



## D4.3 European recommendations for perpetrator work in multiagency collaboration



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## D4.3 European recommendations for perpetrator work in multiagency collaboration WP4 Piloting

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# 1. Foreword

European Recommendations for Perpetrator Work in Multiagency Cooperation are developed to assist domestic violence perpetrator programmes and policymakers in Europe in establishing, enhancing, and utilizing multiagency cooperation to curb violence against women and ensure their safety.

A coordinated community response and cooperation among relevant agencies constitute one of the four pillars of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (Istanbul Convention). This emphasizes that ending violence against women requires a joint and coordinated effort from various agencies. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence are recognized as an integral element of the framework for stopping violence and protecting victims (Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention).

However, many countries and organizations in Europe face challenges in ensuring that perpetrator programmes are established and conducted in close cooperation with other agencies, especially women support services. These recommendations integrate international guidance, promising practices, and experiences from the European projects ASAP and [ASAP 2.0](#), translating them into tangible recommendations for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and policymakers in Europe.

The two ASAP projects, funded by the European Commission through the REC and CERV programs, carried out actions aimed at developing a collaboration framework to streamline coordinated response in five European countries where collaboration practices are not existent or standardized. The working methodology developed and consolidated through the ASAP Protocol and Toolkit has the ultimate purpose of increasing the safety of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence and their children.

The document and its recommendations specifically focus on the cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services, a crucial element in ensuring the safety and well-being of survivors during interventions with perpetrators. Furthermore, the document emphasizes the cooperation between perpetrator programmes and a wide range of stakeholders, including courts, police, social and health services, providing recommendations for enabling and fostering this kind of multi-agency work for mutual benefits. Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence can significantly contribute to ensuring the safety of victims and amplify the effects of other agencies involved in their protection.

## 2. Perpetrator ProgramMEs and Coordinated Community Response: Collaborative Approaches in Addressing GBV

This section examines two key aspects: a) collaboration between programmes for perpetrators and victim support services, and b) collaboration between perpetrator programmes and a broader array of agencies involved in addressing violence against women and domestic violence (e.g., courts, probation services, police, social services). While both aspects fall under the umbrella of multi-agency cooperation, this distinction underscores the specific nature and significance of the collaboration between perpetrator programmes and victim support services. This collaboration plays a vital role in ensuring that the work with perpetrators is both safe and accountable (CoE, 2011; WWP EN, 2018; WWP EN, 2023). Moreover, establishing this collaboration is a recurring challenge identified by GREVIO in nearly all countries that have undergone the evaluation process for implementing the Istanbul Convention (CoE, 2022).

### 2.1. Cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services

Cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services can manifest on different levels, whether focused on individual clients or involving broader collaboration in capacity building, policy, and advocacy.

In client-focused cooperation, partnership often includes the exchange of referrals and information. In some cases, victim support services play a pivotal role by providing “partner contact,<sup>1</sup>” where they reach out to partners or ex-partners of perpetrators enrolled in programmes. This outreach involves informing victims about the programme, assessing their safety and existing risks, and ensuring they receive appropriate support. The ASAP project has clearly demonstrated the benefits of establishing such cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services, even if victim services are not directly engaged in partner contact. When programmes and victim services have mutually connected clients (partners or ex-partners), this collaborative information exchange contributes to enhanced victim safety and enables more informed decision-making by both service providers. Victim support services that implemented the ASAP approach in Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Greece reported that establishing cooperation with perpetrator programmes has aided them in protecting the victims they work with in a more comprehensive manner.

Establishing client-focused cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services is a process that necessitates the active involvement of both parties, a shared understanding of goals, and well-defined procedures. The ASAP project demonstrates that building such cooperation can leverage the principles outlined in the Istanbul Convention, especially in countries that have ratified it. Many organizations often lack established procedures for setting up and implementing this type of cooperation. Additionally, they grapple with dilemmas related to data protection, lacking a clear understanding of how to effectively exchange information with other agencies while ensuring the data protection of their clients.

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<sup>1</sup> European standards for perpetrator programmes define partner contact as: activities aimed at ensuring that female survivors are informed about the perpetrator programme their male (ex-)partner is attending, risk of harm is adequately assessed and managed, and survivors are offered support.

[European standards for perpetrator programmes \(2023\)](#) offer clear guidance on how to establish partner contact within the context of perpetrator work. The [ASAP protocol \(2023\)](#) outlines specific steps to be taken to establish cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services, especially when they have mutually connected clients. The protocol also addresses issues of confidentiality and data protection during the exchange of information.

Cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services can evolve into a more collaborative form, extending to supporting the development of each organization and the creation of shared strategies and activities to combat gender-based violence. Best practices include engaging in mutual learning sessions and joint trainings, by facilitating the exchange of rich and unique expertise held by organizations in both sectors. Participating in joint capacity-building activities further contributes to a shared understanding and practices in addressing GBV, and enhancing overall efficiency when collaborating on specific cases in practice. Some perpetrator programmes incorporate victim support services into the management structures of their organization by involving them in the organization's Board. This practice is also considered beneficial.

Furthermore, perpetrator programmes and victim support services share a common goal—to end gender-based violence and domestic violence. Organisations in both sectors can maximize their impact by uniting their efforts through joint advocacy and lobbying activities.

## 2.2. Collaboration between perpetrator programmes and other agencies in the GBV field

Programmes for perpetrators need to be an integral part of the coordinated community response to GBV and domestic violence, and shouldn't be set up in isolation ([CoE, 2013](#); [WWP EN, 2018](#)). This entails close collaboration with various entities, including women's support services, law enforcement agencies, judicial services, probation services, and, when applicable, child protection agencies ([CoE, 2023](#)).

The benefits of including perpetrator programmes in the framework of multiagency cooperation are mutual and contribute to stopping violence and protecting victims. Coordinated collaboration with different agencies supports the quality and outcomes of perpetrator programmes. As confirmed by the research, programmes that have better cooperation with other agencies also have better outcomes, in terms of stopping violent behaviour and increasing safety of survivors ([WWP EN \(2023\)](#)).

Conversely, perpetrator programmes contribute to the quality work of other agencies. For instance, as perpetrator programmes are in continuous and frequent contact with perpetrators (usually once a week over several months), they are in a position to closely monitor any signs of an increased risk and react to prevent harm. Furthermore, the effectiveness of measures imposed by other agencies is increased if perpetrator programmes are involved. For example, if courts impose a protective order for the removal of the perpetrator from the house, a perpetrator programme can support men to accept that measure, understand their responsibility, and reduce the probability of breaking the protection order.

The most often method of collaboration between perpetrator programmes and other agencies involves mutual referrals. Courts, social and health services commonly refer individuals to perpetrator programmes, and the programmes, in turn, may refer men to other agencies. Countries with supportive legislation facilitating referrals to and from perpetrator programmes tend to have higher referral rates. However, countries in Europe face similar shortcomings in integrating referral mechanisms to perpetrator programmes within the criminal justice system (see GREVIO report for [Portugal, Belgium, Austria, France, Croatia](#)). These challenges include inconsistent enforcement of referral pathways, lack of available programmes, or referrals used as alternatives to convictions. Described tendencies were experienced in the implementation of the ASAP project as well. Organisations in Cyprus and Greece highlighted the need for a legislative framework that enables referrals to perpetrator programmes, and recommended development of multiagency protocols that provide a bases for cooperation with other agencies.

Programmes in Europe invest efforts to establish cooperation with alcohol and substance abuse centers, as violence against women is often associated with dependency problems. Some countries have set up domestic violence perpetrator programmes in substance abuse services, such as [REPROVIDE](#) in the United Kingdom. Cooperation between perpetrator programmes and alcohol and substance treatment centers is highly valuable, as alcohol and substance abuse are factors of higher-risk, higher-harm violence, and many clients require simultaneous work on both problems.

It is important to emphasize that cooperation should extend beyond mutual referrals to broader collaboration, including information exchange, joint planning, and decision-making. In some countries, perpetrator programmes are involved in multi-agency meetings, such as MARAC in Scotland, United Kingdom, demonstrating a good practice in establishing productive partnerships with other agencies. However, many perpetrator programmes in various countries encounter challenges in ensuring this level of participation. For instance, in none of the [ASAP project](#) implementing countries this level of cooperation between perpetrator programmes and other agencies is systemic.

# 3. European policy recommendations for perpetrator work in multiagency cooperation

These recommendations serve as guidance for perpetrator programmes as they strive to establish safe and accountable practices. The recommendations also prove beneficial for policymakers, offering clear guidance on how to create a framework for perpetrator programmes at both the national and local levels. The presented framework incorporates international guidance and draws from European experiences, promising practices and typical pitfalls.

## 3.1. Recommendations for perpetrator programmes

- Ensure that partner contact is extended to every partner or ex-partner of a perpetrator entering a programme who might be at risk. When developing the partner contact approach, explore the possibility of having it facilitated by an independent victim support service. This ensures that victims have access to specialized support encompassing a wide range of services.
- Develop protocols, whether internal within your organization or external between your organization and independent victim support services, outlining the implementation of partner contact and the regular exchange of information. Make sure that these protocols outline partner contact as defined in the Istanbul Convention ([CoE, 2011](#); [CoE, 2013](#)) and European standards for perpetrator programmes ([WWP EN, 2023](#)).
- Maximize efforts to establish cooperation with all victim support services in your community, particularly those used by partners or ex-partners of the perpetrators you are working with. The ASAP 3-steps approach has demonstrated positive results in establishing effective cooperation.
- Consider ways to ensure that the expertise and feedback of victim support services are utilized to enhance your perpetrator programme and organization. Best practices in how victim support services can contribute to the safety and efficiency of your work include, but are not limited to: participating in management structures (e.g., Board of the organization), contributing to drafting sections of the curriculum for working with perpetrators, being invited as consultants in challenging cases, and engaging in mutual training sessions.
- Reflect on the ways that your expertise and practice can support the work of victim support services, and work of other agencies in GBV field. This may include specific expertise in assessing and managing risks, being in a continuous contact with perpetrators and thus having the possibility to timely identify the increase of the risk, focusing your work on specific aspects that are a priority for the survivor, and similar contributions. Ensure that your specific contributions are clearly communicated and understood by all relevant agencies.
- Initiate and establish cooperation with alcohol and substance abuse services in your community. This is a way to enable treatment to your clients with dependency issues, and reduce the risk of high harm violence.
- Advocate for your participation in multi-agency meetings, such as MARACs, MATAcS, and similar.
- Initiate and advocate for the creation of multi-agency agreements and protocols of cooperation that will include mutual referrals but also extend to broader exchange of information and decision-making.



## 3.2. Recommendations for policymakers

- Support and encourage cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services in the country. This can be done by outlining the cooperation in relevant policy or strategic documents (e.g., standards, and strategies for preventing GBV) or funding joint initiatives of perpetrator programmes and victim support services.

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- Ensure that perpetrator programmes in the country can only be implemented if offering partner contact is guaranteed.

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- Ensure that the data protection framework in the country enables exchanging information between perpetrator programmes and victim support services, or between perpetrator programmes and other agencies in the GBV field. Data protection should be guaranteed, and implemented in a way that doesn't restrict exchanging information about potential risks and coordination of activities aimed to ensure safety of victims.

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- Promote the importance of programmes working with perpetrators in ending violence against women and domestic violence. Ensure that perpetrator programmes are accessible nationwide, allowing entry through various referral paths (mandatory, recommended, voluntary). Additionally, establish measures to monitor the imposition of requirements to attend a perpetrator programme and take corrective actions if these measures are not imposed in sufficient numbers.

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- Ensure that the contribution of perpetrator programmes in assessing and managing risks of repeated violence is understood by all relevant agencies. Design policies and protocols that will enable perpetrator programmes to closely cooperate with other agencies. This cooperation should include the possibility of mutual referrals, but also broader collaboration, encompassing information exchange, joint planning, and decision-making.

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# ASAP<sub>2.0</sub>

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Perpetrators of domestic violence



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