

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence

The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States

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1. Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies¹. It can be sexual, physical, verbal, psychological, or socio-economic and can happen in both the private and public spheres – online and offline². This imbalance is deeply rooted in the social and cultural structures and unequal distribution of power, norms and values that govern society, and because of this it is often perpetuated by a culture of denial and silence. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge structural or institutional violence, which can be defined as the subordination of women in economic, social and political life.³ Finally, women may face intersectional harm through intersecting identities such as “race”, (dis)ability, age, social class, religion, sexuality, immigration status, etc.

Article 3 (d) of the 2011 **Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**⁴ defines gender-based violence against **women** as violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. The 2022 **proposal for a directive on combatting violence against women and domestic violence**⁵ refers to this definition⁶.

Article 3 (b) of the Istanbul Convention defines domestic violence as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim. The Explanatory Report of the Istanbul Convention clears up that it is a gender-neutral definition that encompasses victims and perpetrators of both sexes. Furthermore, that domestic violence as intimate-partner violence affects women disproportionately and is therefore distinctly gendered.⁷ For this reason, the focus of this paper is on women.

Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention contains general obligations and overarching principles related to the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. Prevention of violence against women and domestic violence (next to protection, prosecution and

¹ The economic cost for society is also very high. EIGE delivered a first estimate of the costs of GBV in the EU in 2014 ([EIGE \(2014\). Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union: Report](#)). The updated estimates from 2021 is of 289 billion euros per year for GBV against women (79 % of all costs of gender-based violence against both women and men, i.e. 366 billion EUR) and nearly 152 billion euros for IPV against women (87 % of the total EUR 174 billion cost of intimate partner violence). These figures are underestimates because of the insufficiency of research and data, primarily on the impacts of gender-based and intimate partner violence, including health and inter-generational impacts on children. (EIGE (2022). [The cost of gender-based violence in the European Union. Technical report.](#))

² [What is gender-based violence? | EIGE \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [What is gender-based violence? - Gender Matters \(coe.int\)](#)

⁴ [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#)

⁵ [Proposal for a directive of the European parliament and of the council on combating violence against women and domestic violence - COM\(2022\) 105 final](#)

⁶ Violence includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, including threats of such acts. It encompasses offences such as sexual violence, including rape, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortions or sterilisation, human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, stalking, sexual harassment, femicide, hate speech and crimes on the basis of sex and various forms of online violence (‘cyber violence’) and technology-facilitated violence against women, including non-consensual sharing or manipulation of intimate material, cyber stalking and cyber harassment.

⁷ Explanatory Report – CETS 210 – Violence against women and domestic violence, p. 7, 8.

integrated policies) is one of the four pillars of the holistic approach towards ending violence against women and domestic violence set out by the Istanbul Convention, which has been ratified by the EU in June 2023 and by 22 Member States. It is central to ending violence against women and domestic violence in the long-term, through the promotion of changes in mind-sets, attitudes and behaviours based on historically unequal power relations between men and women which tend to minimise, legitimise and sustain such violence.

The 2022 **Declaration on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (Dublin Declaration)** is inspired by the Istanbul Convention. It was signed by the Ministers of Justice of 38 European states (the 37 states parties to the Istanbul Convention as well as Latvia) that commit “to actively promote an institutional and political culture which rejects gender-based discrimination and violence, sexism, gender stereotypes and gendered power dynamics in the public and private sector, including by ensuring the adoption of pledges or concrete targets by leaders related to promoting gender balance and to combating gender-based discrimination.”

Ending gender-based violence is also one of the objectives of the **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**. It provided that the Commission would propose measures, within the limits of EU competence, to achieve the same objectives as the Istanbul Convention. The following **2022 proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence** specifically refers to appropriate preventive actions to be taken by member States including awareness-raising campaigns, research and education programmes, making information on preventive measures and the available protection and support measures available to the general public, targeted actions for groups at risk and against cyber violence.

Finally, the Gender Equality Strategy announced that “the Commission will launch an **EU network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence**, bringing together Member States and stakeholders to exchange good practice”. This network will be operational as of end of 2023.

2. Objective

This Opinion aims to determine what are the areas of prevention where an exchange of views and best practices among Member States and stakeholders bring real added value and aims to identify gaps in prevention policies that could be discussed and tackled. It helps to target exchanges on topics specific enough so that the various groups of professionals involved in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence can learn about good practices in these fields and can successfully implement them on the ground.

3. Policy areas of prevention of violence against women

An overall factor contributing to effective and efficient prevention measures is stakeholders' cooperation across all sectors (e.g., education, law enforcement, social work, healthcare, etc...) and administrative levels. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** should elaborate strategies and action plans that provide a clear structure of measures, resources and responsibilities of each stakeholder with specific objectives and targets for each. Also, adequately **resourced survivor support services**, and prompt and **effective investigations** that send clear messages about the non-acceptability of violence can have a deterrence effect and as such be considered also prevention measures; and, **strengthening the role of men and boys** in actions to prevent violence against women, beyond targeted

education for boys and men, is another important policy area. The Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women⁸ recently adopted by the Council of Europe present a range of relevant measures which member States may take in this respect.

3.1. Primary prevention - tackling the root of the problem

To achieve lasting change and gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence must be tackled by its roots. Primary prevention aims to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes and stereotypical expectations based on prevalent norms for women and men that limit their aspirations, choices and freedoms. These limiting stereotypes and expectations lead to inequality, and violence against women is an extreme form of such inequality. Sexism and sexist behaviour are perpetrated at the individual, institutional and structural levels, and experienced with detrimental effect at all three levels. Measures to prevent and combat sexism should therefore be taken at all levels.⁹ Challenging harmful gender stereotypes demands that **men and boys are not only addressed and engaged as agents of change, but also as co-beneficiaries** because these stereotypes still hinder men and boys to accept masculinities which are perceived as weak. So, prevention must include promoting healthy attitudes and behaviours, and encouraging all men and boys to free themselves from harmful gender stereotypes, such as toxic masculinity.

Awareness raising in the general public and targeted campaign to potential victims and perpetrators are seen as the main instrument to produce behavioural changes. The Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention stresses that women's NGOs supporting women victims of gender-based violence have a long tradition of carrying out successful awareness-raising activities at the local, regional or national level. Thus, when running such campaigns, parties are encouraged to **collaborate with women's NGOs and relevant entities**, (e.g., national human rights institutions, civil society, and the media). Communication needs to address and discuss stereotypical notions of masculinity and power, stereotypical gender roles and stereotypical notions pertaining to violence victimization as well as perpetration. Therefore, it is also necessary to integrate men's NGOs and to cooperate with them to find ideal solutions for campaigns.

Integration of GBV issues in education programmes is of particular relevance through formal and informal education, at all levels and include, in particular, comprehensive sexuality education. Since young people are still in the development of their personalities, which get formed and influenced by external impacts, it is indispensable to address and inform young people at school to overcome harmful gender stereotypes. At the Combatting domestic violence conference taking place in the framework of the EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality hosted by Romania in April 2023, the participating Member States reaffirmed primary prevention as a top priority and called for **more investment, targeted education for boys and men, and widespread awareness raising in society**.

3.2. Possible policy measures and good practices in primary prevention

⁸ [Guidelines The place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women guidelines cm \(2023\)51-add2-final](#) – part II.D

⁹ Preventing and Combating Sexism - Recommendation CM/Rec (2019)1 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 27 March 2019.

Many Member States have national strategies to prevent and combat violence against women with actions on primary prevention that emphasise the importance of a **holistic approach** and engage all sectors – education, law enforcement, healthcare, social work and all levels – national, regional, and local. A key element of these strategies is the establishment of a **(interministerial) body responsible for coordination and implementation**. The awareness promotion of the recommendations of international bodies and the participatory engagement of stakeholders are other promising practices.

In education – GBV aspects have been included and reinforced in national curricula for **all education levels and targeted education programs and trainings** for professionals and stakeholders in education, law-enforcement, healthcare, social care employees have been developed.

3.3. Secondary prevention - responding and preventing the reoccurrence of gender-based violence

A **secondary level of prevention** is prevention targeted at those already at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of GBV, and those at risk of revictimization. It covers matters such as early detection of risk of or existing violence, targeted programmes for persons at risk and training of professionals or actors likely to be in contact with actual or potential victims /perpetrators in order to improve support for victims.

Training of professionals who potentially come into contact with victims is a priority and key to ensure early detection of victimisation and prompt risk assessment of individual cases. It also facilitates better quality support for victims. Finally, a proper training of professionals regarding the notion of abuse allows to identify abusive behaviours that might be not perceived as such by victims because they are so engrained in society that are considered the norm. This is particularly relevant for new and intersectional forms of discrimination. Beyond professionals in contact with victims, training should also be provided, among others, to people in charge of human resources (e.g., in order to address sexual harassment at work), to people organising events (e.g., in order to put in place support and complaint procedures), to people dealing with institutions and organisations (e.g., to develop codes of conducts to prevent all forms of VAW).

Article 15 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to implement appropriate training for all relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence against women. Such systematic training shall cover the prevention and detection of violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, and the prevention of secondary victimisation. This provision also specifies that such training should cover coordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in relevant cases. This is reaffirmed in the Dublin Declaration.¹⁰ The issue of bystanders, hard to tackle and sensitive, is a crucial element (also in relation to the role of men and boys) on which more research is needed.

3.4. Possible policy measures and good practices in secondary prevention

¹⁰ In the Dublin Declaration, signatory states committed to “*encouraging initial and in-service training of all relevant professionals, including within the criminal justice system*”.

Based on a coordinated and streamlined approach, several promising secondary prevention measures have been identified at local and regional level. These are: strengthening detection and **encouraging reporting**; investing in **support services** for victims of violence, deliver support services for perpetrators of domestic violence, including in prisons to reduce reoffending, and preventing re-victimization, and the following ones at the national level - **special commissions** and collaborations to strengthen work to prevent gender-based violence and **conducting research** to address gaps in knowledge.

4. Recommendations

The Advisory Committee recommends that:

The European Commission:

- Enhances the activities of the newly established Network on the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence by incorporating the following elements into its programme:
 - identification and discussion of emerging issues in the area of prevention (e.g., online GBV violence¹¹, reducing access to pornography, addressing men and boys as agents and co-beneficiaries to combat GBV).
 - identification and discussion of potential measures required to bridge remaining gaps (e.g., prohibiting sexist content in media, intersectionality)
 - compilation of methods and tools for evaluation in determining the effectiveness of specific policies and measures identified by the Network in order to identify best practice.¹²
- Ensures cooperation to prevent online GBV and promote common initiatives to facilitate removal of illegal content.
- Carries out awareness raising campaigns to deconstruct stereotypes about the roles and behaviours of women and men within society that tend to trigger violence against women.

and Member States:

- Ensure that the prevention of violence against women is encompassed in the wider context of gender equality so that the 'historically unequal power relations between women and men' as specified in the Istanbul Convention are effectively addressed in with primary prevention measures.
- Reinforce (or introduce where not present) the criminalisation of all forms of violence against women including currently under-addressed forms of violence, such as coercive control, cyber violence and technology-facilitated violence against women,

¹¹ See also the 2020 Committee [Opinion on combatting online violence against women](#).

¹² EIGE (2023). [Improving legal responses to counter femicide in the European Union: Perspectives from victims and professionals](#).

honour related violence including forced and early marriages and female genital mutilation and economic violence.

- Develop and implement national strategies and action plans with targets, timeframes methods and resources as well as monitoring, evaluation and regular reporting mechanisms to combat/prevent violence against women and domestic violence.
- Improve funding for GBV in national research frameworks, in particular as for emerging forms of violence.¹³
- Collect and make available for stakeholders comparable, reliable, high-quality, administrative and survey data on violence against women and domestic violence.¹⁴ Such administrative data collection should be based on EIGE's recommendations for comparability.
- Collaborate with various stakeholders, including media actors for combating sexism, harmful gender stereotypes, and unequal power relations, and promote positive masculinity.
- Empower and engage women's and other civil society organisations in interactive and participatory way in all GBV prevention actions.
- Develop and implement measures to strengthen the role of men and boys as agents of change and at the same time as co-beneficiaries in preventing and combatting violence against women.

5. Annex – Examples of National practices

National plans

Malta's National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2021-2022 is covering the areas of integrated policies, legal measures, and data collection; prevention; protection and support as well as prosecution. The measures on prevention cover awareness raising campaigns for the general public; campaigns aimed at men and boys; teaching on gender-based violence and domestic violence in the education sector; training on preventive action professionals working in the field. The coordination and implementation of this strategy is carried out by an interministerial committee that includes representatives of various ministries and entities in Malta, coordinated by the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence. In the coming months, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) will be launching Malta's third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2023-2028. Through this 5-year action plan,

¹³ See EIGE (2022) [Combating coercive control and psychological violence against women in the EU Member States](#).

¹⁴ See EIGE (2021). [EIGE's indicators on intimate partner violence, rape and femicide: Recommendation to improve data quality, availability and comparability](#); EIGE (2020). [Advancing administrative data collection on Intimate partner violence and gender-related killings of women](#); EIGE (2018). [Indicators on intimate partner violence and rape for the police and justice sectors](#) and EIGE (2017). [Crime and criminal justice statistics on violence against women \(VAW\): Good practices on administrative data collection on VAW](#).

CGBVDV will continue coordinating, monitoring, implementing and evaluating several measures and actions enlisted in the new strategy to strengthen prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies.

Norway has several action plans and strategies with measures to prevent gender-based violence and domestic violence. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security is coordinating the government's work to combat domestic violence and is leading an interministerial working group. The latter is responsible for coordinating and implementing the Istanbul Convention, including reporting to GREVIO, the Council of Europe's independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The work to combat violence and abuse of children and adolescents, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, has formal support from this working group.

Sweden has a holistic approach to the work aimed at preventing and combatting gender-based violence and domestic violence. All sectors (e.g., the educational sector, law enforcement, social work and the healthcare sector etcetera) and all levels (national, regional and local) are engaged and collaborate. As per 1 January 2017, Sweden has a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women that places particular emphasis on prevention and addresses all the forms of violence in the Istanbul Convention.

Ireland has taken a different approach by establishing a Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality in 2019. Its mandate included examination of the social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls, boys, women and men. In its [final report](#) it made recommendations relating to education (including higher education) and media representation which have been further elucidated by the [Joint Committee on Gender Equality](#). Ireland's Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence was published in 2022 and includes an implementation plan with actions across the Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Co-ordination sections of the Istanbul Convention. It contains an action to "ensure the review of the Department of Education's Action Plan on Bullying and Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools considers the specific issues of sexual harassment and identity bullying, including gender stereotyping and gender identity bullying, in both the physical and online sphere," as well as other public awareness and education actions.

Finland has a coordinated and cross-administrative action plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention for 2022-2025¹⁵. It was designed by the (interministerial) Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Committee that is in charge of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of measures required by the Istanbul Convention. The Finnish National Action Plan for the prevention of female genital mutilation ¹⁶ includes measures aiming to change mentalities and attitudes among communities from countries where FGM is practiced. Measures like training community ambassadors to educate members of their own community, organizing debates on the subject by both public authorities and communities, and strengthening cooperation by participating in events organized by various grassroots actors, for example in mosques, have taken place to achieve the objective. Cooperation in prevention will also be stepped up between CSOs, CSOs and authorities, as well as between the authorities and communities practicing FGM.

¹⁵ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2022): Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention for 2022–2025. Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2022:10. (<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-9704-2>)

¹⁶ Koukkula, M. & Klemetti, R. (2019): Action plan for the prevention of female genital mutilation (FGM). Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2019:7. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-4065-9>

Prevention through education (Art. 14 IC)

Primary and secondary education

In **Austria** the circular issued by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research “Reflective gender pedagogy and equality” contains recommendations on how gender equality issues can be taken into account in public schools, both in classrooms and at the social level. The circular was implemented in the new curricula for primary schools and schools on the lower secondary level as an overarching topic and with specific competence targets for students of the 4th and 8th grade.

In **Sweden**, school curricula cover sexuality, consent and relationships as well as honour-related violence and oppression as part of comprehensive sexuality education.

In **Norway**, gender equality and equal status now have a central role in the social studies curriculum and is mentioned in the preamble to the curriculum and in the concrete learning objectives that describe the knowledge students should attain. The curriculum for choice of education also addresses the topic in relation to selection of education and career choices in the preamble and in the competence objectives. What students learn about equal status and gender equality is closely linked to what they learn about topics like human dignity, discrimination, democracy, identity, gender, sexuality and setting boundaries. In line with the understanding of GBV as an extreme manifestation of gender inequality, plans to update the second-level Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum are discussed in **Ireland**. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission recommended that lessons on abusive relationships are grounded in norms of gender equity, non-gender stereotyped roles, mutual respect and consent and incorporate principles of diversity, inclusion and intersectionality. It also recommended that age-appropriate RSE delivery begins from early childhood, in recognition of the cultural context of toxic masculinity, which can influence the behaviour of boys from a young age.

In **Portugal**, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality has developed far-ranging and in-depth teaching material to promote an education free from gender stereotypes, supported by extensive in-service training for teachers since 2008.

In **Malta**, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV), in collaboration with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, implemented a pilot study in four secondary schools to evaluate the effectiveness of the ‘Safe Dates’ programme in changing the attitudes and beliefs on dating violence of students aged between 14 to 15. Results are expected in the coming months. In 2022, CGBVDV organised a drawing and creative writing competition in primary and secondary schools across Malta and Gozo to raise awareness on the importance of respectful relationships. It also conducted 2 information sessions for school educators on how to recognise and help children exposed to or experiencing violence at home and multiple information talks were held with Heads of College Networks, Heads of Schools and guidance teachers to provide information on CGBVDV’s role, the forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence and service provision.

In **Germany**, the Ministry of Family Affairs, Seniors, Woman and Youth supports initiatives that question gender stereotypes among young people in higher education and when choosing a career, in particular through the “Klischeefrei” initiative. This work on fundamental gender stereotypes can make a positive contribution to a different perception of gender roles.

Higher education

Many universities across **Spain** have introduced graduate programmes specifically dedicated to the study of violence against women.¹⁷

In **Sweden**, men's violence against women has become a compulsory subject for university students within various fields of study, e.g. nursing, dentistry, medical doctors, law studies and psychology etc.¹⁸

Another promising example includes in **France**, the creation of a network of "persons responsible for the prevention of discrimination", present in higher education establishments who have been trained on how to prevent and handle sexual and gender-based violence and harassment.

In **Malta**, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence has delivered an information session for creative media production and journalism students in post-secondary school highlighting the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

Prevention through awareness raising (Art. 13 IC)

Article 13 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to "*promote or conduct on a regular basis and at all levels, awareness-raising campaigns or programmes, including in co-operation with relevant civil society partners – the aim being to increase awareness and understanding among the general public of the different manifestations of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this convention, their consequences on children and the need to prevent such violence*".

The Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention stresses that women's NGOs supporting women victims of gender-based violence have a long tradition of carrying out successful awareness-raising activities at the local, regional or national level. Thus, when running such campaigns, parties are encouraged to collaborate with women's NGOs and relevant entities, (e.g., national human rights institutions, civil society, and the media).

Many countries agree that prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence needs to address stereotypical notions of masculinity and power by promoting or conducting awareness-raising campaigns. Important actions must inter alia include targeting stereotypical gender roles and stereotypical notions pertaining to violence victimization as well as perpetration.

The **Swedish** police launched a "Come to us" campaign. This initiative consisted in the provision of information online in 18 different languages on the importance of reporting crimes such as domestic violence, forced marriage and "honour related violence", how to report such crimes, how a criminal investigation is conducted and the help that is available to victims. The campaign had the potential for increasing the number of reported cases. At the same time, it stressed the need to ensure adequate responses on the part of law enforcement following these awareness raising endeavours.

French authorities tried to increase the visibility of violence against women and the existence of political will to increase societal awareness of the phenomenon, which has led to tangible results. It highlighted, in particular that awareness raising activities have become more systematic in the last two decades, and that they continue every year as part of the measures implemented by the various inter-ministerial plans. Some have addressed gender-based harassment and sexual violence in public transport, including unacceptable behaviour,

¹⁷ See GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Spain paragraph 102.

¹⁸ See GREVIO's baseline evaluation report on Sweden, paragraph 89.

key advice on how to behave and how to react in these situations. Others have focused on sexual violence, or for example, on witnessing domestic violence. The latter was unprecedented in scale and budget (around 4 million euros).¹⁹

Belgium run an awareness raising campaign at different levels of government (federal, regional or community). These focused on diverse forms of violence, notably, sexual harassment and gender based acts, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, “honour related violence”, forced marriage and FGM as well as on diverse target groups, using various communication media.²⁰ It included a campaign on psychological intimate partner violence “Fred et Marie/Marie et Fred”, which uses series of short films that portray, in a non-sensationalist way, psychologically violent behaviour in a relationship and the responses of the victim and bystanders.²¹ More recently, several actions were taken to increase the visibility of the Sexual assault centres (SAC) in place since 2017 and to raise awareness about their existence: a [new website](#) was launched in July 2023, the project “Operation Consent” between January and October 2023, which included sensibilization sessions during festivals and in student festive environments and training sessions for student event organizers, and a [national campaign](#) in November about the SAC.

In **Finland**, the Ministry of Justice launched a campaign called “Yes we all can” in August 2021. The aim of the campaign was to tackle gendered sexual harassment and highlight the role of bystanders. The campaign sought to lower the threshold for bystanders to intervene, change social norms and break the silent acceptance.

Building upon the network that formed in 2020/2021 in the context of the ‘Dialogue fora against sexism’ (Dialogforen gegen Sexismus), in February 2023 the **German** Federal Government founded the broad social alliance “Together against sexism”²² with a focus on the workplace, public spaces, culture and the media. Particular emphasis is placed on local-level initiatives and small and medium-sized enterprises. The alliance takes an intersectional approach: It addresses and includes on equal footing a variety of different groups affected by discrimination on account of ethnic origin, disability or grounds such as antisemitism. In October 2023 the alliance has more than 480 partners.

In 2022, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) invited ministries, stakeholders, entities, organisations, and non-governmental organisations in **Malta** to join the campaign titled, ‘Domestic Violence is Everybody’s Business’. The campaign included a social media campaign, instalments of road-signs with a preventive message across several localities in Malta, preventive messages on fiscal receipts, creative workshops with residents residing in domestic violence shelters, information sessions with primary and middle school educators, information talks for the elderly, creative competitions in primary and secondary schools and a roundtable conference on the role of men and boys in violence prevention.

CGBVDV coordinates regular awareness-raising campaigns on the various forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence and to address the intersectional elements of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Throughout 2022 and 2023, CGBVDV commemorated several international days on social media and conducted the following campaigns:

- ‘Engaging Men & Boys in Violence Prevention’ campaign, in collaboration with Men Against Violence, consisted of a series of video-clips with male local public figures

¹⁹ See GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on France paragraphs 87-88

²⁰ See GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Belgium paragraph 66.

²¹ [FRED et marie](#)

²² <https://www.gemeinsam-gegen-sexismus>.

reflecting the role of men and boys in violence prevention and a series of posters reimagining discriminatory proverbs on gender stereotypes. The campaign concluded with a conference with academics, professionals and representatives from MAN Sweden and eMANcipator Netherlands.

- ‘Consent Matters: Stop Sexual Violence’ was a social media campaign to inform the public on the importance of consent and the active bystander approach and the procedures that ensue when one seeks professional support services due to sexual violence.
- ‘All Humans Have Dignity: RESPECT. PROTECT.’ was developed with the aim of addressing migrants’ experiences of gender-based violence and domestic violence and the barriers migrant victims and supporting professionals face. This campaign involved online and printed dissemination of multilingual posters, information sessions with migrants residing in open centres and a focus group with supporting professionals.
- ‘Show Domestic Violence the Red Card’ campaign was organised throughout the World Cup 2022 tournament and it involved designing and disseminating posters on football and domestic violence to local bars and restaurants where the matches were being featured on TV.
- ‘The Fear of Coming Out and Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence’ was a panel discussion for Euro Pride 2023 where the discussion focused on the challenges LGBTIQ+ persons face when coming out their families and their experiences of same-sex intimate partner violence.

On May 11, 2021, the **Austrian** Federal Government adopted a “Package of Measures to Combat Violence against Women and to Strengthen Violence Prevention” in accordance with the presentation to the Council of Ministers. The priority activities of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs concern a bundle of measures in the area of prevention of male violence, as well as awareness raising and breaking gender stereotypes. A selection of important projects includes the promotion and expansion of “StoP - Neighborhoods without Partner Violence”, the men’s crisis hotline “Männerinfo”, the promotion of Austria-wide violence prevention work with men, as well as the promotion of gender-sensitive work with boys to break gender stereotypes and the awareness-raising campaign “Mann spricht’s an” (Man speaks up).

Prevention through legislative measures

Legislative measures either on the constitutional level or on the level of legislative acts are important adjusting screws when it comes to efficient prevention. Several member states have been adjusting their legislation or are in the process of doing so in order to enable effective prevention.

There are several examples for legislation improving prevention:

In **Norway**, the penal code is gender neutral, but contains several provisions, as well as a separate chapter, pertaining to forms of violence that women are particularly exposed to such as sexual violence and domestic violence. The penal code also contains a provision pertaining to illegal sharing of images, videos, and audio recordings of an offensive or obviously private nature. The Crisis Centre Act offers equal crisis centre services to women, men, and children. However, the preparatory works to the Act, which have a bearing on the interpretation of the Act, expressly state that the Ministry acknowledges that women have a particular need for protection, as women are most at risk of domestic violence, and that the

violence men commit against women is a gender equality problem based on the genders being different. Furthermore, it is clarified that the gender-neutral framing of the Act must not have a negative impact on services for women, and the residential services for women and men must be physically separate. Most of the persons who seek help from a crisis centre are women.

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act is gender neutral, but states that the Act has the particular objective of improving the position of women. Also, the Act has several provisions that are particularly important to women. For example, there are dedicated provisions regarding treatment on the basis of pregnancy and sexual harassment.

In 2020, the duty to promote gender equality and to report on the part of employers and public authorities was clarified and strengthened. As of 2020, Norwegian public authorities and employers have an obligation to, in all their equality efforts, make active, targeted, and systematic efforts to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, and gender-based violence, and to counter stereotyping. In the preparatory works to the act, the reason given for this clarification is women's exposure to harassment, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Following an amendment to the Criminal Code, non-consensual sexual acts, including rape, have been criminalized in **Sweden**. It is thus no longer required that an offender uses force, threats, or takes advantage of the vulnerable situation of a victim. The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority has been commissioned by the Government to undertake different actions to disseminate information and increase awareness of the legislation, including actions targeting young persons.

Article 41.2 of the **Irish** Constitution, on a woman's life within the home, contributes to the creation and perpetuation of inaccurate and discriminatory gender stereotypes. In this context, plans for constitutional reform and the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach are welcome. Constitutional amendment was recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality in 2021. The Joint Committee on Gender Equality recently published its proposals for the wording of the replacement articles, which emphasise equality 'without distinction to sex,' and recognise the value of care. The Government has committed to holding a referendum, which is likely to take place in 2024.

As of 2023, in the Criminal Code of **Finland** the definition of rape and other sexual offences is now based on consent. Punishments for sexual offences have become tougher: for example, when the act is sufficiently severe it constitutes sexual harassment even with no physical contact and non-consensual dissemination of a sexual image is now punishable.

Belgium recently adopted the [law Stop Femicide](#) (June 2023). This law defines intimate and non-intimate femicide and gender-based homicide, as well as the violence that precedes it, such as sexual violence, psychological violence or coercion and coercive control. Additionally, 'gender perspective' is now legally defined for the first time. The law creates extensive measures : 1) it makes compulsory the collection, analysis and publication of data on these acts of violence, 2) it appoints a scientific committee to analyse and review individual cases of femicide and gender-based homicide, 3) it makes the use of risk assessment and risk management tools mandatory, and 4) it stipulates that special attention will henceforth be paid to these acts of violence during the training of the police and magistrates.

Since 2023, in **Malta** the Domestic Violence Prevention Act enables individuals in intimate relationships to contact the Police or the Victim Support Agency to check whether their partner has a history of convictions on domestic violence. If this is the case, the police issues a risk warning.

In 2021, **Slovenia** amended its Penal Code regarding the definition of rape, introducing a new concept of "yes means yes". The amendment stipulates that a sexual act is consensual if the participants have given "outwardly perceptible" consent, either by their words or their actions. The amendment also changes the penalties for sexual offences from six months to five years' imprisonment for the offence of rape. If committed by use of force or threat, the penalty is from one to 10 years' imprisonment, and from three to 15 years' imprisonment if committed by several persons. The offence of sexual violence is punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

Prevention through research

The **Norwegian** Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Education and Research are financing The Domestic Violence Research Program. This is a ten-year programme at the Norwegian Social Research – NOVA at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University. The programme runs from 2014 to 2024. The programme is organized in four thematic areas: Developmental trends, vulnerability and protection; Cultural understandings and underlying causes; Measures and systems in public and private sector; Negative social control and forced marriages. The programme includes research on perpetrators of gender-based violence.

The **Swedish** Gender Equality Agency coordinated pilot work, which includes inter alia a survey in partnership with researchers at the University of Western Ontario and the Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children. The survey focuses on how domestic violence can affect employees and what kinds of support is available in workplaces.

In **Malta**, the study "Safety in Childhood: A Prevalence Study of Childhood Abuse Experiences in Malta" explored the prevalence rate of individuals experiencing or witnessing violence during childhood. The findings, launched in a national conference in April 2023, demonstrate the importance of collaboration across all sectors to prevent and intervene in early stages in cases of children witnessing domestic violence, child maltreatment and peer and sibling victimisation.

In 2020, the **Slovenian** Statistical Office conducted a nationwide study on personal security in a private environment. The main purpose of the research was to collect data on violence against women and domestic violence: the proportion of the population experiencing different types of violence (threats, physical violence, sexual violence), relation with the perpetrator, basic characteristics of violence, what proportion of victims report violence, etc.

Secondary prevention - responding and preventing the reoccurrence of gender-based violence

Assessment of the measures in place

On a European level, **EIGE** tries to identify the protection, access to justice, support, response, and prevention gaps in European Member States. EIGE's Gender Equality Index measures gender equality in the domain of work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and violence.²³

²³ See latest report EIGE (2022). *Gender Equality Index 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic and care.* <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2022-covid-19-pandemic-and-care>

In 2021, **Ireland** commissioned an analysis and mapping of the existing provision of training for those serving in a front-line capacity with victims and survivors of sexual violence. This training mapping exercise was carried out through a process involving key stakeholder meetings, focus groups, one-to-one calls and an online survey. However, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has found the execution of this mapping analysis to be lacking in a number of ways. Firstly, the mapping exercise focused on victim and survivors of sexual violence only rather than considering all forms of GBV. It focuses on those who have already experienced sexual violence rather than those at risk. Secondly, it excludes key frontline service providers, such as local housing authorities, educational professionals and the Department of Social Protection.

Strengthening detection and support through training for professionals (Art. 15 IC)

To ensure detection and for victims of violence to receive quality support, access to knowledge and training for professionals is a priority. Strengthening detection (e.g. in the healthcare sector), also includes knowledge among professionals that not necessarily all persons subjected to for instance domestic violence have identified their experiences as violence. Knowledge dissemination, training and awareness raising are increasingly taking into account the particular barriers that women subjected to intersectional forms of discrimination may face and the particular vulnerable situation some persons subjected to violence may find themselves in (e.g. older women, women with disabilities, minority women, asylum seekers and refugees, LGBTIQ*-persons etc).

Article 15 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to implement appropriate training for all relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence against women. Such systematic training shall cover the prevention and detection of violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, and the prevention of secondary victimisation. This provision also specifies that such training should cover coordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in relevant cases. This is reaffirmed in the Dublin Declaration.²⁴

In **Austria**, domestic violence, including its gender-based dimension, are encompassed in the two year basic initial training of law enforcement officers. As domestic violence cases and emergency barring orders account for a large part of the work of law enforcement agencies, the specific nature of this type of violence and the relevant police measures are an important element of the basic training. Depending on grade and job profile, some law enforcement officers receive more extensive training. For example, prevention officers receive training on forced marriage and FGM in a small training module, and domestic violence prevention officers are trained extensively on how to address warnings to perpetrators who have been barred from their home. Much is done, however, also at the level of in-service training, which is mandatory and organised every three months on various subjects. Domestic violence is covered once or twice a year, and seminars are usually conducted by representatives from the specialist support services.²⁵

The **Danish** approach to awareness raising taken in the context of the campaigns on stalking and rape, which included components that specifically targeted professionals such as law enforcement agents and social workers has led to improvements in the professionals' response to such violence and demonstrates the importance of such measures, where their initial training does not yet include information on these forms of violence against women.²⁶

²⁴ In the Dublin Declaration, signatory states committed to “*encouraging initial and in-service training of all relevant professionals, including within the criminal justice system*”.

²⁵ See GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Austria, paragraph 76.

²⁶ See GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Denmark, paragraphs 65-66.

Belgium developed a tool concerning the detection of coercive control and its warning signs between (former) partners. This tool is intended for professionals who work with victims of domestic violence, such as police officers, front-line workers and clinical psychologists. Their aim is to raise awareness of the warning signs that can precede a femicide or gender-based homicide, even in the absence of physical violence. Another toolkit on consent in the digital world and digital sexual violence was developed. This toolkit aims to raise awareness on the issue of digital sexual violence and provides information to assess one's own behaviour online.

In **Malta** the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) coordinates training programmes on gender-based violence and domestic violence for frontliners, professionals working in the field and new recruits. Throughout 2022 and 2023, there were 8 rounds of multi-agency training sessions for professionals from the educational, social work, legal and health sectors and the police. In 2023, a specialised training programme was delivered for members of the judiciary and another programme was aimed at journalists.

In **Slovenia**, judges and state prosecutors who deal with victims or perpetrators of violence, are bound to continuous training within the Judicial Training Centre at the Ministry of Justice. Slovenia participates in the Council of Europe HELP Programme organizing on-line trainings on violence against women and domestic violence, for the judiciary, prosecutors and police. The Programme help to promote and enhance their knowledge and skills necessary for the effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The police created a training system for police officers under the principle of multipliers, where selected officers who express interest for work in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, train their colleagues. Moreover, there are regular trainings of professional staff in education on the topic of gender equality and non-stereotypical gender roles. Finally, the Social Chamber of Slovenia has a mandate of planning and organising education and training for professional staff and professional assistant staff in social care.

Targeted programmes for persons at risk and early detection of violence

Norway developed and adapted several programmes in this field which are implemented either on the national or on the local /regional level:

The police has developed the "Shareable?" educational programme on illegal image sharing among children and adolescents. The programme has been focused on adolescents aged 13–16 and their parents or guardians and was expanded to include younger age groups in 2020.

In addition to the police, teachers, public health nurses, social care workers, youth outreach officers and other adults who work with children and adolescents can use teaching materials that are available.

TryggEst is a model for organising work to prevent, detect and act upon violence against and abuse of adults who are incapable of protecting themselves. The TryggEst model is based on experiences gained in the UK (SOVA). TryggEst has become a main municipal channel for reporting cases of violence and has attained the goal of improving the handling of these cases.

Support centres for victims of violence have been established for victims of crime in each of the country's 12 police districts. The centres must offer advice, guidance, and support to persons who are parties in a criminal case until it comes to an end. The purpose of these initiatives is to have more victims report rape and abuse in close relationships to the police. The police use risk assessment tools for early detection of risk of or existing violence. One of the tools, Patriark, targets honour related violence.

The government is currently looking into the use of reverse violence alarms to see if the area of use can be expanded. Also, the health services are developing a programme for children and adolescents with problematic or harmful sexual behaviour. In 2024, Norway will establish a partner homicide commission to strengthen the preventative work regarding homicides.

In **Sweden**, actions have been introduced aimed at ensuring quality sheltered housing for victims of violence and strengthened rights of accompanying children in recent years. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency was tasked with the collection, dissemination and development of working methods for violence prevention, focused on young men and boys in an honour context.

Prevention targeted at (potential) perpetrators (Art. 16 IC)

At the combatting domestic violence conference in Romania in April 2023, a number of countries have discussed approaches to enhance prevention by prioritising treatment of perpetrators. Also, Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to set up or support programmes teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships, with a view to preventing re-victimisation and changing violent behavioural patterns.

Since 2004, in **Luxembourg** the social service RIICHT ERAUS of the Luxembourg Red Cross Association accompany and advise perpetrators, convicted or not. Since the modified Domestic Violence Act of 2013, perpetrators evicted from their homes by the police are required to report to RIICHT ERAUS within 14 days. All clients receive advice on how to change their behaviour and through the counselling, they acquire tools to peacefully manage risk situations. The counsellor's first objective is to encourage perpetrators of violence to take responsibility, becoming aware of their violence and understanding that it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

Sweden launched the PREDOV programme in 2019, based on research evidence. It offers individualised treatment for medium-risk offenders in prisons, which can be continued during probation. Perpetrators are assessed after sentence, and high-risk individuals receive more intensive cognitive behavioural therapy. The length of treatment depends on each case, but it is not mandatory. Results and recidivism rates will be assessed in 2024, with a more in-depth evaluation in 2026.

In **Belgium**, perpetrators are obliged to undertake counselling after an emergency protection order. However, treatment lasts only 2.5 months, and it was stated that short interventions can be worse than nothing.

Croatia is drafting a new, improved strategy for psychosocial treatment of perpetrators, who receive compulsory treatment while in prison, continuing voluntarily on probation. However, the justice system lacks resources for comprehensive follow-up, and judges need more training about DV risks.

In **Latvia** the state organises care for victims while a private state-funded agency offers treatment (individual or group) for perpetrators. This can be mandatory outside prison. Around 700-800 people a year receive treatment. The probation service carries out risk assessment. Latvia does not support mediation, which tends to lead to more opportunities for violence.

Greece funds treatment for perpetrators. A programme launched in 2012 and covering most of Northern Greece has successfully treated 75 perpetrators, with only three cases of recidivism. The programme is available to both men and women and lasts five to seven years. Evaluation occupies the first six months, taking account of the victim's point of view, followed by individual and group therapy and couple counselling under strict conditions. The

final six months set the groundwork for the future. Evaluation shows that the programme successfully changes aggressors' attitudes to society, but more funding is needed.

In **Finland**, programmes last 1.5 years, with voluntary face-to-face or peer-to-peer support group therapy.

Spain runs two programmes: one for offenders in prison and the other for men without criminal records, carried out by NGOs. Unfortunately, indicators for success and recidivism vary from country to country making comparison difficult.

Support services for perpetrators of domestic violence are provided in several municipalities in **Norway**. The services have a family mandate, which means they must offer treatment to perpetrators of domestic violence and their families.

In **Italy**, Relive, a national network that implements perpetrator programmes, has developed consolidated guidelines for perpetrator programmes and supports newly established programmes to reach baseline standards through practice exchange and training. An accreditation process ensures quality standards.²⁷

Although programmes exist in **Ireland** with the aim of changing the behaviour of perpetrators of GBV, uptake of these programmes is very low. Annual referrals, assessments, commencement numbers and completion rates are much lower than the number of court orders made under domestic violence legislation each year. Organisations in the sector have expressed the need for the expansion of programmes geographically and in terms of scope; noted a high turnover among programme facilitators; and have advised that changes may be needed to increase the effectiveness of the interventions. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission recommended that programmes are embedded in local intervention structures; widely used by police, courts, social workers and others; adaptable to the diverse needs of offenders; and comprise both court mandated and voluntary programmes.

Article 12 – General obligations

In **Finland**, the government-run nationwide “Nollalinja” helpline uses marketing and campaigning to popularize their services through various channels, in media and social media. “Nollalinja” campaigns are organized 4-6 times a year to raise awareness on different forms of violence and “Nollalinja” services. The main target group of the campaigns varies by gender and age. For instance, in 2023, one of the “Nollalinja” marketing campaigns was targeted at young persons aged 15–25, using the “Jodel” application as a new tool. The campaign’s aim was to raise awareness among young on dating violence.

Moreover, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) has developed an online training to raise awareness and build capacity of professionals to respond to domestic and intimate partner violence. The online training includes a section on honour related violence and harmful traditions thus also seeking to address the subordinate position of women and girls as victims of these forms of violence. Together with community-based NGOs THL has also produced and disseminated materials to prevent harmful traditions and honour related violence as well as videos in languages such as Somali and Kurdish to prevent FGM²⁸. In 2022, another online training on digital violence was published. It is aimed at professionals and students in the social and health sectors as well as in education and security. Digital violence online training raises awareness on digital violence, stalking and coercive control in

²⁷ See GREVIO’s baseline evaluation report on Italy paragraphs 108-111.

²⁸ Videos on FGM at THL webpage. www.thl.fi/silpominen

close relationships. The online training is intended to help identify different forms of digital violence in all its complexity and to build capacity for professionals to address it.

In **Malta**, the “STOP! The Violence and Abuse Service” programme is offered for perpetrators of intimate partner violence to help abusive persons in their behaviour. Abusive persons may opt for this service either through self-referral or through a court-mandated request for service. This service operates in the form of a group programme which spans over 22 weeks. Following the group sessions, 8 additional support group sessions are delivered. Through this service, abusive service users learn to identify trigger and danger signs, stop violent and abusive behaviour, and learn other ways to express their feelings while learning how to build healthy relationships and how to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour.