



European
Network

NATIONAL REPORT GUIDELINE

Country: PORTUGAL

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

In GEAV we work regularly with victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence (DV).

Our programme for perpetrators of DV happens in individual sessions. We work with perpetrators judicially ordered to the programme (convicted for DV or sent by the child protective services) or voluntary. The majority of them are mandatory clients and all of them are men.

This programme usually is completed after 20/25 sessions, even though it may include some more sessions. The sessions may happen weekly or twice a month.

In the first sessions we collect of personal data, history of the violent relationship, assess the actual situation of the man, considering risk and protective factors, assess symptomatology, personality, beliefs concerning DV and violent behaviors used against his partner and children. Perpetrators

are explained the rules of the programme and the limits of confidentiality and are invited to sign a therapeutic contract.

The majority of the perpetrators we work with maintains the relationship with his victim and is accused of psychological and physical violence. Almost of them are parents and have frequent contact with their children.

When the perpetrator is in a relationship we contact the partner, whether she is the victim or not, and clarify with her the goals of the programme and collect some additional data about the actual behavior of the perpetrator.

The main framework of our programme is a cognitive behavioral approach with an educational dimension and is inspired in feminist theories. The goals are:

- to motivate the perpetrator for change and to responsibility for his violence,
- to recognize his behaviors as crime and the impact of it,
- to change beliefs and thoughts that legitimate DV,
- to make him more capable of recognize emotions and to regulate himself,
- to develop personal and interpersonal skills in order to make him more capable of self-control,
- to reduce the risk of victimization of the partner,
- to eliminate or reduce the violent behaviors,
- to make him adopt a nonviolence style of relationships.

Through this programme we:

- ✓ discuss and define DV, human rights, types of violence and its impact on the victims, beliefs about DV and its importance to the legitimacy of violence,
- ✓ analyze dynamics of power and control,

- ✓ try to develop some awareness of the causes and origins of the violence, in order to make him more conscious of the instrumental function of violence,
- ✓ promote the adoption of nonviolent solutions to the resolution of conflicts,
- ✓ propose some tasks in order to make the perpetrator more aware of his body, cognitive or sensorial signs of anger and try to develop some strategies to avoid the anger explosions.
- ✓ discuss good strategies of parenting whenever perpetrators have regular contact with children and/or play an important role in their lives,
- ✓ analyze some masculinity issues.

We have improved our work in the last few years: we are working with more perpetrators, we are following a more standardized programme and standardized measures of psychological assessment of perpetrators, in order to evaluate the changes occurred through the programme.

However, we can point out as the major obstacles the financial difficulties to maintain the programme and other projects related to this field, the payment required to the perpetrators (even though they are required to pay a small amount of money, our perpetrators have low income) and some schedule difficulties (the job timetables are longer and there are many difficulties in conciliating all of them).

Beside working with victims and perpetrators of violence, we also realize research in this field, trainings and supervision of professionals working in the field, sharing best practices and learning from other experiences of intervention.

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

After 2007 the portuguese law about DV suffered some changes (eg. more restraining orders applied, eletronic surveilence and mandatory programmes). Perpetrators of DV started to be ordered to a programme for preventing DV whenever they were convicted for DV. However, in that time, we did not have enough programmes running in Portugal to respond to all needs. Because of that, in the last few years we have seen some projects emerging in this field and new responses becoming available.

Nowadays we have a national program for perpetrators of DV (called PAVD) convicted for DV, held by the national probation service. There are some criteria for the inclusion of perpetrators in this program, like the extent of the judicial punishment (it has to be 18 or more months), the risk of violence evaluated by SARA has to be low or medium and the perpetrator cannot have mental disease or be a drug abuser. The programme is conducted in group by two trained facilitators. The next step is to make this program available in all country, but it is not a reality yet.

There are some other programmes being held in portugal. University of Minho has been working with perpetrators in individual programmes and in the last few years has been developing a new group programme (PPRIAC). There are no public results yet as the programme is being tested.

There are some other institutions working with perpetrators of violence (Hospital Sobral Cid, in Coimbra; Projecto Contigo, in Açores; Recomeçar, in Vila Praia de Âncora), throughout the country. Nevertheless, there are many places in Portugal where we have no available responses for perpetrators.

Between 2009 and 2011, the national entity responsible for the coordination of measures to prevent domestic violence (CIG) has ordered GEAV the portuguese adaptation of DAIP/Duluth Program. It is already concluded and some professionals are already getting training to work with perpetrators of violence. We hope next year it will be possible to have DAIP being implemented in Portugal (dependind on CIG decisions).

In a few years we hope to have a national network of programmes available.

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

To conduct our programme in GEAV we consider essential:

- To have in mind that our major goals are: stop violence, protect the victim and change behaviors and attitudes of the perpetrator.
- The psychologist must have a good training about DV and some practice working with victims of violence. (The psychologists that work with perpetrators - at the moment, they are all females - are specialized in this field and work also with victims of DV. We think that that experience improves our practice as it makes us more aware of the complex dynamics of violence).
- The psychologist must have supervision by a senior colleague.
- There is a therapeutic contract where the rules of the programme are specified (the need to stop violence, the limits of confidentiality, the length of the programme and the network maintained with other institutions) and which is presented to the perpetrator and signed by him.
- There is a good network (with judicial institutions, child protective services, health and mental health services and community institutions working with the victims) and in each case we contact other institutions also involved in the specific case in order to confirm if the changes of behavior are occurring and if the perpetrator is following the therapeutic contract.
- It is essential to clarify the expectations of the partner of the perpetrator/the victim and explain her how the programme works. If she is being followed by other professional we may ask him/her to make it avoiding to leave the victim more unsafe and not protected.

All of this best practices may be adopted by any other project.

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

In Portugal there is a need to develop more programmes and make them available for more perpetrators. To do it will be necessary to apply more financial and human resources to this field. We have some professionals that are getting education on working with perpetrators of violence and we can take full advantage of these resources by integrating them in the network of institutions.

We also need to educate some professionals and the general population about the importance of this work to the protection of past and future victims. This is important not only to spread the message that perpetrators can change their behavior and make more of them look for help but also to make more professionals of the area, that work only with victims, and more other people to invest in this kind of programme and make possible to get more financial support.

The fourth Portuguese national programme against DV (PNCVD) state the importance of developing more programmes for perpetrators and make them available throughout the country. It also reinforces the need of more scientific research and more training about DV for professionals.

It is urgent in Portugal to create some national guidelines for perpetrators of DV programmes and define one institution as responsible for that task. This institution should be also responsible for the accreditation of valid programmes.