

NATIONAL REPORT CYPRUS 2016

WORK ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND WORK WITH PERPETRATORS IN SWEDEN

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DETAILS REPORT WRITING ORGANISATION

Country: Cyprus

Organisation writing report: Association for Prevention & Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO), Website: <http://www.domviolence.org.cy/?lang=EN>

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1. ORGANISATIONS/PROGRAMMES

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

*1. Educational Seminars*

Our seminars provide comprehensive information on the phenomenon of domestic violence, along with information regarding relevant services available in Cyprus. The trainers consist of police officers, psychologists, social workers, lawyers and academic researchers. The participants are trained and develop skills in order to staff the helpline 1440.

## 2. *Training in schools, universities and other social entities*

Every year, SPAVO organises seminars and workshops in schools, universities, professional bodies and other social entities. Some of the subjects of our trainings include

1. Domestic violence/neglect
2. Recognising the signs of violence
3. Sexual abuse
4. Communication skills
5. Anger management
6. Creating healthy relationships (for teenagers)

## 3. *B Here Prevention Program*

*B Here* was a European project aimed at teenagers, with the goal of creating awareness of the problem of violence in relationships. The focus was on teenagers in order to ensure that violence in early relationships is handled effectively, or prevented altogether. Through the provision of information through which youngsters can assess the quality and health of their romantic relationships, we hope to open the doors for prevention and stop violence in its tracks before it reaches destructive levels. The *B Here* project was undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Education & Culture, Cyprus Family Planning and DIAS Group. Overall 305 students took part, from seven high schools across Cyprus. The programme was undertaken in a workshop style. One of the components of the project was to improve dialogue, respect and cooperation amongst students. The project made it clear that stereotypical views exist among youngsters and that this is something that needs addressing in order to minimise violence.

## 4. *WAKE (Working Along Key Experts)*

*WAKE* is another European project. The association is working in coordination with the Red Cross, Enoros Consulting CY, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (PT) and the

Association for Battered and Sexually Abused Women (ES). Together with these organisations we are in the process of implementing this project with the aim of addressing the problems that victims of crime and violence face in Cyprus due to insufficient knowledge and support. These problems also stem from a lack of training on the issue, and a lack of implementation of the legal framework concerning access to justice. In achieving the goals of this project we aim to improve the day to day situation of victims of crime wherever possible, and reduce discrimination. In addition, we aim to further identify the training needs of practitioners who come into contact with victims of violence, and exchange good practices on identifying and screening victims and pinpointing their individual needs. Finally, we aim to sustain a network of good working relationships between those involved.

The activities of the project include:

- A research project that hopes to identify what the current situation and system is in Cyprus, with regards to victim awareness and training
- Development of trainers' knowledge on issues involving access to justice for victims, and issues linked to domestic violence, victims of sexual abuse, immigrants and victims of trafficking
- Organisation of workshops and case studies for professionals that come into contact with victims of crime and violence in Cyprus
- Formulation of a Screening Victim Identification Tool and associated guidelines

##### *5. Prevention Support Groups*

These groups were formed by SPAVO to provide a base of knowledge in every city in Cyprus. They help with raising public awareness on the issue of domestic violence and assist with fundraising to support SPAVO's work. The groups consist of sensitised citizens who have been willing and able to promote SPAVO's vision and objectives on a multinational level.

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

The biggest obstacles and challenges that our organisation faces regarding violence prevention are undoubtedly financial. Most prevention programmes are done with the financial help of European projects. This leads to a lack of continuity due to an absence of long-term funding, and this also affects the commitment of all parties involved.

SPAVO runs two shelters, three help lines, and a counselling centre. We do not have enough staff to run an ongoing prevention programme but we do respond to all prevention requests we get from various schools, and other professional bodies, through the provision of workshops and training seminars.

## 2. COUNTRY

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

In Cyprus, SPAVO is the only organisation that offers programmes for domestic violence victims and/or perpetrators.

From 2007 to 2015, SPAVO offered the psycho-educational programme “Love Without Hurt”. This programme teaches compassion and self-compassion techniques to perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. The programme consists of groups of approximately 12 participants. The aim of the programme is to empower individuals to create an automatic habit of healing instead of automatically turning to violence. The programme includes communication skills and empathy strengthening techniques. The programme was adapted to include meditation, which has proven to be of help. The programme was successful on the small scale that it was offered. However, it is evident that more programmes need to be implemented across Cyprus, in longer and more intense forms, and in ways that are uniquely adapted to individuals. Thus far, the programme has

only been offered in the capital city of Nicosia, neglecting the remainder of the country's population, and their need for perpetrator programmes.

A perpetrator programme was also attempted in the main prison in Nicosia, together with a domestic violence psycho-educational programme for women in prison. The project was part of a European programme thus, although it was successful, it did not continue due to financial reasons.

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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?)

Since 2004 the Family Court may, if it is considered expedient, accept the accused's request to place him on probation, in lieu of any other sentence, on the special condition that he will be submitted to self-control treatment by specialists. However, we have had only two referrals throughout this time, despite a number of meetings with the Lawyer's Association aimed at promoting the programme and improving the referral system.

Cyprus is in the process of administering criminal punishment for stalking. Previously there has not been any laws specifically addressing stalking alone.

Moreover, in 2014, the government ratified the Lanzarote Convention, and implemented the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Act of 2014. The government is also working towards establishing a Children's Home as a one-stop house that will accommodate all the necessary services for a child and the child's family, provided by trained professionals.

The government signed the Istanbul Convention in 2015 and is preparing to ratify it.

Finally, figures of sexual assault have increased within the last 10 years, despite sexual abuse being the least reported form of abuse. Currently the government is studying the possibility of creating a one-stop house for women victims of any form of abuse, that will accommodate all the necessary services for women.

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

The Republic of Cyprus signed the convention on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015, and is currently undertaking preparatory work in order to meet the associated obligations and ratify the convention.

(a) Legal Services have prepared a legal bill to criminalise harassment and stalking, in line with Article 34 of the convention, and it will soon be presented for approval.

(b) An external associate was hired to prepare a study of the Cypriot legislative framework and identify the necessary improvements/changes needed in order to comply with the provisions of the convention. The associate also prepared a study on assessment and risk management, in line with Article 51 of the convention.

(c) As a result of these studies, the government proceeded to prepare a special legal bill to criminalise violence against women.

(d) In addition, the government acknowledged the need for specialised training of professionals who work with domestic violence, through a training seminar in which keynote speakers were American experts in this field. The government plans to continue to educate and raise awareness among professionals.

(e) Finally, the government supports various organisations financially to help them upgrade their services.

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

In Cyprus, there are no other available programmes for domestic violence perpetrator work.

### 3. BEST PRACTICES

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

Family Violence Law in Cyprus enables the court to refer a perpetrator to a therapeutic programme.

SPAVO keeps records of data for statistical purposes. Moreover, an assessment is done at the beginning and end of the programme (self-reports).

During the course of programmes held for perpetrators, as well as after the programme is completed, there is an open line service for one on one counselling, for both victims and perpetrators. Individuals are able to approach therapists at any point to receive counselling.

The intensity of the perpetrator's programme has been increased. The period over which individuals attend training has increased from 12 weeks to 16 weeks and includes regular role plays focused on exercising empathy and good communication skills.

In addition, Campbell's Risk Assessment has been added in order to further address the issues faced by victims at risk of abuse.

### 4. NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Provide workshops starting at an early age (kindergarten) focusing on communication skills and developing healthy relationships
- Raise awareness on the issue of treating perpetrators - perpetrators of DV can change if they want to receive help
- NGO's contribute to policy development on the issue of DV perpetrators
- Train police and other social services in motivating perpetrators to start treatment

- Train psychotherapists working with perpetrators of domestic violence (on motivating perpetrators to start treatment, working with perpetrators with personality disorders etc.)
- Promote research that focuses on perpetrators of domestic violence

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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?

Cyprus has a comprehensive legislative framework to combat family violence, and has adopted a National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2010-2013). However, the current legislative framework and policies are gender neutral and do not recognise that women are the primary victims of such violence, and men the perpetrators. Thus, there is a complete lack of gender perspective in prevention and service provision. To improve this situation, the law and policies need to be gender sensitive.

Moreover, there is a lack of systematic training and high mobility among front line and service providers. This needs to change, and professionals should be trained and specialised in their work in order to adequately respond to victim's needs.

Cyprus has one of the lowest conviction rates for domestic violence in Europe, with high rates of victim attrition. This could be improved with adequate training of professionals as well as through speeding up trial procedures and stricter penalties.

There must be awareness-raising on the issue of domestic violence through campaigns.

Finally, there must be systematic prevention programmes in schools.

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