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FLASH REPORT

Country:	Malta
Title:	Legal Aid to victims of domestic violence
Date:	1 July 2020
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	In order to address financial barriers that victims of domestic violence may face and which may be a reason for not pursuing their case in court, the Government will offer a legal aid service by specially trained lawyers who will be engaged for this purpose
Grounds of discrimination:	Gender
Field of application:	Violence against women
Source:	Policy development

Content

Victims of domestic violence may not have access to the necessary finances to pay for a lawyer and the Government is therefore setting up a new service for legal aid lawyers who are trained in such cases. In a statement announcing the service, the Government said that the legal aid service was introduced following a suggestion by Maltese MEP Miriam Dalli, who said that victims often hold back from filing legal action because of concerns about the cost. The service came into force on 24 April 2020 in collaboration with Appogg (the national agency) and the Victim Support Unit within the Malta Police Force. The system envisages both urgent as well as less urgent situations. The procedure is instigated when the victim calls the responsible national agency or files a police report. A social worker from the national agency (Appogg) contacts or meets the victim and makes a risk assessment and sends the victim's details to Legal Aid Malta which assigns a lawyer for legal advice and information to the victim. In less urgent situations, the victim can communicate with the national agency through email or phone and subsequently a legal aid lawyer would be assigned.

Key points of analysis: Victims of domestic violence who take the step to report the violence are often faced with questions regarding their rights such as those relating to property and children. This service will ensure that victims can access a lawyer to represent them "parte civile" in criminal cases or pursue civil cases in those instances where such victims do not have the necessary financial means to engage and pay for a lawyer.

Internet link source: <https://justice.gov.mt/en/legalaidmalta/Pages/Domestic-Violence.aspx>.