



# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality


## Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys: Challenges and Opportunities

Sweden, 16-17 September 2019

### Comments Paper - Lithuania



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This publication is supported by the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission and shall contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected.

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# Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys: Challenges and Opportunities in Lithuania

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## Abstract:

Domestic violence is highly prevalent, preventable public health problem affecting every fifth household in Lithuania. In 2011, Lithuania took a new approach to domestic violence with the adoption of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence aimed at support and protection of victims of domestic violence. Main policy documents focusing on prevention of domestic violence are gender neutral. In the past 20 years in Lithuania, numerous initiatives have sought to empower women and redress gender inequities, as 77 % of all cases of domestic violence are cases of violence against women (Information, Technologies and Communications Department, 2018). But many stakeholders working in the field of domestic violence prevention have learned that improving the health and well-being of adult and young women also requires engaging men, adult and young. Each year support for violent behaviour programmes increases, but NGOs working with perpetrators struggle with lack of funds for their programmes, which are still seen as unnecessary. This paper reflects on the situation in Lithuania towards prevention of domestic violence and analyses transferability of Sweden policy in the area of involving men and boys with prevention of domestic violence.

## 1. Relevant country context

Domestic violence against women is a grave problem in Lithuania. Recent survey<sup>1</sup> revealed that 19 % of respondents, every fifth household is dealing with this complex issue. In the first two quarters of 2019, 60% of victims did not report domestic violence. It could partially be explained by high rates of victim blaming in Lithuanian society. According to Eurobarometer survey,<sup>2</sup> 42 % of respondents agree that women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape and 45% agree that violence against women is often provoked by the victim (compared with 9 % in Sweden). These victim-blaming attitudes are linked to traditional roles of men and women in the society.

In 2018, police registered 9 529 crimes of domestic violence, 90 % of perpetrators were men.<sup>3</sup> Recent national survey<sup>4</sup> showed that 70 % of male perpetrators are former

<sup>1</sup> "Survey of Lithuanian inhabitants on domestic violence" (2019), Baltic Surveys.

<sup>2</sup> [Special Eurobarometer 449, Gender – based violence](#) (2016). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>3</sup> [Violence in private area \(2019\)](#) Lithuanian Department of Statistics. [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>4</sup> "Survey of Lithuanian inhabitants on domestic violence" (2019), Baltic Surveys.

intimate partners. Growing numbers of repeated cases of domestic violence are proving that Lithuania must put focus on primary prevention of domestic violence.

Lithuania does not have specialised legislation addressing violence against women. In 2011, Lithuania adopted Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas)<sup>5</sup> that set specific regulation of cases of domestic violence (Note: this law is gender neutral and do not recognise domestic violence as a men violence towards women) as well as included articles on prevention of domestic violence.<sup>6</sup> This law gave a start for the establishment of Specialised Assistance Centres<sup>7</sup> (SAC) for victims of domestic violence. In 2018, SAC supported 12,3 thousand victims of domestic violence (10,3 thousand women, 1,9 thousand men, more than 400 children). These centres are also implementing numerous initiatives on prevention of domestic violence.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP) and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing provided a foundation for including men in efforts to improve the status of women and girls. However, Lithuania have yet to have specific policy framework on prevention violence against women and engagement of men and boys with this issue. Ministry of Social Protection and Labour is responsible for implementation and evaluation of the National programme as well as coordination of other ministries involved in the implementation. In 2014, Lithuania adopted National Programme on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Support to Victims 2014-2020.<sup>8</sup>

Lithuanian criminal law foresees participation in a violent behaviour changing programme as a measure that can be imposed with criminal sanctions such as actual or suspended prison sentence. Such measure can also be ordered as a condition for release from criminal liability in cases of reconciliation between the victim and perpetrator. Work with perpetrators in Lithuania is being carried out by: a) probation services; b) municipal services such as public health or crisis centres; c) non-governmental organisations. National Probation Service (Probacijų tarnyba) under Prison Department (Kalėjimų departamentas) have several certified programmes

<sup>5</sup> [Republic of Lithuania Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence](#) (Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas) (2011), No. XI-1425, 26 May 2011. [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>6</sup> [Republic of Lithuania Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence](#) Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas) (2011) – art. 2 p. 5 “A person suffering from domestic violence is a person who has been subjected to domestic violence or a member of the family of a deceased person in the immediate vicinity of the victim who has suffered harm as a result of the death of the person or a child who has become a witness of domestic violence or living in an environment where violence was committed. The perpetrator is not considered a victim of violence.”. [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>7</sup> [Specialized Assistance Centers \(SAC\)](#) established in 2011 are NGO’s providing support for victims of gender based violence, both men and women. There are 17 centres that cover all 60 municipalities in Lithuania. SAC provide specialised legal, psychological and social support for victims. All NGO’s are working with victims of domestic violence for a long time and have in depth knowledge of dynamics of domestic violence.

<sup>8</sup> [National program on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020](#) (Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa) (2014). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

implemented by probation officers e.g. motivational interview programme “Behaviour – conversation – change” (“Elgesys – pokalbis – pasikeitimas”) and individual thinking and behavioural correction programme “Just you and me” (“Tik tu ir aš”). Service providers from NGO’s are free to choose their working programmes (e.g. Dialogue against domestic Violence (DADV) implemented by Kaunas county men crisis centre or „Education Groups for Men Who Batter- The Duluth Model “). Services provided by NGO’s are funded through the National Programme on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Support to Victims 2014-2020, municipal budgets, EU structural funds as well as international funding. Annual reports<sup>9</sup> of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour state that in 2015, 252 perpetrators received services funded through the state budget; 460 in 2016, 389 in 2017 and 500 in 2019. These numbers do not include perpetrators reached via activities funded by municipal budgets. There is no available data of evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes.

## 2. Policy debate

Current policy debate evolves around the issue of ratification of Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention)<sup>10</sup>. This convention is widely recognised as the most far-reaching legal instrument to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence as a violation of human rights. It also paves the way to include men and boys in the policy for prevention of domestic violence.<sup>11</sup> Even though it seems that some of the politicians are expressing their political will for ratification, (e.g. Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs) in general the climate is not welcoming and clear steps towards ratification are unseen due to fears and speculations on the concept of “gender”.

The National programme on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020 (Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa)<sup>12</sup> state that there is a lack of violent behaviour change programmes for perpetrators as well as sustainable government funding for these programmes. This issue results in most NGO’s reducing amount of their activities for perpetrators.

<sup>9</sup> [Annual reports of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor](#) [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>10</sup> [Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (Istanbul Convention) (2011). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>11</sup> [Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (Istanbul Convention) (2011) Article 14 of the convention requires states to take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Convention. Article 16 of the Convention requires states to set up or support programmes aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns. [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>12</sup> [National program on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020](#) (Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa) (2014). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

Specialised Assistance Centres providing support for victims of domestic violence argue against increasing government funds to programmes for perpetrators motivating that even though it is claimed that violent behaviour correction programmes help to reduce the risk of repeated acts of violence, there are some researches showing lack of evidence in this statement (Kellen, Brooks ir Walker (2005)<sup>13</sup>; Babcock, Green and Robie (2004)<sup>14</sup>. NGO's working with victims also claim that more resources should be allocated to primary prevention of domestic violence rather than programmes for perpetrators. They stress the need for state regulated support programmes for perpetrators ensuring collaboration with victim support organisations to avoid using harmful practices as a part of violent behaviour change programmes (e.g. mediation).

Actions to prevent domestic violence implemented by other ministries remain sporadic and gender neutral e.g. Ministry of Education Science and Sport developed recommendations for education specialists on how to identify domestic violence and act to it focusing on children as victims<sup>15</sup>, recommendations on how to identify domestic violence for pre – school students and different aged students in the school starting from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, are implementing trainings for 120 teachers on domestic violence, bullying and human trafficking. Ministry of Health developed recommendations for medical professionals on domestic violence<sup>16</sup>, programmes to fight substance abuse.

### 3. Good practice examples

Growing understanding of importance of including men and boys in the efforts to improve status of women and girls in Lithuania resulted in some good practice initiatives. Since 2008 Non – governmental organisation Missing Person's Families support Centre in cooperation with The Aland Islands Peace Institute implements Girl and Boy group method<sup>17</sup>. The Girl and Boy group method is a Nordic model of practical work with young people, aiming to strengthen individuals, enhance the participants' possibilities to become active members of society, while questioning prevailing gender stereotypes and norms, in order to achieve greater gender equality and a non-discriminatory setting for individual development.

<sup>13</sup> [Lenore E.A. Walker "Battered woman syndrome"](#) (2017). [Accessed 25 August 2019], p. 500.

<sup>14</sup> Babcock, Green, Robie C. [Does batterers' treatment work? A meta-analytic review of domestic violence treatment](#) (2014). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Education, Science and Sport [Recommendations for school on recognizing and reacting to domestic violence](#) (Rekomendacijos mokykloms dėl smurto artimoje aplinkoje atpažinimo kriterijų ir veiksmų, kilus įtarimui dėl galimo smurto artimoje aplinkoje. 2017 įsakymas Nr. V- 625)) [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Health [Criteria on recognizing adult domestic violence and recommendations on actions](#) (Smurto prieš suaugusius artimoje aplinkoje atpažinimo kriterijai ir rekomendacijos dėl veiksmų kilus įtarimui dėl galimo smurto artimoje aplinkoje prieš suaugusius) (2017) [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>17</sup> Mia Hanström, [Manual about the girl group method](#) (2008) and [Manual on the girl and boy group method](#) (2011).[Accessed 27 August 2019]

The basis of the Girl and Boy group meetings are “coffee break conversations”, i.e. gathering, drinking coffee or tea, discussing various issues that are relevant for the participants with the gender perspective in the discussions as much as possible (Folkhälsan 2004:7). This initiative was recognised as a good practice by the Ministry of Interior. Another initiative was implemented by NGO Women’s Issues Information Centre (WIIC) with partners from different EU member states who created a training manual *Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender – Based Violence*<sup>18</sup>. This manual was piloted in schools in Lithuania, Cyprus, Spain, Greece and Italy aiming at preventing of gender – based violence among boys and girls aged 14 – 18 years. This manual include peer-to-peer model, e.g., group of 5 students (3 girls and 2 boys) graduated from the programme became ambassadors of gender equality and trained 500 of their peers on healthy relationships between boys and girls.

WIIC also implements programme initiating positive masculinity called Super Dad, where men are encouraged to share their experiences on fatherhood and raising children.<sup>19</sup>

Another example of raising awareness on positive masculinity is informational portal “Not shameful anymore” (“Nebegėda”)<sup>20</sup> that incorporates podcasts, articles, events tackling stereotypical roles of men and women in our society e.g. podcast where men discuss on most common gender stereotypes in the society. One of the creators of this webpage Beata Tiškevič also initiated a social experiment where well know men sat in front of camera and were asked to read a story letter written by different woman disclosing their real stories of sexual violence. This video generated more than 297 thousand views on YouTube and encouraged public debate on men involvement with gender-based violence.<sup>21</sup>

Another new initiative is podcast of gender equality by writer Donatas Paulauskas called “Modern men” (“Šiuolaikiniai vyrai”)<sup>22</sup> encouraging positive masculinity. Donatas also recently published a book “Who needs a crying man” (“Kam reikalingi verkiantys vyrai”) on negative effects caused by gender inequality towards men. These initiatives help to normalise public debate on norms of masculinity and contribute to the shift of mind in society. This shift helps to minimise negative attitudes towards investing in programmes that involve men and boys with prevention of domestic violence. Finally, good example of the nationwide campaign is former Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė’s campaign “For A Safe Lithuania”<sup>23</sup>. Prevention of domestic violence is one of the main priorities of the campaign.

<sup>18</sup> [Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender – Based Violence](#) (2014). [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>19</sup> [Women’s Information Center](#) initiative Facebook page and social campaign [Superdad](#). [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>20</sup> Informational portal [Nebegėda, podcast „What do men think“](#) [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>21</sup> [Beata Tiškevič](#) social clip [#Musudaug](#) (2015). [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>22</sup> [Donatas Paulauskas](#) podcast [„Modern men“](#). [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>23</sup> President of the Republic of Lithuania national campaign [„For A Safe Lithuania“](#) [Accessed 28 August 2019]



Campaign attracted famous men and women as ambassadors to participate in the initiatives against domestic violence.<sup>24</sup>

## 4. Transferability aspects

UN CEDAW Committee recommended that Lithuania should adopt strategy on prevention of all forms violence against women as an addition to the National programme on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020. Therefore, Lithuania could adopt good practice from Sweden policy, where prevention measures are planned according to the definition of domestic violence as male-to-female perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV). This would shift the policy from gender neutral prevention of domestic violence and set the goal to end men's violence against women. This goal would reflect on the real situation in the country, were 90 % of perpetrators are men and women and children are the ones mostly affected by the phenomenon of domestic violence. In accordance with the Swedish policy and National Strategy, the opportunities and challenges with preventing men and boy's violence are discussed in three stages; (1) primary prevention, (2) formal responses from the criminal justice system, and (3) violence prevention post-criminal justice system process of violence prevention.

Primary prevention of domestic violence is gender neutral and a part of the official curriculum in Lithuania. It is usually being implemented in a form of informal education. Therefore, Swedish government efforts to promote programmes of violence prevention among the youth, targeting particularly young men and boys in schools could be seen as a good practice to be implemented in Lithuania. Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme mentioned in the Swedish discussion paper<sup>25</sup> could be adapted to Lithuanian context as now government institutions debate on the necessity to involve more men in early prevention of domestic violence. Unfortunately, Ministry of Education Science and Sport, responsible for implementation of education policies, is still focused more on domestic violence against children rather than promotion of healthy relationships and positive masculinity as a prevention of domestic violence and other crimes. It is most likely that Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme could be adapted by NGO's working with the issue of gender equality and then piloted in several schools in urban and rural areas. After these pilots testing behavioural change of students could be measured. Main constrains of transferability of this practice would be lack of support of Ministry of Education Science and Sports and funds to adapt and test the programme in Lithuania. This limitation could be solved while attracting funds from government programmes and other donors like local municipalities, which would be interested in piloting the programmes.

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<sup>24</sup> Social campaign against men's violence against women "[I wonder](#)" [Accessed 27 August 2019]

<sup>25</sup> Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys: Challenges and Opportunities, Discussion paper Sweden [Accessed 26 August 2019]



In Lithuania as in Sweden, there is no elaborated national structure for supporting the municipalities, regions and other actors in training staff and implementing evidence-based methods of violence prevention. There are 60 municipalities in Lithuania that work autonomously; therefore, awareness and prevention of domestic violence vary according to municipality. In most municipalities in Lithuania new role of Institutional Cooperation Coordinator (ICC) was established, whose primary function was child right protection issues, but not limited to that. As this description of the role of ICC is broad it has been applied differently in municipalities (e.g. in some municipalities ICC is also focused on encouraging institutional cooperation in the area of domestic violence prevention and support for victims, while in others just on domestic violence against children). The National programme on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020<sup>26</sup> aims to improve mechanism of specialised support for victims of domestic violence and improve victim protection measures when the perpetrator does not obey restriction measures.

It is claimed in the Swedish Discussion paper that it is mandatory for police to use structured risk assessment methods when assessing risk for intimate partner violence (IPV) and stalking in order to give the victim the most effective risk management. General Prosecutor adopted recommendations according to Victims Directive that integrate individual risk assessment questionnaires. There are several risk assessment methodologies In Lithuania: The Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA), Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER), same used in Sweden (Risk-20, sutr. SVR-20). Lithuania could look into adaptation of Swedish Guidelines for stalking assessment and management (SAM: Kropp, Hart & Lyon, 2008). These guidelines would be relevant to the country context and current policy debate on criminalisation of stalking led by Human Rights Committee of the Parliament of Lithuania (Žmogaus teisių komitetas). Stalking is a rising problem in Lithuanian society, according to recent survey on domestic violence; majority (45 %) victims claimed they experienced violence from former intimate partner.<sup>27</sup>

There is lack of collaboration between actors providing support for victims of domestic violence in the field of risk assessment and protective measures. Specialised Assistance Centres receive information from police on registered cases of domestic violence to provide specialised support. SAC have no information or updates on risk assessment of particular case or protection measures implemented during pre – trial investigation as well as court procedures. SAC have no cooperation with the actors implementing violent behaviour change programmes for perpetrators. All cases of domestic violence that involve children are managed and monitored by case managers in the municipalities that have the right to receive information related to the case from police, SAC, schools and etc. Therefore, it would be beneficial to trial models that help to enhance cooperation between different actors working with cases

<sup>26</sup> [National program on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020](#) (Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa) (2014). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>27</sup> "Survey of Lithuanian inhabitants on domestic violence" (2019), Baltic Surveys.

of domestic violence. One of the models could be RISKSAM if it allows agencies to work in a similar way where the type of protective actions in the risk management plan can differ due to the conditions in different cases. Limitation for this model would be strict personal data protection rules that narrows the ability for institutions to share important information on the same domestic violence case they are working on.

NGO's implementing violent behaviour change programmes for multiple years claim that perpetrators vary in their motivation, addiction to substance abuse and other factors. These different needs and backgrounds indicate that individual approach is more effective than application of standard programmes. Therefore, Swedish Predov (Preventing Domestic Violence) programme acknowledging that perpetrators are a heterogeneous group with different needs could be piloted working together with Lithuanian Prison Department as well as different NGO's providing services and support for perpetrators after the evaluation of effectiveness of the programme in Sweden. Limitation for this programme would be lack of national funding for programmes for perpetrators in Lithuania.

There are several helplines for victims of domestic violence in Lithuania e.g. Women help line<sup>28</sup>, Hope line<sup>29</sup> – emotional support for adults, but there is no separate line for perpetrators like a male phone-line, 'Choose to stop' (Välj att sluta) in Sweden. This initiative is necessary, but there are some limitations for its practical implementation in Lithuania. Main hotlines operating in Lithuania that could provide support for victims or perpetrators of domestic violence are overload with calls and lack of funding to ensure enough staff members and volunteers operating the hotline. Having said that, mostly men crisis centre provide support via phone or other online means for the perpetrators of domestic violence, these initiatives are sporadic and depend on funding received by NGO's.

## 5. Recommendations

### National level:

- Ratify Istanbul Convention
- Criminalise Stalking
- Develop National Strategy Against Violence Against Women and National Action Plan for 2020 – 2026
- Establish Gender Equality expert role in all municipalities in Lithuania, which would be responsible for gender mainstreaming including prevention of domestic violence and coordination of support for victims of domestic violence
- Establish specialised services for adult victims of sexual violence

<sup>28</sup> [Women helpline](#), operational 24/7. [Accessed 26 August 2019]

<sup>29</sup> [Hope line](#) (for men and women). [Accessed 26 August 2019]

- Reform victim protection measures ensuring enforcement of protective measures for perpetrators
- Mandatory train main actors working with cases of domestic violence and its prevention
- Develop and include subject of gender – based violence to official curriculum
- Ensure availability of support services for disabled victims of domestic violence
- Prioritise early education in schools to promote a culture of non-violent behaviour and enable children to recognise signs of all forms of abuse from an early age
- Sensitise law enforcement agencies to enable women to report more often
- Improve application of legal protection measures to prevent repetitive domestic violence
- Constantly enforce courts orders, both protective and punitive
- Improve multi-agency cooperation and coordination of response to domestic violence on the national as well as municipal levels

European level:

- Adopt EU directive on gender – based violence
- Adopt EU-wide strategy to eliminate violence against women
- Initiate EU level campaign for increasing the number of women in politics followed by training on gender – based violence
- Establish European knowledge centre for sharing successful examples of primary prevention programmes among Member States within the EU