azores-**1 month**; the rest of the country (delivered by security forces) - 8 to 15 days)
- **Positive Awareness by victims who benefited from the program:** Although that assessment questionnaire should be improved, it can be concluded that, in general, the consciousness of safety and support was one of the main advantages identified by the victims
- **Rapid police intervention**, in those situations which such was requested by call-centre



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Thank you for your attention!

More information on project: cig@cig.gov.pt