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The costs of violence against women in Estonia

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Abstract:

Understanding and awareness of problems related to GBV has improved and a lot has been done in the field of violence prevention and victim support in Estonia. The first special Development Plan for Reducing Violence 2010–2014 with violence related to minors, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings. The Strategy for Preventing Violence 2015–2020 targeted to the same topics, but more attention was paid to intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Estonia signed the Istanbul Convention in 2014, with ratification in 2017, the IC entered into force on 1 February 2018. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Convention. There is a need for better gender disaggregated data collection. The e-File system may offer high quality data for the purposes of qualitative and case-by-case analysis, but significant challenges in connection with statistical analysis remain. In 2014-2015, there were couple of attempts to assess the cost of violence against women and the estimation varied from EUR 116 million to 500 million per year. There is a need to increase the budget for violence prevention for reducing the costs of violence.

Abbreviations

ACF	Active Citizens Fund
CCP	Code of Criminal Procedure
DP	Development plan
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESF	European Social Fund
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GBV	gender-based violence
IC	The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
IT	Information technology
IPV	intimate partner violence
MARAC	Multi-agency risk assessment conference
MS	Member State
PC	Penal Code
SACC	Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
VAW	violence against women

1. Tackling violence against women

1.1 Prevalence of violence against women

Domestic violence constitutes half of all crimes of violence and 85 % of domestic violence cases were classified as cases of physical abuse. This shows that other forms of violence are neither reported nor taken seriously. Psychological and economical abuse in the family context is often inapplicable due to a poor legal basis. In Estonia in 2020, out of 3987 registered cases 85 % was a physical abuse, 11 % was a threat, 3 % sexual violence, and 1 % offenses against life.¹ Physical abuse if committed in a close relationship or relationship of subordination is an aggravating circumstance from 2015. According to the Victim Survey, in 2020, 5 % of respondents (women and men) was victim of crime, it is impossible to say, where it happened.²

5 % of women from Estonia said that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence within the 12 months prior to the interview the FRA survey carried out in 2012 (FRA, 2014; EU average was 8 %). 2 % of women have been victim of IPV over the 12 months preceding the survey in Estonia (EU average was 4 %).

The FRA Fundamental Rights Survey data were collected in 2019 to study people's experiences and views of their rights in the EU-27 (FRA, 2021).³ 9 % women from Estonia said that they have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months.⁴ 84 % of women did not report the incident of physical violence (EU average was 68 %), 12 % told to somebody and 5 % admitted that "Police were already aware so no need to report". The increased share of women with physical violence experience in the past 12 months is the evidence of heightened awareness of VAW.

In 2015, Proos et al. (2016) have asked women and men aged 15-74 and found that from the age of 15, 42 % of women and 40 % of men have experienced mental, physical and/or sexual violence, in total about 215 000 women and 189 000 men.

1.2 Data availability

The Strategy for Preventing Violence for 2015–2020 set a target to collect and analyse gender-based statistics on the prevalence of violence and injuries caused by violence. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the arrangement of data collection, analysis and publication on crime. On the basis of the data in the e-File system (administrative data), and a small-scale victim survey, the report on crime during the previous year by 1 March each year is published. The e-File system collects all information

¹ <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2020/perevagivald-ja-ahistamine>.

² Unfortunately, the annual Victim Survey does not give an option that the place of the crime scene was the home.

³ The survey collected data in 29 countries: 27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom (an EU Member State at the time of the survey interviews) and North Macedonia (the only non-EU country with observer status at FRA when the survey was designed). In each country, a representative sample of respondents – ranging from about 1,000 in most countries to about 3,000 in France and Germany – participated in the survey. The survey interviews, which took place between January and October 2019, resulted in a total sample of 34,948 respondents.

⁴ <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2021/frs>

concerning the status of the proceedings, procedural acts and court adjudications in a central database creating digital dossiers available simultaneously to all concerned parties. The crime statistics reports include chapters about homicide, domestic violence (incl. stalking and sexual harassment), sexual violence (incl. rape), and human trafficking statistics. The incidents are classified and data collected according to the crimes defined in the Penal Code. The e-File also includes the following breakdowns: the age and sex of the victim, the sex of the perpetrator, the age of the perpetrator (in case of homicides and rape), and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. The latter variable to identify has remained problematic. The e-File system is not planned for statistical analysis and needs to be developed for this purpose.

Administrative data collections by police and justice services are cost-efficient sources on recorded and prosecuted cases of GBV. They inform the policy-makers whether measures to protect women and to punish perpetrators are working or not. However, differences in definitions and recording can hinder efforts to obtain reliable and comparable data. Therefore, harmonising administrative data collection on GBV nationally and at EU level is a key to provide a reliable picture of the scope of the issue.

Domestic violence is often unreported and unnoticed by bystanders. For example, in 2018, there were 505 registered cases with children experienced sexual abuse, but it might be the tip of the iceberg and a lot goes unnoticed and undetected. Older victims do not report cases and it is difficult to get the victim to cooperate.

The victim support service is a governmental service, available all-over the country and coordinated by the Victim Support Department of the Social Insurance Board (SIB). Their budget is known and data could be used. But, the SIB also coordinates subcontractors' projects and services, mostly provided by the NGOs, where a voluntary work is quite common and the real costs are complicated to estimate. The SIB coordinates the women's support centre service, which is a compound service available in every county in Estonia. The basic funding to every centre is known, but it is hard to estimate what is an additional income of the NGOs (projects, donations) and how it is used by the women's centres.

The health data remain problematic. Family physicians do not report about all injuries, only serious cases with signs of violence are reported to police. The rural municipality or city government must be notified of the person in need of help, if possible, directly to the social worker. The rural municipality or city government or the police must be notified of a person in danger. Health practitioners learn to recognise the signs of violence.

The Department of Health Statistics of the National Institute for Health Development operates as a central unit that is in charge of health statistics in Estonia. The statistical information is produced by following the principles of objectivity, reliability, relevance, confidentiality and transparency. Victims of violence could not be identified through ICD-10 codes (X85-Y09).

There is also a problem of unmet medical care. Self-reported unmet need for medical care was said to be a problem for 15 % of respondents in Estonia in 2019 (Eurostat,

2019). This indicates that access to health care remains a challenge in Estonia. There is a serious problem with the access to psychiatrists and psychotherapists.

1.3 The spending

Most of the violence prevention strategies and action plans have been implemented within the general budgetary framework. The Estonian report for GREVIO states that it is complicated to offer complete detailed overview of the funding resources allocated specifically for work against violence against women and domestic violence in Estonia. The majority of the funding is covered by the state in the form of operational expenses of the ministries and their subordinate authorities, including the police, prosecutor's office, courts, health and care services, schools etc. The municipalities offer several social services and are financed through the municipal budget. In addition, in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, support has been received, for example, from foreign grants (including the ESF, the EEA and Norway Grants, and the ACF). Important is also volunteer and private sector contribution, which has significantly grown in recent years. In 2021, an open application rounds (total EUR 380 000) for NGOs and legal persons in public or private law registered in Estonia is planned for two measures:

- to raise awareness on domestic violence issues and reducing the demand for buying sex;
- to train specialists on domestic violence issues and creation of a social programme.

The State Budget Strategy 2021-2024 of Estonia has planned resources for combatting domestic violence, development of victim support system, maintaining 24-hour crisis helpline service 116 006, providing a focal point for trafficking cases and psychosocial crisis management, strengthening the service of Sexual Assault Crisis Centres (SACCs). There is highlighted the activities of ensuring protection and empowerment of the victim, adequate treatment of perpetrators and strengthening of cooperation between the authorities in cases of domestic violence. Calculated and transferred direct costs 2020 – 2024:

- Legal fees of third parties – EUR 700 000 a year;
- Compensation for victims of crime – near EUR 100 000 a year;
- Psychological care for victim of an offence is planned to increase from EUR 739 000 to 1 216 000.

The Social Insurance Board develops and coordinates violence prevention, victim services and runs perpetrators program, manages within limits of the state budget and foreign funding (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Budget of some victim support services in 2018-2019, euros

	2018	2019
Women's shelter service	786 000	1 050 000
Rehabilitation of victims of sexual violence	78 000	116 000
Psychological support	394 000	667 000
Compensation for crime victims	328 000	244 000
Social programs for perpetrators of violence	58 000	83 000
Crisis counselling 24/7	0	182 000

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs; First Report (2021).

Women's support centres provide psychosocial support, advice and counselling and temporary accommodation if needed. According to the existing data the cost per survivor was 366 euros in 2018 and 483 euros in 2019 (**Table 2**). The state funding for women's support centres is inadequate.

Table 2. Support provided by women's support centres in 2018-2020.

	Survivors	Medical care was needed	Accommodation	Funding by state (EUR)	Cost per survivor (EUR)
2017	NA	NA	NA	641 292	NA
2018	2150	115 (6 %)	150	786 000	365.58
2019	2176	162 (7 %)	155	1 050 000	482.54
2020	2153	NA	135	NA	NA

Source: Kink et al. (2020); Valberg et al. (2017).

The Ministry of the Interior has been funding the MARAC teams supported by ESF. In the years 2018-2020 the amount was EUR 398 785. The Estonian report for GREVIO shows widespread training programmes held on violence related issues for state officials, professionals and NGOs. One problem is the high personnel turnover, which keeps the training costs high and hampers building a competence base (First Report, 2021).

2. Research on the cost of violence against women

EIGE administered a study of methodologies for the estimation of the cost of GBV (Walby & Olive, 2015). An analysis of the feasibility of methodologies with respect to the availability of data sources, recommended methods were illustrated in a case study centred on the UK. Three main types of costs were identified: lost economic output, provision of services, including health, legal, social and specialised; and the personal (physical and emotional) impact on the victim. In order to support the estimation of the cost of intimate partner violence, it is necessary to have quality information as to the extent, frequency and severity of GBV. Unfortunately, these data do not exist and the FRA surveys and also the GBV survey administered by Eurostat⁵

⁵ Eurostat is carrying out an EU-wide survey on GBV. The draft questionnaire and the draft methodology prepared for the EU-wide survey was piloted in 2017-2018.

are important steps to fill the gap. The EIGE survey has estimated the costs of violence for Estonian society higher than the Estonian researchers' findings, this could be caused by remarkable differences between wages in the UK and in Estonia.

Two studies carried out on the cost of violence against women, estimating the cost of intimate partner violence against women to the Estonian society (Pettai et al., 2016; Kallaste et al., 2015). The first time in Estonia, Pettai et al. (2016) tried to calculate the domestic violence (incl. physical abuse, homicides/femicides, and rape) cost to the Estonian society and found that it is EUR 116.5 million a year. The cost was calculated using international methodologies, prevalence study data and registry-based databases. The price is based on the number of victims who have been injured, sought help and reached to crime statistics. Authors state that the real cost can be ten times higher, because only every tenth victim of domestic violence turns to the police and seeks help. The violence experienced is detrimental to the health of the victims. During the year, a total of 52 942 people was injured due to domestic violence, including 37 810 women and 15 132 men. 31 % of victims have experienced bruising as a result of violence in the face and 22 % in the body, every tenth has experienced internal bleeding as a result of violence in the last 12 months.

In Estonia, no method to calculate costs for intimate partner violence to police and justice has been employed thus far. Pettai et al. (2016) have used a mixed (eclectic) model, where incident costs and workload costs related to family violence were considered. There was calculated an estimated average time (hours) spent on one incident/case. There is known (approximately) number of cases of intimate partner violence and wages of people in public sector. The total costs for domestic violence to the police and judiciary, included costs for pre-trial and court proceeding, detention, legal assistance, expert analysis, imprisonment, and probation were calculated. The researchers conducted structured interviews with investigators, prosecutors and judges in order to evaluate the average time expenditure for dealing with a domestic violence case, using the average wages for respective positions.

Pettai et al. (2016) have studied the Hämeenlinna study experience as well as the UK study from 2001 (Heiskanen & Piispa, 2002; Walby 2004). The advantages of the Hämeenlinna study can be described as simplicity and comprehensibility, but the disadvantage is the limited costs used in the calculation, which is why the indirect costs of violence, such as the costs of medicines or days off work, are not known. In the UK study, the estimates of the extent and nature of domestic violence were derived from four sources: the 2001 British Crime Survey self-completion module on Inter-Personal Violence (BCS IPV) (Walby and Allen 2004); the Criminal Statistics for homicides; reports from agencies; and a review of previous research (Walby 2004).

Kallaste et al. (2015) have studied the violent crime costs for Estonian society and have selected crimes – murder/manslaughter, rape and robbery. For each of the offenses in question, the costs related to the criminal proceedings and punishment of criminal offenses, i.e. the costs of the criminal justice system, and the damage resulting from the consequences. Prevention costs were not considered. The short- and long-term costs to society of one crime and the total costs of crimes registered with the police per year are found. As not all sub-categories of expenditure can be

considered in the study, these are partial estimates. Based on the number of criminal proceedings per year, the cost of the consequences of rape and abduction is underestimated. Kallaste et al. (2015) estimated the cost of one rape case about EUR 100000 and the cost EUR 5 557 181 per year, out of which near half of the cost is related to the consequences.

3. Discussion

Pettai et al. (2016) have used the experience of the Hämeenlinna study (2001), where a bottom-up data collection method was used. Authors used also the UK study results (Walby 2004). From the UK survey was learned that three main types of data are needed to identify the costs of domestic violence. Firstly, there is a need to know the extent and nature of domestic violence, including both the number of victims and the number of incidents detected. Secondly, there must be some dimension to assess the impact of the extent and nature of domestic violence on victims and society as a whole (to what extent it disrupts working life, causes suffering, etc.). The third element relates to the cost of providing the service, the economic loss and society's willingness to avoid the cost to the person of pain and suffering. Walby (2004) admits that there are some costs of domestic violence for which there is insufficient data to enable reliable estimates such as for the long-term cost implications in relation to children as the next generation; informal support from friends, family, volunteers and the wider society; and mental health costs. In Estonia, it is complicated to say anything about costs of victim support services provided by the NGOs. Pettai et al. (2016) argue that on the one hand, the reason is the lack of systematic data (grants are received from various sources, a significant part is still voluntary, i.e. unpaid work), on the other hand, the sensitivity of the data – it is not recommended to declare publicly the receipt and provision of assistance.

Pettai et al. estimated the cost of domestic violence EUR 116.5 million for the Estonian society a year, which equals to approximately 88 euros per resident each year. This is four times higher than the Hämeenlinna study results from 2001 (Heiskanen & Piispa, 2002; Siltala & Hisasue, 2021). The EIGE study estimated higher cost for violence against women for the Estonian society – EUR 320.9 million for IPV and EUR 593.1 million for GBV against women (Walby & Olive, 2015). The main challenges in the EIGE study were related to the measurement of the extent of violence (severity and frequency), availability of disaggregated data by gender and identification a relationship with perpetrator; the identification of the extent of employment losses; the measurement of the extent of service use; and the measurement of the public valuation of the physical and emotional impact of the violence.

Walby (2004) highlights the problem with data and confirms that the official statistics on British society supply very little information about domestic violence. While public agencies routinely collect statistics on some of their activities, they do not usually collect information on domestic violence. This is also a problem in Estonia in 2021. Walby points out a need for improvement of data collection procedures and that the data collection could serve a dual function by assisting planning in relation to service

need as well as obtaining a more accurate assessment of the cost of domestic violence.

There is still a lot of case by case analysis and key-word search used for annual crime reports. Analysts of the Ministry of Justice study e-File system and use keyword search from the descriptions of violent episodes to specify information on IPV and DV. It was reported that an additional budget is needed to reorganise e-File system enabling the statistical analysis. It is unbelievable, that costs of violence, which is measured in hundreds of million euros and the improved data availability and management is seen too expensive even if the IT costs would be ten or twenty million euros.

Kallaste et al. (2015) acknowledged that the information related to state legal aid was manually retrieved from court judgments for the study. Throughout the databases of the various authorities could be structured in such a way that the costs incurred can be linked to specific criminal proceedings. Such a general approach would allow for more accurate cost accounting at national level for different criminal proceedings.

It is easy to dream that health statistics should be easy to use. Siltala and Hisasue (2021) argue that for the purpose of the study on cost of domestic violence, victims of violence will be identified through ICD-10 codes for assault (X85-Y09). It is impossible to use this source in Estonia and there could be a doubt that this is also impossible to apply in Finland. These codes do not offer entire information about cause of injury or health problem. There is also T73 on effects of other deprivation and T74 on maltreatment syndromes, but then there should be added some additional information and some easy to read codes. There is needed additional case-by case qualitative analysis.

The strength of the UK study (2001) can be considered its large scale and a good overview of the various costs incurred as a result of domestic violence. However, the weakness of the study can be pointed out the cost of the study and for a replication is a prerequisite the existence of accurate statistical databases (Pettai et al., 2016). Siltala and Hisasue (2021) encourage to critical discussion whether cost-related research really is a breakthrough way towards better policies or are resources instead wasted on the costly and time-consuming calculations required by such research.

There are direct and indirect costs of violence. It is not so complicated to analyse the direct costs if data collection is adequate and gender sensitive, but the problem with calculating the indirect costs and costs of consequences remain a challenge. There is high cost due to lost resources, wasted lives and lost opportunities resulting from violence. This cost is too high for a person with violence experience and for the society that it is impossible to say that research on violence does not serve a high purpose for a better future.

4. Conclusions

There are problems with data availability and legal definitions of GBV and different forms of violence against women. Administrative data are a distinctive form of big data. While these data are not collected primarily for research purposes, reviewed

and elaborated additional coding can present new opportunities for researchers. The challenges associated with such administrative data from a research point of view is that data production is un-harmonised (semi-systematic) across various state institutions. These data vary by the range of formats: there are personal data, datasheets, texts, pictures, and videos etc. These data in the different databases should enable to create multidimensional datasets, where multiple fragments of raw data are linked. Today analysts face difficulties in producing official statistics. There is a need:

- To revise classification of crime for statistical purposes, to pay special attention on data needs in the field of GBV.
- To set up a working group to agree on definitions of different forms of GBV – physical, sexual, psychological and economic.
- Data collection and presentation should accommodate data requirements by the Victims' Directive (recital 64), Istanbul Convention and satisfy data needs of the national agencies and NGOs.
- Making better use of administrative data and to initiate cooperation with state institutions, the research community and software developers to discuss raw data and data collection from research and usage perspectives.
- To define relationships of the parties involved in different types of offences, to define the relationship of intimate partners and to use these variables thorough legal proceedings, recording and counting units.
- Economic and psychological violence, e.g. coercive control, should be defined, and amendments should be made to necessary texts/laws to reflect such changes.

Walby & Olive (2015) suggested to elaborate the EU-led strategy. Authors proposed to develop and carry out of one excellent case study of one Member State and then to extrapolate the findings to the EU as a whole or based on a first extrapolation for each Member State proportionate to population size. This idea is worth pursuing.

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