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Exchange of good practices on gender equality

Awareness raising activities to fight violence against women and girls

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Awareness raising activities to fight violence against women and girls

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1. Introduction - description of the main elements of the good practices

In Poland, the problem of violence against women (VAW) has begun to appear in political debate, and thus also in the social consciousness, after the transformation of the political system in 1989. Especially women's organisations, derived from the feminist movement began to pay attention both to violence against women in the family (in relationships), as well as in public life (sexism, inequality in the labour market, sexual harassment).

A strong shift in mind was carried out in 1997 with presence of a **public campaign** entitled "Stop domestic violence" organised by the formed in 1996, Polish Nationwide Emergency Service for Victims of Domestic Violence "Blue Line" (NGO¹) and The State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems (PARPA). Poles remember this campaign under the slogan "Because the soup was too salty", which was one of the three slogans of the campaign. Others ("Because she looked too attractive", "Because he had to let off steam") show how easy it is to be a victim of domestic violence and simultaneously to expose the irrational reasoning of using violence by perpetrators.



Many politicians, and outstanding people in the social life, thought that the campaign was evil, and unfounded, because "the Polish family is a bulwark of peace and kindness", it is impossible that in the family unit in such a bad thing (in the case of Poland, Catholic values are significant in this context). They used the argument that

¹ www.niebieskalinia.pl

domestic violence affects a very small number of people within the so-called margins of society - people addicted to alcohol or drugs, notorious criminals - but does not apply to the so-called good families. However, the media really supported that campaign, started on TV and press to describe specific cases and it was some kind of the critical mass.

Due to the effects of this campaign and the follow-up, there was a ground for changes in the legal system. At the end of term of the left-wing Parliament (2005) there was enacted **the Law on preventing domestic violence**². Unfortunately, the law has been drastically reduced as compared to the project submitted by female members of the Left, in collaboration with women's organisations and dealing with domestic violence. The project has not reflected many proposals submitted by the NGO-s and the environment of employees who have had first contact with victims of domestic violence (social workers, policemen, employees of the crisis centres etc.).

After 5 years (in 2010) all stakeholders managed to bring the amendment to the Act. It has been amended with numerous legal acts (the Code of Criminal Procedure, Family and Guardianship Code, Health Benefits Act, the Act on social assistance), which significantly improved the legal system and in consequence forced many institutions (police, prosecutors, courts, local governments) to undertake real actions to protect rights of victims of domestic violence.

The Act also requires the preparation and implementation by the Government National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence³. The current programme covers the years 2006-2016, but now it is at stage of transformation after new regulations coming into force in 2010.

The implementation of activities under the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence is responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, one of the deputy serves as National Coordinator of this programme. In May 2011, there was appointed the Monitoring Team on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (duty saved in the Act of 2010), which includes (in accordance with the Act) - 7 representatives of central ministries (eg Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, etc.), 5 representatives of local government and 10 representatives of NGO's. The team meets four times a year, consult the projects of developed programmes, action plans and standard setting in the area of domestic violence, and assesses the current implementation of specific objectives of the National Programme.

Unfortunately, the financial resources allocated to Poland for the implementation of activities to prevent domestic violence are inadequate. The central state budget funded (for inadequate level) is only a few activities (one study per year, a social campaign, dozens of programmes interactions with perpetrators of violence, and 35 specialist support centres for victims of domestic violence). The government allocates on this ca. 16.5 million PLN (approx. 3.5 million euro) per year. But we have to remember that in Poland live 38.2 million people (52% female), Poland has 16 voivodships and almost 2,500 municipalities (the smallest unit of local government).

To avoid spending too much from state budget funds for higher tasks related to prevention of domestic violence (including violence against women) and the protection of victims of violence, on the occasion of the amendment provisions in 2010, Parliament decided that the activities in this area will be the task of local government

² <http://www.lex.pl/du-akt/-/akt/dz-u-05-180-1493>

³ http://ms.gov.pl/Data/Files/public/ppwr/krajowy_program/krajowy-program-przeciwdzialania-przemocy-w-rodzinie.pdf

(municipality) and community therefore, to be financed from own local funds. Central government supports local authorities with symbolic amount 3 million PLN per year (about 670 thousand euro), which gives the community an average of approximately 270 euro. Most activities in the area of domestic violence and VAW are implemented by NGO in Poland, however, funding of these activities is incidental and at a very low level - the majority of competitions for grants are up to 5 thousand euro. Most competitions are also subject generally associated with the prevention of social exclusion, and so projects related to VAW funded in these competitions are as small percent age of the total pot.

Prevalence of violence against women and domestic violence

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy every year carries out nationwide study on the phenomenon of violence. Each of the tests were conducted on a representative sample of 3000 adults. In 2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy conducted a nationwide survey "Poles against domestic violence and the opinions of victims, perpetrators and witnesses of the occurrence and circumstances of domestic violence"⁴.

The survey showed that:

- Poles in the majority do not agree with the harmful stereotypes about domestic violence, but still concerned about the relatively high level of support for some of them.
- It is frequent to throw the responsibility on the victims experienced violence – one in four respondents believed that the perpetrator will stop violence, when not provoked (24%), as many believe that the fear of discussing some of the problems with her husband, is the wife's problem.
- Still majority of the society consider it to be normal during a quarrel in the family: insults and verbal abuse (24%) and pulling and pushing (18%). The reason for concern maybe just the bruises and wounds on the body of the victim (16%), and so violence is mainly associated with physical violence.
- Support for all kinds of stereotypes about domestic violence – its forms and victims, significantly higher than average among people over fifty years of age, people with primary education or basic vocational education, and among rural residents.
- Men more than women agree on popular views about sexual violence, which is reflected in the results concerning the prevalence of such behavior among men.
- Stereotypes are rejected by most residents of large cities and young people and people with higher education.
- A significant proportion, almost two thirds (64%), Poles know in their environment, such a family neighborhood, who heard or know that occurred one of the different forms of violence.

In 2008, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy conducted a nationwide survey on violence against children.⁵

⁴ http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Przemoc%20w%20rodzinie/wyniki_badan_13.11.07.pdf

⁵ http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Przemoc%20w%20rodzinie/dzieci_spol.pdf

- One fifth (19%) of respondents admit that the applied force (at least one of its form) to the members of his family.
- 12% of Poles admit to use violence against members of their family. Out of whom 27% have experienced psychological violence in childhood and one fifth (21%) patients who experienced any form of childhood violence.
- Over two fifths (44%) of Poles know at least one family, who heard or know about violence against children therein.

In 2009, the subject of research was domestic violence against the elderly and disabled⁶.

- In public opinion, domestic violence against the elderly and disabled seems to be a clearly observable phenomenon. About 50% respondents say that they are familiar with forms of physical, economic and psychological violence in families with the elderly and more than 30% for people with disabilities.

In 2010, the theme of the study was "Diagnosis of domestic violence against women and against men"⁷.

- Among the total of victims of domestic violence, 39% are male and 61% female. Women constitute the largest percentage of all the victims of sexual violence in the family (90%).
- In the case of physical violence with in the family women constitute 63% of all victims, and men - 37%.
- The same concerns victims of psychological violence - 64% of them are women and 36% - men.
- Among the victims of economic violence is 70% females and 30% of males.
- Among the perpetrators of domestic violence (in total – whatever forms of violence), 70% are males and 30% females. When a victim of domestic violence is female, the male participation among the perpetrators of this violence is even higher (79% to 21%). However, when the victim is male, the situation is different – males account for 53% of the perpetrators, and females - 47%.

In 2011, the perpetrators of domestic violence were the focus of research. The results of these studies have not yet been published. The research that led in 2009 prof. B. Gruszczyńska (Department of Criminology and Criminal Policy, University of Warsaw) show that:

- Every 40 seconds a woman in Poland is experiencing violence.
- Every 2.5 days a woman dies due to "family misunderstandings".
- Every seven minutes some one in the police reports on domestic violence.

⁶ http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Przemoc%20w%20rodzinie/przemoc_spol.pdf

⁷ http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/_public/1-2010_%20Raport-ogolnopolski_K-M_01-03-11.pdf

- 6% of women aged 16-60 years of age experiences violence every year (circa 800 thousand.), every second went to seek medical assistance, and one in six required hospitalisation due to sustained violence.
- Only 30% of women reported to law enforcement authorities that they suffered violence, so the police does not know about 70% of cases of violence.

2. Policy debate

Unfortunately, the Polish legal system and the organisation still lack some crucial elements:

- Regulations and operational documents do not include the fact that violence “has” sex and is directed against the vast majority of women. All laws and operational documents treat the victims of domestic violence as gender-neutral, which means that more and more voices argue that men as often as women are victims of domestic violence. Followers of this opinion refer to the (methodologically dubious quality) studies from Western Europe and the USA.
- Therefore, the sphere of domestic violence is not in any aspect of crosscutting issues with the subject of gender equality.
- There are no action plans that would address violence against girls, girls and young women and the phenomenon of so-called dating violence.
- Topic of sexual harassment of women in the workplace (very marginally treated) is tied to the area of preventing discrimination in the labour market, not the issue of VAW.
- There is lack of help for non speaking Polish women, and yet in spite of relatively high homogeneity of Polish society, every year more women are coming to Poland from Eastern countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania), from Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, and Asian and African countries, which are particularly difficult to stop the violence and to find help.
- There is no nationwide help line for victims of domestic violence working 24/7. Blue Line, which runs since 1996 is the nationwide help line, each year receives less and less resources for the implementation of its task (for more than 1 million PLN in the 90's to 300 thousand PLN in 2011) which restricts the operation of telephone counselling for the weekday hours only between 2:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M.
- Although research on the social awareness of the problem of domestic violence are conducted quite regularly, VAW methodology in each study is different, which causes difficulty in interpretation of the results in the long term.
- There are no studies on broadening the knowledge about the problem of domestic violence and VAW such as the economic aspects of domestic violence (how much violence costs) or on the health effects caused by experiencing violence.
- There is no early prevention of the problem of VAW - in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges. Central ministries (education and higher education) responsible for the content of educational programmes and curriculum have left this issue to the decision of directors of schools, which means the lack of

even minimum standards and the large differences in the approach to the problem (from a total indifference or even outright denial of the problem to be actively involved.).

In the near future in Poland, we will not anticipate the possibility of changes in the law - still takes place the implementation of the changes from 2010 and the main emphasis in the activities is laid on the direction of implementation of existing records and improvement of the quality of their application (the need for many training courses for police, the judiciary, education, health, etc.).

3. Transferability issues

One campaign, similar to the Greek one, was carried out in Poland (at the national level and regional or local) several times, starting from that described in point 1 – campaign of 1997. As in Greece, their transmission focused on showing that violence refers to a large number of women and that it is possible to obtain support and assistance (“you are not one and you're not alone”).

Like our Greek colleagues, we had a problem with measuring the effectiveness of these campaigns. The solutions were typically hybrid- as the effects of the campaign were given specific artifacts (e.g. how much specific support centres were established or how many times support centres gave help to the victims), sometimes also were done measuring the attitudes of adult Poles in some cases (eg consent for abusing children or sharing the view that “domestic violence is a private matter and no one from outside should interfere in it”) before the campaign and repeated these studies after the campaign. Changing the results was taken as the positive effect of the campaign, although it would be difficult to defend the argument that a person is only influenced at this time by the social message of the campaign - usually expected change of mind shift is constructed of different influences and events that take place in a given period of time. Social campaign is probably one of them, but not unique. But this fact can defend the effectiveness of negative results that indicate a decline in attitudes - a regression may result from other actions at this time-for example, increase the number of attractive messages in the media that glorify violence or unfavourable in terms of prevention of events that have been publicised by the media during the period.

In Poland, we are very interested in the British campaigns related to the problem outlined in the report VAW Kely Liz and Jo Lovett from London Metropolitan University.

They were directed to a precisely defined target groups (eg. boys over 13 years of age, the perpetrators of sexual violence), which allows focus the message in order to reach the interests and beliefs of that particular group. We especially liked the campaign “We Are Men : Promoting non-violence forms of Masculinity among young men”. Its form and manner of communication, the means we believe to be particularly successful for this group of recipients. In Poland, there is no campaign aimed at men, especially young men, where they hope to change attitudes towards women is particularly promising.

We were also interested in project in Northern Ireland (Women's Aid in Antrim, Ballymena ...etc) as a good local practice. For several years in Poland, particular emphasis has been laid on developing local actions as the most suited to the specific nature and mentality of the community. This year, the Blue Line, together with the

Spanish Foundation “La Caixa” will implement the project of professional elicitation of women/victims of domestic violence, who are determined to leave the perpetrator. Cooperation with employers who would be willing to hire women from our programme is a part of the project. We would be happy to follow the experience and forms of the Northern Ireland project.

The areas of gender equality and VAWG are very difficult to separate from each other in both theory and practice. Both also intersect with issues of domestic violence and prevention of sex crimes. Equally difficult is the prevention of risky behaviours (especially the first and second degree) to separate the impact of prevention for alcohol problems, drug use, risky sexual behaviour or crime).

In the field of awareness-raising campaign (ARC), the key seems to be working with the media - both journalists and editors, publishers and media owners, building jointly with the CSR programmes.

Our “promising practices” in this area are short educational seminars that we organised for journalists to enable them to: establish a good relationship with NGOs dealing with the issues of victims of domestic violence, increase awareness about the problem of violence and the psychology of victims, interpret statistical data and research in this area, access to current information. This contributed significantly to the improvement of the relationship between professionals in the field of prevention of domestic violence and VAW and the media, stopped (temporarily) bad from the standpoint of public awareness messages.

Acceleration of the exchange of good (or at least promising) practices could possible implement the campaign relating to this area in other countries without royalties. Campaigns carried out by the EU should contain a clause available for other countries that would cover only the costs of preparing its version. Thus the two Polish NGO - Blue Line and Nobody's Children Foundation - have implemented a campaign linked to the prevention of violence against children (Childhood without abuse) in 6 countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine)⁸.

Sharing visual materials, commercials, finished the campaign scenarios that have been “tested” with success in another country would be a great convenience and reduced costs of independent execution.

⁸ <http://fdn.pl/dziecinstwo-bez-przemocy-7>