

A.S.A.P. A Systemic Approach for Perpetrators

WP 3: Testing of the operational protocol and elaboration of policy guidelines

D 3.3 - FINAL OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL AND TOOLKIT

- ITALY -

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INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Istanbul Convention and the definition of violence

In Europe, the main reference document on preventing and combating male violence against women and violence against minors (both direct and assisted) is the **"Council of Europe Convention on the prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence" (Istanbul, 7 April 2011)**.

The Convention is the first international legally-binding document on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The preamble of the "Istanbul Convention" quotes the main European and international recommendations that inspire the Convention, **and defines the key concepts for a correct interpretation of the phenomenon and of its causes**, namely:

- that violence against women is a structural phenomenon:
"... violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women";
- that, consequently,
"...the realization of de jure and de facto equality between women and men is a key element in the prevention of violence against women";
- that women and girls are more exposed, compared to men, to the risk of suffering various forms of violence (domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence, forced marriages, so-called "honor" crimes, female genital mutilation ...) and that all of this constitutes
"...a serious violation of the human rights of women and girls and a major obstacle to the achievement of equality between women and men".

Given these premises, Article 3 ("Definitions") describes **"violence against women"** as
"... a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"(Art.3 a).

It also defines "domestic violence" as

"...all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim"(Art.3 b)

Finally, it defines "violence against women based on gender" as

"...any violence directed against a woman as such, or affecting women disproportionately" (Art.3 d), meaning the term "women" even girls under the age of 18 (Art.3 f) and with the term "gender" the set of "...roles, behaviors, activities and socially constructed attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men" (Article 3 c).

The main purpose of the Convention is

"...to protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence" (Chapter I – Purposes, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, general obligations - Art .1 a).

This goal is pursued through actions and interventions relating to three main thematic areas:

1. the prevention of violence (Chapter III - Prevention)
2. the protection of victims (Chapter IV - Protection and support)
3. the prosecution of perpetrators (Chapter V - substantive law)

In Chapter III, **the work with perpetrators of domestic violence (Art.16) is listed as one of the possible forms of prevention**, in addition to other actions like awareness-raising, education and training of professionals (Art.13, 14 and 15).

More specifically, Art. 16 (Preventive intervention and treatment programmes) states as follows:

1. *Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programmes aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns.*
2. *Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programmes aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex offenders, from re-offending.*
3. *In taking the measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, Parties shall ensure that the safety of, support for and the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, **these programmes are set up and implemented in close coordination with specialist support services for victims.***

Art.16 3 underlines the need for a coordinated work between services that support victims (as defined in Articles 20 and 22 of Chapter IV) and programmes for perpetrators, but no methodological indication is given regarding the possible forms of this collaboration.

In conclusion, the "Istanbul Convention":

- defines male violence against women as a structural phenomenon, mainly caused by social and cultural reasons (gender inequality and its consequences in terms power inequality between men and women);
- states and defines the different forms of gender-based violence (physical, sexual, economic, psychological, stalking);
- states that protection and support of victims (women and minors) is the main goal to be pursued by the Parties that ratified the Convention;
- details the main areas of intervention for the prevention and combat of violence (prevention, protection and punishment);
- quotes the work with perpetrators as one of the necessary preventive interventions, acknowledging the need for collaboration between programmes for perpetrators and support services for victims (although there are no operational and methodological indications on how to implement this collaboration).

4.2 Elaboration of the protocol

The collaboration between services that work with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence is a necessity that is addressed by the Istanbul Convention and by the national and regional legislations of many countries across Europe. It is also a need that arises in the day-to-day work of professionals that work in Programmes for Perpetrators and Services for the protection of victims of domestic violence.

This protocol was created and tested by the partners of ASAP Project (A Systemic Approach for Perpetrators) in 2019, and it proved to be a useful tool in the management of collaborative networks among organizations and entities working with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

This protocol tackles the main opportunities and challenges resulting from the preliminary mapping on existing forms of collaboration and good practices in Europe carried out by the partners of the project, and is ultimately aimed at granting the safety of women and children victims of violence through:

- Cooperation and coordinated interventions;
- Establishment of institutional agreements;
- Capacity building of professionals on domestic violence related issues;
- Improved interventions and follow up of the cases of domestic violence;
- Greater understanding of Male VAW/DV

The Operational Protocol and Toolkit develops and improves the existing practice of cooperation between the Programme for victims of domestic violence and the Programme for perpetrators. The protocol also provides a clearer timeline and thematic framework, setting up a structured meeting for sharing information, inter-institutional cooperation and joint planning.

Its universal and flexible structure makes it suitable for use in all cases of domestic violence and it can be adapted to the reality of each organization.

5. PURPOSES OF THE PROTOCOL

The present protocol aims at providing an operational tool to implement a systemic cooperation between Support services for victims and Services for perpetrators.

When possible, this collaboration should be extended to other local agencies such as Children support/protection services, Social Services and Police Forces.

The main and constant purpose of the collaboration relationships established through this protocol must be the protection of victim(s) of both direct and witnessed violence (including children).

Every step, action and cooperation between the services and agencies involved must recall this purpose.

6. PARTICIPANTS AND PRIVACY

6.1 PARTICIPANTS

Support services for victims and Services for perpetrators that have – separately – worked with the two members of a couple in which the man perpetrated (or is currently perpetrating) violent behaviors against the woman.

When possible, the collaboration should be extended to other local agencies involved in the case, such as Children support/protection services (Servizi di Tutela minori, servizi per l'età evolutiva), Social Services (servizi Sociali comunali), Family consulting services (Consultori familiari) and Police Forces (Forze dell'ordine).

6.2 TARGET AND EXCLUSIONS

The protocol can be applied every time both members of the (ex) couple are attending a programme (respectively for perpetrators and for victims).

There are no specific cases in which collaboration could or should not be established.

With this in mind, we think that information sharing could be useful especially in the case of high-risk situations, presence of children and repeated violent behaviors.

This protocol can also be used in other cases in which

- the man attending the perpetrator programme is the father of a child/children under Children support/protection Services
- the man is addressed to the programme by Police Forces or other Services that can monitor the impact of the violence on women or children

6.3 PRIVACY

In compliance with the GDPR and with the relevant measures for the protection of personal data, the collaboration and exchange of information between different Services must be explicitly detailed in all privacy authorizations.

7. COLLABORATION PROTOCOL AND TOOLKIT

The cooperation between the Services and agencies involved is divided into two phases:

- Phase 1: meeting between the full teams of the services/agencies involved, in order to acquire a mutual knowledge of working methodologies
- Phase 2: meetings between the case managers (one for each Service).

7.1 Phase 1

It involves a first meeting between the full staff of the collaborating Services/agencies.

The aim of this meeting is to share methodological and theoretical foundations and operational procedures of each Service/agency, in order to:

- start the cooperation with a reciprocal knowledge and awareness.
- Build mutual trust, based on the awareness that each Service/agency has the same purpose common purpose.
- Discuss any different view (both methodologic and/or theoretical)
- Convey the beneficiary the idea that all the Services involved are not only cooperating, but they also share the same purpose.
- Work with the beneficiary having clearly in mind the parallel path the other member of the "couple" is following with the other service.
- Control any unrealistic expectation the woman may have about an immediate improvement of her (ex)partner's violent behaviour (especially at the beginning of the programme). This may help prevent drop-out.

7.2 Phase 2

Each Service appoints a case manager, possibly the team member that works with the target beneficiary (one for the perpetrator, one for the victim/minor).

If the Programme for Perpetrator has a team member dedicated to "partner contacts", she is also invited to the meetings.

The case managers will meet every 4 months for all the period in which both members of the couple are attending their respective programme.(even if they join the programme at different times)

In each meeting, the case managers will discuss the following items:

- **Joint risk assessment**

The risk assessment will be carried out through the specific checklist RISK INDICATORS IN MALTREATMENT SITUATIONS, that contains risk indicators both for the woman and for the children. Programmes that are already using similar tools for risk assessment (for example the S.A.R.A. questionnaire) can substitute or integrate the protocol's checklist with their own tool.

Risk assessment through the checklist is done individually by each case manager before every meeting, in order to reach a faster and more effective comparison and sharing procedure.

When using the checklist, the risk is to be considered as high when 3 items are checked.

- **Assessment of recidivism**

Assessment of recidivism is performed confronting the episodes of recidivism described both by the perpetrator and the victim and recorded by case managers in the following table

Recidivism episodes reported by the perpetrator

Type of violence	Description of the episode	Date
Physical violence		
Psychological violence		
Economic violence		
Sexual violence		
Stalking		
Other		

Recidivism episodes reported by the victim

Type of violence	Description of the episode	Date
Physical violence		
Psychological violence		
Economic violence		
Sexual violence		
Stalking		
Other		

- Assessment of individual change

The assessment of individual change is carried out through the administration of IMPACT questionnaires to both the perpetrator and the victim according to the following program:

- T0 at the beginning of the programme
- T1 when the perpetrator starts the Psycho-educational group
- T2 every three months
- T3 at the end of the programme
- T4 follow-up

For victims, the questionnaire can be administered either by the operator from the service for victims or by the operator of the programme for perpetrators that manages the contacts with perpetrators' partners.

The questionnaire should be administered at the same intervals both to the perpetrator and the victim. In case of particularly difficult situations for the victim, operators can decide to delay the questionnaire to avoid potential stressful effects

- Measurement of other qualitative elements

It's very important that the case managers also share information and discuss about other *qualitative* features of the programmes (e.g. perception of risk beyond the objective results of risk assessment).

Besides the programmed meetings, informal contacts (by phone or e-mail) between the case managers are encouraged in case of critical events (significant changes within the life-cycle of couple/family – e.g. births, deaths, separation, divorce -, recidivism, especially about physical violence or serious threats; escalation; Court orders regarding children; will of the woman to split up; actions taken by judicial system; modifications in the legal procedure) for which the reassessment of risk is necessary.

8. ANNEXES

5.1 Checklist for risk assessment (woman and children)

5.2 Recidivism assessment tool

5.3 Meeting records

8.1 CHECKLIST: RISK INDICATORS IN MALTREATMENT SITUATIONS

Section A: risks for the woman

SERIOUS (HIGH RISK)

- The woman has intuitive feelings of being at risk (woman's fears)
- Death or suicide threats; fantasies of death
- Non treated alcohol or drug use (memory loss, cruelty)
- Increase in the frequency and seriousness of violent behaviors (escalation)
- Extreme and obsessive jealousy towards every area of interest of the partner
- Criminal record
- Access to or possession of weapons; reference to weapons as tools of power, control or revenge; "intimate" relationship with the weapon, jokes about it, use of terms of endearment for the weapon
- The woman has left post-death instructions
- Pet abuse
- Violence in previous relationships
- Previous police interventions for threatening behaviors, stalking, private violence, maltreatment, sexual abuse
- Demand for the relationship to last forever; use of expressions such as "together for life", "forever", "whatever it takes"
- Will of the woman to split up
- Ongoing divorce proceeding;
- Diagnosis of mental illness in the perpetrator not treated by a psychiatrist or doctor;
- Violation of Court's protective order measures;

NON-SPECIFIC INDICATORS – INTERMEDIATE RISK (TO BE ASSESSED AS A WHOLE)

- Anger against police or other (real or perceived) authorities
- responsibility for violent or aggressive behaviors is attributed to alcohol or drugs
- Monitoring, control and inappropriate attention to the partner
- Rejection is not accepted
- Projection of extreme emotions on others (hate, love, jealousy)
- Minimization of violent behaviors
- Belief that everyone is against him
- Refusal to change and description of himself as inflexible and not willing to compromise
- Acceleration of involvement in the first phases of relationship (cohabitation, marriage, pregnancy)
- Suicide attempts of the victim
- growing up in a violent environment (parents abusive with one another or towards children);
- growing up in the welfare system (with a foster parent or in an institution);

Section B: risks for the children

- She is pregnant
- She takes care for children (her own or his)
- Have their own (legal) children.
- She knows that the child/children have heard what has happened in some of the incidents.
- She knows that the child/children are witnessing any of the incidents.
- The husband/partner have hurt at least once the child/children.
- The husband/partner has threatened to hurt the child/children.
- The husband/partner has threatened to kill the child/children.
- The husband/partner has threatened to the child/children directly

8.2 RECIDIVISM ASSESSMENT TOOL

Recidivism episodes reported by the perpetrator

Type of violence	Description of the episode	Date
Physical violence		
Psychological violence		
Economic violence		
Sexual violence		
Stalking		
Other		

Recidivism episodes reported by the victim

Type of violence	Description of the episode	Date
Physical violence		
Psychological violence		
Economic violence		
Sexual violence		
Stalking		
Other		

8.3 MEETING RECORD

Meeting n°	Case number	Date	Participants

	Support service for victims	Service for perpetrators	Other services/agencies	Joint decisions taken
Risk				
Recidivism				
individual change				

Other qualitative notes:

