

Exchange of good practices on gender equality

Awareness-raising activities to fight violence against women and girls

United Kingdom, 7-8 February 2012

Summary report

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Awareness-raising activities to fight violence against women and girls implemented in the UK and in Greece were presented and discussed at an exchange seminar hosted by the British government in London on the 7th and 8th February 2012. The seminar was attended by government representatives and experts from 15 countries¹, in addition to representatives of the EC-DG Justice, EIGE and FRA.

1. The good practice of the host and associated countries

In both Greece and the UK violence against women and girls is widespread, with high social and economic costs. Both the UK Home Office and the Greek General Secretariat for Gender Equality (Ministry of Interior) have recently adopted comprehensive strategies to fight violence against women and girls. The UK *Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls*² and the Greek *National Programme to Combat Violence Against Women 2009-2013*³, include awareness-raising campaigns aimed at different target groups: women, men, professionals in the health care, justice and education systems.

1.1. The UK background and policy approach

The UK representatives and expert presented data showing that in England, violence against women and girls is a more prevalent cause of health problems amongst women than stroke, diabetes and heart disease⁴, and that tolerance of violence remains widespread in public attitudes and beliefs. According to figures presented by the Home Office in the UK: 30% of women (against 17% of men) have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16; 19% of women (against 2% of men) have experienced sexual assault; 18% of women (against 9% of men) have experienced stalking; repeat victimisation accounted for three-quarters of all incidents of domestic violence; and one-in-three girls have experienced unwanted sexual touching at school, and in 2010 the Forced Marriage Unit received over 1,700 calls to its helpline on suspected/potential cases of forced marriage.

Recent research suggests that the attitudes and beliefs that normalise and tolerate violence against women and girls remain widespread in the UK, notwithstanding a greater degree of formal gender equality in education, employment and the family since the 1970s. According to the Home Office, 36% of people believe that a woman should be held wholly or partly responsible for being sexually assaulted or raped if she was drunk, and 26% if she was wearing what are considered to be sexy or revealing clothing in public. One-in-five people think it would be acceptable (in certain circumstances) for a man to hit or slap his female partner in response to her being

¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

² <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-endviolence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan>

³ GSGE. (Nov. 2009). *National Programme on preventing and combating violence against women 2009-2013*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality. Available at <http://www.isotita.gr/en/var/uploads/english/NATIONAL%20PROGRAMME%20ON%20PREVENTING%20AND%20COMBATING%20VIOLENCE%20AGAINST%20WOMEN%202009-2013.pdf>.

⁴ Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against Women and Children, 2010.

dressed in such sexy or revealing clothing in public. Around 43% of teenage girls believe that it is acceptable for a boyfriend to be aggressive towards his partner.

The UK has long experience in combating violence against women and girls, including legislative acts, the funding of support services and of awareness-raising campaigns. On 25 November 2010, the Government launched a “Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls” outlining the guiding principles for a cross-governmental integrated strategy to tackle the problem. The strategy was underpinned by an Action Plan, launched in March 2011 and involving 88 initiatives to be implemented over 2011-2014 with a budget of £28 million (euro 33 million). An additional £3.5 million (euro 4 million) per year for three years was made available to fund the Rape Crisis Centres. It covers England and Wales, with Scotland and Northern Ireland having their own strategies.

The approach is focussed on prevention, with the aim of changing attitudes, especially among teenagers, in schools and the media. Furthermore, the Home Office is seeking the involvement of government departments and a stronger role for NGOs and local actors in implementation of preventative and supportive actions. The role of central government is to provide the legislative framework, funding and standards for national support services (help-lines, specialist services, support centres), training programmes and media campaigns. Local bodies and NGOs are responsible for service delivery, policy prioritisation and networking at local level, as well as funding for local initiatives.

The main current initiatives include the following:

- a campaign targeted at teenagers (aged 13 to 18) to prevent them from becoming victims or perpetrators of abusive relationships, is based on the website and on-line campaigns via Facebook and MTV (launched in March 2010);
- a campaign against the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood in the media and advertising;
- awareness-raising measures in the armed forces;
- awareness-raising activities against Female Genital Mutilation, targeting certain ethnic minorities;
- support to national help-lines aimed at victims of violence, men and perpetrators; and
- training for health care professionals involved in preventing and curing domestic and sexual violence.

Future steps involve: a campaign against rape; the signing of the Council of Europe Convention⁵; the updating of the Action Plan; the launch of specific awareness-raising measures at local level; and research into the health effects of violence against women and girls.

⁵ The Ad Hoc Committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO) of the Council of Europe prepared the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Convention has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on April 2011 and has been opened for signature in Istanbul on 11 May 2011. The Convention has been so far ratified by 10 countries.

According to the Home Office representative, the key success factors of the plan are the strong political leadership, the cross-governmental approach (at least eight government departments are involved, meeting every three months with all departments and NGOS involved in the strategy to discuss progress) and partnerships with NGOs and community actors.

Assessment of the UK measures

The UK independent expert emphasised the *strengths* of the UK approach, including the adoption of a unified strategy and the recognition of the important role of prevention in tackling the problem. Other strengths relate to the implementation of valuable community-based initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns, the latter specifically targeted at young people to promote new forms of non violent masculinity among young men and to change attitudes that view abuse in relationships as acceptable.

In the expert's view, the main *drawback* of the current strategy is the lack of a more consistent long-term prevention strategy with integrated actions addressing the causes of violence against women and girls that is rooted in persistent gender inequality and gender orders. For effective prevention it is considered necessary to implement a range of targeted interventions combining education, community mobilisation and capacity building. In addition, media and public awareness campaigns are needed to address the intersections between gender and other social and economic inequalities. These elements should be designed and delivered in a coordinated manner, bringing together the government, key institutions and NGOs. The expert also indicated the lack of a coherent response, with different policies and initiatives being developed across the four home nations and some regions. There was also unevenness in cross-governmental commitment in addressing the issue, with the Home Office and Justice more active, while other Departments (such as Education) less involved.

Regarding the implemented awareness campaigns, the expert underlined that to be more effective, campaigns should enhance social identification and give greater attention to the images they convey because of the high risk of reinforcing stereotypical representations of men and boys as perpetrators, and women and girls as victims.

1.2. The Greek background and policy approach

According to the country representative, in Greece there is a high social tolerance of violence against women and girls because of the prevailing gender stereotypes, with violence considered a "typical" male trait. The available information is limited but shows that:

- only 3.6% of respondents to the 2002-2003 Epidemiological Survey on intimate partner violence reported physical abuse and only 3.5% sexual abuse;
- 23.6% reported that they knew a woman relative or friend who had suffered or is suffering from intimate partner violence and 56% reported having experienced verbal and/or psychological abuse;
- women killed by a spouse or intimate partner represented 12% of all homicides that occurred in Greece between 2007 and 2009⁶; and

⁶ Data from criminal proceedings.

- one in three women victims of domestic violence married the offender even though he had shown signs of violent behaviour before marriage, and two out of three victims remained in the relationship for more than 10 years⁷.

The policy framework still has significant gaps, both in prevention and protection legislation and in the provision of support services. A law to prevent and fight domestic violence was adopted six years ago and some improvements have been made to laws related to sexual harassment and trafficking. However, significant gaps remain in Greek legislation regarding various forms of violence against women, and in the way the law is implemented. For example, currently only one Counselling Centre and six shelters for abused women and their children are available for the entire country. The existing shelters cover the basic housing needs for victims and offer counselling services, but only in Greek. There are no employment programmes, no services for children and, in general, there are no “second stage” provisions and facilities after the end of the short-term sheltered accommodation. Training programmes for professionals are almost non-existent or short-lived because they are usually connected to specific limited duration projects.

Within this framework, the National Programme, launched in November 2011, is the first comprehensive attempt in Greece to fight violence against women. It provides legislative measures to strengthen the institutional framework, as well as actions to prevent violence (including awareness-raising measures), assist victims and train professionals, with the aim of empowering women victims of violence. The Programme is co-financed by the National Reference Strategic Framework⁸ with a total estimated budget of euro 30 million.

In 2011, the actions implemented included the launch of a three-year awareness-raising campaign and activation (in March 2011) of the first Greek SOS helpline, operating 24/7. There were also training activities aimed at professionals and public officials dealing with women victims of violence (advisors, lawyers, police officers and healthcare workers), and financial support to NGOs and women’s organisations active in the field of gender equality and human rights, to contribute to preventative actions and to combat gender stereotyping in the mass media. Years 2012 and 2013 will be devoted to the implementation of support services, providing psychological support, legal counselling and legal aid that will include 15 new shelters (at least one in each of the 13 Greek regions), 14 new Counselling Centres and the upgrading of the existing ones, presentations to schools and teenage students, and funding NGOs for counselling, training and awareness-raising projects.

The presentation focused on the three-year long campaign, launched in April 2011, to raise awareness among the general public on violence against women as a violation of a woman’s human rights. It is also aimed at providing information about the existing SOS helpline and support structures. It focuses on demonstrating that violence refers to a large number of women and that obtaining support and assistance is possible (“You are not the only one and you’re not alone” is the main slogan of the campaign) and is co-funded by the European Social Fund with a budget of euro 543,000.

⁷ Data provided by the Counselling Centres.

⁸ The National Reference Strategic Framework sets out the investment priorities for the regional and sectoral programmes to be supported by the European Union over the seven-year period 2007-13. The *National Programme to combat violence against women 2009-2013* falls under Priority Axis III “Strengthening gender equality policies across the breadth of the public administration” of the Operational programme “Administrative Reform 2007-2013”.

The campaign is based on printed materials and online access (Facebook and other social media), TV and radio spots, information booths, banners, and city murals. It also includes the organisation of information sessions and conferences, such as participation in the 15th Biennale of Young Artists in the Mediterranean, organisation of an International Conference on Violence Against Women (held in October 2011), and a special film festival screening of 16 foreign and Greek films on violence against women. The primary target groups are women victims of violence, the general population over 15 years of age, professionals and agencies in contact with women and girls exposed to violence, and the civil society. To reach migrant women and women from ethnic minorities, the information leaflets were printed in four languages.

Provision for monitoring the progress of the awareness-raising campaign has been included in the programme and is scheduled to take place every six months on the basis of specific process and outcome indicators. Process indicators include those based on the dissemination means and items disseminated. Outcome indicators relate to the number of participants at the events, and the number of people who contacted the services promoted by the campaign at different periods of time (to allow comparison between “on” and “off” periods of the campaign).

Assessment of the Greek Action Plan

The independent expert underlined the important strengths of the National Programme and its innovativeness. In particular the comprehensive strategy at the basis of the awareness campaign, with a wide range of materials, activities and means to reach multiple target groups of young people, abused women, ethnic minority communities, professionals, and the general population. Innovative aspects of the campaign include its length (three years), use of on-line campaigns, attention to different languages, and involvement of art and cultural events to convey messages to everyone. Also underlined was the effectiveness of the campaign slogan - it is simple, clear and memorable in the Greek language. It conveys two important messages, “you are not the only one” supports the deconstruction of the stigma abused women bear and helps them to relieve the feelings of shame and guilt they might experience. “You are not alone” conveys a message of support to abused women and girls and points out that violence against them is a matter that concerns the entire population.

The other actions in the National Programme are also considered innovative and relevant in the Greek context. Attention was drawn to the following actions:

- implementation of the SOS helpline and new shelters and counselling centres;
- the initiative against gender stereotypes in the media;
- the awareness-raising and capacity building actions in the police, judicial and healthcare services;
- preventative activities in schools; and
- the financial support provided to NGOs and women’s organisations.

The only *weakness* identified by the expert was the evaluation of the awareness-raising campaign, which was not specified in the campaign’s planning phase and lacks adequate data. However, the monitoring indicators could be used to a certain

extent for evaluation, and as the basis for a survey assessing the outcomes, but further work is needed.

However, the sustainability of the National Programme in the future is at risk due to the difficult socio-economic conditions which might reduce political support to the issue. Another potential challenge comes from the new regulations for radio and television, which limits broadcasting to two social messages per year per agency.

2. The situation in the participating countries

According to the comment papers by the national experts, attention to violence against women and girls has been increasing in the last decade in all participating countries except the Netherlands. The policy approach has moved from the provision of support services and criminal justice responses, to a greater focus on awareness-raising and prevention measures. Most have adopted comprehensive policy strategies, either through multi-year action plans or programmes addressing all forms of violence against women, or with separate action plans for specific forms of violence, or targeted measures in gender equality plans. Nevertheless, there is still little knowledge of the outcome of such interventions, as only a few countries have monitored and evaluated the activities implemented.

The main preventative measures adopted are awareness-raising campaigns targeted at the general population and/or to specific population groups; professional training sensitisation programmes aimed at practitioners in contact with (potential) victims (police, social and health workers, judges, lawyers, school teachers and media professionals); and treatment programmes for abusers. Immediate support for women victims of violence is provided by help-lines and women's shelters offering temporary accommodation, psychological treatment and legal assistance to women victims of violence and their children. The design and implementation of these measures usually involves different actors and stakeholders such as national and local public institutions, service providers, NGOs and women's movements. NGOs play an important role in setting up and managing shelters, hotlines and services to support victims, and in lobbying for legislation and intervention. In some countries, NGOs are in fact the only providers of support services.

Common challenges for the participating countries relate to the ways of addressing children and teenagers. There is still not enough attention paid to the specific risks that hard-to-reach groups of women face (such as the disabled, ethnic minorities and immigrant women). Another challenge is the reduction in financial resources and in political attention given to the issue due to the current economic crisis. Furthermore, in some countries the increasing trend to present domestic violence as a gender neutral phenomenon is viewed with concern, since for the fight against violence to be effective, it should be strongly connected to gender equality and human rights policies. However, there are still wide differences among participating countries, reflecting their cultural attitude and social awareness of the problem and their different welfare systems.

Among the countries participating in the exchange meeting, **Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the UK, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands** present a consolidated tradition in the design and implementation of action plans to fight violence against women, often financed by public institutions at the national and local levels. Awareness-raising campaigns and prevention programmes are increasingly targeting men, teenagers, schools and employers' organisations in order to induce peer effects and change deeply-rooted behaviour. Vulnerable groups of women (such as ethnic

minorities, migrants, lesbians, transgendered persons, and disabled women) are also increasingly targeted by awareness-raising and preventative measures, as are professionals in the health care, education and judiciary sectors. Furthermore, recognition of the importance of cross-ministerial actions has been increasing.

In **Belgium**, action plans to fight violence against women have been adopted since 2001 and represent important political commitments. The current discussion is centred on whether to have an action plan on all forms of gender-based violence, or a more focussed plan on domestic violence. According to the Belgian expert, the main drawback of existing action plans is that they still represent lists of measures rather than real strategic documents with clear objectives, results, actions and targeted resources. Awareness-raising measures also address psychological violence and involve general campaigns, such as the White Ribbon, addressing men as actors for change, as well as targeted campaigns aimed at teenagers and at specific groups at risk (ethnic minority women and girls at risk of genital mutilation or of forced marriage). To ensure the appropriateness of words used, the translation has been carried out in collaboration with volunteers / NGOs from different ethnic communities.

More recently, attention has been focused on children as witnesses of violence and indirect victims of violence between partners. Professional training is regularly organised for the police, social workers, family practitioners and judges on signs of violence and the cycle of violence between partners. One important step in this respect was the adoption, in 2006, of guidelines for public prosecutors, which supported the collaboration between representatives of the different federal ministries, the exchange of information and the creation of regular meetings on domestic violence.

In **Denmark**, a sequence of national action plans and awareness-raising campaigns has been developed since 2002. The target group has been broadened from covering only Danish women to children, men, and ethnic minority women. Furthermore, cross-ministerial initiatives have been developed, involving the areas of equality, justice, integration, social affairs, education and health.

The 2010 National Strategy identifies, as key areas of action, prevention (with a focus on youth relationships), knowledge dissemination (for example on male victims of violence) short and long-term support for victims, and cross-disciplinary cooperation. One of the main goals is to ensure that fewer children and young people grow up in a home affected by violence. In general there is an increasing focus on men (as perpetrators and as victims) and two recent campaigns appeal to the majority of non-violent men as peers to stop violence against women, involving role models (male ministers, football players, etc.). Increased attention has also been given to the particular needs of victims from the ethnic minorities and their children, with trafficking and forced marriages high on the current policy agenda, with plans to ensure that victims of violence can stay in Denmark for longer periods.

Ireland has 30 years' history of women's movement activism which has supported legislative reforms and service provisions to women victims of violence. In 2007 a National Office (Cosc) was established to prevent domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, promoting a national strategy for 2010-2014, involving a major awareness-raising campaign across radio, billboards and online. Breaking with the past, the campaign focuses on perpetrators and bystanders. Campaigns targeted at teenagers and students were organised in collaboration with the Unions of Students and the Department of Education, which is also considering including an anti-violence module in schools' curriculum.

The frontline support services and shelters for victims are spread throughout the country, though financial resources have been consistently reduced in the last few years due to the austerity measures. The main challenge, according to the Irish expert, is that the budget cuts and restructuring taking place risk undermining the social capital accumulated over more than two decades in the fight against gender based violence. Another issue is the lack of attention to violence against or within same sex partnerships, persons with different sex orientation, transgendered persons, persons with a mental illness, autism, or intellectual disability.

Violence against women is also widespread in **Norway**, despite being considered one of the most gender equal countries in the world. An action plan against domestic violence (2008-2011, extended in January 2012) provides measures for victim safety, treatment of offenders, restorative justice, research, and awareness-raising. Nationwide awareness-raising and preventative measures have been implemented in cooperation with NGOs, the business sector, and other actors. A pilot project is to be developed for upper secondary schools and for children, with a special focus on family relationships, communication and conflict management. Awareness-raising among immigrants and refugees, as well as among the armed forces, has also been developed. The White Ribbon Campaign was conducted in cooperation with the national football association and the largest trade union in Norway, and this aimed to reach more than one million people, with a clear message on the responsibility of men to take part in stopping the violence.

In **Sweden**, violence against women is also still widespread. Since the 1970's the NGOs and especially the women's shelters movement, have been crucial in highlighting the issue and improving support services for abused women. The 2007-2010 "Action Plan for Combating Men's Violence against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honour and Violence in Same-Sex Relationships" contains a range of measures involving different government agencies in the judicial, health and youth departments, as well as in municipalities, county councils and NGOs. The objective is to integrate new working methods and approaches into regular activities, including follow-up and evaluation activities. Two other action plans were introduced against prostitution and human trafficking and to prevent forced marriages.

Awareness-raising campaigns have been promoted on the activation of a national helpline (in 2007) and to encourage victims and witnesses to contact the police in cases of violence. A website has been activated with information translated into English and easy-to-read Swedish, together with brief information in 23 other languages. Educational resources for teachers and other professionals who work with young people have been developed, as well as specific university courses for students, professionals and the training of trainers. An Internet-based and inter-disciplinary "knowledge bank" on violence against women, violence in same-sex relationships and violence in the name of honour was set up in 2010. The main challenge, according to the Swedish expert, is to reach professionals who meet women victims of violence in their daily work (especially teachers and workers in the education system) to address children and support the creation of a gender equality culture through education on human rights, sexual integrity and relationships.

The Netherlands has a history of active state support in combating violence against women, dating back to the 1970s. During the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was on violence against women as a form of gender-based discrimination and government policy focused on victim support services. In recent years, according to the Dutch expert, an increasingly gender-neutral approach has developed in this field, along with a decline in gender-sensitivity in society, so that currently the Netherlands does not have any comprehensive strategy or action plan in this field. The emphasis is currently

on domestic violence, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation, while sexual violence against women or girls (rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and sexual harassment) occupies only a marginal place in government interventions. The implementation (in 2009) of the emergency barring order law brought about a profound shift towards systemic multi-agency intervention programmes (focusing on the victim, perpetrator and children). Treatment programmes for convicted offenders of domestic violence are receiving increasing attention, even if evidence of their effectiveness is still very limited and not unequivocal.

According to the expert, the current Dutch policy approach suffers many drawbacks, including little attention to primary prevention or awareness-raising activities, and the fragmentation of interventions across various policy domains. Also, an individualistic approach tends to limit governmental involvement to police investigation and the prosecution of perpetrators and encourages 'self supportiveness' and the support of 'family and friends'. Also, a cultural shift is taking place with a tendency to selectively position the issue of violence against women as an ethnic minority problem and the decentralisation of policy responsibilities to provinces and municipalities without adequate financial support, which has resulted in large differences in policy implementation.

In **Bulgaria, Croatia, the FYROM, Malta, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia**, attention to violence against women is more recent. Different forms of violence have long been accepted within families and between partners, and only recently there is an increasing awareness in the population of the need to fight violence. In these countries, most attention is paid to fighting domestic violence and trafficking. Provision of shelters and support centres is often scarce, and the lack of stable funding reduces the continuity of service and prevents long-term planning. Women's movements, NGOs and international organisations, as well as European programmes (such as Daphne or the ESF), or bilateral cooperation programmes (as in Poland with Norway, and the FYROM with the Netherlands) have played a very important role in drawing the attention of politicians and the population to the issue and in supporting awareness-raising campaigns and institutional learning in combating violence against women. In **Malta and Poland** religious organisations also play an important role in the provision of support services.

In **Bulgaria**, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings are the most widespread and serious forms of violence against women. However, for 49% of the population domestic violence is considered a private issue. The current policy approach is based on strengthening the legal framework and the involvement of law enforcement institutions. NGOs play an important role as partners of the government institutions in the policy-making process and as service providers, though the state maintains the main role in the implementation and enforcement of policies and programmes. The 2012 National Action Plan for Gender Equality gives more attention to the issue of violence against women, relative to previous legislation, and envisages a series of measures including: prevention; awareness-raising; the empowerment of women; support to NGOs' specialised counselling for migrants and refugees; law enforcement; and punishment of perpetrators. It is expected that in 2012, a specific National Programme for Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women will be elaborated with the participation of all stakeholders.

According to the independent expert from **Croatia**, the war that ended 16 years ago left behind a high tolerance of all forms of violence, including that against women. Since then, the need to address violence against women has gained importance, thanks to women's NGOs, which have established the first services for victims. They have also lobbied for the introduction of legislative changes, the organisation of training for public

servants, the activation of media awareness campaigns, the introduction of systematic prevention programmes into school curricula, and the implementation of the first research on violence against women in Croatia. In 2003 a Law on the Protection from Domestic Violence was enacted and official police data have been collected since. Furthermore, an Office for Gender Equality was set up, which supported the implementation of action plans. The main drawbacks of the policies relate to the insufficient number of centres and shelters for victims and the need to assess the quality of the services provided. In this respect the Office for Gender Equality has produced a protocol of conduct in cases of sexual violence, which is awaiting adoption by the Government to become a binding document. Furthermore, inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation is to be improved, as well as the recognition of the role and importance of NGOs as relevant partners.

NGOs and international cooperation programmes have been crucial in the development of policies to fight violence against women in the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)**. NGOs have organised training for police, judges, health workers, professional support services and three national awareness campaigns on national television. A joint protocol for dealing with victims was prepared and activities for the prevention of domestic violence and awareness-raising were undertaken, in collaboration with the Labour Ministry and the Dutch Embassy in the country. According to the country expert, the FYROM presents an example of successful inter-institutional cooperation in the fight against domestic violence and trafficking in human beings, as well as cooperation between government institutions and NGOs. One of the main challenges in the country is how to reach women of different ethnic backgrounds in rural areas.

Domestic violence has received most of the attention given in **Malta**. The Roman Catholic Church is an important presence in this field, being a provider of support services and influencing the policy approach. Currently Malta meets the Council of Europe and the EU Parliament requirements in relation to the coverage of shelters, and there is a strong tradition of close cooperation among direct service providers (the state, Church, and NGOs). However, according to the Malta expert, further efforts are necessary to strengthen networking with other state agencies such as the police and the law courts, health and educational professionals, etc. The Domestic Violence Act, in force since 2006, set up a Commission on Domestic Violence to advise the Minister responsible for Social Policy. The Commission's funding comes mainly from the European Social Fund. A White Ribbon Awareness Campaign, involving, among others, employers and football players, ended in December 2011. Training for professionals was held in the summer of 2010. However, the current unstable political and economic climate makes it highly unlikely that combating violence against women and domestic violence will be given the priority they deserve in the coming years.

In **Poland**, a strong shift in public awareness came in 1997 with an important public campaign to stop domestic violence, organised by an NGO and the State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems. The campaign led the way for the enactment of the Law on Preventing Domestic Violence (2005). In 2010 amendments to the Act significantly improved the legal system and forced many institutions (police, prosecutors, courts, and local governments) to undertake real actions to protect the victims. The Act also requires the implementation of a National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

Most activities in the area of violence against women are implemented by NGOs, with poor funding reducing the availability of services. An interesting programme is activating short training seminars for journalists to enable them to establish a good

relationship with NGOs dealing with domestic violence, to increase awareness on violence and the psychology of victims, to interpret statistical data and do research in this area, and to access current information. However, traditional gender stereotyping is still prevalent, and legislation and operational documents consider domestic violence as a gender-neutral form of violence. Furthermore, no attention is paid to violence against girls and migrant women, or women from ethnic minorities and there is no action to address early prevention in schools.

Violence against women has been given increased social visibility in the past few years in **Portugal**, thanks to the action of several NGOs, which led to the creation of the Agency on Gender Equality and the promotion of specific national action plans. The ongoing IV National Plan against Domestic Violence (2011-2013) consists of five strategic areas: 1) Informing, sensitising and educating; 2) Protecting the victims and promoting their social integration; 3) Preventing recurrence by interventions on perpetrators; 4) Training professionals; and 5) Investigating and monitoring. Awareness-raising campaigns, the training of professionals, the provision of support help-lines and shelters have been operating since the nineties. Among awareness-raising campaigns, one was targeted at men with an online petition to make public their commitment against violence, while another integrated cultural, recreational and reflective activities, and a teacher training action for the prevention of gender based violence in schools. More recently, a campaign showing a dead woman victim of violence caught the attention of the public and stimulated a widespread debate.

The public perception of violence against women has changed significantly during the last two years in **Slovenia**. Young women in particular tend to seek help much sooner than other women, since they tend to be better informed and more assertive in their dealings with the institutions. They find a lot of information on the internet and in different workshops at their schools, mostly conducted by the NGOs. Recent campaigns run by NGOs address every person as a potential perpetrator and ask them to choose non-violence. As in other countries, the main problems are the lack of funding and the difficulty in involving different policy sectors. Slovenia has a comparatively good network of support services that includes crisis centres, safe houses, counselling and advocacy, mostly funded by the state and municipalities. A very important issue is how to deal with violence against older women and Roma women. While some organisations are currently starting to provide services for the older victims of violence, there are no preventive programmes and no services for Roma women and girls who are much more likely to become victims of trafficking and domestic violence.

3. Summary of the discussion at the exchange meeting

Discussion at the meeting focussed on how to develop effective awareness-raising campaigns and on the transferability of the UK and Greek experience to other countries. It covered the need to improve knowledge on the multiple causes of violence against women in order to develop effective preventative strategies and awareness-raising campaigns.

Improving knowledge on the causes of violence against women and girls

All participants stressed the need to improve knowledge of the multiple factors that affect gender relationships and which may lead to violence against women. More

knowledge is needed to adopt awareness-raising measures, and in what combination with prevention, provision, protection and prosecution measures, for effectiveness in different contexts.

The UK expert underlined that violence against women and girls occurs in a range of settings and relationships, and drew attention to the complexity of the relationship between gender equality and violence against women. In the Nordic countries, even though there is a high level of gender equality, violence against women could still be pervasive. Evidence from developing countries showed that improvements in gender relations can be associated with increases in violence against women. This implies that while gender equality helps empower women, there is a need to better understand how it affects men and their behaviour and attitudes.

The pathway model on factors contributing to inter-personal violence⁹ (summarised in the UK paper) illustrates how violence arises through multiple and intersecting factors simultaneously, operating at different levels. The model shows that interventions which interrupt only one pathway while leaving others unaffected might still not prevent violence from occurring. Thus a comprehensive and coherent prevention and intervention approach is necessary to address the different pathways leading to violence.

While pathway models demonstrate the multi-layered relationship between gender and perpetration, 'intersectionality' theories help theorise the complexity of victimisation in relation to gender, according to the Dutch expert. These models have convincingly argued that gender is only one of the factors at play when trying to describe and explain why and how women are affected by simultaneous structures of subordination. The risk of the victimisation of women and girls is impacted by a range of social identity markers (*inter alia*, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age), all of which can constitute risk factors and/or sources of protection and empowerment.

The role and effectiveness of awareness-raising measures for prevention

The discussion underlined the need for better understanding of the links and differences between awareness-raising and prevention strategies. Awareness-raising is part of prevention strategies and campaigns and are usually aimed at changing attitudes and informing about existing protection and prosecution services. Prevention strategies should tackle the causes of violence against women, and be aimed at changing behaviour through long-term integrated measures carried out at the community level, with the direct involvement of the target population.

According to the UK expert, the pathway model helps to better understand the interface between awareness raising and prevention, as well as the ways in which protection, provision and prosecution intersect with prevention. The model helps identify and change specific factors and pathways to interrupt the contexts that facilitate violence against women and girls. However, as stressed by the Dutch expert, it is not easy to visualise which pathways to focus prevention and awareness-raising interventions on. Existing evidence shows that norms regulating masculinity/ femininity, gender inequalities, poverty, lack of law enforcement, etc., represent important conducive

⁹ Hagemann-White *et al.* (2010) Factors at Play in the Perpetration of VAW, VAC and SOV, A Multilevel Interactive Model, (Annex to: European Commission *Feasibility Study to Assess the Possibilities, Opportunities and Needs to Standardise National Legislation on Violence against Women, Violence against Children and Sexual Orientation Violence*), Publications Office of the European Union, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/daphne3/funding_daphne3_en.htm.

conditions for perpetration and are, therefore, crucial to be addressed from a preventative perspective.

Within this general framework, the discussion on awareness-raising campaigns started from the criteria proposed by the UK expert to define good or promising practices¹⁰. This included the following characteristics:

- adopt a gendered and human rights approach;
- be evidence-based to represent realistic settings;
- be sustainable and replicable;
- enable excluded sectors of society; and
- encourage community ownership.

These criteria were then considered while addressing the following issues:

- how interventions should be targeted; what message they should convey; how capacity in communities can be best built;
- how men should be addressed;
- the best ways to work with media; the tools and media that should be used; and
- ways to evaluate the effectiveness of awareness-raising and prevention programmes;

Targeting (i.e. who do we want to reach) is a particularly relevant issue in awareness-raising interventions. According to the Norwegian expert, public campaigns should concentrate on three main target groups: abused women, perpetrators, and bystanders, to have any direct impact on the level of violence. The Belgian expert added that the greater effectiveness of targeted campaigns, together with their more limited costs, should be considered in times of limited financial resources.

The importance of the *content and language* adopted in awareness-raising campaigns was discussed in depth, underlying the need to pay specific attention to the content of the key messages to avoid the risk of reinforcing stereotypes, with women portrayed as passive victims and men as perpetrators. For this reason, targeted campaigns are more effective when they are based on research results and when representatives of the target population (“ambassadors”) are directly involved in the development of the campaigns’ content and language, to enhance social identification.

¹⁰ End Violence Against Women (2011a) *A Different World is Possible: A Call for Long-Term and Targeted Action to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls*, London: End Violence Against Women Coalition.
http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/a_different_world_is_possible_report_email_version.pdf.
End Violence Against Women (2011b) *A Different World is Possible: Promising Practices to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls*, London: End Violence Against Women Coalition,
http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/promising_practices_report_.pdf.

For example in the case of *teenagers*, an interesting practice is the UK “Tender” project, uses art and drama to challenge young people’s attitudes about domestic and sexual violence. The “nia” project is also considered promising since it provides a safe space in which 13-14 years old boys were enabled to discuss a range of issues including consent, the differences between healthy relationships and pornography, and to reflect on gender stereotypes and expectations.

As for *campaigns targeted at minority groups*, the Belgian involvement of representatives of the targeted communities for translation and dissemination of information material was considered an interesting practice. Another interesting example is the “Forward” project in the UK, which trained 17 Somali and Sudanese female advocates to raise awareness against female genital mutilation in their communities. However, the discussion underlined the need for caution when activating targeted campaigns for ethnic minority women, to avoid the risk of stigmatising ethnic minorities and contributing to a perception that violence against women of a problem only found within minority groups.

The discussion on *how to address men*, underlined the difficulty of talking about violence from the male perspective, but this is crucial to raising awareness of the phenomenon, even if it is still not clear what type of campaigns are more effective. Positive masculinity and male role models should be promoted, addressing men not only as perpetrators, but as supporters of prevention. However, the content and message of awareness-raising campaigns have to be carefully designed to avoid conflicting results, inducing imitating behaviours. As for the *treatment of perpetrators*, the discussion stressed the limited evidence on the effectiveness of such policies and the risk of reducing the already scarce resources for victims’ support.

The effort to enhance *employer’s engagement* to integrate domestic violence into their company’s policy (as in the “Safe place to go” campaign) was also considered with interest by participants, even if there is very little information on its effectiveness. However, awareness-raising campaigns on the economic costs of domestic violence might be one strategy to convince employers of the benefit of such engagement.

The role of the *Mass Media* in awareness-raising was much debated. In most countries, mass media do not seem very receptive to the need to self-regulate and abstain from the portrayal of (hyper) sexualised women and girls, the prevailing argument being based on the freedom of press. Furthermore, the *risks associated to media attention* were stressed by many participants, an example being in Norway where media attention to the increase in rape cases incited other men to outsmart the police. Therefore, awareness campaigns in the media need special attention and some interesting programmes were presented in this respect, such as the Polish training projects aimed at journalists, which improved the relationship between NGOs dealing with violence against women and the media, and the way the issue was presented. In some countries, NGOs and gender equality bodies have been able to develop good relations with the media and to introduce gender equality and anti-violence messages in very popular programmes.

The discussion also addressed the difficulties involved in *evaluating* awareness-raising and prevention policies, especially in the case of interventions adopting new technologies and aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours, which were mostly due to a lack of adequate research and gender data. According to participants, more sophisticated methodologies than those currently available should be developed, as well as adequate research methods, including repeated measurements and longitudinal research to establish reliable trends.

Output and outcome indicators (such as the number of help-lines or shelters created, the number of trainees, the number of people contacting help-lines or reporting cases of violence, etc.) are very useful, as are those indicating changes in attitudes on the basis of ad hoc surveys. However impacts (i.e. changes in behaviour) should also be assessed when evaluating the effectiveness of awareness-raising and prevention programmes. However, these indicators are much more difficult to measure, because changes in behaviour tend to become apparent only over long periods. Therefore, even if prevention activities do not immediately lead to a reduction of violence, they might nonetheless lead to steps in the right direction.

Transferability issues

Both programmes were considered very interesting by all participating countries for their comprehensiveness, their coherent planning, their innovativeness in terms of targeting and duration, their attention to monitoring indicators and their relatively high level of available funding. However, as stressed by the Norwegian and Irish experts, transferability to other countries is particularly difficult because awareness-raising campaigns have to take into account the specific country context. Practices are usually specific to language, national or ethnic groups, to cultural and religious contexts and to historical and political circumstances. As a consequence, practices often do not work well when taken out of their own context.

Furthermore, transferability depends on three core conditions: 1) securing governmental willingness to develop and implement a coherent and comprehensive strategy; 2) adoption of a gender equality perspective, and 3) securing an adequate budget. The lack of resources (both financial and human), as well as the lack of strong political endorsement, plus the difficulty in implementing collaboration between different policy departments were given as the main obstacles faced. In some countries, such as the Netherlands, the lack of the gender perspective is also an obstacle to the adoption of effective measures.

The UK approach, involving *different policy departments, NGOs and local communities*, as well as the *focus on teenagers* in awareness-raising campaigns, was considered particularly interesting by all participants. Other innovative elements emphasised were the involvement of employers, community ownership, the close link between different forms of violence and the focus on types of masculinity among young men.

The *comprehensive, long term approach* adopted by Greece was also appreciated, especially by representatives of other Southern and Eastern European countries. Particularly underlined was the strong internal consistency of the National Programme and the capacity to rapidly implement high quality actions in a country characterised by a high tolerance of violence against women. The capacity to use *ESF resources* was also widely acknowledged, especially during the current lack of public finance. Also appreciated by some countries was the recourse to “social messages” broadcasted by TV and radio, as was the message conveyed by the campaign and the involvement of the art and cultural community.

4. Conclusions

The main policy conclusion emerging from the London seminar is that *awareness-raising and prevention should be at the core* of integrated and coherent long-term strategies and to make these strategies more effective, a long-term commitment is required from governments. Interventions have to be carefully designed for the specific target groups and should be planned and delivered in a coordinated manner, bringing together cross-government institutions and sectors (including the judiciary and education sectors), specialised NGOs and representatives of communities.

In detail, the discussion at the seminar concluded that:

- having an action plan or a national programme on fighting violence, in which the awareness-raising strategy is embedded, appears to have clear advantages, However not all countries currently have such a comprehensive approach;
- the objectives to be achieved with the awareness-raising strategy have to be carefully thought through in order to define what methods might give better results and which are more feasible, taking into account different contexts;
- there is a shift towards more targeted campaigns that allow addressing victims as well as bystanders and perpetrators and this should also be applied towards professionals, men, young people, and minority groups, with the key messages carefully formulated in terms of content and language. Role models and 'ambassadors' appear effective in putting forward messages and addressing particular groups;
- awareness-raising campaigns aimed at changing attitudes should pay greater attention to what images they convey, so as to avoid the risk of reinforcing stereotypes with women as passive victims and men as perpetrators;
- the use of the media in general and in campaigning in particular, requires caution to avoid unwanted effects such as the commercialisation and sexualisation of women and childhood, promoting violent masculinity, and the stigmatisation of ethnic groups, etc;
- budget allocation is an essential factor which can restrict intervention possibilities and so new ways to promote campaigns without having to allocate public resources (for example via engaging the media, the private sector or stakeholders, as well as EU funding) might help to ensure the continuity of actions;
- strong political leadership and a clearly identified institution with a coordination role, inter-ministerial cooperation, involvement of local communities and civil society as well as partnership with stakeholders and NGOs, are important for success;
- there is a need for research, data and evaluation studies to better understand the links between gender equality and violence against women, as well as the effectiveness and impact of prevention policies, especially in the case of interventions adopting new technologies and aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour.