Field-study results: Risk-assessment tools and case documentation used by frontline responders

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Examining risk assessment and case documentation processes in 8 European countries

-296 interviews addressing risk assessment procedures and tools in respect to case documentation and their use by frontline responders (FLR) of high impact domestic violence (HIDV): the police, the medical sector and the social sector.
Areas of the examination

• We examined if risk assessment and case documentation procedures exist when FLR-s are handling HIDV?

• What kind of risk assessment instruments and related case-documentation mechanisms are used? Especially concerning the level of standardization and spread of use

• What are the critical shortcomings of these tools?

• What are the main suggestions to improve risk assessment and case documentation processes?
Key problems identified

- One third of the participating countries lack formal, standardised risk assessment tools and protocols or their protocols only cover certain parts/areas of the risk or are used only in certain types of crimes.

- In some other countries (e.g.: in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Finland) there are effective instruments, but they are not generally used, only discretionally in:
  - certain sectors
  - certain regions/ police units, or other frontline agencies

- Good practices face obstacles to spread in the countries and across the different sectors.

- Many countries lack cooperation and information sharing among FLR-s regarding risk assessment and risk-related case documentation procedures.
Typical shortcomings of risk assessment tools mentioned by the interviewees from partner countries

- the rigidity of existing formal risk assessment tools
- the lack of case-based sensitivity
- lack of multidisciplinary cooperation across the sectors in risk assessment and case documentation
- risk of 'false assessment' and negligence of certain risk situations
Typical shortcomings of case documentation

• Documentation of DV incidents is often not unified, standardised and formalised

• In countries where there are no unified case documentation systems, regulations and practices often ensure a lot of discretion of what and how to document

• Discretional and informal processes and the lack of standards for DV case documentation hinder inter-sectorial cooperations between FLR agencies
Suggestions how to improve risk assessment and case documentation tools and protocols

• Need for unified risk assessment and case documentation protocols across the FLR sectors and country-wide

• Using risk assessment tools have to be accompanied by comprehensive and regular professional training

• Timing of the risk assessment process is crucial: the dynamic approach of risk assessment was preferred, meaning a continuous re-evaluation of risks during the course of a case management

• It is important to acknowledge country-specific differences; models have to be tailor-made to the unique conditions of each countries
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!