

Action IS1206 *Femicide across Europe*
Guidelines for the use of policy-makers
Template

1. Identify the **main aims** of the WG

The aims of WG4 on prevention of femicide have been used for setting up the activities, and developing an action plan both in the direction of research as well as for possible policy implications.

- **Define** *what* is prevention of femicide, based on its definition.

The WG adopted a broad definition of femicide starting off by identifying the gender of the offender (male) and of the victim (female); the motivation that lead to the killing (cultural or masculine honour, distortive cognition on gender role, psychopathology, context of the killing (intimate partner femicide, honour killing and other culture related killing, family related, sex-exploitation). This definition goes beyond any specific legislation introducing these types of murder, but it looks at them from a criminological, victimological perspective adopting a psychological, sociological and epidemiological approach.

- **Define** *what* primary, secondary, tertiary and quaterly prevention consists of and how it relates to elimination or reduction of femicide.

Prevention of femicide is strictly related to prevention of other forms of violence against women, and it is a first step towards a broader way of thinking about femicide, as a form of violence against women. Prevention of femicide sets its roots in primary prevention involving education, media awareness, change of attitudes, and this is the main path for effective durable and long-term prevention of femicide. The actions and activities involving the education system, the media, and the population as a whole can be very broad but often difficult to grasp. Impact of their effectiveness might be difficult to obtain or establish in the short term. As effective and essential as they are, they are also not directly linkable to reduction/prevention of femicide. At

the next level of prevention, the actions focus toward those cases that have already posed a level of concern for women's safety, as they have already come forward and have been brought to the attention of social services, the police, medical sector or the judicial system. What emerges from studies in this area is that not all interventions are effective and not all women in need will ask for help, so addressing most of a country's energy and resources to those who are assessed as 'high' risk, might still not be fully effective for the prevention of femicide.

- **Define** the use, benefits, limits and role of risk assessment approaches in the prevention of femicide and repeated victimisation.

Based on the most well validated procedures for risk assessment in the cases of violence against women, and the international requirements set forward also by the Istanbul Convention, the working group on prevention has searched for the different existing forms of risk assessment procedures or protocols to prevent recidivism and escalation of violence that might lead to femicide used by law enforcement, judicial system, social-health services, in various countries. In particular, it is of interest for the WG to monitor how this or other preventive measures are implemented.

2. Identify the **main achievements** of the WG: what do we know now on femicide?

- **WG4:** What are the most important ways to prevent femicide? What is working, what is not working and why?

There are no systematic experiments or studies that can say what really prevents femicide. Most studies are related to prevention of DV and IPV which in turn is related to killing, so what prevents IPV can be used as a policy, strategy to prevent killing of women.

Prevention of killing of women is very much related to what forms of femicide we are referring to, and which social and cultural context we are thinking of.

Numbers of women killed vary and as it is difficult to address uniformed and comparable data, as ways of collecting these data vary, we will be referring to studies which constantly show that killing of women in the last two decades have fluctuated but never really declined. This is in the opposite direction of what one would expect, given that so many actions have supposedly been taken at several levels: judicial, social, with regard to training, services for victims, etc. However, to prevent femicide a whole set of actions needs to be taken into account. Prevention starts from early education, from social norms minimizing or even justifying violence, which enable violence to grow and expand.

The best strategy to address prevention of femicide is to carry out detailed analysis of the cases of femicide to understand at all possible levels what led to the killing. This is the activity done through the so called 'fatality reviews' (also known as homicide reviews).

As a WG, we recommend that each country should implement the FFR, Femicide Fatalities Reviews, as a regular procedure, either systematically for each case, or with a randomly extracted number of cases. This would depend on the number of homicides each country has and the amount of resources available.



FFR would enable us to do what has already been done in several US, and Canadian studies: identify recurrent factors related to the individual, the social context, the circumstances that precipitated events and lead to the murder (see also Dobash and Dobash, 2015).

It is not possible to identify single causes and risk factors are numerous and only explain the correlations. However, some risk factors and needs/vulnerabilities related to the individual and to the system are recurrent and worth paying more attention to.

There are many examples that could be expanded. The Femicide census in the UK is one of these, as well as the UK legislation introducing the fatality (homicide) reviews.

3. What **recommendations** can we make to policy-makers? Consider the 3 basic policy-making levels: **local authorities** (city councils), **national authorities** (central or federal governments), the **EU**.
 - Can we recommend: special legislation, best practices, improved methodologies for treating cases, improved coordination among services, new services, etc.?

As a working group and for developing best recommendation at several levels of those involved, we have to start by emphasizing that femicide is a pandemic. It goes far beyond the issue of criminality and harsh(er) punishment in itself is not the way to prevent femicide. When comparing countries that have different conviction rates we understand killing of women cannot be stopped only by addressing the problems from a criminal justice point of view. We should not forget for instance, in the case of IPV that it is estimated that in 20% of cases the perpetrator kills himself after the killing of the partner. Furthermore, the perpetrator, in so called 'civilized' countries, is not necessarily a person with an extensive criminal record. The perpetrator is often a 'normal' person who acted out of anger, masculine honour and/or revenge.

These are the most common cases of femicide examined in our WG, with killing happening as an escalation of further violence. If this is where we want to focus most of our attention, prevention must be concerned with changing mentalities, customs, social norms. This would include issues such as what is considered normal and acceptable in an intimate relationship and what is recognized as violence, targeted at women as well as men, as they should build a stronger and better self identity.

For **local authorities**: Women victims of violence should benefit from some form of 'privileged' path in relation to public housing. Local authorities related jobs should reserve a number of 'quotas' for women in difficulties, including victims of violence. Kindergarten or other day care needed for children should be guaranteed for all women throughout the year to enable them to go on working or look for a job, while their children are safely in care.

The local authorities should sign a protocol/ agreement with all local relevant bodies to clearly emphasise roles and duties and resources available to maximize what is available and to clearly differentiate roles, so as to allow victims to know who is in charge of what. We cannot assume or expect that women victims of violence are aware of the laws and regulations.

At a **national level** we recommend *monitoring* of the cases of IPV and GBV and especially to review cases of femicide so as to better address areas for improvement, to learn from 'errors' and possible misunderstandings of level of risks or lack of understanding of the complex dynamics often lying behind these crimes. At a national level we need a uniform database, census where all relevant variables, when possible are inserted. These should be



looking at a wide framework such as the ecological framework, enabling the possibility of disentangling levels of risks and all layers of responsibility, in order to better address and prevent violence. Fatalities review teams should be set up to analyse cases taking place in the whole country. They should have the power to consult case material, interview family members, friends and authorities, to enable them to draw a 'road-map' of risk.

At the **international** level we invite all involved countries to go on drawing on the actions set up at the UN level, the UNDOC and those put forward by the ACUN organization. There are multiple actions which have been in place internationally for an extensive period of time with significant results in terms of documented outcomes, guidelines and recommendations. At the European level the Convention of the Council of Europe, also known as Istanbul Convention, was ratified by enough countries to become an official legally binding document in August 2015. The Convention has a set of principles developed for the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence which per se is the first and major precursor of femicide and an irreversible form of violence against women.

What we think is missing at the systematic level worldwide, is the implementation of a shared understanding of what works and what does not work, through the adoption of an experimental control-set of activities or interventions and the measurement of their effectiveness.

4. Summarize the **activities** that the WG carried out in 2013-2016

First WG4 meeting. During the first year of Cost Action, the working group gathered for its first time in Caserta, in February 2014, where we discussed the aims of the WG and the steps that we want to pursue and the goals that we want to accomplish by involving also some national and international leading experts.

Second WG4 meeting in December 2014, Bucharest, during the second year of the Cost action. International and national speakers were present and special attention was paid to the role of the police, the NGOs, community service for the prevention of femicide and how research knowledge and information can be transformed into practical effective actions.

At the General Annual conference in Saratoga, March 2015, a third meeting took place including a discussion about aims reached and future goals, as well as existing research on what prevention of femicide entails and whether there is evidence as to how it can be effectively carried out.

In July 2015 the First Training School for young researchers and PhD students on Femicide, was held in Italy, Rome, with a dedicated session on prevention of femicide, at the premises of the National Police Academy. National and International trainers and young scholars participated in a big successful event.

The WG 4 also participated in the Brussel round table meeting held in November 2015 with national and international stakeholders involved in the monitoring of violence against women and femicide.

Two special issue have been prepared with papers also from the Cost Action:

Policing (2016) 10 (4): Policing and domestic abuse:



Baldry, A.C., Cinquegrana, V., Cacace, S., Crapolicchio, E. (2016). Victim's perception of quality of help and support by the police issuing warnings orders in ex intimate partner stalking cases in Italy. *Policing (2016) 10 (4): 432-445 doi:10.1093/police/paw037.*

Baldry, A.C., & Seibre, J. (2016). Policing and Domestic Abuse: Challenges and Ways to Go. *Policing. 10 (4).*

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Prevention of femicide

5. **List names** of MC members, MC substitutes and other people who helped drafting this report

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