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Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys: Challenges and Opportunities

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Preventing domestic violence with men and boys in Denmark

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Abstract:

In recent years, the development in the field of IPV in Denmark has been characterised by a growing focus on the heterogeneity of IPV. Among the results can be mentioned new legislation on psychological violence as well as strengthened punishment in regard to digital sexual abuse. Yet the content and scope of interventions and risk management such as for example treatment to perpetrators of IPV are far from matching the extent of the problem and the growing evidence of the heterogeneity of IPV.

1. Relevant country context

1.1 Policy context

In the context of the seminar, it is essential to mention the following recent initiatives in Denmark:

- From 2019, psychological violence has been criminalised by including an independent provision in the Criminal Code. The provision is now to be implemented among other things with new guidelines for the police and the prosecution service on how to deal with cases related to psychological violence.
- From 2018, Danish Stalking Centre is made permanent on the Finance Act offering national support and counselling for victims of stalking and stalkers.
- Since 2002, national grants are allocated to Dialogue against Violence - a competence- and treatment center offering a psychological treatment program for perpetrators of IPV (male and female). Present grant runs to 2022².
- In 2017, Lev uden Vold (Life without violence) was established as a national unit³ to combat IPV. The unit is established by a consortium consisting of key actors in the field⁴. The unit runs a national hotline (for victims and perpetrators), provides

¹ Dialogue against Violence is since 2002 mandated with national grants to provide psychological treatment to perpetrators and victims of domestic violence; men as well as women; adults, adolescents and children. Dialogue against Violence is a branch of the social NGO AskovFonden and was established in 2002.

² Financed by the agreement on the Rate Adjustment Pool for 2019, Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, March 2019.

³ Financed by the Rate agreement pool for 2017.

⁴ The consortium consists of the national organisation of women's shelters in Denmark (LOKK), Danner, Dialogue against Violence, Fundamentet (The foundation) and Mødrehjælpen (Help for mothers).

legal counselling (for victims), network groups (victims), telephone counselling (for perpetrators) etc. Lev Uden Vold is also a knowledge center that collects and disseminates knowledge and experiences to professionals who work in the field. The work of Lev Uden Vold is targeting both women and men.

Appendix 1 includes a list of relevant action plans and permanent measures in the healthcare system, the social services and the judicial system to prevent violence in intimate relationships, to provide access to support and treatment to victims of violence and to ensure criminal prosecution of the perpetrators of violence.

1.2 Legal provisions and data

Legal provisions to combat violence in intimate relationships is covered within different legislations depending on the subject. Since 1999, annual statistics on women in shelters have been collected, including children in shelters. From 2005, the Ministry of Justice has annually carried out a so-called victim survey, including information on violence and the relationship between the perpetrator and victim. Moreover, regular surveys provide information on the frequency, extent and character of acts of violence. Appendix 2 includes a short presentation of relevant legal provisions and a list of selected data.

2. Policy debate

2.1 Reforms and important issues

In the recent years public and policy debates on IPV in Denmark have moved from a strong focus on physical violence to a quite intensive focus on other forms of IPV. Especially psychological violence, digital sexual abuse and stalking have been intensely debated and in all these three areas, there have been reforms and new legislation and/or guidelines. In addition, a focus on men as victims of IPV is emerging.

In the Danish debate – as in the international debate - there are different approaches, theories and explanatory models of IPV. One can distinguish between an approach that sees IPV as an expression of male dominance (structural power and control) that pierce society and has done so through history; and an approach that focusses on the couple and the family as a dynamic system where the interaction and behaviour changes over time and where alcohol, childhood trauma (many perpetrators are themselves victims of childhood family violence), attachment, communication, jealousy and mental health of both partners can be explanations as to how IPV develops. It is important to note that there is evidence supporting both perspectives and that these perspectives represent opposing ends of a continuum⁵. A refined terminology as well as nuanced understanding and evidence based models

⁵ Johnson, M.P. (1995) Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57(2) 283-294. Doi: 10.2307/353683.

explaining IPV are important to ensure future progression in the field. Geffner has introduced a distinction between ‘partner aggression’ and ‘partner abuse’ to try to facilitate a common understanding and uniting of a historically divided field⁶. A better common understanding of the terminology as well as of the explanations of IPV is important for the development of the effective interventions and risk assessments⁷. IPV is in some couples bidirectional and appears as a symptom of a variety of problems within the couple. Therefore, it is recommended to target preventive efforts and interventions towards both members of the couple to directly address the unhealthy dynamics that are contributing to a pattern of IPV⁸.

2.2 Gaps and needs at different levels

Denmark has no comprehensive data on the costs of IPV. There is a need to look at the costs across national, regional and municipal level. The costs of IPV present an important baseline for computation of the potential savings in case IPV were discovered earlier and preventive interventions were put in place. Research into the costs of IPV is important as it supports political decisions strengthening the prevention of IPV.

Outboard psychological treatment for perpetrators is only accessible in four cities in Denmark. In the rest of the country, treatment for perpetrators of IPV is not available. Dialogue against Violence has departments in the three biggest cities - Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense – and employs 17 full time psychologists. Dialogue against Violence offers psychological treatment to both male and female perpetrators. There is a wide gap between the capacity and the actual need/demand. Dialogue against Violence at the moment has 334 perpetrators (plus their partners/ex-partners and children) on waiting list. 86% of them are male, while 14% are female. They sign up for treatment because they want to take responsibility and change. Approximately half of them are still living with their partner and children. A majority of them are unknown to their municipality. With the current capacity of Dialogue against Violence, they will have to wait for more than 2 years! ATV Roskilde offers treatment to male perpetrators. ATV is located in Roskilde and employs two half time psychologists.

More research into the effects of outboard treatment programs for perpetrators is needed.

⁶ Geffner, R. (2016) Partner aggression versus partner abuse terminology: Moving the field forward and resolving controversies. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(8), 923-925. Doi:10.1007/s10896-016-9898-8.

⁷ Bates, E.A. (2016) Current controversies within intimate partner violence: Overlooking bidirectional violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(8), 937-940. doi: 10.1007/s10896-016-9862-7.

⁸ Dokkedahl S. & Elklit A. (2019) Understanding the Mutual Partner Dynamic of Intimate Partner Violence: A Review. *Partner Abuse* 10(3) 298-318. Doi:10.1891/1946-6560.10.3.298.

3. Good practice examples

3.1 The Danish Prison and Probation Service

The Danish Prison and Probation Service cooperates with Dialogue against Violence to offer perpetrators of IPV psychological treatment specifically aimed at addressing, coping with and eliminating violence within intimate relations. Perpetrators may be inmates in prisons or clients on probation. The perpetrator may be male or female. It is voluntary to participate, however it is possible for the Prison and Probation Service to make participation in the program a condition for probation. The program is offered nationwide. For inmates in closed prisons, treatment is offered within the prison. For inmates in open prisons and clients on probation treatment is offered out site of prisons on six locations placed strategically in order to accommodate clients from all over Denmark. Transport expenses may be covered by The Prison and Probation Service, just as it is possible to have an interpreter present if appropriate. Approximately 108 perpetrators have participated yearly in the program since 2012.

3.2 Telephone counselling for perpetrators

The national unit Lev Uden Vold (Live without Violence) from spring 2019 offers telephone counselling for male and female perpetrators of IPV as a pilot project. The telephone counselling model offers five telephone counselling structured meetings. It is based on experiences from the treatment program for perpetrators at Dialogue against Violence. The experience after the first six months is that the clients have been motivated to participate in the counselling. They have taken responsibility for the violence and are distancing themselves from the perpetration of violence. Clients who completed the programme have expressed great satisfaction with the process, but they also express a need for further support and treatment.

3.3 Voluntary and Holistic Psychological Treatment

Dialogue against Violence has since 2002 offered psychological treatment to perpetrators of domestic violence. Today Dialogue against Violence offer holistic psychological treatment to both perpetrators and victims of IPV. Their treatment programme for perpetrators was evaluated in 2011 by The National Board of Social Services with positive results. Their treatment programme for children and young victims of domestic violence was evaluated in 2017 by The Danish Center for Social Science Research (VIVE) and found to be the most promising intervention for the target group in Denmark. Dialogue against Violence in their therapy to both perpetrator and victim (when they are parents) has a systematic focus on the child. Since 2014, Dialogue against Violence has developed special interventions addressing dating violence targeting both the victims and the perpetrators. From 2019, Dialogue against Violence also engages in the development of screening methods and intervention methods for the health sector in regard to vulnerable

pregnant women. Training and supervision for professionals in municipalities and police is also offered.

3.4 Support for male victims of IPV

For the period 2016-2018, Mandecentret (Shelter for men) carried out a pilot project offering sheltered housing and counselling for male victims of IPV. During the three-year project, 58 male victims stayed at five shelters all over Denmark. As part of the project the need for counselling and support was mapped. Professionals were trained in how to help men exposed to violence and they focused on communication about the kinds of violence men are subjected to. Based on an evaluation of the project, it will be politically determined how to best ensure the necessary support for men subjected to violence in the future. The aim is to ensure that the appropriate programmes are made available to both men and women. Currently, unlike female victims of violence, male victims do not have a statutory right to go to shelters.

3.4 Danish Stalking Centre

In 2015, the Danish Stalking Centre was established as a knowledge and intervention centre on stalking. The Danish Stalking Centre is now made permanent and offers outpatient hotline, social and legal counselling, and psychological treatment for both victims of stalking and stalkers. Treatment for stalkers is also provided, based on a holistic and preventive perspective. Approx. 40 perpetrators of stalking are receiving treatment from the Danish Stalking Centre.

4. Transferability aspects

4.1 Investigations into the costs of IPV

The annual cost of IPV in Sweden is estimated by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (2006) to 3,3 billion SEK. The comprehensive cost of IPV for a country is a very important issue to investigate into and follow over time. It is essential because it gives the scale of how big the IPV problem is. But not least because it shows us how much we could gain – both humanly and economically - by prioritizing and developing a more effective prevention of IPV. In Denmark, there are no recent investigations into the comprehensive costs of IPV. This is recommendable as well as transferable.

4.2 Efficient cooperation

Like it is pointed to in the Swedish discussion paper, the efficient cooperation between agencies within the criminal justice system, social services and health care sector and NGO's is crucial in regard to risk management. And a system for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are very much needed also in Denmark.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Heterogeneity of IPV

- The heterogeneity of IPV should be further studied and a common understanding should be developed to ensure effective preventive measures and interventions.
- Understanding of the heterogeneity of individual perpetrators of IPV should be the foundation of risk assessment and risk management such as treatment programmes.

5.2 Treatment should be offered to all perpetrators of IPV

- Professional psychological treatment targeting the individual typology of the perpetrator and the concrete dynamics of violence should be offered to perpetrators who want to take responsibility and are able to carry on through therapy. In line with this, the GREVIO committee has recommended the Danish authorities to ensure that all types of perpetrators receive appropriate treatment⁹.

5.3 MARACs and risk management

- MARACs and structured models for cooperation on risk management should be implemented.

5.4 The cost of IPV

- The comprehensive costs of IPV across sectors should be investigated.

⁹ GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Denmark.

Appendix 1: National action plans and permanent measures

National action plans

Since 2002, Denmark has had action plans for the prevention of violence against women and violence in intimate relationships. The action plans highlight specific areas and target groups to test new efforts to prevent violence in intimate relationships, and to consolidate knowledge and prevention efforts.¹⁰ Selected and relevant Current National Action Plans from the Danish Government covering the topic of violence and thus relevant for the theme of the seminar are:

1. National Action Plan for the prevention of physiological and physical violence in intimate relations 2019- 2022.
2. Presentation/Perspective and Action Plan 2019.
3. Compilation: Stepping up initiatives against digital sexual abuse. The Government of Denmark 2018.
4. National Action Plan: Prevention of honour related conflicts and negative social control 2016.¹¹

Permanent measures

- Børnehusene (Childrens Homes).
- SISO: The National Board of Social Services knowledge centre for social measures against violence and sexual abuse in Denmark.
- Woman's shelters (accommodation, support and counselling) – 53 in 39 municipalities in Denmark.¹²
- Shelters for men (accommodation, help and support) 8 in different municipalities).
- The RED Centre against Honour-Related Conflicts (counselling to children, youth, parents and professionals, safe place residence, mediation, psychological assistance, trauma treatment, etc.).
- ECEC teachers and primary and lower secondary teachers (preventive work).
- The Danish National Police – A national prevention centre has been established. The centre directs, coordinates and supports the crime prevention efforts of police districts, including the prevention of violence in intimate relationships.
- Local Police districts. Several police districts have prepared operative plans on the matter and the jurisdictions collaborate with the relevant external actors, including the national organisation of women's shelters in Denmark (LOKK) and

¹⁰ Action Plan for the prevention of physiological and physical violence in intimate relations 2019-2022, Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, March 2019.

¹¹ Source to all Action Plans are: Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark as cooperation with other relevant ministries.

¹² Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, March 2019.

the NGO Dialogue against Violence, which provides outpatient psychological treatment for perpetrators.

- The Director of Public Prosecutions has the overall responsibility of the prosecution service's handling of criminal cases, including cases on violence in intimate relationships.

Appendix 2: Legal Provisions and data

Legal provisions

- The Social Services Act, Section 109: Municipalities are obligated to offer temporary accommodation to women victims of violence. Women's shelters will offer the women support, protection, counselling and help to move on. Moreover, municipalities are obligated to offer preliminary and coordinative counselling to all women who stay at a shelter, and to offer psychological assistance to all children accompanying the mother to the shelter.
- The Social Services Act, Section 110: Shelters for men offer accommodation, help and support for men in crisis situations due to divorce,
- Intimate partner violence, unemployment, etc. But the Act does not provide an equal right for support to the male victims of IPV and their children.
- The Criminal Code, Chapter 25: Violence in intimate relationships is criminalised within the Criminal Code (Crimes against life and body). As mentioned above psychological violence has an independent provision in the Criminal Code from April 2019.
- The Criminal Code, Section 264, 232 and 235 criminalises digital sexual abuse such as for example sharing of nudes and videos. From April 15th 2018 the punishments for such offences in the Criminal Code has been markedly strengthened.
- There is no a specific Stalking legislation. In 2012, a coherent set of juridical provisions regarding protection orders was adopted within the Criminal Code regarding: restraining orders, exclusion orders and emergency protective orders¹³. Stalking is now seen as an aggravating circumstance in violation of the restraining order and can become an offense if the restraining order is violated and results in a fine or a prison sentence up to two years.¹⁴

¹³ Law number 112 of 03/02/2012 "Lov om tilhold, opholdsforbud og bortvisning".

¹⁴ The Danish Stalking Centre 2019.

Data

Violence in intimate relationships

- Approx. 38,000 women and 19,000 men are victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) every year¹⁵.
- 3.9% of women and 1.2% of men have been subjected to psychological intimate-partner violence within a one-year period.
- Persons exposed to psychological IPV are just as negatively affected as persons exposed to physical IPV.
- In 2017, 97% of women at shelters had been subjected to psychological violence, and 83% had been subjected to physical violence.

Children¹⁶

- One in six children has been exposed to physical violence in the home in the past year.
- 9% of children in 7th grade (13-14 years old) have been subjected to severe acts of violence at home, for example, hitting and kicking.
- 28% have been subjected to less severe acts of violence, for example, they have been shaken, pushed, pinched and had their hair pulled.
- 17% have been subjected to psychological violence, e.g. they have been degraded, threatened or they have witnessed violence against family members.
- 5.3% of children grow up in families, reported for one or several episodes of violence, before the child's eighth year.

Young people¹⁷

- 3.2% of women and 1.6% of men aged 16-24 have been subjected to IPV within a one-year period. This corresponds to approx. 10,500 women and 5,500 men.
- Within the past year, 27.2% of young women aged 16-24 have been subjected to non-physical sexual harassment such as unwanted text messages, emails, online pictures or similar. For young men aged 16-24 the number is 6.7%.

Digital sexual abuse¹⁸

¹⁵ National Institute of Public Health 2018.

¹⁶ Action Plan for the prevention of psychological and physical violence in intimate relations 2019-2022, Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, March 2019.

¹⁷ Action Plan for the prevention of psychological and physical violence in intimate relations 2019-2022, Minister for Equal opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, March 2019.

¹⁸ Ungeprofilundersøgelsen 2015:
<https://www.skolesundhed.dk/Files/CMS/Ungeprofilunders%C3%B8gel-sen%202015.pdf>.

- 17 percent of boys/men and 20 percent of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of themselves.
- 10 percent of boys/men and 4 percent of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of someone else.
- 17 percent of boys/men and 13 percent of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have experienced that others have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of them. Data on the percentage who experienced sharing without their consent is not available.
- 53 percent of the 15-30 year-olds have received nude pictures.
- 22 percent of the 15-30-year-olds have no problem forwarding a nude picture of someone they do not know.

Stalking

- 2% of the population aged 18-74 has been subjected to stalking within the past year. This corresponds to approx. 84,000 people.
- 2.4% of women and 1.7% of men have been subjected to stalking within a one-year period.
- Almost a quarter of stalking victims have/had a close relationship with their stalker (a partner or ex-partner).¹⁹
- More than 1300 people seeks telephone counselling in the Danish Stalking Centre annually.²⁰
- Approx. 260 people exposed to stalking get support and counselling from the professional intervention in the Danish Stalking Centre per year.
- Currently approx. 40 perpetrators of stalking is receiving treatment from the Danish Stalking Centre.

¹⁹ Source: National Institute of Public Health, 2018; VIVE, 2018; Ministry for Children and Social Affairs, 2018; Ministry of Justice, 2018.

²⁰ The Danish Stalking Centre 2019.

Data on characteristics and heterogeneity of perpetrators in a Danish Sample²¹

The study examines the prevalence of psychiatric and personality disorders among perpetrators and the association between a range of demographic, childhood trauma and adult criminality variables for the most prominent disorders.

Data was collected from a database of clients ($n = 529$) undergoing therapy in 'Dialogue Against Violence'. In the sample 85,9% were men and 14,1% were women. The average age was 36 years.

- 84.8% reported experiencing physical violence during childhood and adolescence.
- 67.8% reported experiencing psychological violence during childhood and adolescence.
- 6.5% reported experiencing sexual violence.
- 52.4% engaged juvenile delinquency, with 59.3% engaging in criminal activity in adulthood and 51.3% had a criminal conviction.
- 56,1% of the sample suffered from anxiety.
- 28,5 suffered from dysthymic disorder.
- 28,5 % suffered from alcohol dependence.

²¹ Elkit, Ask et al, *Clinical and personality Disorders in a Danish Treatment-seeking sample of intimate Partner Violence Perpetrators*, International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 2017.