

NATIONAL REPORT BELGIUM 2016

DETAILS REPORT WRITING ORGANISATION

Country: Belgium

Organisation writing report: Family Justice Centre Antwerp – Provincial coordination on policy on violence

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Representing any other organisations? Yes

Names of these organisations: All organisations involved in the FJC including local authorities, police, prosecutors, women’s aid, shelters, services for child abuse, services for social welfare, counselling, medical services, services for housing, probation, perpetrator programs, services for migrants and asylum seekers, youth care, centres for mental health, services for job seeking, etc.

1. ORGANISATIONS/PROGRAMMES

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION HAS YOUR ORGANISATION CARRIED OUT DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS?

The Welfare and Health Service is a large service provider active in the province of Antwerp. It has several areas of concern, including issues related to poverty, violence, equal opportunity, and the elderly, for example.

A team of four co-operators are involved in the provincial coordination of violence and victim care. In particular, these services address physical, sexual, psychological, and

honour-based violence through networking, training, innovative projects and sensitisation. There is a particular focus on partner violence, and violence against women and children.

The provincial co-ordination programme works to formulate effective and appropriate measures for victims of physical, sexual and psychological violence. Further, it develops measures and projects to act effectively against various forms of violence. It regularly distributes information and assists in the development of expertise. Services are diversified, to target particular groups, themes and methodologies.

The provincial coordination on violence and victim care works in collaboration with the city of Antwerp as well as with partners from justice organisations, the police, centres for general welfare, victim aid, women's aid, perpetrator programmes, and with centres for child abuse and youth care such as the Family Justice Centre in Antwerp. The Family Justice Centre provides an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to family violence, through which victims of violence and their family members can find the help they need in one location. The Family Justice Centre is guided by principles of victim-centeredness, and accountability for offenders.

The Family Justice Centre Antwerp has a specific interdisciplinary team, the CO3, which focuses on complex cases of family violence. A joint plan of action, fine-tuned and discussed with victims and families, is at the forefront of their approach. The aim of the CO3 is not only to intervene in violent situations, but also to strengthen protective measures within families, in order to avoid the recurrence of violence in the future, and to assist victims and families in addressing underlying problems.

WHAT WOULD YOU DEFINE AS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES/CHALLENGES REGARDING VIOLENCE PREVENTION TO YOUR ORGANISATION/S? PLEASE FOCUS ON THE LAST THREE YEARS.

- Funding (in order to establish complete centres in all regions)
- The uncertain position of women in migration situations/refugees
- Silos between organisations (e.g. domestic violence and child abuse organisations, front desk and specialised support, etc.)
- Sustainability of larger organisations that are involved in tackling and preventing violence

2. COUNTRY

PLEASE GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF GENERAL SITUATION IN YOUR COUNTRY REGARDING WORK WITH PERPETRATORS.

In our three regions there exists reliable, if small, quantitative programmes, offered by a small team. The programmes are mostly funded by local authorities. Despite good evaluations, the government does not provide adequate funding.

In other regions, programmes are also limited, and rely on local funding and/or local initiatives. The Federal Government is currently researching all initiatives relating to perpetrator programmes in cases of partner violence in Belgium. Results are expected in January 2017.

PLEASE GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR COUNTRY'S CRIMINAL AND CIVIL RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ESPECIALLY ANY CHANGES WITHIN THE LAST 3 YEARS? (I.E. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LEGAL AND POLICY MEASURES AND HOW HAVE THEY BEEN IMPLEMENTED?)

The circular from the Minister of Justice and the Board of Procurators General concerning criminal justice policy on partner violence (COL4/2006) has strengthened existing services to combat partner violence. This has led to the elaboration of a uniform criminal justice policy in the context of partner violence. The circular COL 4/2006 is a good tool for protecting victims of partner violence and dealing with offenders. Its main aim is to prevent recidivism, and its approach is not repressive, but rather aims to bring about positive changes in attitudes. Police now systematically register all forms of domestic violence and further, magistrates from the office of the public prosecutor attach more importance to this form of violence.

In 2015, COL 4/2006 was improved and revised and this revised circular follows the same logic of intervention as the original document. The document is based on the conviction that offenders should face reprimand as soon as possible, in order to limit this type of violence, and prevent its escalation. COL 4/2006 outlines the importance of reacting promptly and appropriately to all forms of gender-based violence, and the necessity of providing victims with adequate and immediate protection. For this reason, the circular concerning the sexual aggression set (SAS) will also be revised. Simultaneously, a specific circular concerning honour-based violence is to be drafted.

Combatting gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual offenses, remains a priority of the national security plan. It is thus also a priority for all local security plans, as well as for the 'Kadernota Integrale Veiligheid' (framework memorandum of integral security). These tools determine the overall police and justice framework relating to gender-based violence, and they will be incorporated into the current plan, in line with the principles of the Istanbul Convention.

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE PROGRESS YOUR COUNTRY HAS MADE IN RELATION TO ISTANBUL CONVENTION.

The Istanbul Convention was ratified in 2016. The National Action plan for the implementation of relevant measures is now available: <http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/en>; http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/comprehensive_press_file_0.pdf.

DO YOU KNOW ANY OTHER ORGANISATIONS/PROGRAMMES IN YOUR COUNTRY THAT CARRY OUR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR WORK? IF YES, PLEASE, LIST THEM.

An overview of existing programmes will be available in January. Most programmes are very small and locally organised.

3. BEST PRACTICES

TELL US ABOUT BEST PRACTICES IN WORK WITH PERPETRATORS IN YOUR COUNTRY.

The Time Out programs work closely with victim support and interagency work on domestic violence. There is also a close working relationship with services for children who witness/experience violence in the family.

4. NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT HAS TO BE DONE TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN YOUR COUNTRY (REGARDING WORK WITH PERPETRATORS)?

Family Justice Centres need to be established in every region. This is a work in progress, and some regions are currently in the beginning stages.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS AND STEPS THAT YOU FEEL SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON IN YOUR COUNTRY IN ORDER TO TACKLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON A GENERAL LEVEL?

- Sustainable funding
- Research to expand good practices
- Developing of interdisciplinary approaches such as Family Justice Centres

Written by Pascale Franck, Family Justice Centre Antwerp

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