



# **IMPRODOVA Handbook on High Impact Domestic Violence in Europe - Summary of the Handbook-**

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Edited by Branko Lobnikar, Catharina Vogt, & Joachim Kersten  
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## Content

1. Chapter: INTRODUCTION .....	3
The aim of the handbook.....	3
2. Chapter: THE MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN 21ST CENTURY .....	3
2a. International policy framework.....	3
2b. Policy maturity assessment framework.....	4
2c. Domestic violence risk assessment and case documentation.....	4
2d. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination: the characteristics of a "good partnership" against domestic violence .....	5
3. Chapter FRONT-LINE RESPONSE TO HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN EUROPE - COUNTRY REPORTS .....	6
Austria .....	6
Bulgaria .....	7
Finland.....	7
France .....	9
Germany .....	9
Hungary.....	10
Portugal.....	10
Scotland .....	11
Slovenia.....	11
4. EUROPEAN PLATFORM - DEVELOPING IMPROVED DV RESPONSE PROTOCOLS 12	
4a. A digital communication platform for inter-agency collaboration to manage high impact domestic abuse: Structure and essentials.....	12
4b. Development of a training platform on domestic violence.....	13
4c. Recommendations for an innovative gender-sensitive training and education for various front-line responder groups.....	13
5. DISCUSSION ON OPTIMISED HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION .....	14
Roadmap towards an integrated European response .....	14

*This handbook is going to be published by the Maribor University Press. Below are the summaries of the chapters in the handbook.*

## **1. Chapter: INTRODUCTION**

### **The aim of the handbook**

*Authors: Joachim Kersten, Catharina Vogt, Branko Lobnikar*

The introductory chapter of this handbook presents the structure of the book as a whole and gives a brief overview about its single chapters and the interrelatedness.

## **2. Chapter: THE MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN 21ST CENTURY**

### **2a. International policy framework**

*Authors: Norbert Leonhardmair, Paul Herbinger, Marion Neunkirchner*

This chapter describes the international policy framework and efforts made on international and European level to further the fight against violence against women and domestic violence after which the respective national legal frameworks and organisational context of front-line responder services are discussed in-depth in Chapter 3. The IMPRODOVA project followed a bottom-up approach in its investigation of ground-level practices of cooperation of front-line responder services, which are, however, only meaningfully understood when interpreted in the governing national legal and policy framework. Against the background of earlier initiatives and institutions such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979; the 1985 General Assembly Resolution on Domestic Violence; and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the United Nations, Council of Europe, and European Union began drafting documents intended to provide guidance and legal grounds for the national responses to Domestic Violence in the 1990s. While numerous international policy documents (only a selection of which have been outlined above) relate to the topic of Domestic Violence, the ratification of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2011, represents perhaps the most important attempt to institute a comprehensive policy framework in this field. The "Istanbul Convention" includes the first legally binding, international, and wide-reaching set of norms to combat Violence against Women (VAW) in general, and Domestic Violence (DV) specifically. As of 2021, the convention has been ratified in all partner countries except Hungary and the UK. IMPRODOVA approached the exploration of the existing national policy framework via the National Action Plans as an entry point. The NAPs served as a chain link between international policies, the national legal framework and the local and organisational implementation of guidelines in the investigation of the gap between formal provisions and organisational practices. The definition of DV in the Istanbul Convention is often used as the leading definition of DV within the country's National Action Plans (NAPs). Within this framework, the definition is based on a gender related violence concept, mainly understood as violence against women and children. Generally, a cross-national comparison is a complex undertaking, particularly in the context of DV, as different countries make use of distinctive and varied definitions of DV.

## 2b. Policy maturity assessment framework

*Authors: Martta October, Suvi Nipuli*

The Policy Development Module aims to make the Domestic Violence combatting policy planning process more structured and inclusive. The Checklist and Manual developed during IMPRODOVA research and innovation project, form together a tool designed for Policy drafters, decision makers and other key professionals responsible for planning the Policy's Feedback Cycle on both national and local levels.

This Policy Development tool enables a critical examination of relevant information and helps to consider all viable policy perspectives and tools, leading to increased understanding between different professions. It makes the Policy planning more inclusive and aids to engage all salient stakeholders, including the representatives of the practitioners who work at front-line and implement the policy. Consequently, the participants will develop a common purpose and a shared view on how to tackle the multidimensional societal challenges posed by Domestic Violence.

The Checklist consists of eight different sections, each of which should be noted when drafting a new policy document and planning the indicators for its follow-up. The Manual gives more details and practical examples of each section and therefore supports the use of the Checklist.

## 2c. Domestic violence risk assessment and case documentation

*Authors: Marianne Mela, Jarmo Houtsonen*

Risk assessment is a cornerstone of domestic violence (DV) prevention and intervention. From the front-line responders' (FLR) perspective, risk assessment constitutes a process that starts from the identification of the factors increasing the likelihood of violence and then continues to the planning of safety measures to manage the sources of risks and thereby prevent the recurrence of violence. The Istanbul Convention binds the parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that an assessment of the lethality risk, the seriousness of the situation and the risk of repeated violence is carried out by all relevant authorities in order to manage the risk. However, many countries have not yet implemented systematic risk assessment tools and procedures for FLRs. The IMPRODOVA study showed that the FLRs were not particularly well trained in carrying out risk assessment.

To address some of the shortcomings related to the risk assessment of DV, the IMPRODOVA project developed a Risk Assessment Integration Module, RAIMO. The overall purpose of RAIMO is to bridge the gaps between different risk assessment tools and professional perspectives, and thereby to generate a shared understanding of risk assessment in multi-professional and cooperative contexts.

While RAIMO can be utilised in learning, teaching and as a databank, in this Handbook Chapter, we focus on the key aspects and findings in risk assessment research. The chapter also aims to equip FLRs with applicable information to revise or remodel the existing risk assessment procedures, networks, and tools. Furthermore, FLRs, managers and trainers are offered advice and detailed information about the purpose of the risk assessment process including explanations for risks and vulnerability factors, challenges in risk assessment and suggestions for improvements. Due to the differences in legislation, organisational cultures and arrangements for multi-professional cooperation, there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution for improving risk assessment procedures and tools, so risk assessment policies and practices developed in one location cannot be transplanted directly to another.

## 2d. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination: the characteristics of a "good partnership" against domestic violence

*Authors: Thierry Delpuech, François Bonnet*

In the 1970s, the feminist movement exposed a sexist police culture as the main cause for police apathy in the face of domestic violence. This critique led to an ongoing transformation of police organisations. This transformation is composed of two main processes. The first process is a movement to constrain police activity, to force police officers to take domestic violence seriously by enacting laws and rules which aim at reducing the discretion of police officers.

The second process also aims at transforming police activity, not by constraining it, but by improving the skills of police officers and making them work in partnerships with other stakeholders from medical or social service professions, in the best interest of the victim. These partnerships may be within the police organisations, or between the police and other stakeholders—typically social workers, magistrates, social housing representatives, NGOs, city administrators, and so on. This chapter focuses on this second process of transformation and aims at drawing comparative lessons from case studies in eight countries—Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Scotland, and Slovenia—to document the characteristics of a "good partnership" against domestic violence.

What makes a partnership more likely to be successful? In short:

- First, it takes targeted actions with an intended outcome. That is, it targets specific types of perpetrators, or acts to mitigate or manage risks posed to victims.
- Second, it has a system for managing its action that is both capable of performing a range of functions and of imposing its authority on system members.
- Third, information management facilitates inter-institutional sharing and ensures feedback from partner organisations to the partnership mechanism.
- Fourth, the partnership organisation has specialised relays in each partner organisation. These specialised units or staff, who represent, promote, and implement the partnership in their respective organisations, enjoy a high status within their own partner organisations.
- Fifth, the partnership mechanism and partner organisations make a significant effort to train the staff involved in the collaboration, as well as codify and produce professional knowledge useful for the proper functioning of the partnership.

All in all, this chapter shows that police action towards domestic violence can be improved not only by forcing police officers to take domestic violence seriously, but also by educating them about the subject, specialising them on it, and above all make them work in partnerships with other professions—such as magistrates, social workers, health professionals or city administrators.

## 2e. Risk-assessment and victim support recommendations during covid-19 related lock-down periods

*Authors: Joachim Kersten, Catharina Vogt, Michele Burman, Jarmo Houtsonen, Norbert Leonhardmair, Paul Herbinger*

This chapter covers the topic of effects from the COVID-19 crisis on the incidence and severity of domestic abuse cases in Europe. First, the manifestation of the COVID-19 lock-down and its adverse effects on private life are described. Building upon this description, co-occurring risks factors with a high potential to initiate or intensify domestic abuse (e.g., cramped living conditions) are discussed. Responding to various calls on investigating the impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse incidents,



IMPRODOVA research on the first lock-down shows that the related concerns for various reasons are inconsistently reflected in domestic abuse-related statistics. In some IMPRODOVA partner countries, however, victimisation numbers went up, after the lock-down ended. Consequently, the complexity of detecting domestic abuse cases during lock-downs are discussed. In line with the strong concern about an intensified victimisation, innovative responses by front-line professionals to detect and manage cases of domestic violence and abuse are presented. Building on the beforehand presented assumptions, findings and explanations, the chapter closes by highlighting eighteen recommendations regarding risk assessment and victim support during pandemics.

### 3. Chapter FRONT-LINE RESPONSE TO HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN EUROPE - COUNTRY REPORTS

#### AUSTRIA

*Authors: Paul Herbinger, Marion Neunkirchner, Norbert Leonhardmair*

The networked response to cases of high-impact domestic violence in Austria predominantly involves four groups of actors, who share both formal and informal modes of inter-agency cooperation, and each function as independent entry points to a networked intervention. These groups consist of specialised and non-specialised police officers, a number of NGOs in the social sector, regional administration and municipal authorities, as well as the medical sector, predominantly involving hospital staff.

Entering into force in 1997 and last amended in 2019, the Protection Against Violence Act (Gewaltschutzgesetz) represents the central piece of legislation underlying the national response to domestic violence as a public problem. The most important legal measure in place for the protection of victims by police, is the restraining order in the Security Police Act (SPG), which was introduced as part of the victim protection guidelines. In early 2020, the restraining order under section 38a of the SPG has been amended and replaced by a broader prohibition of approach.

A unified and universally applied definition of domestic violence (DV) does not exist in Austria. As a result, there is no cross-sectoral standardisation when identifying violent acts. A common understanding of domestic violence as a problem that reflects social inequalities in the private sphere to turn it into a public matter, seems to be a suitable approach for the common definition on domestic violence within the three sectors.

As in most European Member States, there is not one indicative data set designed to consistently and scientifically measure the prevalence of domestic violence in Austria.

Where the role of police is chiefly focused on acute interventions in cases of domestic violence and directed mainly at perpetrators of criminal acts (or probable immanent criminal acts) occurring during such violence, Austrian NGOs in the social sector are primarily focused on victims and offer interventions which accompany cases for longer periods of time.

Centres for Protection Against Violence share strong formalised cooperation agreements with law enforcement in Austria. Specifically, police officers are required to share the contact information of all victims involved in cases where a restraining order has been issued to the regional Centre. While the medical sector plays a key role in the networked response to domestic violence and abuse in Austria, its response is in many ways the least established.

The Austrian networked response to domestic violence is characterised by a series of established formalised cooperation practices between police and other front-line responder agencies. These good practices of cooperation are grounded in policies that regulate and reinforce the interaction between different actors and are well established within operating procedures of each of the agencies involved.

A structural long-term challenge faced by the Social Sector in general relates to the ratio between level of funding and caseload.

The main challenge faced by the Medical Sector in the short and mid-term pertains to the continuing roll-out and implementation of the Victim's Protection Groups in Hospitals.

## **BULGARIA**

*Authors: Margarita Vassileva, Thierry Delpuech*

According to the NGO Women Against Violence Europe, an estimated 900,000 women (30%) in Bulgaria suffer from domestic abuse every year. 35 women were murdered in the context of domestic violence (DV) in 2018. The mistrust of law enforcement and justice system inherited from the communist regime discourages victims from seeking assistance from the police and the judiciary. Largely ignored by the state for many years, the issue of violence against women surfaced in the government's agenda due to the debates around the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the mid-2010s (which was ultimately rejected). The country policies are characterised by a lack of change in the legal frameworks, a lack of official data, a lack of sufficient financing from the state budget and the lack of established procedures for handling cases of DV. Ineffective coordination between institutions, the failure to make official statistics publicly available, the lack of a national register of acts of domestic violence, the requirement of proof of systemic violence to initiate criminal proceedings, the lack of resources to support NGOs, etc. are all obstacles that result in a high number of acts of domestic violence that go unaddressed by the courts, and a number of femicides that is proportionally twice as high as in France.

NGOs are at the forefront of the fight against DV, and thanks to their activities the phenomenon is starting to be taken seriously. They are also the main providers of services, training and analysis related to DV. NGOs working on domestic violence issues keep well-updated databases of relevant information and advice for DV victims, as well as current methodologies and surveys for use by professionals in the field. The case of PULSE Foundation in the city of Pernik is an example of good practices built on individual initiative and personal involvement on international, national, and local level. This NGO plays an important role in the protection of DV victims and thus helps to overcome the shortcomings of State policies in this area.

## **FINLAND**

*Authors: Marianne Mela, Martta October, Suvi Nipuli, Jarmo Houtsonen*

Finland is committed to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The Convention entered into force in Finland on August 1st 2015. The Current Government Programme of the Prime Minister also includes several initiatives to better combat domestic violence. According to the Programme, the government will safeguard the implementation of fundamental and human rights and tackle violations of people's rights. Different forms of physical violence are criminalised in the Criminal Code (e.g., assault, killing, homicide, murder, negligent bodily injury, negligent homicide, imperilment, endangerment of health

and abandonment). In 2014, the new offence of 'Preparation of an aggravated offence against life or health' was inserted into the Criminal Code. In 2019, the Finnish Parliament adopted changes to the Marriage Act (234/1929) and repealed the exception that under-aged persons could marry with special approval from the Ministry of Justice. The purposes of the changes are to protect children and limit the risk of forced marriages. The current Social Welfare Act entered into force in April 2015. It emphasises the timeliness of assistance, improves the basic services and reduces the need for reparative measures. The Child Welfare Act determines regulations concerning child welfare and applies to all children who live in Finland. According to the law, all children are entitled to a safe and stimulating living environment, balanced and diverse development and special protection.

In 2020, there were 10,800 incidents of domestic violence and intimate partner violence offences reported to the authorities. The number of reported offences decreased by 1,2 per cent from 2019. Among all the adult victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, 75.2 per cent were women, whereas 78.1 per cent of suspects were men. The suspect was also male in one-third of cases where the victim was a male. These numbers include only incidents that have been reported to the authorities. Uniformed police officers are often the first responders encountered by a victim of domestic violence. For the police, domestic violence call-outs are the most common sources of information about violence in close relationships. In 2011, the Criminal Code was reformed to give a clear message that even milder forms of violence in close relationships are unacceptable. In a domestic violence case, uniformed police officers intervene and often interrupt the unlawful activity, question the parties, collect the evidence, and file a report. The uniformed police officers also inform Child Welfare if there are minors in the family or report a need for social welfare services if they are concerned about the ability of an adult client to cope. The uniformed police officers also apprehend the suspect based on the Police Act (872/2011) or Coercive Measures Act (806/2011) depending on the seriousness of the crime or the risk of continuation or recurrence of violence.

In Finland, 7 per cent of emergency department patients have reported recent and 20 per cent lifelong domestic violence. Domestic violence is seriously unrecognised in emergency care, with the result that victims are likely to suffer from a wide range of mental and somatic health issues and to make repeated visits to emergency departments and other medical services. According to the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014), a municipality must arrange social services to support those who have experienced domestic violence or other forms of violence or abuse. The shelter is a home-like environment where victims find refuge from violence and where they get help to stop the violence, free of charge. In 2020, there were in total 29 shelters for victims of domestic violence in Finland. There are several NGOs supporting victims of domestic violence and providing perpetrator programmes in Finland. For example, the Helsinki Shelter Association offers shelter services as well supported accommodation for adults and children who have experienced violence. Additionally, the organisation has a Counselling Unit for the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. RIKU (Rikosuhripäivystys – Victim Support Finland) is a member of the European umbrella organisation, Victim Support Europe (VSE), advocating on behalf of all victims of crime. When discussing the good practices of cooperation, 'Anchor' ('Ankkuri') teams shall be mentioned. 'Anchor' teams are multi-agency teams working in several police departments in Finland. These teams often consist of police officers, social workers, and psychiatric nurses. The composition and involvement of handling domestic violence cases vary in different locations. The Anchor model supports the wellbeing of children and adolescents and prevents juvenile crime and violent radicalisation. At some police stations, the Anchor model is also used to prevent domestic violence by intervening in incidents at the earliest possible stage and by referring the parties involved to relevant support services.

## FRANCE

*Authors: Marion Tillous, Thierry Delpeuch, François Bonnet*

In 2003, the murder of a famous actress by her rock star companion created an enormous scandal in France and put domestic violence (DV)/intimate partner violence (IPV) on the agenda. Since the 2000s, several laws have been enacted by the French parliament to make domestic violence a crime taken more seriously. Among the most important developments, a 2010 bill introduced the protection order in French law; the inter-ministerial mission for the protection of women against violence and the fight against human trafficking (MIPROF) was created in 2013; and a set of conferences between public stakeholders and NGOs took place in 2019 (the "Grenelle des violences conjugales"). In spite of these recent efforts, there is an estimated shortage of funding for action against domestic violence of 500 million to 1 billion euros.

There are two sources of data on domestic violence, administrative (police) and victimisation surveys. Before the 2000s, the quality of French data—police and survey—on domestic violence was poor. In surveys, there had been a question about rape and sexual assault in the public studies of sexual behaviour in 1992 (ACSF) and 1994 (ACSJ), but no dedicated survey on DV/IPV. Meanwhile, police/justice data were notoriously poor. In the 1990s, police data did not indicate the gender of the perpetrator, and justice data only focused on the perpetrator. It was thus impossible to assess the extent of domestic violence. In 1997, the French government, pressured by both activists and international norms after the Fourth World Women Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), commissioned a survey, which was finalised in 2000 as Enveff (enquête nationale sur les violences faites aux femmes en France).

In France, as in other EU member countries, the development of policies to combat DV at local level essentially relies on the setting and diffusion of two types of organisational arrangements. The first type of arrangement is a specialised DV unit that is set up within a larger organisation with a more general mission, such as law enforcement agencies, hospitals, or social services. The second type of arrangement is inter-organisational structure intended to provide a framework for partnership cooperation against DV, such as social worker embedded in police stations to provide expert assistance to victims when they report domestic violence.

## GERMANY

*Authors: Stefanie Giljohann, Catharina Vogt, Lisa Sondern, Paulina Juszczuk, Joachim Kersten, Bettina Pfeleiderer*

Domestic violence, with a total of 141,792 incidents in 2019 (Bundeskriminalamt, 2020), is a serious problem throughout Germany. The country chapter provides an overview of crime statistics as well as results from victim studies and a cost study.

With regard to legislation, there have been two major waves improving victim protection in recent times, initiated by the implementation of the Act on Protection against Violence in 2002 and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2018. The more precise underlying legal situation for front-line responders is elaborated in the country chapter.

An ongoing trend towards interagency-cooperation and setting up coordination bodies can be noted in the social sector, also incorporating law enforcement agencies and medical institutions. After delineating the scope of responsibilities of front-line responders in the police, medical, and social sectors, the country chapter describes examples of good practice for interagency cooperation.

The country chapter concludes with the main challenges to be anticipated in combatting domestic violence. In the short and medium term, the three main objectives identified are minimising unreported cases, expanding the scope of interventions and improving victim protection. In the long term, the implementation of policies and standards will be vital to evaluate and improve prevention and protection measures to assure a high and nationwide comparable quality standard.

## HUNGARY

*Authors: Gabor Hera, Dora Szegő*

The first part of the chapter describes the legalisation of domestic violence (DV) while introducing the regulations of the Criminal Code, the National Strategy for Social Crime Prevention, the Act LXXII of 2009 on restraining orders, and the relevant instructions of the Hungarian National Police Headquarters. As the authors underline, the Criminal Code criminalises domestic violence, including several areas of DV such as emotional physical, economic, and sexual violence. The two main limitations of the legal framework are the followings: 1) verbal abuse is not sanctioned by the Criminal Code, 2) the police is obliged to file a criminal complaint ex officio only if the DV involves serious physical injuries. In all other cases, it is upon the request of the victim to file a criminal complaint against the offender. The crime category of domestic violence makes up a small amount of all violent crimes committed against partners and family members. There were only 392 reported DV cases in 2019. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen a remarkable increase in the number of DV crimes.

The second part of the chapter describes the roles of the different front-line agencies in responding to DV; the police, the Child Protection Perceiving and Reporting System, the Guardianship office, the family support and child welfare services and the different NGO's that operate crisis management and different telephone helplines. The next part of the chapter introduces the work of the National Crisis Telephone Helpline as a good practice of a cooperation between stakeholders that helps victims of domestic violence and human trafficking through a free of charge telephone line. The last part shows the main challenges and shortcomings characterising the handling of domestic violence in Hungary. One main conclusion of the research is that prevention and rapid response requires cooperation and information sharing between different actors.

## PORTUGAL

*Authors: Paulo Machado, Lúcia G. Pais, Sérgio Felgueiras, Carina Quaresma*

There have been profound social transformations in Portugal in the last 50 years. Portugal currently adheres to the international and European agenda to prevent violence, namely domestic violence (recognised as a public crime in the Penal Code since 2000). However, there is still much mistrust and resistance in large cross-sectional groups within society. The Portuguese legislation and the reporting figures regarding domestic violence, the role of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), other front-line and first-responder agencies, and pertinent stakeholders in responding to high impact domestic violence, as well as the National Network for the Support of Victims of Domestic Violence, are addressed enabling the drawing of the big picture of domestic violence. It also permits highlighting good practices and significant challenges. Two of these are intertwined – none of them is quickly addressed, nor can they be addressed by itself. One is developing a collective attitude that considers such violence as unacceptable behaviour, besides being punished by the criminal law. The other is directly posed to the LEAs and has to do with the increasing complexity of the operational procedures

(derived from the new tools presented by the Government last year). Nevertheless, the problem of elites provoking social change on a superlative level is to forget that the adoption of new social models is not achieved by decree but through social influence processes, which takes time.

## SCOTLAND

*Authors: Ruth Friskney, Oona Brooks-Hay, Michele Burman*

Scotland's progress in tackling domestic abuse is recognised for the gendered analysis which underpins it. This gendered analysis recognises structural gender inequalities as the context in which domestic abuse occurs, enabling more effective targeting of resources for prevention and response. The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, described as a 'gold standard' in legislation to tackle domestic abuse, draws on the gendered concept of coercive control. The Act seeks to recognise in law the nature of domestic abuse not as isolated incidents but rather as an ongoing exercise of power and control by the perpetrator, using a wide variety of tactics.

In this chapter we describe what is known about domestic abuse in Scotland, the strengths, and weaknesses of different sources of data in capturing the gendered nature of domestic abuse and the reality of how it is experienced by victim-survivors. We consider the multi-agency structures, in particular Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordinating groups (MATACs), which support Scotland's partnership approach in the front-line response to domestic abuse, recognising the crucial role of feminist third sector agencies alongside statutory agencies such as police, health, social work, and housing.

While there has been progress in tackling domestic abuse in Scotland, significant challenges remain. Despite increasing recognition of the ways that children experience, and are harmed by, domestic abuse together with their mothers, much work remains to ensure that family court processes and child protection procedures effectively protect children from domestic abuse. While the creation of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 was positively received, the extent to which it achieves its aims depends on the effectiveness of its implementation, relying for example on the ability of police responders to recognise the subtle and insidious signs of coercive control and to respond to these within policing systems. Finally, in Scotland as elsewhere domestic abuse persists. Our gendered analysis tells us that preventing and eradicating domestic abuse rests not only on our response but on our ability to tackle the structured gendered inequalities that are both its cause and its consequence.

## SLOVENIA

*Authors: Karmen Jereb, Aleksander Koporec Oberčkal, Kaja Prislan, Boštjan Slak, Branko Lobnikar*

In Slovenia, domestic violence is a common social problem that infringes upon basic human rights. Results of a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey from 2014 showed that, after the age of 15, 22% of Slovenian women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence, which is 11% lower than for the EU overall. The European Institute for Gender Equality in their report from 2017 estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence against women in Slovenia could amount to EUR 440 million annually. However, the full extent of violence against women is hard to estimate. Violence against women continues to be underreported and stigmatised.

The Slovenian police is one of the main front-line responders that react to domestic violence incidents. A comprehensive protocol is set in place that enables the police to react as effectively as possible.

The form of interinstitutional cooperation is also available to deal with a case of violence in a multidisciplinary team treating domestic violence. Mutual cooperation in Slovenia not only means the better identification of cases and more efficient help for victims, but also the possibility of speeding up the processes, obtaining additional relevant information, preventing the negative effects of the procedures introduced and, in particular, protecting the most vulnerable victims.

Despite the nationwide policy on preventing and eliminating domestic violence, raising public awareness about it, allocating resources to education and training initiatives, an intervention programme for perpetrators, as well as a coordinated system for providing victim assistance – some deficiencies remain in the implementation of these policies.

Slovenia committed itself to the overall goal of eliminating domestic violence when began work on a new National programme on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women 2020–2025. The document's fundamental objectives are to connect the measures of various sectors and ensure efficient activities to reduce domestic violence. Building high-quality, diverse, and widely available programmes of assistance and protection for domestic violence victims; improving the protection, treatment, and position of victims of this type of violence; providing highly competent professionals and experts; and building greater awareness among society of these problems are just a few of the future goals of reducing domestic violence in the country.

#### **4. EUROPEAN PLATFORM - DEVELOPING IMPROVED DV RESPONSE PROTOCOLS**

##### **4a. A digital communication platform for inter-agency collaboration to manage high impact domestic abuse: Structure and essentials**

*Author: Catharina Vogt*

Interagency cooperation is a necessary response to domestic abuse to care best for victim-survivors. However, for many reasons especially pertaining data security, digital solutions to support such action remain scarce. This chapter explains what needs to be considered when installing such a tool into a network of front-line responders' activity by pointing to the advantages of digital communication platforms to manage high impact domestic abuse and summarising what IMPRODOVA researchers' expertise presented regarding the status quo of exchange of information in domestic abuse cases. Afterwards, criteria are defined that need to be fulfilled by an ICT tool set up for the management of domestic abuse by professional front-line responders (objective of usage, functions, usability, IT system, safety measures, and demands to be fulfilled by the ICT tool to be usable for police). Moreover, criteria to be fulfilled by the users of the ICT tool set up for the management of domestic abuse by professional front-line responders are discussed. Finally, the stashcat® app is presented as a suitable tool meeting the before defined criteria to a great extent. This is also attested by the evaluation of the stashcat® app during its piloting by a Slovenian network of front-line responders active in the management of domestic abuse cases. In sum, this chapter shows that digital solutions can assist professionals to communicate quick and effectively when supporting victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

#### **4b. Development of a training platform on domestic violence**

*Authors: Bettina Pfleiderer, Paulina Juszczuk*

As part of the IMPRODOVA project, a training platform with training formats and materials was designed to optimise front-line response strategies and to enhance inter-organisational cooperation to prevent, investigate and mitigate domestic violence (DV). The teaching concept involved two pillars: the training platform can either be used as an online self-learning tool to train oneself individually combined with knowledge assessment, case studies and training videos or as a source for training materials on DV for trainers/teachers who want to conduct a training on DV on their own. This chapter explains the needs identified through the IMPRODOVA research and requests from front-line responders, as well as the modular structure of the training platform with a focus on the topics most relevant for front-line responders from the police, the health sector, and social sector. In addition, the training materials especially designed for this training platform and tailored to each DV responder group are presented. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the challenge that even though the international English platform provides a good overview on the EU level and corresponding policies, it does not necessarily reflect national/local context and reference frameworks. As a best practice model for a local/national version of the training platform a German IMPRODOVA training platform was developed and adapted to the local German context and needs. The chapter concludes with a description of the results of the evaluation of the IMPRODOVA training platforms and highlights gaps to improve the usability of the platform even further and how these have been addressed.

#### **4c. Recommendations for an innovative gender-sensitive training and education for various front-line responder groups**

*Authors: Bettina Pfleiderer, Paulina Juszczuk*

Rigid gender roles and gender stereotypes can limit both women's and men's choices, opportunities and access to power and resources. While both sexes suffer from domestic violence, women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. However, the concept of gender goes beyond numbers, and it is an important human factor, that is not integrated sufficiently in existing trainings, risk assessment tools and procedures. An understanding of the gendered nature of domestic violence, but nevertheless taking into account that both, men and women can suffer from violence, or be perpetrators, enables front-line responders to develop services which are sensitive to the different needs of individuals affected by domestic violence (DV). This chapter introduces the principles of an innovative gender-sensitive training and education for various front-line responder groups. This chapter explains the reasons for it and how the gender norms and perceptions that were identified in the IMPRODOVA research which may have a negative impact of front-line responders' responses to DV were addressed in all IMPRODOVA instruments and guidelines and in teaching formats.

## 5. DISCUSSION ON OPTIMISED HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

### Roadmap towards an integrated European response

*Authors: Branko Lobnikar, Catharina Vogt, Joachim Kersten*

If we want to achieve optimised high impact domestic violence intervention and prevention, we found within the IMPRODOVA project that more effective cooperation of first responders comes from a common understanding of the problem. For this reason, we developed a training platform on domestic violence and supported it by analysing the possibilities of using the digital communication platform for inter-agency collaboration to manage high impact domestic abuse. Both contents are thoroughly presented in the previous chapters. In previous chapters, we also discussed domestic violence risk assessment and case documentation in detail. We also noted the need to develop innovative gender-sensitive training and education recommendations for various front-line responder groups. In order to establish a roadmap towards an integrated European response to the one described in the previous chapters, we add some findings that are the result of research work within the IMPRODOVA project.

The main research findings of the IMPRODOVA project were presented in the previous chapters, starting with the importance of a clear definition of high impact domestic violence for the effective operation of first responders. We analysed in detail the legal definition of the analysed area. We found that, generally, cross-national comparison of domestic violence (DV) definitions is a complex undertaking, as different countries make use of distinctive and varied definitions of DV. Furthermore, these distinctive concepts caused the phenomenon itself to appear in a different light in each context. Intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV) and family violence (FV) are the main terms that are used across all countries to describe this phenomenon. However, we can observe that there are primarily gender-based definitions in all three front-line responders (FLR) sectors. In terms of the definition of violence, the situation is satisfactory. It seems now quite well established that violence consists of various forms and types of acts and is not restricted to physical violence alone. Violence is understood as being also possibly of mental, sexual, or economic nature. It is well known that these general terms can cover multiple types of acts that have specific content. A further gap can be demonstrated by the definition of "high impact" DV cases, which predominantly are not covered by a specific sub-definition of DV within national policies.

According to our analysis, the police data sources seem more promising and systematic in a broad picture of data provisions. Police data appears to be more systematically available, at least in the form that would allow some statistical reporting and secondary analysis. Legal differences in criminal codes could be acknowledged in a way that may not prevent all comparative analyses based on crime statistics. However, these data sources are also not without problems. In addition to differences in legislation affecting practical police work, the police forces are organised differently in different countries. Most of the country reports also included assessments of considerable deficiency concerning the quality of police data. The data may be more illustrative about police actions, such as reporting and the use of data systems, than the actual phenomenon of domestic violence itself. From other data concerning high impact domestic violence (HIDV), homicide data seems most promising. It is somewhat standardised compared to other data and available at a general level from all IMPRODOVA partner countries. However, analysis of DV related homicide specifically could include some of the similar issues that can be found in other crime data, and this should be examined more thoroughly in IMPRODOVA research publications focusing on secondary analysis. Homicide data could also provide information usable in constructing a risk assessment tool.

The main finding of our analyses is that the international standards are relatively well implemented in all the partner countries. Based on the analysis, we can conclude that police have powers to enter private property, arrest and remove a perpetrator. Protection or restraining orders are available for police to tackle all forms of DV. The important is that police agencies coordinate with, and refer to, specialist support services for domestic victims well and that all analysed police organisations have protocols on information sharing on DV with other agencies. The IMPRODOVA partners also found that there are some areas that require special attention in the future since gaps between the international standards and the actual practice were discovered. Police personnel should be better trained on all aspects of DV, victims should be seen as soon as possible by a specially trained officer, and there should be a specialised officer per police unit for DV and sexual violence. The comparison of the case studies in the eight partner countries yields many lessons, but one sticks out: front-line responders who are specialists in domestic violence serve the needs of victims in a better way than front-line responders who are generalists.

Multidisciplinary cooperation across the sectors in risk assessment and case documentation was mentioned by many countries in all sectors as a favourable objective, which might result in more dynamic and comprehensive risk assessment processes. Unified risk assessment and case documentation protocols are the preconditions of such an endeavour. Based on the findings regarding data on the incidence of domestic violence, we analysed in detail in the handbook the different approaches to assessing the risks of domestic violence. The first responders will find in the text many valuable approaches that have already proven to be good practices in the individual countries involved in the IMPRODOVA project. Cross-referenced analysis of the 18 case studies shows that the consolidation of a partnership against DV depends on many factors that have nothing to do with the partnership organisation's design and management. By consolidation, we mean here the institutionalisation and systematic use of working procedures by which partnership bodies and partnership relays contribute together and in an integrated manner to provide efficient partnership services. These factors include:

- a. The existence of a legal framework or public policy that encourages or even enforces partner organisations to engage in the partnership and consider it a priority. These incentives can be negative (regulatory obligation, hierarchical order, etc.) or positive (granting of subsidies, allocation of additional resources, etc.).
- b. Increased social, political and media pressure to strengthen the war on DV. These pressures are often linked to public opinion cases, advocacy, or the adoption of international standards.
- c. Strong involvement of institutional entrepreneurs and change agents in the design and promotion of the partnership mechanism and their ability to build alliances with influential partner organisations' members.
- d. Securing political support, especially from local authorities.
- e. Reference to models applied elsewhere – on the national territory or abroad – that are already acknowledged as "good practices". Such recognition is rarely linked to the availability of rigorous evaluations of "good practice" effectiveness. It most often results from the notoriety of the institutions that have pioneered the practice or are working to disseminate it.

In researching data harmonisation and consolidation, it is clear that domestic violence data is gathered across a range of registers and contexts. In looking across these sources, far from its simplicity, domestic violence data is marked by its variable categories, definitions, and measures, the fluidity of such features to their temporal and spatial contexts, and in some cases, the ambiguity of data categorisations and the meaning of that which is then gathered. This proves true in the internal efforts of IMPRODOVA partners to compile a comprehensive, comparative picture of country data, and is

apparent in varying categories and definitions specified in European data requirements outlined in the Istanbul Convention, EIGE administrative data recommendations (2019) and surveys such as FRA (2014). In addition, current debates, which surround survey data on domestic violence, further underscore the contested nature of data measurements and definitions. The resulting question might well be: to what extent can data be meaningfully harmonised, consolidated and compared? As a result of the analyses, the following recommendations for improving data practices were provided (Burman, Brooks-Hay, & Bradley, 2020).

1. "Efforts to harmonise data should be underpinned by a clear understanding of the aims, meaning and feasibility of 'data harmonisation' and 'consolidation' in relation to different data sources.
2. Measuring the extent of domestic violence reported to the police in terms of the numbers of victims, perpetrators, and offences, as recommended by EIGE (2019), should be a minimum standard for police data gathering.
3. Data should be recorded on police action taken in response to acts (incidents) reported to them as domestic violence, including those incidents not later recorded as a crime of offence.
4. Data on types of abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, psychological, and economic) should be priority categories for survey data collections.
5. As identified by the Istanbul Convention, measuring the sex of the victim and perpetrator and the relationship between them, should be a minimum standard for police and survey data gathering. In addition to collecting data on sex, measuring the gender identity of victims and perpetrators would be a further step towards inclusivity.
6. Where domestic violence data is gathered on violence/abuse perpetrated in a range of family relationships or a domestic unit (as per the definition of domestic violence adopted by the Istanbul Convention), there should be a clear delineation of these relationship categories, and this must include categories for violence/abuse perpetrated by intimate partners and/or ex partners.
7. Data should be gathered regarding repeat offending and victimisation, and the impact of domestic violence and abuse on victims a minimum standard for survey data gathering.  
This data is central to understanding the gendered, ongoing, and coercive nature of domestic violence. These dimensions are important to operational police responses though they are difficult to record consistently within police administrative data, hence the importance of capturing this information directly from victims within surveys.
8. Consideration should be given to how cases reported to the police can be tracked through the criminal justice system (e.g., through the use of unique identifier for individual cases).  
The capacity to track cases throughout the criminal justice system will provide the basis of an in-depth understanding of individual cases as they progress through the system.
9. NGOs, social work services and medical services are important sources of data and can provide information about the incidence and impact of domestic violence across different populations. Consideration should be given to the use of the definition of domestic violence adopted by the Istanbul Convention in data recording, and the utilisation of de-identified and aggregated health or social work services data to identify and respond to domestic violence at both individual and community levels.
10. The needs and demands placed upon FLRs should be a key consideration development, implementation, and operation of administrative data collections systems.
11. The unidirectional flow of data from FLRs to data gathering systems should be addressed by ensuring that FLRs are data recipients rather than just providers. 'Closing the loop' for FLRs will allow FLRs to locate and understand their actions in relation to managing and mitigating domestic violence.

12. Administrative and survey data analyses should not only be made available to the public (and FLRs), but it should be made accessible to them.
13. Raw data should be made available for further analyses.
14. The EU and Member States should promote and fund surveys that can be repeated every few years to measure developments over time.
15. Alternative methods of gathering and utilising data about the 'bigger picture' of domestic violence should be considered, in addition to the use of administrative and conventional survey data.”