



European  
Network

## NATIONAL REPORT GUIDELINE

Country:

Lithuania

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### 1) Organisation/programme.

In Lithuania there are many organisations that provide support to women, meanwhile there are only few working with men. Many people have never visited a psychologist, especially Lithuanian men, who believe that 'complaining is not manly', 'men do not cry', etc. They tend to solve their problems by consuming alcohol, taking risks when driving, committing violent acts against themselves and others.

From the day of establishment five years ago, Kaunas County Men's Crisis Center has been actively working in the fields of human rights, reducing violence in domestic environment (working with the perpetrators), and vulnerable groups (family members of the perpetrators – women and children). Every year we implement one or two projects in these fields and provide individual and group support to the target group.

- We work with violent men according to the violent behaviour modification programme;
- We provide psychological support to family members (violence victims) of violent men;
- We engage in educational and preventive work with society and youth;
- We provide complex support to men and family members who suffer violence in domestic environment.

We have been working with domestic perpetrators since 2009. In cooperation with Danish partners, we were authorised to use the DADV programme in our work. We keep in touch with Danish partners; we were one of the first organisations in Lithuania to use their programme for work with perpetrators in domestic environment and thus, indirectly provide support to the victims of domestic violence – women and children.

Every year we publish brochures, organise meetings with social partners, give interviews to the media, participate in the action "16 Days against Violence against Women", and organise workshops in the rural areas. In 2011, we organised a conference in Seimas. This year, together with the police

and probation we are implementing a social campaign 'I am not violent. Don't be either'. During the campaign, we invite the men, including well-known ones, to take a picture with a poster.

The public is aware of our work. Other NGOs and the Police Department invite us to give speeches on this topic. Following our example, other NGOs have started working with violent men and are asking to share the experience. This year, we initiated the establishment of three more Men's Crisis Centres in Lithuania.

The biggest problem for us is the lack of state funding. We have to maintain the employees, the office, pay the utilities and telephone bills. This year, the state allocated the funding for work with perpetrators of € 2300 per year. All our specialists have to take other jobs to ensure the living and make sure they do not become unemployed. Therefore, we are at risk of losing the specialists: this year, we have already lost a social worker.

## 2) **Country**

Two years ago, on 15 December 2011, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence came into effect in Lithuania. This Law attributed domestic violence to the acts of public importance. The Law provides for undergoing the violent behaviour modification programme as one of the punitive measures. The specialists working with families as well as police officers agree that when implementing the new Law, attention must also be paid at the perpetrators to reintegrate them in society, modify the habits and skills, because violence cannot be reduced without support to the perpetrator: he will find another victim and continue doing harm. According to the statistics of Lithuania, 90 percent of the victims are children and women and 10 percent – children and men.

As the courts started applying this punitive measure, the demand for such programmes and qualified specialists increased. In cooperation with Kaunas Probation Office, in 1.5 years, over 80 people participated in the violent behaviour modification programme in Kaunas City. Implementing the court judgment, they must undergo the programme from the beginning to the end. We enjoy our especially close contact with Kaunas Probation Office, which helps us to reach the perpetrators in domestic environment.

The organisations working with perpetrators in domestic environment in Lithuania are Klaipėda Social and Psychological Support Centre (anger management), Raseiniai Crisis Centre, the psychologist of Vilnius Men's Crisis and Information Centre. Three newly established Men's Crisis Centres are preparing for work and are being trained by us.

## 3) **Best practices**

The principle of the programme implemented in our organisation is that the perpetrator is responsible for his behaviour, and violent behaviour is learned behaviour and therefore, non-violent behaviour may also be learned. Sometimes violence is the only learned way to solve conflicts. The focus of the violent behaviour modification programme is establishing contact, developing mutual trust, and increasing the motivation for participation in the programme and modifying the behaviour. The attitudes that may influence the emotional response and behaviour are identified, childhood and adolescence experiences are discussed. At this stage, the assessment of the perpetrator's personality is important as well as identifying the relation with alcohol, psychotropic substances and the likelihood of a mental disease so that these problems could be solved before the second stage (group work).

Later on, the sessions in groups of 7-10 men are started. The meetings take place once per week and last 2-3 hours. The group work is conducted by two specialists. We have noticed that

modifying the behaviour of one member of a couple is not always enough. Quite often both partners have to learn a different behaviour: to recognize and express their feelings calmly, solve the problems by discussion with a tolerant attitude towards the opinion of the other.

We take all men committing violent acts in domestic environment to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at least once, because 90 percent of men who have committed an act of violence in domestic environment were intoxicated at the time. The stories they hear from the alcoholics anonymous often makes them think of their own relation with alcohol.

Our programme is predominantly based on the Danish DADV programme. We have slightly adapted it to Lithuanian mentality, changed some pursuits, allow more discussions, and give some tasks to perform at home, e.g., to monitor and register the mood, thoughts, their impact on the behaviour. We also have a shorter version of the programme, which lasts 3 months.

In 2011, together with Danish partners and Women's Crisis Centre we have implemented a common project, where we shared the experience with the NGOs of North-Western Russia, Latvia, and Belarus. In 2013, we are implementing another common project with these partners. In the project, we are sharing the experience and consulting the specialists of NGOs of North-Western Russia, Latvia, and Belarus, where the law on protection against domestic violence has not been adopted yet. The shorter version (3 months) of our programme would be suitable for the countries, where the courts are not yet applying the obligation to undergo the programme: a group of volunteer participants could be gathered there; the participants often lack motivation to attend the group sessions for a longer time.

#### 4) **Needs and recommendations**

We are glad that the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence is already in effect in Lithuania; however, to ensure better safety of violence victims, more attention must be given to support to perpetrators. The state has not yet created a strategy on how to do it, how to fund this work, and how to support the NGOs that do the work.

Violent behaviour modification programme is often the opportunity for perpetrators to participate in group sessions for the first time and to experience their benefit. When leaving the group, the men often say that it was useful as it allowed seeing their own life from a distance, analysing own problems and the ones of others, helping other people to solve them and helping themselves at the same time as well as taught to recognize their own feelings and deal with them.

However, in Lithuania there still are opinions condemning the work with violent people and urging the authorities not to provide funding for the programmes for perpetrators. They state that such programmes do not bring any benefit and only the victims should be given support. Therefore, public awareness of the good practice of work with the violent people and the benefit of the programmes for perpetrators should be raised.

The country also has an extremely harmful tradition of alcohol consumption. People drink often and a lot. Around 90 of people who have committed an act of violence in domestic environment were intoxicated at the time and a large part of them are addicted. There must be more focus on alcoholism prevention as well as youth training on appropriate conflict resolution, anger management, and communication with the opposite sex.