

# Summary of key findings from GREVIO reports relevant for Perpetrator Programmes (PP) for domestic and gender-based violence

Information from GREVIO reports collected from the [Council of Europe website](#)

Report produced by WWP EN (December 2020)



With financial support from the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020" of the European Union.



## KEY FINDINGS

### ALBANIA

Perpetrator programmes are new and offered only by a few NGOs and not by any public institution. The ones available do not comply with standards set on the Istanbul Convention as they do not follow the same methods and approaches. There are no programs for sex offenders to prevent them from re-offending. GREVIO encourages authorities to ensure voluntary and court-mandated programmes. In addition, Albanian authorities should increase the number of programs available to perpetrators in order to prevent further violence and change patterns of violent behaviour. Albanian authorities shall establish and support treatment programmes for sex offenders that ensure the safety, support and human rights of victims.

In accordance with Shadow Reports provided by two different organisations (“Refleksione” and “Albanian Women Empowerment Network”), there is a lack of financial resources to address gender-based violence in Albania, including counselling for perpetrators and support services for victims. Part of the work with perpetrators in Albania was initiated after survivors of domestic violence requested/suggested it and there is a growing interest to participate in the programmes even by men who are not court-ordered. Most providers have tried different approaches and models including family counselling and mediation and are only available in Tirana.

### AUSTRIA

Programs for perpetrators and sex offenders are available both on a mandatory and voluntary basis from men’s and other counselling centres. Special attention is given to the protection of women and programmes seek to cooperate with victim support services. They are developing national standards for victim-orientation and protection. Victims are informed of progress and the level of cooperation from attendees only when perpetrators consent to share this information. (While data protection is important, priority should be given to the safety of victims.) In terms of attendance, the numbers are very low, as attendees are ordered to join perpetrator programmes in connection with a criminal conviction, and conviction rates for domestic violence are very low. Austrian authorities should reinforce their efforts to ensure the systematic victim-orientation of perpetrator programmes and to achieve wider attendance.

There are specific support programs for sex offenders run by the Austrian probation service. These programs are available in individual sessions for offenders who have been ordered to participate by the courts. Some men’s counselling centres offer sex offender programmes for self-referral or referral by courts, youth welfare offices or the law enforcement agencies. According to the data provided, there is a working group to establish and implement standards for sex offender programs.

The Austrian NGO- shadow report states that one of the challenges in working with perpetrators is the lack of accountability of the criminal justice system and the lack of referrals to perpetrator programmes which makes assistance to such programmes very scarce.

Although authorities have shown a particular concern for ensuring the safety and human rights of women, only 2 out of 11 programmes for perpetrators work closely with the specialized women's support services. There is no available information in relation to the funding spent on perpetrator programmes as there is no data on the number of perpetrators enrolled in those programmes annually.

In addition to the recommendations made by GREVIO, civil society suggests mandatory training for judges and other relevant personnel to ensure that gender-based violence is effectively prosecuted and punished and therefore that perpetrators are referred to anti-violence programmes. To meet the standards set by the Istanbul Convention, adequate and sustainable funding must be established, and financial support for the work of national expert groups must continue and increase. In addition, a minimum amount of data needs to be collected at the national level to make the data comparable.

## DENMARK

Programmes for perpetrators and sex offenders are funded by the Danish Government, the Danish Prison and Probation Service and the Municipality of Copenhagen. Although programmes used to focus exclusively on men, there are now programmes available for male and female perpetrators of domestic violence. There are different providers of these programmes; the ones offered by Dialogue against Violence are primarily funded by the Danish Government targets 3 different groups: convicted perpetrator of violence or other crimes, self-referred perpetrators and families to which counselling has been recommended by the Municipality of Copenhagen.

The funding provided by the Government for self-referrals covers work with around 100 perpetrators a year and the waiting list is long. Considering that the number of perpetrators attending programmes funded by the Danish Government is lower than the number of women housed by shelters every year, it is necessary to develop incentive schemes and to increase the number of perpetrator programmes.

GREVIO concerns include the close co-operation between shelters, perpetrators programmes and the municipality and the low number of perpetrators required to attend a domestic violence treatment. Danish authorities should ensure wider levels of attendance and expand significantly the number of programmes to ensure that all types of perpetrators receive appropriate treatment.

Programmes for sex offenders are offered by the Danish Prison and Probation Service and are usually linked to a conviction. Programmes are complemented by treatment for other issues such as substance abuse, anger management and also domestic violence.

Under certain conditions sex offenders may receive a suspended sentence on the condition of their participation on a 2 year psychiatric treatment programme.

## FINLAND

Perpetrator programmes are available in custodial and non-custodial settings and all are voluntary, as courts cannot order attendance to behavioural change programmes. In non-custodial settings, programmes are run by civil society and most of these programmes aim at behavioural change and are implemented by trained psychotherapists. As there is no clear information on the measures taken to ensure attendance and motivation to these programmes, it is difficult to assess the impact.

There are no national standards on perpetrator programmes and it is unclear if standard referral pathways exist and how attendance is promoted. Police officers encourage perpetrators to attend programmes and some perpetrators attend under their own initiative. Efforts have been made to link criminal convictions to perpetrator programmes by enabling convicted offenders to participate in individual counselling sessions as part of their community service – on a voluntary basis.

GREVIO calls authorities to ensure more standardised approaches and to adopt and implement uniform standards which place at their centre the safety of, support for and human rights of victims by co-operating closely with victim support services. GREVIO recommends incorporating programmes into the criminal justice system, including probation service to reduce recidivism.

There is a voluntary programme for sex offenders exists and aims to reduce the risk of re-offending by recognising and processing the thought and activity relating to sex offences. Another programme exists for sex offenders at a lower risk of re-offending and it is available within and outside prison. Support, treatment and counselling are offered in non-custodial settings for anyone at risk of (re-) offending. There is therapy and counselling for adults who self-identify as being at risk of committing sexual offences. In addition, online support and legal advice telephone helpline are available as support for sex offenders.

In accordance with the Shadow Report, funding is insufficient for perpetrator programmes. About a third of services that provide support for perpetrators and victims do not contact the perpetrators' partners. It is recommended to create separate programmes for women of minority groups. Moreover, police should systematically refer perpetrators to support services and work with perpetrators should be available throughout the country.

## FRANCE

There are awareness and accountability courses for perpetrators of domestic violence, available through individual request or a judicial injunction in the pre- or post-trial phases. However, the lack of guidelines impacts negatively the effectiveness of these programmes as there are no national standards. The length of the programmes varies, and they are not structured within an inter-institutional response involving victim-protection services. There is no information on the participation rates and recidivism which hinders evaluation of the impact of the programmes.

Preventive value of awareness courses is not fully understood and perpetrators rarely request the service on their own initiative. Perpetrators of domestic violence may also be required to follow preventive intervention programmes following an injunction of remedial care imposed in the event of a conviction as part of socio-judicial follow-up. These therapies can be individual and collective and

perpetrators may also participate in discussion groups run by the Penitentiary Insertion and Probation Services. These groups are part of efforts to prevent recidivism.

GREVIO recommends authorities to further develop perpetrator programmes in close collaboration with specialist women's organisations. To determine short- and long-term impact it is necessary to evaluate existing programmes through scientifically-designed outcome studies and the development of statistics on attendance rates and recidivism rates. Professionals involved in the procedures for applying and following up on these programmes, including judges, should receive adequate training.

In addition, French authorities should ensure the development of appropriate guidelines that would enable harmonising the modalities for the implementation of accountability courses based on minimum standards.

Programmes for sex offenders are offered in addition to the penalty, following a psychiatric assessment which concludes that therapeutic intervention is necessary. These interventions take place in and out of prison. However, a recent report notes that there are shortcomings in the implementation of these programmes. GREVIO encourages French authorities to continue to set up and evaluate programmes for perpetrators of sexual offences taking into account the gender dimension of violence against women, its causes and consequences.

## ITALY

The main national network implementing perpetrator programmes is Relive aiming to improve women's and children's safety in cases of domestic violence by promoting co-ordinated work with perpetrators. Programmes implement a psycho-educational and cognitive behavioural approach and many of them are run by entities not affiliated to Relive. Some of them follow the operating standards promoted by Relive while others are managed by private entities and do not necessarily follow a standard approach. Public funds earmarked for perpetrator programmes have not consistently benefited programmes possessing the necessary knowledge and experience in line with the Istanbul Convention requirements.

In accordance with national legislation, enforcement agencies and courts promote participation in perpetrator programmes. Prosecutors and judges are required to take into consideration the attendance of a perpetrator programme for the purpose of amending or revoking security measures issued during criminal proceedings. However, there is a tendency not to refer indicted perpetrators to a programme during the initial stages of the proceedings, thus not allowing them enough time to complete a programme and become entitled to the benefit of this provision.

In accordance with Relive's shadow report, most men attending their programmes are self-referred and a smaller proportion joins programmes following a non-mandatory referral by the judicial system. Most of them only after being sentenced for gender-based violence and through collaboration with probation services. Wider attendance would be possible if statutory agencies were allowed to impose an obligation for the perpetrator to attend.

To enhance the potential of perpetrator programmes as a preventive tool, authorities need to ensure alliance with a structured co-ordinated response to violence against women and to train the agencies involved.

There are only a few treatment programmes aimed at preventing sex offenders from reoffending. One is available inside the jail and as an outpatient treatment once perpetrators are released from jail. The treatment follows a criminological approach and there is a possibility for convicts of sexual crimes against children to access treatment programmes while serving their prison term.

GREVIO encourages authorities to promote the use clear minimum standards and to ensure the evaluation of programmes to determine their impact. Likewise, Italian authorities should expand the number of available programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and sex offenders and promote the attendance to those programmes both by mandatory and voluntary referral.

According to the Shadow Report recommendations, services aimed at perpetrators should operate within anti-violence networks for women. Family mediation must be ruled out and rehabilitation work must be carried out along with work to reintegrate offenders once outside. It is difficult to assess the impact and effectiveness of programmes and the distribution of the Centres is not ideal, as they are more in Northern and Central Italy. There are no minimum operating requirements and there is a lack of comparison between the methods adopted and the results obtained. There are no judicial regulations to establish the obligation of sentenced perpetrators to participate in specialists services. Therefore, it is recommended to Italian authorities to include drafting guidelines ensuring the safety of women as well as training staff and increasing activities to analyse the risk of recidivism.

## MONACO

Treatment orders are seen as an alternative sentence or additional to a custodial sentence – subject to the consent of the perpetrator. The judicial services point out that the system has its limits, in particular because it is conditional on a prior medical expert opinion. A convicted person given a suspended sentence and placed on probation may be subject to certain supervision and support measures to promote his reintegration into society, including the obligation to undergo treatment or medical care.

GREVIO calls authorities to provide preventive intervention and treatment programmes where perpetrators can choose to attend independently of any court proceedings. Courses to promote responsible behaviour cannot be imposed nor can they be suggested by the prosecution or the law enforcement agencies as soon as the victim files a complaint. Services likely to be in contact with the perpetrators could also suggest a referral. Authorities should take the necessary measures to encourage or require perpetrators to attend programmes. Where necessary, such programmes could be made available through co-operation with other countries.

Programmes for sex offenders are not available; there is only one of the monthly consultations provided by psychiatrists at the Remand Prison dedicated to sex offenders.

## MONTENEGRO

Misdemeanour judges can order a perpetrator to attend mandatory addiction treatment or mandatory psycho-social therapy. Institutions offering these treatments are focused on perpetrators who acted under the influence of alcohol drugs psychotropic substances and programmes are hospital-based and administered for in-or our patients. The programmes' approach is one of medical treatment of addiction and mental health issues – with much less focus on addressing the violent behaviour as such. They do not focus on achieving behavioural change, emphasising the need to take responsibility for their violent behaviour but seem to suggest that overcoming addiction and mental health issues will put an end to the violence.

Appropriate programmes for perpetrators are needed, as current programs do not respect the basic elements of programs for perpetrators. Programmes should focus on changing attitudes and beliefs regarding gender roles, women and power, ensuring the safety of women and children especially when they still live with the abuser. GREVIO encourages authorities to set mandatory psycho-social treatment programmes and to expand their work in also setting up voluntary perpetrator programmes in accordance with the core elements.

Sex offender programmes seem to exist for convicted offenders serving a prison term, however, there was not enough information provided.

In accordance to the shadow report provided, misdemeanour judges orders for addiction treatment are limited to one year and do not work in cooperation with health care providers. Spaces and facilities available are limited particularly for inpatient treatment and programmes do not promote victim safety and are considered an ineffective remedy for perpetrator behaviour change. Programmes lack protocols for prioritising and protecting the needs of victims, and there is no system-wide structure for the process, resulting in a wide variety in the length of each session and program. Professionals working with perpetrators shall receive adequate training to provide guidance about best practice standards and effective court monitoring of offender participation in therapy programmes. Moreover, it is necessary to collect further data on national level and to establish a precise and comprehensive manner of reporting between health institutions and with the judiciary.

## NETHERLANDS

There are no specific interventions or programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence who are in the prison system. The probation service offers two programmes: “Termination of Relational Violence” and “Caring Dads”. Additional programmes are available for those under forensic care as a result of mental health disorders. The aim of these programmes is to work towards behavioural change in men on the basis of accepting responsibility of their acts. A specific programme, BORG, is designed for both perpetrators and victims (current or former partners) and is intended to deal with low to moderate risk of repetition.

Research shows, that it has been extremely difficult to reach perpetrators of domestic violence and child abuse and identifies potential failings of adopting a gender-neutral approach. It is unclear

whether standard referral pathways exist and how attendance is promoted. The Dutch sentencing system prioritises reducing reoffending and only in some cases courts can order offenders to undertake treatment.

According to the reports received by GREVIO, most programmes operate on a gender-neutral understanding of domestic violence, therefore, it is seen as an issue between two parties rather than gender-based violence perpetrated against women.

GREVIO strongly encourage the Dutch authorities to ensure all perpetrator programmes aim for a behavioural change in men and to protect and support victims working in close co-ordination with specialist support services for women. Moreover, authorities should evaluate the success of these programmes, in particular the impact of the gender-neutral approach on rates of violence and recidivism and to ensure attendance including by incorporating them into the criminal justice system.

## PORTUGAL

The PAVD (Rehabilitation Programme for Domestic Violence Perpetrators) applies by court decision to individuals indicted or convicted of the crime of domestic violence. The minimum duration is 18 months and it incorporates risk assessment aimed at ensuring the safety of the victim. It includes both individual and group sessions and is designed to make the perpetrator accept responsibility for his violent behaviour. Participation can be court-ordered as a protection order, a penalty of imprisonment or as an accessory penalty.

GREVIO requires authorities to not replace prosecution, conviction or sentencing with these programmes. To ensure women's safety, these programmes should work in close co-operation with women's support services. There is information on interagency-cooperation, but not enough regarding the work with women organisations NGOS.

Developing new programmes authorities should comply with minimum standards established in the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO urges the Portuguese authorities to ensure that the interplay between perpetrator programmes and criminal proceedings does not work against the principle of victims' access to fair and just legal processes. Authorities should strengthen these programmes' working relations with women's support services to ensure victims are informed and protected and to expand the number and types of available programmes and promote their attendance.

Programmes for sex offenders exist inside prisons and efforts are underway to consolidate such programmes and expand them to a community context. GREVIO stresses the importance of ensuring that they comply with best practices and are integrated into an understanding of violence against women from a gender perspective.

According to the shadow report provided, there is no coherent and articulated national strategy on perpetrator programmes. All intervention models are different and there is no information about the impact on the safety and security of victims and the re-incidence of the crime. Most programmes do not work in close co-operation with support services for victims, specifically with the women's rights



NGO support and advocacy services. Rehabilitation programmes of sex offenders are not approaching the addiction dimension of sexual violence.

Perpetrators programmes are usually mandatory within the provisional suspension of the criminal proceedings and when perpetrators have been convicted to prison but the sentence has been suspended. This practice reflects that the crime of domestic violence is not taken seriously by the judiciary. Moreover, the funding for these programmes is taken from the State budget while other services to support victims are funded through the social gambling available amount which varies every month. Lastly, there is not enough information about the progress of the programme nor evaluation on the impact of it.

## SERBIA

Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence have been implemented with difficulties in securing sustainable funding. Centres for social welfare offer work with perpetrators but there is unclear information in the number of cities offering these programmes. Participation is mostly voluntary through encouragement from marriage and family counsellors. However, attendance to these treatments may be ordered by the prosecutor's office in deferral of prosecution.

The approaches of each programme seem to vary, some use marriage and family methodologies and others use anger management techniques. GREVIO points out the urgent need to set up well-resourced and adequate perpetrator programmes. For the recently developed modules for behavioural change programmes GREVIO is hopeful that they will be made available to a large number of convicted offenders. GREVIO encourages the Serbian authorities to ensure the adequate resourcing of existing domestic violence perpetrator programmes in particular those in non-custodial settings, as well as to increase the number of voluntary programmes in accordance with the standards established in the Istanbul Convention.

Moreover, Serbian authorities should ensure programmes are widely attended by incorporating them into the criminal justice system including probation service or by introducing incentive schemes, as a tool to reduce recidivism. Evaluations of the programmes to assess their impact and the risk of reoffending are necessary to ensure higher levels of safety for victims.

Programmes for sex offenders are based on the needs of the perpetrator and convicted perpetrators of sexual offences against children can be ordered to abide by certain measures upon release, including mandatory counselling and supervision.

In accordance with the shadow report submitted, the professionals working at "Network for Treatment of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence" face a potential conflict of interest as they work at the same time in centres for social work and conduct needs assessments of the court and other state bodies. In addition, they do not work in close co-operation with women's support services. One of the challenges faced to effectively implement perpetrator programmes is that treatments established are mainly realised by state institutions, while non-governmental organisations have not secured financial support from the state to systematically develop this type of programmes. Current programmes do

not really endure long enough to bring about a change in the perpetrator's behaviour and their motivation to attend the programmes can be a manipulation to gain control over the situation.

## SWEDEN

Perpetrator programmes are available in custodial and non-custodial settings for convicted offenders and those on probation. Municipalities and civil society organisations run programmes for non-convicted perpetrators. All programmes are voluntary in nature and are firmly rooted in a gendered understanding of domestic violence. The quality of the treatments varies greatly, ranging from programmes run by specifically trained social workers and psychologists in close co-operation with local women's services to less structured and less specialist interventions which are often carried out in isolation. GREVIO points out the importance of ensuring harmonised standards placing the safety, support of and human rights of the victims at the centre by co-operating closely with specialist support services for victims. GREVIO welcomes the emphasis placed on preventing recidivism and notes the need to ensure more standardised approaches.

Support programmes for sex offenders exist throughout the country. The focus of the Swedish criminal justice system lies on the treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment. An initial evaluation has shown that completion of the programme seems to lower the rate of recidivism. Other custodial institutions such as forensic psychiatric care and juvenile detention centres also offer individual treatment for sex offenders. Support, treatment and counselling is also offered in non-custodial settings for anyone at risk of offending. GREVIO welcomes the measures taken and notes the emphasis placed on low-threshold preventive counselling and support.

## TURKEY

Participation in preventive intervention programmes is one of the court-ordered measures that family judges can impose upon perpetrators. They are hospital-based and have led to the establishment of "emergency psycho-social support centres" in hospitals. Failure to attend these programmes exposes perpetrators to criminal proceedings. Programmes revolve mainly around the principles of anger management and self-control whereas their primary focus should be on the need for perpetrators to

take responsibility for their actions and question their attitudes and beliefs towards women. Courts and health institutions tend to refer perpetrators to medical treatment for psychological disorders or problems of addiction which raises the question of whether health centres offer the proper setting to work with perpetrators of violence and whether health professionals are the right professionals to handle their preventive intervention programmes. GREVIO notices difficulties from health centres in coping with the responsibility of dealing with perpetrators. Only a small fraction of perpetrators are being referred to treatment programmes, figures provided show that more than 85% of offenders refuse or fail to attend them and failure to attend is not systematically sanctioned.

GREVIO finds that authorities should do more to develop preventive intervention and treatment programmes that are more widely available to domestic violence offenders, including on the basis of self-referral. Authorities should re-consider their choice to give the health sector the prime responsibility for conducting preventive intervention programmes and a stronger role should be given to social workers in probation services and men's centres. Moreover, GREVIO encourages the Turkish authorities to ensure that personnel administering such programmes receive adequate training that incorporates a gendered understanding of violence and the need to deconstruct sexist stereotypes.

Programmes for convicted perpetrators should be established not only for convicts serving prison time, but also in cases of suspended sentences. Such programmes should be mandated in addition and not instead of, criminal sanctions.

There are mandatory programs for sex offenders while in prison, which have been heavily criticised as they include anti-androgenic treatment that requires the free and informed consent of the offender. Sexual violence should not be viewed from the angle of the offender's inability to control their libido, disregarding the fact that sexual violence, like any form of violence against women, is a means of exercising power and domination over women and their bodies. GREVIO encourages authorities to develop treatment programs for sex offenders in accordance with best practices developed internationally.

According to the shadow reports provided, preventive programmes against perpetrators are not aimed at perpetrators taking responsibility of their actions. There are no programmes that aim to transform gender perception of the perpetrators and to prevent reoffending. Existing programmes focused on anger management do not ensure the safety and human rights of victims. Therefore, the report recommends the effective participation of civil society and women's organisations in the preparation of rehabilitation and treatment programmes for perpetrators.