



**13<sup>th</sup> WAVE CONFERENCE**  
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**INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL D.I.RE ASSOCIATION  
(WOMEN'S NETWORK AGAINST VIOLENCE)**

In 2008, the Italian national association “D.i.Re Donne in rete contro la violenza-ONLUS” (Women's Network Against Violence) was founded with the object of creating a national umbrella association, based on over twenty years experience amassed by the 45 founding Anti-violence Centres and Women's Shelters and voicing the distress of thousands of women who, after being in contact with a anti-violence centre, managed to exit from violence and achieve freedom.

The foundation of the National Association was an important step for the Italian Women's movement and confirmed their intention of becoming a formalized political subject with a visible position in the fight against gender violence.

The national D.i.Re Association has become a point of reference for the promotion of adequate action and intervention, suited to the needs and aspirations of women in a context, like the Italian one, in which violence against women continues to be a gigantic problem, whilst the response supplied by institutions and society continue to be glaringly deficient and women's living conditions become ever more difficult.

To start with, we were aware that are the only venues in which the problem of violence perpetrated against women is mentioned coupled with a critical appraisal of the relationship between woman and man in society, calling upon all violent men to face up to their responsibilities and standing by women. They are the only places in which the problem of violence perpetrated upon women is explicitly stated from the point of view of women and the un-named, hidden evil is defined: mistreatment, rape, above all violence carried out within the family and/or by men known to the women.

Centres do not only provide services, but also operate on a socio-cultural level, exercising preventive action and creating awareness, based on acquired knowledge and on international and national networks. The Centres, with their professional women operators and the contribution of women experts ranging from the juridical sector to the social and health sectors, offer true support to women in violent situations. They create force and political push, managing to create networks with the institutions and between services which has produced and regenerates social capital.

In the first two years of activity, other Anti-violence Centres all over the Italian territory have joined the association (to date they are 58).The members must have been active for at least 5 years in the field of violence against women, they have to be non-governmental associations (NGO), made up solely of women.

From the start, the D.i.Re Association has taken action, in order to raise awareness among the public regarding the theme of violence against women, as the President or other members all over the Italian territory have taken part in numerous public events or by means of press

releases/interview/articles aired by national and local media. Moreover the D.i.Re association speaks out on a national level to protest and provide support every time an Anti-violence Centre risks closure due to lack of funds.

The first political tasks undertaken by the association have been directed towards creating forms of dialogue with the appropriate government institutions so as to voice the need, which has been the object of requests over many years, for an adequate national plan against violence committed against women, that recognizes the fundamental role of already existing Anti-violence Centres, and guarantees their existence on a more stable financial level, as well as setting up others in the many Italian areas in which there are none.

The national plan finally published this year, 2011, by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities does not meet with the approval of D.i.Re. chiefly because of the lack of any specific professional training, as regards violence perpetrated against women, for the personnel foreseen by the plan and the absence of any financial provisions for the existing Centres or for the setting up of new ones.

D.i.Re is active in another political field of intervention, thanks to the group of legal consultants of the D.i.Re Centres, who for years, have carried out research on the civil and penal judicial provisions, issued on the theme of violence against women, which culminated in the "Dossier on the theme of domestic violence crimes perpetrated against women". The "Dossier" was presented at an official meeting with the CSM (The Italian Upper Council of Magistrates) - Sixth Commission and various representatives of the Magistrates (State Attorneys and Presidents of the main Italian Courts) and achieved the important object of sharing the critical aspects, the strong points and the good practices developed in the various territories by the existing legislation protecting women-victims of violence, which resulted in the CSM adopting a resolution concerning violence against women in February 2009, that includes the suggestions advanced in the Dossier. Moreover, this meeting proved a departure point for ongoing cooperation between the parties for the setting up of a training project and the formulation of protocols and good practices to be applied all over Italy.

The D.i.Re association carries out its political actions by means of specially constituted working groups, responsible for working on common interest themes.

### **The Shelters Group**

In 2010 the Shelters' Group was formed so that one could reflect on managing methods within the houses run by the D.i.Re. Member Associations.

The Group is composed by over 30 representatives of D.i.Re member Anti-violence Centres and is divided into two sub-groups: the first one has developed reflections and profitable confrontations regarding the methods and objectives adopted within the Anti-violence Centres regarding the contacts with the women guests and the second, on the other hand, has focused on the work that is carried out with the children of the women guests.

### **The Legal Consultants Group**

The network of women lawyers of the D.i.Re association, formed by lawyers working with the Anti-violence Centres and specialized in dealing with violence perpetrated against women and their children, aims at examining and analyzing the most innovative Italian and international jurisprudence concerning violence perpetrated on women and promoting judicial practice in favour of women, creating a network in cooperation with magistrates specialized in dealing with the violence on women theme, so as to develop adequate and efficient civil and penal judicial practices capable of protecting women-victims of violence.

## **The International Group**

8 members within the D.i.Re association have formed the International Group, which is aimed at keeping a coordinated and ongoing relationship with the various European and international organisations that handle the theme of violence against women. The Group wishes to represent and give visibility abroad to the D.i.Re Association and to the Italian situation, contributing at conventions and international meetings towards the reflection upon and growth of anti-violence policies. In the European context D.i.Re is the Italian focal point in WAVE (Woman Against Violence Europe) - an organisation that includes 47 European countries. Moreover, since 2009, D.i.Re has been a member of EWL - the European Women's Lobby. The International Group also actively participates in the activities of the GNWS (Global Network of Women's Shelters), which is the international coordinating organism for Anti-violence Centres, which was founded during the first world convention of non governmental Centres, that took place in Canada in September 2008.

## **The Institutions Group**

In 2010 the Institutions Group was formed with the object of creating contacts and strategies leading to dialogue with the institutions. The group consists of about ten representatives of an equal number of member Anti-violence Centres.

## **Research and Survey Group**

In 2009, a few months after the foundation of D.i.Re, the Research and Survey group was formed, the first aim of which was to collect data on women and children received and given hospitality by the D.i.Re Centres and Shelters. The intention is to collect comparable and homologous data, by means of a simple shared grille, so as to have a precise, overall picture of the work carried out in the Centres. For the first year of activity, a basic registration card has been put together to be used in "retroactively" collecting information for 2008. Thanks to the effort and cooperation of all the Centres who took part in the survey, the group has re-proposed an extended grille or registration card, which provides space for additional data considered to be most significant and to be used for 2009 and 2010.