



European  
Network

## NATIONAL REPORT

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### 1) Organisation/programme (max 3000 characters)

The **Estonian Women's Shelters' Union (EWSU)** is a national umbrella of non-profit organisations which provide services for victims of violence against women; it serves public interests.

EWSU works to combat various forms of violence against women. Doing so it engages in violence prevention, provision of support to victims of violence against women and advancement of gender equality in the society generally.

To achieve the above goal, the organisation cooperates with governmental and non-governmental organisations in Estonia and abroad, mobilises support for NGOs providing services for victims of violence against women in Estonia, develops and implements respective projects and programmes, helps prevent violence before it occurs, raises public awareness of the spread, causes and consequences of violence against women, organises training and awareness-raising campaigns, makes proposals for revising current and drafting new laws and regulations, etc.

EWSU was established in 2006 and is a member of the WAVE Network. EWSU has eight member organisations in eight different counties. The aggregate number of women's shelters in Estonia is twelve, EWSU networks and collaborates with all of them.

EWSU as a national umbrella and its member organisations do not provide services to perpetrators of violence; our primary target group consists exclusively of women victims of violence and their children. Given that we work with limited funding and resources, we have no intention to expand our target group. However, we have initiated cooperation with the executors of the programme targeting male perpetrators so as to make sure the victims feel secure and get full support during the programme.

Over the recent years, we have made every effort to develop, throughout the country, networks bringing together professionals working directly with victims and perpetrators, such as teachers in kindergartens and schools, child welfare workers, social workers, police officers, prosecutors, family doctors, emergency medical care providers, judges, etc) with a view to detect early warning signs of abuse and identify options for intervention. We have, furthermore, produced a range of information materials and organised training across the country addressing occurrence of and responses to violence against women.

Together with the Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable, we have developed and published a handbook for teachers on violence against women and domestic violence. A similar handbook is being developed for teachers working in kindergartens.

Our most significant achievement in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence has so far been the 2009 one-day long charity programme on the national TV called Christmas Tunnel that managed to grab a lot of public as well as media attention. The programme which gave the representatives of women's shelters as well as a range of professionals the chance to address the issue of domestic violence from different angles. The programme helped raise a significant amount of funding for supporting the activities of women's shelters.

A most recent landmark event was the November 25, 2013 conference called „Men talk about violence against women” which was organised together with the Estonian Women’s Associations Roundtable. The conference speakers included four cabinet ministers and three MPs, all males. During the conference a new movement „Men against violence against women” was initiated. The movement’s website is accessible at <http://mehedvågivallavastu.ee> and its first actions are focused on collecting signatures in support of signing the Istanbul convention.

Talking about preventing and combating violence against women in Estonia, we see the biggest challenge in bringing about change in attitudes prevailing in our society where domestic violence was traditionally considered a private family matter and abuse was justified by the victim’s „wrong” behaviour. Even professionals fail to comprehend the gender-based nature of violence against women. Focussing on the perpetrator the victim’s needs remain unattended to.

2) **Country** (max 1800 characters)

In Estonia, programmes targeting perpetrators of violence started to be developed in the mid-2000s when Norwegian and Finnish trainers were invited to Estonia.

Up until today, two rehabilitation programmes for male perpetrators of domestic violence have been implemented. The first was launched in 2006 by the NGO Vägivallast Vabaks (Free from Violence), the programme was funded by the Ministry of Justice. The programme was called „Rehabilitation and support group for male perpetrators of domestic violence”. The project ended in 2007. The programme was continued in 2008-2009 with the funding coming from Tallinn Prison. Support groups were established for Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking men led by specially prepared group leaders. Prior to leading the support group, the group leaders underwent special training; the groups were led either by two men or a man and a woman. In 2006-2007, groups were meeting in two cities, in the second phase, in the capital city of Tallinn only. During 2006-2009, 71 men convicted of committing domestic violence were referred to rehabilitation-support programme, 56 of them undertook the programme fully. The participants in the support groups were referred there by the law enforcement system, a few joined the group voluntarily. During the programme, seventeen 2.5-3-hour meetings were held during 7 weeks. Interviews were conducted at the end of the programme.

From 2010 onwards, the rehabilitation services were no longer outsourced, the prison service developed and introduced a new social programme for male perpetrators of violence.

The programme „Reducing domestic and intimate partner violence” has been executed since 2011, by August 2013, 119 men had participated in the programme. No information is available on the total number of men referred to the programme. The programme is pretty similar to the former one, the number of group meetings has, however, been cut to 12. These are supplemented by individual interviews at the start and the end of the programme. Men are referred to the programme by prisons and the probation supervision system.

In 2010 the Development Plan for Reducing Violence for years 2010-2014 was adopted.

[http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=52311/Development\\_Plan\\_for\\_Reducing\\_Violence\\_for\\_Years\\_2010-2014.pdf](http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=52311/Development_Plan_for_Reducing_Violence_for_Years_2010-2014.pdf)

One of the implementation plan measures of the development plan is the development and implementation of the service or programme aimed at reducing reoccurrence of offensive behaviour.

[http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=52232/Implementing\\_Plan\\_of\\_the\\_Development\\_Plan\\_for\\_Reducing\\_Violence\\_for\\_Years\\_2010-2014.pdf](http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=52232/Implementing_Plan_of_the_Development_Plan_for_Reducing_Violence_for_Years_2010-2014.pdf)

Currently, a project coordinated by the University of Tartu, is underway in the framework of which a short-term programme lasting altogether 14 weeks is being developed. The programme consists of 14 meetings and individual interviews at the start and at the end of the programme.

Information of the programmes implemented in Estonia so far has been collected within the ongoing project by Kadri Soo.

EWSU has proposed that an integral part of the new programme be interviews with partners of the abusers, both at the start as well as at the end of the programme. The interviews should be conducted by professionals working in women’s shelters. The women would additionally receive all the services available at the shelters. Respective negotiations are being conducted with the project team.

3) **Best practices** (max 1800 characters)

We cannot currently suggest any good practice from Estonia that would be worth sharing. Rather, we use and replicate the good practice from other countries. We hope the situation will change in the near future.

4) **Needs and recommendations** (max 1800 characters)

Violence prevention should start, we are convinced, in kindergartens and schools. We should challenge traditional gender roles and break gender stereotypes; we should teach peaceful conflict resolution techniques from the early age.

Awareness-raising campaigns should be run for the adult population, benefits of gender equal societies should be highlighted and zero tolerance toward domestic violence should be developed.

Abusers should be offered long-term (minimum 6-month, even better 1-year) group training that would also include options for individual therapy. The programmes should envisage cooperation with victim support organisations, first and foremost, with women's shelters. Abusers should be dealt with, simultaneously with this, victims should be provided all necessary services. Programme evaluations should consider the feedback from the victims.

Programmes targeting abusers should contain a provision that the abuser's own contribution be increased, which would lead to increased programme efficiency.

The programmes should not only focus on putting an end to physical and sexual violence, but aim also at eliminating mental abuse.

All the programmes implemented should meet WWP standards and be accredited. When developing its own system, Estonia should follow the UK model and Respect.

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