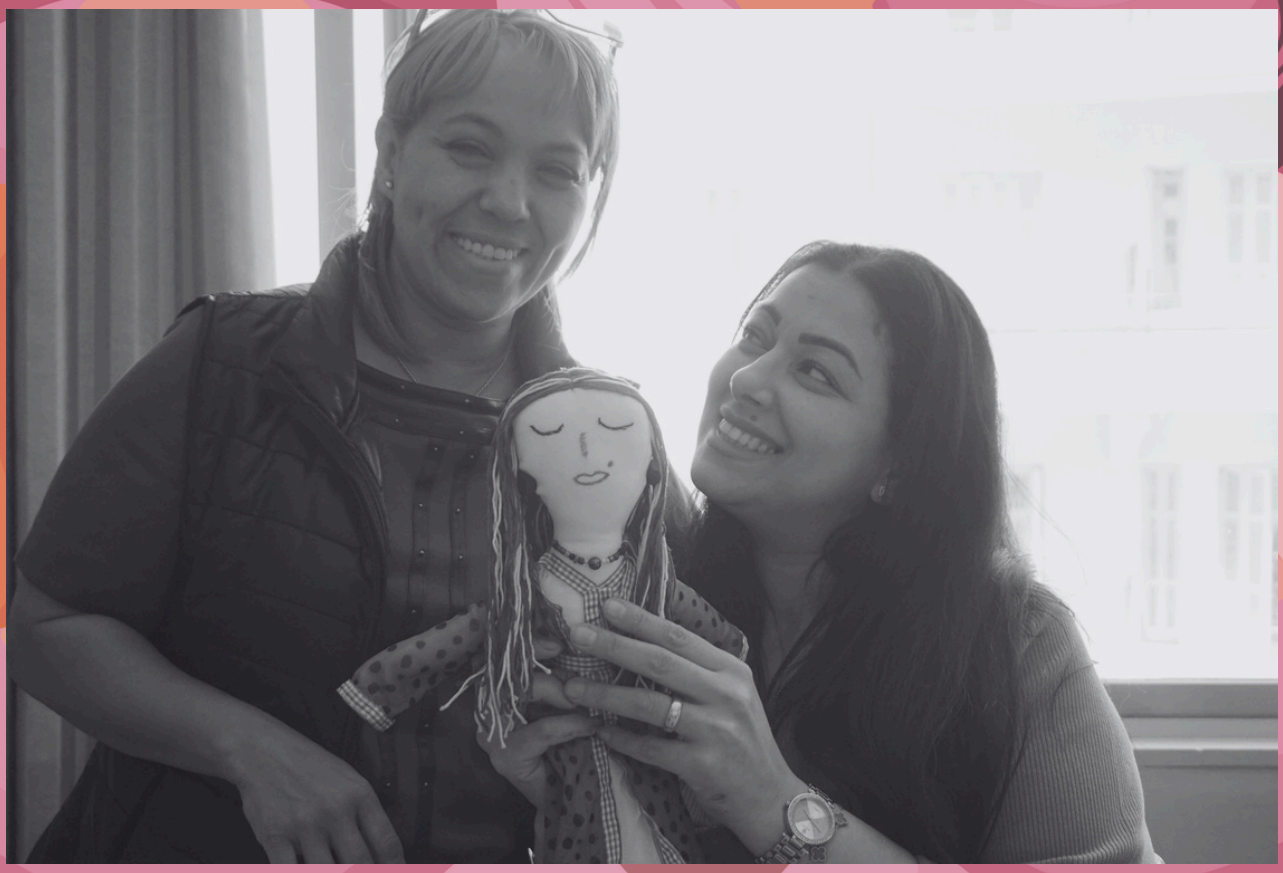
ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Prepared by:
Irida Women's Center

Irida Women's Center



www.iridacenter.org

El. Venizelou 59, 54631, Thessaloniki, Greece

TABLE OF CONTENT

LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO — PAGE 03

IRIDA WOMEN'S CENTER AT A GLANCE — PAGE 04

2025 AT A GLANCE — PAGE 05

REFLECTING OUR 2023-2025 STRATEGY PLAN — PAGE 07

PROTECTION PROGRAM IN 2025 — PAGE 09

LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM IN 2025 — PAGE 11

RAISING AWARENESS: THE # SHECHANGESPEAK CAMPAIGN — PAGE 12

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW — PAGE 13

LOOKING AHEAD — PAGE 14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS — PAGE 15

LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO

Dear friends, partners, and supporters,

For Irida Women's Center, 2025 was a year of sustained and demanding work. As women's needs grew and uncertainty across the sector continued, we remained focused on our core responsibility: that no woman is left behind and that she can access timely, professional, and coordinated support.

The wider context makes the importance of this commitment clear. In Greece, 41.8% of women who have ever had an intimate partner—more than 4 in 10—have experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence, including threats of physical violence, by a partner during their lifetime.[1] At the same time, 26.9% of the population—more than 1 in 4 women—has been at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024.[2]

These are not separate realities. In our daily work, we see how violence can intersect with poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, displacement and legal uncertainity. Therefore, for us at Irida, responding responsibly means fully understanding the circumstances of every woman and designing focused and rigorous support, ensuring she is not left to navigate the barriers alone.

Throughout 2025, our team provided consistent support, adapted to complex and changing needs, and worked closely with other services and professionals. The results presented in this report reflect both the reach of that work and the care, expertise, and sound judgment required to deliver it well.

The year also reaffirmed that no organization can close systemic gaps alone. Meaningful protection depends on strong coordination among public services, civil society, professionals, local actors, and funders. It also depends on stable and flexible resources that allow organizations to retain specialized staff, maintain high standards, and provide continuity beyond short-term interventions.

I am deeply grateful to Irida's team for the professionalism and commitment they demonstrated throughout the year. I also thank our donors, partners, volunteers, and community members for embracing our work through their generous support and invaluable cooperation. Above all, I thank the women who placed their trust in Irida and whose experiences and feedback continue to shape and strengthen our work.

I hope this report provides a clear and honest account of what we achieved in 2025, the challenges that remain, and the shared responsibility required to ensure that no woman is left behind and that violence against women is prevented before it occurs.

With appreciation,
Chloe Elizabeth Kousoula
Founder & CEO

[1] European Institute for Gender Equality, EU Gender-Based Violence Survey
[2] Eurostat, People at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion in 2024

IRIDA WOMEN'S CENTER AT A GLANCE

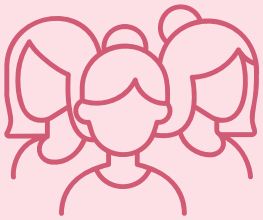
Irida Women's Center is a nonprofit civil society organization established in 2016 in Thessaloniki, Greece. We operate the first and sole, women-led, safe community center in Northern Greece dedicated to supporting socially and economically vulnerable women, including survivors and women at risk of gender-based violence. Rooted in daily frontline work, we provide social services, legal assistance and court representation, mental health and psychosocial support, and community-based prevention through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach.

We support Greek, refugee, and migrant women who are exposed to gender-based violence alongside intersecting social and economic vulnerabilities. By responding to both their immediate needs and the barriers that undermine their safety and well-being, we help women move from crisis and insecurity toward safety, dignity, greater agency, and lasting stability. Alongside direct support, we actively engage with the wider community through prevention, raising awareness, and advocacy efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and build more inclusive societies for women. We join forces with local communities, institutions, and key stakeholders to address the root causes of gender-based violence and contribute to a more inclusive and responsive system of protection.

In recognition of its impact and leadership in advancing women's rights, Irida was awarded the inaugural Vigdís Prize for Women's Empowerment in 2024 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Government of Iceland, among 123 candidates worldwide. This prestigious distinction marked a significant milestone for the organization and reinforced its commitment to advancing gender equality and ensuring that no woman is left behind.



2025 AT A GLANCE:
WHO WE SUPPORTED



534

unique women accessed our center and received individualized and rigorous support in 2025.



48

different countries.



402

women faced multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities.

2025 AT A GLANCE: HOW WE DID IT



2,969

1:1 sessions with our social work team



714

1:1 sessions with our legal team.



520

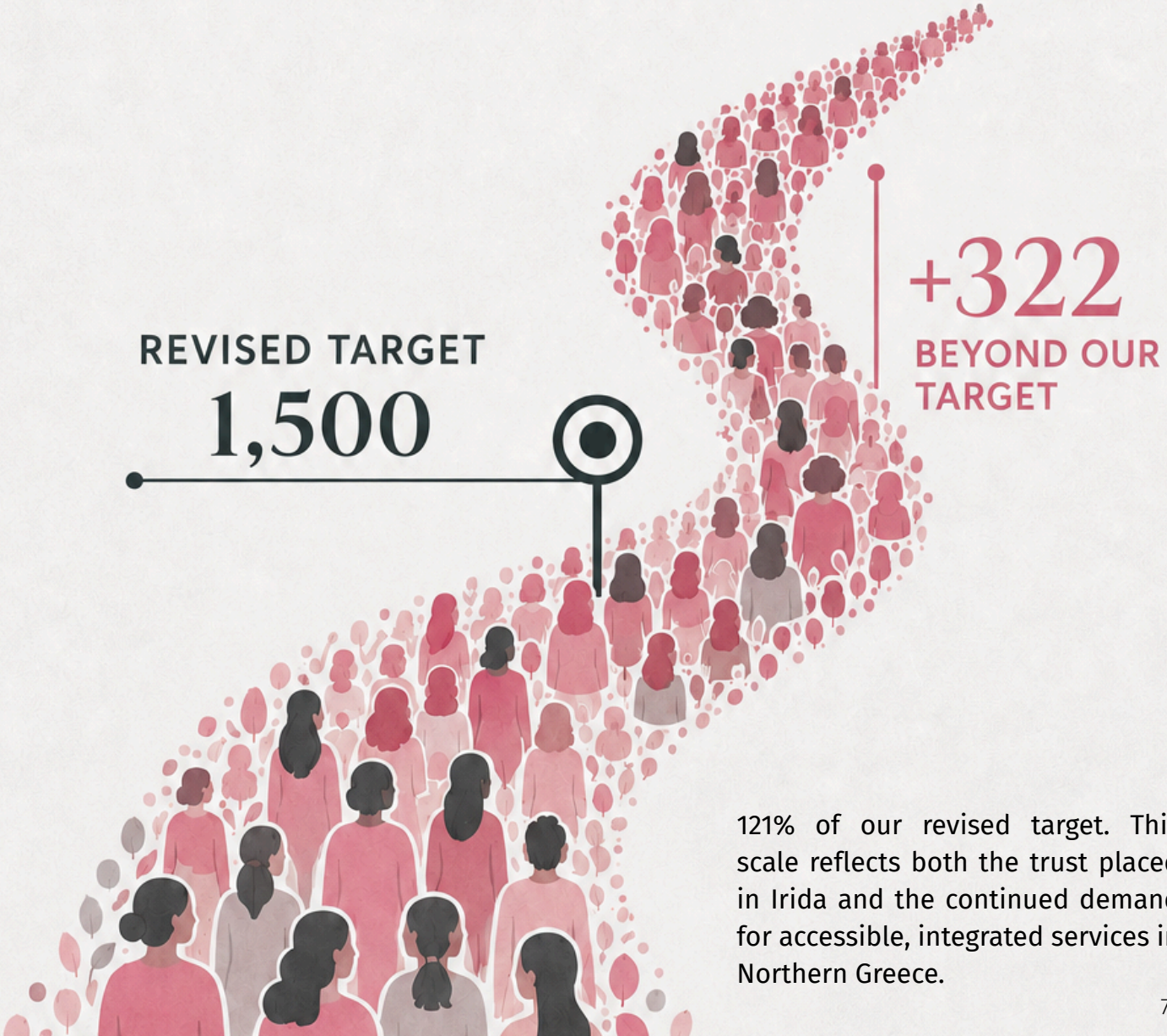
1:1 job counseling sessions with the Employment Officer.

REFLECTING OUR 2023-2025 STRATEGY PLAN:

Three years of progress and learnigns.

1,822

WOMEN REACHED ACROSS 2023–2025



121% of our revised target. This scale reflects both the trust placed in Irida and the continued demand for accessible, integrated services in Northern Greece.

REFLECTING OUR 2023-2025 STRATEGY PLAN:

Three years of progress and learnigns.

2025 marked the final year of Irida Women's Center's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan and offered an important opportunity to reflect on our progress, impact, and organizational learning. Over the past three years, our work has followed three strategic priorities: **Protection, Economic Empowerment, Organizational Development.**

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2023-2025	ACHIEVEMENTS	LESSONS LEARNED
PROTECTION	Protection emerged as Irida's strongest area of impact. Through our holistic model, **1,033 women facing gender-based violence, poverty, displacement, and social exclusion** accessed coordinated casework and social services, legal assistance and court representation, and mental health and psychosocial support through a single trusted point of contact: Irida.	The scale and complexity of women's needs confirmed that safety, access to justice, mental well-being, and long-term stability are deeply interconnected and cannot be addressed through isolated services.
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	**247 women** strengthened their language, digital, vocational, and employability skills and received individualized guidance in navigating pathways toward employment.	Progress toward sustainable employment was often constrained by interconnected barriers, including violence, insecure legal status, mental health needs, care responsibilities, limited language skills, and discrimination. Our experience demonstrated that employment support must be connected to broader protection and integration services and complemented by specialized partnerships.
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	We strengthened our fundraising capacity, strategic partnerships, internal systems, and monitoring and learning practices, **while achieving its revised three-year fundraising target of €1.3 million**.	A changing and increasingly uncertain funding environment highlighted the risks of relying on short-term and restricted grants. Sustaining high-quality services requires diversified funding, greater access to flexible resources, stronger financial resilience, and continued investment in organizational capacity



PROTECTION PROGRAM IN 2025

In 2025, the Protection Program strengthened women's safety, access to rights, and psychosocial well-being via coordinated, individualized support. Responding to the intersecting challenges of gender-based violence, poverty, and social exclusion, our mutlidisciplinary team integrated social services, legal assistance, and psychosocial support to address urgent protection needs aiming to promote women's safety and autonomy. The holistic approach enabled the women to communicate their needs, understand their options, and make informed decision about their lives and the support they received.

CASEWORK & SOCIAL SERVICES

473 unique women

2,969

1:1 sessions with our social work team.

Women received an average of 6 individual sessions with their assigned social worker.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE & COURT REPRESENTATION

102 unique women

714

1:1 sessions with our legal team.

32 women were represented before Greek courts in family law and domestic violence cases.

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

36 unique women

132

1:1 sessions with our psychologist.

107 unique women

57

open psychosocial group sessions.

We developed the Mental Health & Psychosocial Support through Arts Handbook which documents our methodology and core principles, alongside selected examples of open psychosocial support groups and arts-based community empowerment activities designed to strengthen the psychological resilience, emotional well-being, and social connection of the women we support.



THE STORY OF MELINA

I was born in Crete, but my birth had never been registered. I had a difficult childhood.

When I became a mother at 16, I still had no birth certificate or identity card. At the hospital, I was told that the lack of documents also affected my daughter. I could not register her birth, complete the paperwork she needed, or access services that could support us. I was trying to care for my baby while facing a very serious problem I could not resolve on my own. I was desperate.

I was struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes, I could not even afford her milk. My daughter was still a newborn baby when a social worker from the municipal social services referred me to Irida. I called the Center, and the team invited me to come in. At Irida, after my registration, I could get monthly support with milk, diapers, and other essentials, which eased some of the worry about how I would provide for her.

In parallel, the social worker connected me with the lawyer to help me with my documents. I had already sought help from a private lawyer without success, and I could not afford the legal support I needed. When I heard that Irida could help me issue my birth certificate and get my documents free of charge, I was so happy I could hardly believe it.

The lawyer and social worker gathered the information needed for my case. Irida represented me in court and kept helping me through the procedures that followed. It took time, but my birth certificate was finally issued. For the first time, there was an official record of my birth. I could begin obtaining the other documents I needed and move forward with the paperwork that affected both my life and my daughter's.

During that time, Irida became a familiar part of our days. My partner is often away for work, and I spend many hours alone with my daughter. At the Center, I found company and warmth. I can care for her, warm up her food, have a coffee, and talk with other women. I made a friend here, and now, we take our children out together. I stopped feeling so alone.

I love that Irida is a space just for women. I feel comfortable when I am at the Center, and I know I can speak openly. On days when I arrive worried or upset, the social worker or the psychologist will listen. Being able to say what is troubling me helps me leave feeling lighter.

My daughter was a tiny baby when we first came. She is two now, and the team has watched her grow. She knows them and feels comfortable with them. We have a place where we are both welcome.

I want my daughter to attend daycare so I can find work that fits around her hours. There are still things to organize, but I know I have people I can turn to.

When I made that first phone call, I could not have imagined how much this community would come to mean to us.



LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM IN 2025

In 2025, the Livelihoods Program strengthened women's employability and supported their pursuit of economic independence through skills development, individualized career guidance, and job readiness training in groups. Responding to the barriers faced by the women, our team combined Enlish and Greek language and digital literacy courses, vocational training, and job counseling to facilitate access to the Greek labor market. This integrated approach helped women build on their existing strengths, gain recognized qualifications, make informed career decisions, and pursue employment opportunities aligned with their skills and aspirations.

ADULT LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

98 unique women

participated in English Language Courses

10

women passed the Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English

22

women completed a program of certified Vocational Training Education

107 unique women

participated in Greek Language Courses

41

women passed the Examination for the National Greek Language Certificate B1

20

women obtained basic digital literacy skills

EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

98 unique women

20 women secured formal employment through our employment support service.

833

1:1 sessions with our employability officer for action plan, cv-making and job seeking



RAISING AWARENESS:
THE # SHECHANGESPEAK CAMPAIGN

Launched in 2024 and expected to conclude in 2026, #SheChangeSpeak is Irida's first major public awareness campaign. A central component of the project SheChange: Combating Gender-Based Violence in Thessaloniki, it aims to raise awareness of gender-based violence and mobilize the local community to take an active role in prevention and support for women at risk.

The campaign combines awareness-raising with practical community participation through the development of a network of Safe Spots. Participating businesses receive training and dedicated signage to serve as recognizable first points of contact for women at risk, offering initial support and information until the appropriate authorities arrive. It is important to clarify that the Safe Spots do not replace the work of the responsible authorities. This approach enables local businesses to take an active role in the community's response to gender-based violence.

Within 2025:

We reached **44%** of our goal to establishe a network of 50 local businesses acting as Safe Spots.

22

local businesses received the dedicated signage and joined the network of the 50 Safe Spots.

101

employeers were trained on how to help a woman at risk.

- Participating businesses included cafés, retail stores, beauty and hair salons, a restaurant, a fitness club, a language center, a law office, and other service providers. They were located across five municipalities in the Thessaloniki area: Thessaloniki, Kalamaria, Thermi, Neapoli-Sykies, and Ampelokipi-Menemeni.

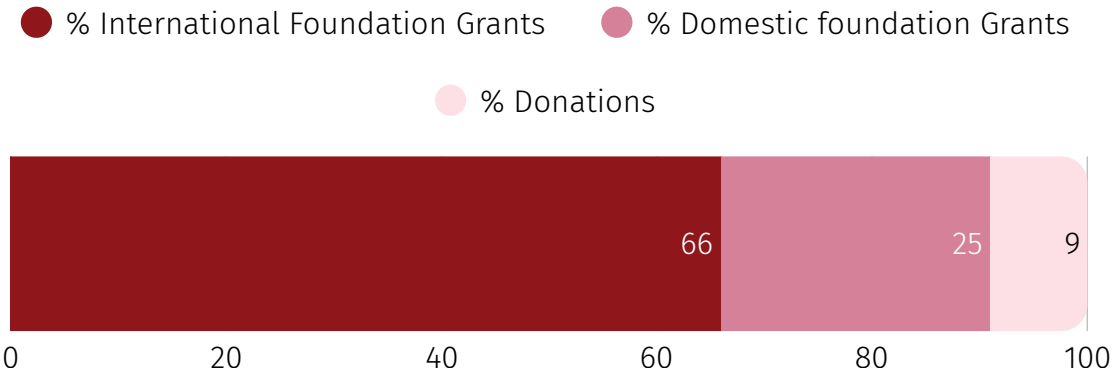
- The Hellenic Police officially recognized and endorsed the #SheChangeSpeak campaign and its initiative to establish a network of 50 local businesses serving as Safe Spots for women at risk.

- We also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Municipality of Kalamaria and the Ermis Trade Association of Kalamaria to strengthen local participation in #SheChangeSpeak and support the campaign's expansion within the municipality.

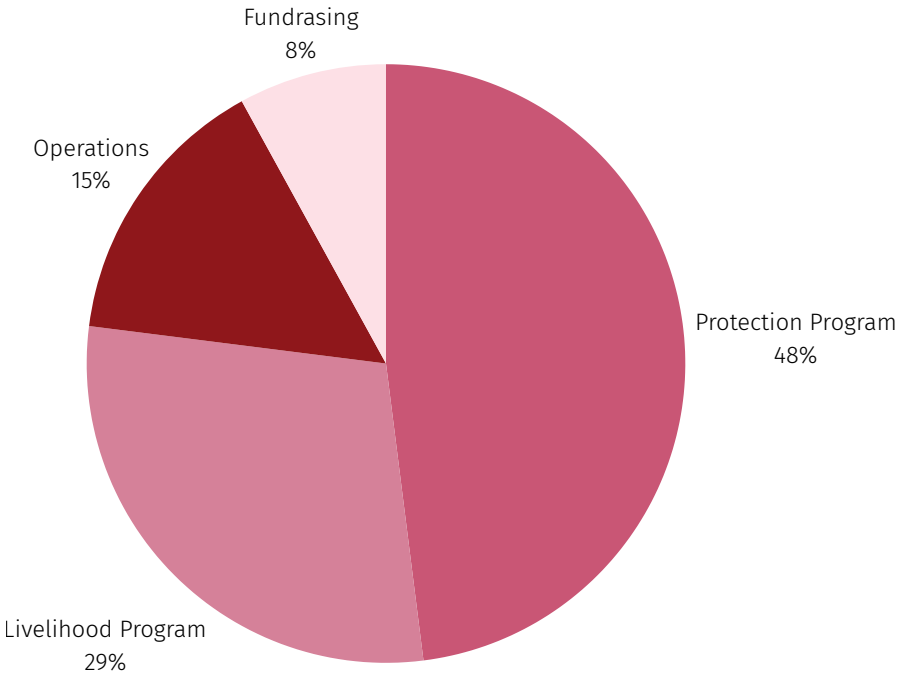
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW IN 2025

INCOME	EXPENDITURE
€ 494,700.77	€ 486,066.59

INCOME



EXPENDITURE





LOOKING AHEAD

THE NEW STRATEGIC PERIOD 2026-2029

As we enter the 2026–2029 strategic period, we reaffirm our commitment to a world where no woman is left behind, and gender-based violence is prevented before it occurs. This vision underpins the next phase of Irida's work: strengthening our core protection model to deliver sustained, specialized support; advancing evidence-informed advocacy and community-based prevention; and reinforcing the institutional foundations that safeguard the quality and continuity of our services over the long term.

At the same time, we will refine our approach to the strategic priority 2023-2025 of economic empowerment. Rather than directly implementing standalone livelihood activities, we plan to focus on facilitating women's access to professional development and economic empowerment opportunities through strategic partnerships, referrals, and external pathways.

Our new approach will be shaped by 3 core priorities:

- Protection: We will provide high-quality, holistic protection services to the most socially and economically vulnerable women, with an emphasis on women who experience or are at risk of gender-based violence, helping them address immediate risks, access their rights, and move toward safety, dignity, and long-term stability.
- Evidence-Based Advocacy and Community Prevention: We will draw on our frontline evidence and experience to advance advocacy, promote public awareness, and contribute to more effective and coordinated responses to gender-based violence, discrimination, and the structural obstacles that limit women's safety, protection, and access to rights.
- Institutional Resilience and Operational Quality: We will develop our institutional resilience, accountability, and financial management in order to ensure high operational quality across the strategic period.

Our ambition is to connect the protection women need today with the lasting change required to secure their rights for the future. Women's experiences will continue to inform both the support we provide and the change we advocate for, ensuring that the barriers encountered in individual lives help shape our collective response. Through this approach, we will work toward a society where safety, justice, and the freedom to shape one's own life are within every woman's reach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reflecting on 2025, we extend our sincere gratitude to the donors and supporters whose generosity and trust sustained Irida's work. Your contributions enabled us to provide essential services to hundreds of women facing violence, poverty, and social exclusion, supporting them to address urgent needs, exercise their rights, and move toward greater safety and independence.

We are equally grateful to our partner organizations for their expertise, collaboration, and shared commitment to women's rights. These partnerships strengthened our response to women's needs and our collective capacity to address the barriers that limit their access to protection, justice, and opportunity.

Our interns and volunteers made a valued contribution to our services and the daily life of the center. We thank them for sharing their skills and dedicating their time to a community where women could find support, build connections, and pursue new opportunities for learning.

We also recognize the commitment of our team, whose professionalism and adaptability sustained the quality and continuity of our work throughout a demanding year. Their dedication translated our mission into responsive, individualized support, grounded in respect for each woman's circumstances, rights, and choices.

To everyone who contributed to Irida in 2025, thank you for making this work possible and for the confidence you placed in our mission. Your solidarity strengthens our shared commitment to a world where every woman's safety, dignity, and rights are upheld—and no woman is left behind.



THANK YOU

Thank you for standing with Irida and the women we support.
Together, we continue working for a world where no woman is left behind and violence against women is prevented before it occurs.

+302311296392

www.iridacenter.org

El. Venizelou 59, 54631,
Thessaloniki, Greece