



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys: Challenges and Opportunities

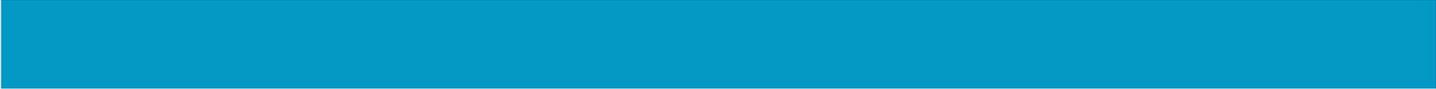
Sweden, 16-17 September 2019

Comments Paper - Germany



“The information and views set out in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission’s behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

Justice



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

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

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm

Preventing domestic violence with Men and Boys in Germany

Frank Scheinert

State Association of Boys' and Men's Work in Saxony e.V.

Abstract:

The following position paper identifies developments in the help system for combatting domestic violence in Germany. Besides women and children, also men are addressed as victims. There are positive examples of support and counselling services for women and men as perpetrators and victims. The focus rests on the opportunities in considering impulses from the gender and men's political debate for the further improvement of the help system for combatting domestic violence in Europe.

1. The help system for combating domestic violence in Germany

The help system for combating domestic violence in Germany is largely directed at combating violence against women due to the different levels of concern. In 2017, 138,893 people were affected by domestic violence, including 113,965 women (82.1%) and 24,928 men (17.9%)¹. However, these are bright field data (displayed acts)². In the same reporting year, 116,043 suspects were recorded, including 93,494 (80.6%) male and 22,549 (19.4%) female persons³.

Currently there are about 7,000 women's homes in 350 women's shelters. Every year, about 30,000 affected women, some of them with their children, can be admitted here. Supportive since 2012 there is a "help phone for women"⁴. The online consultation can currently be offered in 16 languages.

In Germany, there are also offender-oriented counselling centers. These advise perpetrators in the area of domestic and sexual violence as well as couples. In some

¹ BKA. Study Partnership Violence - Criminal Statistics Evaluation 2017, P.5

² BKA. Partnership Violence - Criminal Statistics Evaluation 2017, P.4

³ BKA. Study Partnership Violence - Criminal Statistics Evaluation 2017, S.10

⁴ <https://www.hilfetelefon.de>, 08000 – 116 016, gesetzliche Grundlage ist das Hilfetelefontgesetz

cases, separate consultation of perpetrators and victims takes place via regional cooperation networks. The Federal Working Group on Workers Dealing with Domestic Violence e.V.⁵ currently has 73 members. In addition, there are other offender-oriented counselling services.

In Germany, there are also programmes for male victims of domestic violence and their children. In the Swedish position paper, this target group is only a side issue. We regret that and therefore we will give a description of the situation of male victims of domestic violence in Germany.

The actors involved in violence protection work are usually connected through regional networks and domestic violence working groups. There, in addition to the children's and women's shelters and men's protection projects, police, lawyers and the various counselling centers on violence protection are networked.

In the various school types in Germany there are violence prevention services in school and after class. In many schools, there are additional conflict mediation programmes. Here students are themselves active in the clarification of conflicts. In some cases, such programmes are already available in kindergartens. In addition to the syllabus, external institutions offer courses on sexual prevention and sexual education. Discussions are conducted here on role models, but also on sexual and domestic violence. Increasingly, school social workers are also being used.

Anti-violence courses, social training courses and perpetrator-victim-compensation are offered in the child and youth welfare, in particular in street work and the aids to the education (outpatient and stationary auxiliary offers).

In the area of judiciary in prisons and aftercare, there are few known programmes that specifically address domestic violence.

2. Gender and men's political debate in Germany

The first women's shelter in Germany was opened in 1976 in Berlin. Since then, a network of women's shelters has developed. However, it is still not possible for every woman affected by violence to submit needs-based support, help and advice. The Federal Minister of Family Affairs also pointed out in 2018 that programmes for perpetrators must be expanded.

The Violence Protection Act allows the basis for remittances (up to 14 days) due to partnership violence. If the victim desires, the police provide information to

⁵ <https://www.bag-taeterarbeit.de/>

intervention agencies who proactively provide counselling services. Another problem in Germany is that too few victims have filed a complaint to the police. Even a legally usable documentation of the injuries takes place too little. Thus, there are still too few convictions.

In case of male victims of domestic violence, the most reliable data is provided by the Criminal Statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office and the State Offices of Criminal Investigation. However, these only highlight the bright field (all reported offenses). In the state of Lower Saxony, there are now dark field studies from 2013 and 2017. The experience of these dark field studies should also be transferred to other federal states. In some states, there are now more dark field studies.

In the area of women affected by violence, there are 2 studies in Germany:

- Study "Life situation, safety and health of women in Germany" (2004)
- Violence against women in relationships (2014)

So far, only one pilot study (2004) has been conducted on male violence. For many years there have been men's political initiatives for a representative study of violence. So far without success.

3. Good Practice

In Germany, there are various resources and data files for information for perpetrators and victims:

- **www.odabs.de** - an online database for victims of crime
- **www.maennerberatungsnetz.de**⁶ - Online database for the search for counselling services and various counselling fields for boxes, men and fathers
- **www.hilfetelefon.de** - For women there is the help phone for women

For men affected by violence, there are currently 6 men's shelters with 14 places.

- 3 Men Protection apartments in the state of Saxony: Dresden, Leipzig, Plauen (9 places)
- 1 Men Protection apartment in Stuttgart (2 places)

⁶ Since Feb 2019 there is the web presence "maennerberatungsnetz.de". This page offers an interactive map with regional offers of men advice and is to help with the local search for advice and support for boys, men and fathers in German-speaking countries. This also includes offers in Austria, Switzerland and Lichtenstein.

- 1 Men Protection apartment in Oldenburg (2 places, volunteer operated)
- 1 Men Protection apartment in Munich (1 place, privately funded)
- In the states of Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia, two each Men Protection apartments are to be opened per federal state in 2019

In Hamburg, the project STOP⁷ - Districts without partner violence was developed by the University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with the city of Hamburg in 5 districts.

In all federal states there are state action plans to combat domestic violence. The most be revised after 5 years.

In a federal model project⁸: 2018/2019 and five federal states tested new approaches for needs-based planning and further development of the help system for women affected by violence⁹. In doing so, the Federal Republic fulfils its obligation under the Istanbul Convention to combat violence against women.

4. Transferability of the Swedish experience

Germany does not yet have long-term strategies to combat domestic violence. The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs is planning an action programme against violence against women for the next few years, as well as an investment programme to expand offers for women affected by violence. All activities and initiatives could be bundled in a long-term strategy. The goal must be the further networking of offerings in the domestic violence assistance system and should also include offers for perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

The impetus for improving work in the Swedish criminal justice system also needs to be incorporated into policy at various levels of administration and into concrete legislative initiatives and changes in the penitentiary system and aftercare with a focus on preventing multiple offenses.

The experience in risk management could be linked to the current discussion in Germany on the handling of high-risk cases.

⁷ <https://stop-partnergewalt.org/wordpress/>. STOP is also available in Vienna and in Dresden (Saxony)

⁸ Short description of the federal model project: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/hilfesystem-zum-schutz-von-frauen-vor-gewalt-wird-weiterentwickelt/120232>

⁹ In Saxony, the male protection projects were in the testing and further development of the help system Domestic violence involved.

Awareness-raising campaigns should be geared to increasing the detection and reporting of domestic violence offenses. The goal should be that more and more people affected by violence come out of the spiral of violence and can take advantage of existing counselling and support services.

Model projects in the protection of violence must not be limited to the big cities, but must also reach people in rural areas.

5. Gender and men's political impulses for the European debate

We are fundamentally interested in continuing the expert discussion on violence with men and boys. As a state working group boys and men work Saxony e.V., we start from October 2019, the project of a nationwide specialist and coordination point men's violence. In particular, this coordination office should provide expert advice on existing and future male violence prevention projects and support them in setting up new projects. Target groups are also municipal state and federal politicians as well as local governments, state governments and the Federal Government, in particular the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs. Other activities will be:

- the initiation of studies on violence
- the organisation of symposia
- transnational exchange of information on men and violence

For the continuation of the understanding at European level, we propose:

- Transnational exchange of expertise (conferences, visits, working visits)
- Exchange of statistical data and link with Eurostat activities in the area of domestic violence against women, men and their children
- Exchange for help phones and online advice
- Exchange of information and awareness-raising services for people affected by violence (databases, Internet offers, campaigns)