



**FEM-UNITED**

united to prevent femicide in europe

**Comparative report on femicide research and  
data in five countries  
(Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal, Spain)**

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## The FEM-UnitED project

Femicide – the gender-motivated intentional killing of women – is not only the most extreme manifestation of gender-based violence (GBV) against women but also the most violent manifestation of discrimination and gender inequality.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, and calls by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, data on femicide is not systematically collected in the EU and there is a lack of transnational tools for the study of femicide (EIGE, 2021).<sup>1</sup> It is a notably under-researched subject and a common definition of femicide does not exist.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, harmful attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes, as well as a lack of understanding of the gendered dynamics of intimate partner femicide (IPF), impede prevention measures, including early and effective intervention.

The FEM-UnitED project aims to improve responses to intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV) in order to reduce harm to women and children, and prevent femicide. The project aims to develop system-wide responses to IPV by creating an evidence base for raising public awareness and fostering multidisciplinary cooperation and capacity-building, adopting a gender-specific, victim-centred approach. In other words, FEM-UnitED is about creating evidence for collaborative policy change.

FEM-UnitED seeks to reinforce and contribute to international efforts – such as Femi(ni)cide Watch Platform<sup>3</sup> – by a) further developing quantitative and qualitative tools dealing with transnational and applied femicide data that measure the prevalence of femicide and related risk factors; b) identifying gaps in system responses to IPV/DV across partner countries; and c) initiating change through systematic stakeholder engagement that will result in specific commitments for action for femicide prevention based on the project's findings and results.

The FEM-UnitED partnership spans five EU countries and includes the University of Malta, the Cyprus University of Technology, the Institute for Empirical Sociology (IfeS) at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg in Germany, the University of Zaragoza in Spain, and the University of Porto in Portugal. The project team also includes women's rights and gender equality NGOs, such as the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Cyprus), the Women's Rights Foundation (Malta), and the UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (Portugal).

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<sup>1</sup> EIGE (2021), *Measuring Femicide in the EU and Internationally: An assessment*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>2</sup> EIGE (2021), *Defining and Identifying Femicide: A literature review*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>3</sup> Femi(ni)cide Watch Platform: <https://femicide-watch.org/>.

This project builds on the work of the EU-funded project COST Action on Femicide across Europe (2014-2017)<sup>4</sup> that resulted in the establishment of the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF)<sup>5</sup>, the first European-wide network monitoring cases of femicide and contributing to the prevention of femicide. The EOF has been systematically collecting data on femicide in Europe since 2020.

This report, which is based on the national reports of the FEM-UnitED project, carries out a comparative analysis of the findings of the five participating countries.

## **1. Femicide: Definition and research methodology**

### **1.1 Definition of femicide**

In national and international contexts, the term “femicide” has been used to politicise the killing of women and girls by men on the basis of patriarchal beliefs, practices and power structures. Several definitions have been put forward, with the key denominator being the murder or killing of women because of their gender. Femicide is also understood to be motivated by a desire to subordinate women and girls, and to gain power and control over them. Broader definitions include the killings of women and girls by family members and in the context of sexual violence, prostitution, honour killing or other gendered forms of violence against women.

The term was first used by Diana H. Russell in 1976 at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women. Later, the concept of *feminicidio* was developed by the Mexican anthropologist and feminist Marcela Lagarde and has been used in Latin America since the 1990s with regard to the rise in extreme violence against and killings of women in Mexico, and the failure of state authorities to prosecute and punish perpetrators. The United Nations has used femicide/feminicide in its documents since the early 2010s to describe gender-related killings of women that can take many forms (e.g., intimate partner killings, honour killings, killings as a result of sexual orientation or gender identity). In 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a brief on killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members that explained the statistical framework used to measure gender-related killings of women and girls.<sup>6</sup> The brief recognised that while femicide has a clear conceptual meaning, it is challenging to operationalise it in statistical terms and even more so in a comparable way. In this report, a list of characteristics of the killings of women, including motives, modus operandi and the relationship between victim and perpetrator has been identified as indicative of femicide. The non-exhaustive list of characteristics includes a)

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<sup>4</sup> COST Action IS1206: Femicide across Europe (2014-2017): <https://www.cost.eu/actions/IS1206/>.

<sup>5</sup> European Observatory on Femicide (EOF): <http://eof.cut.ac.cy/>.

<sup>6</sup> UNDOC (2021). Data Matters 3: Killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members. UNODC Research.

the perpetrators being intimate partners or other family members; b) a previous record of harassment or violence against the victim; c) deprivation of the victim's freedom; d) use of force and/or mutilation; e) bodies being disposed of in a public space; f) hate crimes or sexual violence committed before the crime; g) the victim working in the sex industry; and h) victims undergoing some form of illegal exploitation.

In Europe, the term femicide, and the scientific work on definitions, data collection, cultural issues, and advocacy and prevention was broadly brought to the fore by the COST Action on "Femicide Across Europe" in 2014,<sup>7</sup> and carried forward by the EOF and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) since 2017. In 2021, EIGE proposed a classification system for femicide based on context, dividing the term into: a) interpersonal (e.g., intimate partner femicide), b) sexual (e.g., non-intimate sexual femicide), c) criminal (e.g., femicide in the context of organised crime), d) cultural (e.g., femicide related to sexual orientation and gender identity), and e) political femicide (denial of reproductive healthcare leading to death).<sup>8</sup>

The FEM-UnitED project, which was developed within the European research context, uses the term femicide to refer to the intentional killings of women because they are women. Femicide is analysed against the background of gender-specific power and hierarchy relations, and patterns of control. As killings of women are most often committed by male partners or ex-partners, the project focuses mainly on intimate partner killings of women or IPF.

## 1.2 Data collection and measurement tools

During the work of the COST Action on Femicide, existing official national data and information on femicide across Europe was collected and analysed.<sup>9</sup> It was found that the official national data is not comparable between countries due to different legal definitions and/or different statistical frameworks for counting femicide cases.<sup>10</sup> The EOF has since proceeded with the development of common tools for the collection and analysis of comprehensive and comparable information on femicide, with the aim of achieving a better understanding of the root causes and contexts of femicide.<sup>11</sup>

As a result, the EOF developed two data collection tools for collecting quantitative data on the one hand, and qualitative data on the other. These tools provided a commonly agreed selection

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<sup>7</sup> Weil S, Corradi C. & Naudi M. (eds.), 2018, *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*, p. 17ff.

<sup>8</sup> EIGE (2021), *Femicide: A classification system*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>9</sup> Weil S, Corradi C. & Naudi M. (eds.), 2018, *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*,

<sup>10</sup> Schröttle, M & Meshkova, K, 2018, 'Data collection: Challenges and opportunities' in S Weil, C Corradi & M Naudi (eds.), 2018, *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*, pp.33-52.

<sup>11</sup> European Observatory on Femicide (EOF): <http://eof.cut.ac.cy/>.

of variables for obtaining comparable data on femicide in Europe. Initially piloted in seven European countries, the tools have since been further developed.

For the purposes of the FEM-UnitED project, the quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were further developed, adapted and implemented and data from 2019 and 2020 was collected in the five partner countries (Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal, and Spain).

The data collection tools are described in the following sections.

**a) The quantitative data collection tool**

Quantitative data collection is based on seven categories (see Box 1) that include information about victims of femicide (women aged 16 and over), perpetrators, characteristics of the crime and relevant background information. An Excel database was used to compile information, and a detailed instruction sheet was provided for the national researchers to guide the data collection process. Information sources used were primarily media reports or police press releases, as well as other available sources.

The data collected was then verified through additional information from the police and justice system. The information gathered was periodically updated and verified by the research team throughout the project timeline.

## Box 1: The quantitative data collection tool

### 1. Basic data

Date and time of killing, as well as the city or region of killing.

### 2. Characteristics of victim(s)

Age group, marital status, occupation, employment, ethnic background, country of origin and disability.

### 3. Additional victims

Number of and relationship to additional victims killed during the femicide.

### 4. Characteristics of perpetrator(s)

Number of perpetrators, age group, gender, marital status, occupation, ethnic background, country of origin, mental health status and prior record of violent crimes.

### 5. Victim–perpetrator relationship

Nature of relationship, e.g., current or former intimate partner, spouse, other family member, or other relationship.

### 6. Situational factors

Area in which femicide occurred, crime scene, method of killing, witnesses, whether the victim was pregnant, context of sexual violence/rape, whether the perpetrator committed suicide after the murder, prior domestic violence or abuse by same perpetrator, description of forms/intensity of prior violence, victim related factors (elderly/ill/suicidal), prior stalking, other situational factors (e.g. alcohol, revenge, jealousy) or any other factors which are important to mention.

### 7. Background information

Did the incident occur after/during separation, how long after separation; did the perpetrator threaten to kill victim prior to femicide (with threats specified); were prior violence or threats known to the police; were there protection orders in place; were there previous convictions of the perpetrator for assaults/criminal codes; was the case known to the support system or others, and if so what was the outcome of the trial; type of femicide and further comments.

Based on quality of the quantitative data collected within the context of the FEM-United project, the quantitative data collection tool were evaluated as effective, although information on all variables was either not available, or not available at that specific time (e.g. outcome of the investigation and/or trial). As a next step, the data collected may be supplemented as new information becomes available in the partner countries.

## b) The qualitative data analysis tools

The qualitative data collection tool was developed/adapted by the FEM-UnitED project partners to allow for analysis of the legal and policy framework, focusing on the:

- Multiprofessional networks on preventing GBV and the social responses to victims;
- Legal framework on GBV;

- Effective measures for GBV prevention;
- Institutional protocols on identifying and/or reporting GBV;
- Gender values and data on gender (in)equality;
- Social and cultural norms around “the family” and around DV and GBV;
- Studies on the prevalence of DV in the countries;
- Studies on the media portrayals of femicide and GBV;
- Data on gender parity and differentials in politics/media/public figures at the national level;
- Impact of COVID-19 in legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide;
- Other relevant background information.

For the qualitative data analysis, specific case files of femicide in the partner countries were selected and analysed to better explore the environmental, social, legal and policy backgrounds that contribute to femicide, focusing on four main levels of analysis: the individual, proximate, institutional and societal levels (see Box 2).<sup>12</sup> The main aim was to achieve an ecological understanding of femicide, paving the way to propose recommendations for prevention at these various levels.

The four levels of analysis are presented below.

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<sup>12</sup> The dimensions of analysis are an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) ecological model.

## **Box 2: The qualitative data collection tool**

### **1. Individual level**

Data was collected with regard to the victim, the perpetrator and their relationship; the main characteristics and risk factors were analysed (e.g., previous separation or divorce, previous history of DV, coercive control, victim's strategies of survival).

### **2. Proximate level**

This includes the people (family and friends) and social contexts (community, work, school) in relation to the victim and perpetrator. Here, an analysis was carried out as to whether or not social relations play an active role in supporting to the victims. Furthermore, stereotypes and victim blaming discourses were explored.

### **3. Institutional level**

Information was collected on institutional responses (including the police, support systems, youth protection officers and the judiciary), specifically to determine how institutions performed in the specific case in relation to reducing risk, ensuring the victim's safety and punishing the offender.

### **4. Societal level**

This includes the cultural, social and economic indicators related to the cases. Here, different aspects of patriarchal systems were analysed with regard to gender roles and gender equality, the social and economic situation of women, as well as gender stereotypes and values. This level also includes an analysis of media coverage.

## 2. The national legal and political backgrounds

### 2.1 The legal framework on gender-based violence and femicide

Although the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention,<sup>13</sup> has been signed and ratified by Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal and Spain, the implementation of the legal provisions at the national level varies. The resulting legal frameworks on GBV and femicide therefore vary as well.

A notable and common fact across the five project countries is that there is no explicit legal definition for femicide or the killing of women on the basis of their gender. Most forms of violence against women (VAW) – including femicide cases – tend to be regulated by other legal provisions, and differently in each country.

In **Cyprus**, the recent passage of the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law (2021) extended the legal framework to all forms of GBV against women, in line with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. However, there is no legal definition of the crime of the killing of women due to gender and cases of femicide fall under diverse provisions of Cypriot criminal law, such as murder with intent and manslaughter. Additionally, the gender motivation of the killing does not constitute an aggravating factor when sentencing is imposed.

In **Germany**, the killings of women fall under the general – and gender-neutral – provisions for murder, manslaughter and other offences against bodily integrity such as bodily harm resulting in death, with the exception of the offence of female genital mutilation (FGM). When applying the legal provisions, killings of women by intimate partners during or after separation tend not to be classified as murder, but as manslaughter or crimes resulting in death. The law does not recognise the presence of GBV as an aggravating factor in cases of the killing of women, including in cases of gender-based killings or those perpetrated by an intimate partner; however, the law does specifically recognise cases of honour killings and cases where the killing of women were motivated by jealousy as aggravated crimes.<sup>14</sup>

In **Malta**, the law does not consider the crime of killing women as aggravated due to GBV either. However, Maltese law recognises aggravating circumstances in certain cases where the offence is related to gender e.g., cases resulting in grievous bodily harm.

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<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210), 2011: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>.

<sup>14</sup> See also:

<https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/825404/7fae4ea94396d41013e650348a8fe7af/19-13-121f-data.pdf>.

**Portugal** diverges from the other countries in that, if the killing is motivated by hate based on sex, gender identity or sexual orientation,<sup>15</sup> it can be classified as qualified homicide, which is the most serious type of homicide.

**Spain** is the only country where femicide, although not explicitly defined in national law, is recognised as a form of GBV. The country also diverges from the others in that it has laws with a legal definition of femicide, but only at regional levels.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Spain also has special courts dealing with IPV. Aggravating factors have been considered since 2015 in cases of intimate and non-intimate femicide.

Finally, **Portugal** and **Spain** are among the countries with clear legal definitions that classify a homicide by a former or current spouse or partner as an aggravating circumstance that leads to higher sanctions.

## 2.2 Policies on the prevention of GBV and femicide

**All five countries** have at some point implemented policies on GBV, although none in relation to femicide. Measures on GBV emanate from a variety of international treaties and EU regulations and directives; these are implemented to varying extents at the respective national levels of the project countries, in terms of legislation, prevention programmes, support and counselling centres, awareness-raising and further measures.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of national measures, **Cyprus** has included in its 2019-2023 National Action Plan (NAP) on gender equality a key priority titled “Combating gender-based violence / Full respect for the provisions of the Istanbul Convention”. However, this is not accompanied by clear quantitative and qualitative indicators for monitoring impact, nor by sufficient allocation of resources. There is no national action plan dedicated to the prevention of femicide, nor on the prevention of GBV or VAW in general.

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<sup>15</sup> As per number 2 of article 132, paragraph f, of the Criminal Code.

<sup>16</sup> A number of regions such as Navarre, the Canary Islands, Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha have included a definition of femicide in their regional laws. All four regions use similar definitions of femicide without limiting it to the context of intimate partner relationships.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: a) Council of Europe (2011a), Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), *Council of Europe Treaty Series*, No 210, Istanbul; b) European Commission (2016), Proposal for a Council decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Brussels, 4.3.2016 COM (2016) 111 final 2016/0063 (NLE); c) European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2012), Directive (2012/29/EU) establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime; d) European Commission (2020), *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>.

**In Germany**, the federal government developed and partly implemented two Action Plans in 1999 and in 2007;<sup>18</sup> the new government is now preparing a third Action Plan for 2022. In the last 20 years, the federal states have taken a number of preventive measures to support victims of IPV and sexual violence and to prevent VAW. While some state and federal action plans address the full spectrum of VAW and DV, other strategies address only specific aspects within the scope of the Istanbul Convention. Ultimately, at the national or regional levels, there is a lack of a comprehensive strategic and effective primary prevention policy on VAW and DV. On the practical level, the action plans to combat VAW, including working with perpetrators and risk management seem to be only moderately effective.

Two other important steps for the protection of women victims of DV and stalking, as well as victims of violence in general are worth noting for Germany: the enactment of the Civil Protection Against Violence Act (2002) and the establishment of a state-funded 24-hour VAW support helpline.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the government is now planning to allocate more funds to women's shelters and to expand work with perpetrators in Germany; however, the lack of resources and funding for the counselling centres is still not sufficiently addressed. Recently, the NGO network Istanbul Alliance (Bündnis Istanbul Konvention – BIK) documented several problem areas that need to be improved in order to meet the requirements of the Istanbul Convention in Germany.<sup>20</sup>

**In Malta**, there is no legislation specifically dealing with the prevention of GBV, but the relevant provisions of the Istanbul Convention have been integrated into national law.<sup>21</sup> Between 2018 and 2020, Malta implemented its Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan – Vision, which focused on legal and policy measures, data collection, research and training, awareness raising, protection and support for victims and children. A second strategy (2021-2022) is currently underway, focusing on raising awareness and streamlining measures on criminal proceedings.<sup>22</sup>

**In Portugal**, important steps have been taken to prevent GBV since 1999 in a series of National Plans against DV; these have been enacted in four-year cycles up to the fifth one, which was implemented between 2014 and 2017. However, since 2018, a National Strategy

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<sup>18</sup> The first strategic Action Plan was published in 1999 with the aim to combat violence against women; stakeholders were brought together at the federal level by the establishment of the federal state working group on domestic violence. The second Action Plan was published in 2007 and contained 135 measures to fight VAW including prevention, legislation, cooperation between institutions and projects, networking of support services, work with perpetrators, awareness-raising among professionals and the general public, as well as international cooperation.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hilfetelefon/1.html>; [www.hilfetelefon.de](http://www.hilfetelefon.de).

<sup>20</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/alternative-report-2021-german-istanbul-convention-alliance/1680a1f12b>.

<sup>21</sup> See Article 22 of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act, Chapter 58.

<sup>22</sup> The strategy lays out avenues for further research into DV to ensure that current policies are safeguarding victims and not preventing them from coming forward, as well as to expand services available to the victims and to increase training and efficiency when it comes to the investigation and prosecution of such cases.

for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (ENIND) has provided a more comprehensive and strategic approach that promotes cooperation and coordination between actors and sectors. It provides a basis for **three Action Plans** with objectives such as non-discrimination based on gender and gender equality, preventing and combating all forms of VAW and GBV (which is also relevant to femicide, even if it is not specifically addressed), domestic violence and FGM, and combating discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics.

In **Spain**, while there is no specific national action plan against femicide, policies that outline a set of tools for prevention, awareness-raising and a multidisciplinary approach to VAW are ongoing. Autonomous communities (regions) – in which Spain is organised territorially and politically – have different competences and degrees of autonomy, for example in the areas of justice, education, tax collection or GBV.<sup>23</sup> This creates a broader legal framework that works to enhance the National Law Against Gender-Based Violence.<sup>24</sup> All national plans and strategies in Spain are required to address the killing of women because of their gender. Additionally, the State Pact Against Gender-Based Violence (ratified in 2017), called for the development of 212 actions over a five-year period, focusing on improving awareness and prevention, education and institutional response.

The comparative analysis indicates that, on a legal and state level, the Spanish government is significantly more proactive in addressing femicide than the other states.

### 2.3 Official reports on VAW and femicides and institutional protocols

According to the findings, there is no holistic data on femicide published by the states in any of the five project countries. There is, however, information collected on VAW and femicide, which varies from country to country in terms of quality, completeness, manner of collection (i.e., whether the data was recorded by the state / local police / judicial system) and availability to the public. These are discussed below.

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<sup>23</sup> The autonomous community is a territorial entity that, within the Spanish constitutional legal system, is endowed with autonomy, with its own institutions and representatives and certain legislative, executive and administrative powers. Spain is organised into 17 autonomous communities and 2 cities with autonomy status, Ceuta and Melilla, which are Spanish exclaves bordered by the Mediterranean and Morocco 14 and 130 kilometers from the Iberian Peninsula. The complexity of the territorial organisation presents challenges in coordination and exchange of information between the different public administrations responsible for protecting and guaranteeing the human rights of women victims of GBV, as well as their children.

<sup>24</sup> The delegation of competence made by the central state allows the Autonomous Regions to develop their own laws on GBV which, for example, recognise other forms or manifestations of GBV beyond the National Law Against Gender-Based Violence, including femicide (such as in Navarre, the Canary Islands and Andalusia).

### 2.3.1 Administrative data

In **Cyprus**, relevant statistical data (e.g., on characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator, as well as contextual variables) on the incidence of femicide in the country is collected by the police, but is not available to the public; neither is an official register or judicial data that monitors cases of GBV.

As for **Germany** and **Malta**, official police crime statistics are important baseline sources for femicide, as they provide gender-specific information on homicides (i.e., female victims in homicides perpetrated in the domestic context and/or by intimate partners). The **Maltese** police as well as the state social work services, Agenzija Appogg (Domestic Violence Services), publishes figures on DV annually. In **Germany**, Intimate Partner Violence – Crime Statistics Analysis is an annual report that has been published since 2016; it documents all forms of violence against women (and men) committed by current and former partners, including homicides. Beyond prevalence, the report does not include in-depth information on femicide cases. Another source of data in Germany are the court statistics on convicted offenders, but these are not compatible with police data and are also not specified for (intimate partner) killings of women by men.

In **Portugal**, a number of reports are available, for example the government regularly publishes the Annual Report on Internal Security, which includes statistics on DV and homicides.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the state publishes quarterly reports on DV,<sup>26</sup> including homicides in the context of DV (reporting on adult male and female victims, as well as children). A judicial police report was also published in 2019, which analysed intimate partner homicides between 2014 to 2019. In addition, the Directorate General for Justice Policy regularly publishes data on court cases concerning offenders convicted of all types of intimate partner homicides. Another relevant contribution is regularly made by the Team for the Retrospective Analysis of Homicides in the Context of Domestic Violence (EARHVD), which performs an integrated and in-depth analysis of homicides in the context of DV and proposes recommendations for improving the system's responses to this form of violence.<sup>27</sup>

In **Spain**, the General Council of Judicial Power (CGPJ) publishes annually on VAW in the judicial statistics, which include homicide. The CGPJ's Observatory for Domestic Violence and GBV – established in 2007 – also publishes the Report on Dead Victims due to Domestic

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<sup>25</sup> The most recent report is available at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=relatorio-anual-de-seguranca-interna-2021>.

<sup>26</sup> The most recent report is available at: <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=dados-trimestrais-de-crimes-de-violencia-domestica-1-trimestre-de-2021>.

<sup>27</sup> Reports can be found at: <https://earhvd.sg.mai.gov.pt/RelatoriosRecomendacoes/Pages/default.aspx>.

Violence and GBV within Intimate Relationships on an annual basis. This includes homicides/killings of women aged 15 and over.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3.2 Protocols

**All five countries** provide – at least to some extent – protocols to tackle the issue of VAW in their countries. These protocols are essential to achieve a comprehensive approach by the relevant public institutions and services and to ensure better multi-institutional cooperation in prevention, protection and even evidence in proceedings. In some countries, the focus is more on violence within the family, while in others the focus is on IPV.

The legally mandated protocols in each country are often supplemented by guidelines or manuals, aimed at sectors such as health, police or social services and schools (e.g., in **Cyprus** and **Portugal**) or at specific institutions or federal states/regions at the investigation level (**Germany**).

More specifically, **Spain** clearly adopts a gender specific approach in addressing GBV. The Judiciary, the Health System and the Police have signed more than 15 protocols specifically designed for situations of gender-based violence, which are based on 3 levels to guarantee adequate care (first contact), referral and coordination between agencies.

In **Germany**, protocols have been developed at the federal level as framework concepts for the police investigation to identify high-risk cases of DV and stalking. Multi-disciplinary procedures are applied in several regions to stop the perpetrators and protect the victims; nevertheless, this good practice is not implemented nationwide and risk assessment still does not include specific warning signs and risk factors to prevent femicides.

**Malta** has a number of institutional protocols in place. There is a protocol that regulates the procedures between the Malta police force, the legal aid agency and the social welfare services (Agenzija Appogg) in cases of domestic violence. Meanwhile, the now-lapsed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between primary health care services and the social welfare services continues to be in effect on the practical level, as the social welfare services still receive referrals from primary health care services. An MoU was also signed between the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) and the Directorate of Educational Services to address the protection and support of children affected by DV.

In **Portugal**, there are protocols for training sessions with professionals for the support of victims of DV (including guidelines for police and judicial officers), as well as protocols between the government, municipalities and NGOs for the territorial expansion of the National Support

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<sup>28</sup><http://www.poderjudicial.es/cgpj/es/Temas/Violencia-domestica-y-de-genero/Actividad-del-Observatorio/Informes-de-violencia-domestica/>.

Network for Victims of Domestic Violence. This protocol seeks to extend specialised measures for victims of DV living in small cities.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3.3 Risk assessment tools

**In all five countries of this project**, risk assessment tools (e.g. the SARA tool in Malta or 'VioGén' in Spain) are applied by specialised units of the police (Cyprus), or by trained police officers (Germany and Portugal), or by trained social welfare staff (Malta).

In **Cyprus**, the Police have adopted a risk assessment tool for intimate partner violence that is meant to be used by the specialised unit of the police. The risk assessment tool has not yet been evaluated for its effectiveness in preventing re-victimization or lethal violence.

In **Germany**, police officers use the ODARA (Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment)<sup>30</sup> risk assessment tool that estimates how a man who has assaulted his female partner ranks among similar perpetrators with respect to risk.<sup>31</sup> It also calculates how likely it is that he will assault a female partner again in the future. The ODARA tool considers factors such as previous domestic and non-domestic violence, threats and incarceration, the presence of children in the relationship, substance abuse and barriers to victim support. However, the tool is not sufficient for femicide risk assessment, as these are not necessarily preceded by violence.

In **Malta**, risk assessment is carried out by trained social welfare staff who are called in by the police once a DV report has been made.

In **Portugal** there is a standard risk assessment form that is used by the police; in 2021, a single report form was also created to decrease the number of times that the victim has to speak about the violent situation, thus reducing the potential of revictimisation.

**Spain** has created the VioGén risk assessment tool to assess the risk faced by victims of GBV that is carried out at police stations as soon as a complaint is filed. This tool contains 35 questions that assess the risk at five levels. Each level is assigned protective measures and a timeframe for re-assessment. In the Basque Country, the Ertzaintza agents use the EPV-R scale for predicting the risk of serious violence against a partner. Other regional examples include the Mossos d'Esquadra, who have created a special intervention protocol developed exclusively by them. A forensic protocol for the urgent assessment of the risk of GBV by judges once court proceedings are initiated has also been reformulated and is used nation-wide. Currently, the Secretary of State for Security of the Ministry of the Interior is working on the

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.cig.gov.pt/2020/07/assinados-protocolos-territorializacao-da-rede-nacional-apoio-as-vitimas-violencia-domestica/>

<sup>30</sup> The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment Training Program: <https://odara.waypointcentre.ca/>

<sup>31</sup> For the First State Report from Germany (GREVIO, 2020), see <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6>.

development of a specific tool to predict the risk of homicide in IPV. In addition, non-governmental organisations use (their own) risk assessment tools and often work closely with specialised investigation teams (as is also the case in Cyprus, Germany and Malta).

## 2.4 National research on femicide

**All five countries** have conducted empirical research into femicide. These include quantitative, as well as qualitative, studies.

Recent studies from **Cyprus** that have examined femicide in the context of IPV have found that patriarchal gender roles form the basis for femicides.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the male perspective has prevailed in the media reporting of these cases. According to the findings, a prevention and intervention strategy is needed to reduce the number of women killed by men in Cyprus.<sup>33</sup>

Although quantitative and qualitative research on VAW has been conducted in **Germany** for many decades, there are only few studies and publications dealing with femicide or killings of women. The only systematic scientific analysis of intimate partner killings of women in Germany was conducted in 2009 by the criminologist Luise Greuel (2009)<sup>34</sup> on the basis of 69 cases that had gone through court proceedings. The study showed that the risk factors and warning signs of femicide were slightly different from those of DV (e.g., depressive and suicidal tendencies of the perpetrators, especially in the separation phase, extreme fixation on the partner, accompanied by stalking and/or threats of killing or suicide, also towards third parties, complete retreat from social and professional life). Furthermore, in half of the cases, no prior domestic violence was reported or known to the police. Therefore, Greuel states that differentiated and integrated assessments of complex conflict and behaviour patterns are necessary for the prediction and prevention of femicide by intimate partners. In addition, journalists and activists in Germany have published several case studies exploring motives and backgrounds in femicide cases, as well as the support and interventions that were offered prior to the crimes. As these case studies are not scientifically based, they still must be reviewed for validity.

As for **Malta**, there is no specific research on femicide. However, with VAW being a point of focus, in 2011, the Commission on Domestic Violence conducted a nationwide survey on the

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<sup>32</sup> Kapardis, A., Costanza Baldry, A. and Konstantinou, M., 2017, "A Qualitative Study of Intimate Partner Femicide and Orphans in Cyprus", *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 13(3):80-100. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/34479718/A\\_Qualitative\\_Study\\_of\\_Intimate\\_Partner\\_Femicide\\_and\\_Orphans\\_in\\_Cyprus](https://www.academia.edu/34479718/A_Qualitative_Study_of_Intimate_Partner_Femicide_and_Orphans_in_Cyprus).

<sup>33</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou, E. & Zorba, A.. (2019). Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 77. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539519302444>.

<sup>34</sup> [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf)

prevalence of DV against women in Malta and its impact on their employment prospects.<sup>35</sup> More recently, in 2016, an undergraduate criminology student explored the risk factors for femicide in Malta and found that controlling behaviour, jealousy, alienation and the end of a relationship are the most common risk factors for IPV. The results further suggest that the courts' attitude towards domestic violence differed significantly from the national prevention policy at the time.<sup>36</sup>

In **Portugal**, research on homicide in intimate relationships and femicides has become a point of focus in recent years:<sup>37</sup> There are a number of publications including on the predictors of homicide in intimate relationships<sup>38</sup> and on symmetries between homicides in intimate relationships committed by men and women.<sup>39</sup> A national forensic study on fatal IPV against women concluded that identifying early violence and conducting a risk assessment are essential for intervention.<sup>40</sup> In addition, other important studies on intimate partner sentencing have been conducted by Portuguese courts.<sup>41</sup>

In **Spain**, important findings on femicide have been provided by *Feminicidio.net*.<sup>42</sup> Studies commissioned by the Government Delegation against Gender Violence refer to specific forms of violence and specific groups of women suffering violence.<sup>43</sup> The Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence of the General Council of the Judiciary produces annual reports

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<sup>35</sup> [https://fsws.gov.mt/en/fsws/Documents/Research/National%20Reports%20-%20Others/commission dv nationwide research study prevalance impact employment prospects .pdf](https://fsws.gov.mt/en/fsws/Documents/Research/National%20Reports%20-%20Others/commission%20dv%20nationwide%20research%20study%20prevalance%20impact%20employment%20prospects.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/19132>

<sup>37</sup> See, for example: Pontedeira, C. & Iglesias, C. (2019). Fear of crime and intimate femicide: theoretical considerations. *Psiquiatria, Psicologia e Justiça*, n. 16, 93-120. Available at: [http://www.spppj.com/uploads/nue769\\_mero\\_6.pdf](http://www.spppj.com/uploads/nue769_mero_6.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Cunha, O. S., & Gonçalves, R. A. (2019). Predictors of intimate partner homicide in a sample of Portuguese male domestic offenders. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(12), 2573-2598. Available at:

[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260516662304?casa\\_token=A8dGBHf9pO8AAAAA%3AcNAUN4pQ2EUjhhDzRj\\_ie\\_qSxb3RoHCIfZdWtjuvj5jwQ\\_mnQRI5fY-tuisM8d2saPYmq5BMpLD](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260516662304?casa_token=A8dGBHf9pO8AAAAA%3AcNAUN4pQ2EUjhhDzRj_ie_qSxb3RoHCIfZdWtjuvj5jwQ_mnQRI5fY-tuisM8d2saPYmq5BMpLD)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*; Matias, A., Gonçalves, M., Soeiro, C., & Matos, M. (2020). Intimate Partner Homicide in Portugal: What Are the (As) Symmetries Between Men and Women?. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-020-09469-w>

<sup>40</sup> Pereira, A. R., Vieira, D. N., & Magalhães, T. (2013). Fatal intimate partner violence against women in Portugal: a forensic medical national study. *Journal of forensic and legal medicine*, 20(8), 1099-1107. Available at:

[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1752928X13002540?casa\\_token=lvxbT9X3yF8AAA:1KbKEVRvGIAG0fNfRN-pGc1Qw/Cid0zwA1WGRf8L4cpEawkW0p\\_4SxvqLZ0CaFIABApePjw6g](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1752928X13002540?casa_token=lvxbT9X3yF8AAA:1KbKEVRvGIAG0fNfRN-pGc1Qw/Cid0zwA1WGRf8L4cpEawkW0p_4SxvqLZ0CaFIABApePjw6g)

<sup>41</sup> Agra, C., Quintas, J. Sousa, P., & Leite, A. (2015). Homicídios conjugais: estudo avaliativo das decisões judiciais. CIG: Coleção estudos de género, nº11. Available at: <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/83304/2/125824.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> *Feminicidio.net* is an observatory of organised civil society that was created with the aim of documenting and making femicide visible through a methodology designed specifically for this purpose and thanks to the work of professional experts in the field. <https://feminicidio.net/category/informes-y-cifras/>

<sup>43</sup> Reports that cover the last decade, as well as studies on femicide from 2019 to 2021 are available on the delegation's website:

[https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/estudios/investigaciones/home\\_Copy.htm](https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/estudios/investigaciones/home_Copy.htm)

in which it analyses cases of fatal victims in the domestic sphere since 2001 in order to know whether the victims had received an adequate judicial response in the event that they had previously reported the perpetrator. From 2009 onwards, the reports focus on the analysis of fatal victims in the intimate partner or ex-partner environment and include a specific study of the judicial proceedings when complaints had been filed or proceedings had been carried out *ex officio* prior to the result of the death. Specific data on a case-by-case basis, as well as general patterns and judicial responses in each case, are included in these reports.

Additionally, **all five countries** in this project have been participating in the EOF network research group since 2018; the group collects statistical data and in-depth case information on the extent of femicide, analysing the evidence in order to recommend ways to prevent femicides.

## 2.5 Support and intervention systems

**All five countries** have support and intervention systems that focus primarily on the prevention of VAW (and not femicide specifically). While, Spain and Portugal seem to offer the most effective protection from GBV, in Cyprus, Germany and Malta, support and intervention systems have been found to be insufficient in addressing the needs of victims of VAW.

**All five countries** have established women's shelters (e.g., in Germany)<sup>44</sup> and counselling centres (mostly NGOs) for women affected by violence and their children. In parallel, each country has support centres with associated national helplines staffed by psychologists and social workers, available 24/7 and free of charge. These provide counselling support for victims of DV or other forms of VAW, as well as information about further support services dealing with DV and about the victim's legal rights and options.

Looking at each country in turn, **Cyprus** continues to experience a lack of systematic training of frontline professionals, inadequate inter-agency cooperation and coordination between services and an absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. That said, there have been positive developments in recent years primarily in response to the Istanbul Convention. Specialised teams have been set up in the Criminal Investigations Department of the police in each district that work in close collaboration with the Woman's House,<sup>45</sup> a multi-agency and multidisciplinary crisis centre providing integrated specialised services for victims of VAW and

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<sup>44</sup> Support centres are run by welfare organisations and registered autonomous women's associations, or by local authorities:

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfesystem-und-vernetzungsstellen-80640>

<sup>45</sup><http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-V=womanshouse& FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr& VSECTION=10200& VCATEGORY=0000& VCATEGORY=0000>.

their children.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office of the police is responsible for monitoring reported cases of DV and violence in the family on the national level; the office also promotes cooperation with government stakeholders and NGOs for the effective and comprehensive management of specific incidents.

**Germany** provides specialised police units for dealing with gender-based and/or domestic violence in several cities or regions, but not nationwide. Police officers assess risk with the help of questionnaires or checklists for measures against DV. This is crucial for further police intervention (in case of an escalation of violence that can lead to femicide), as well as to further support the victim by informing them of counselling and intervention centres.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the scope of the existing risk assessment tools is limited, especially with regard to effectively preventing femicide. Germany's support and intervention systems vary between the federal, state and local levels. While support and protection is offered on a variety of levels to women affected by violence, many are not able to access it because the system is under-resourced, especially with regard to the capacity of women's shelters and support centres. Furthermore, there is no long-term state funding for these facilities.<sup>48</sup>

In **Malta and Portugal**, a number of support and intervention systems are in place, with services provided by both the state and NGOs.

In **Malta**, besides national helplines and counselling centres, systems include social work facilities and residential facilities (shelters), the latter also providing follow up support for the women and children who use their services. However, the main national helpline service in Malta does not meet the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, as it is not specifically dedicated to provide support to victims experiencing all forms of violence covered by the Convention.<sup>49</sup>

In **Portugal**, the National Support Network for Domestic Violence Victims (RNAVVD) offers various types of support and accommodation to victims nationwide;<sup>50</sup> there are also a few centres that support victims with a migrant background. Support centres, specifically for LGBTQI victims of domestic and gender-based violence, are also run by NGOs.

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<sup>46</sup> Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family  
<http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy>.

<sup>47</sup><https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup><https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf> and <https://rm.coe.int/shadow-report-germany-solwodi/16809f7cfd>.

<sup>49</sup> Naudi, M., Dimitrijevic, L., Farrugia, M., Galea, E. (2021). Country Report on Femicide Research and Data: MALTA. University of Malta & Women's Rights Foundation, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> See detailed information on support centres at: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Rede-Nacional-de-Apoio-%C3%A0s-Vitimas-de-violencia-dom%C3%A9stica.pdf>.

As for **Spain**, the national support system, which also carries out comprehensive monitoring of cases of GBV, has set out the following measures for support and intervention: a) bringing together public institutions; b) integrating all the information considered necessary; c) risk forecasting i.e., taking into account the level of risk; d) monitoring and protection; e) implementing prevention measures; and f) building a network that makes it possible to monitor and protect abused women and their children across the country in a responsive, comprehensive and effective manner.<sup>51</sup> In this regard, it seems that Spain is the most active in implementing effective intervention, support and prevention measures to safeguard women (and children) from extreme violence and femicide.

Regarding the budget dedicated to support services, there is currently no information available from all of the participating countries that would allow a comparison to be made. Nevertheless, based on available information, it seems that **Spain** spends the highest amount of money, more than 200 million euros, on prevention of GBV alone.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, available figures for **Germany**, **Cyprus** and **Portugal** indicate that the budget allocated for support services, prevention and intervention systems is much lower.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.6 Multiprofessional networks for the prevention of GBV and femicide

The countries that took part in the FEM-UnitED project all presented a coordinated and specialised response to VAW and domestic violence (but not specifically to femicide) in terms of their multiprofessional networks. According to the desk research, however, one point of difference is the level of cooperation among professionals from the respective sectors (e.g., in the investigation stage).

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<sup>51</sup> See further on Sistema del Seguimiento Integral en los casos de Violencia de Género (Sistema Viogen) of the Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad del Ministerio del Interior: <http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/violencia-contra-la-mujer/sistema-viogen>.

<sup>52</sup> In **Spain**, the budget of the Ministry of Equality was increased to 525 million euros in 2022, of which 209 million euros is earmarked for the prevention of GBV, a change of 16.1% compared to the previous year (Press release of 15 October 2021. Ministry of Equality, Government of Spain: <https://www.igualdad.gob.es/comunicacion/notasprensa/Paginas/el-presupuesto-de-igualdad-para-2022-aumenta.aspx>).

<sup>53</sup> Indicatively: in **Germany**, the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs intends to make 135 million euros available from 2020 up to and including 2023 to the support services (see: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfesystem-und-vernetzungsstellen-80640>); in **Cyprus**, in 2020 the government provided financing of 762,069 euros to the support system (information available at: <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20211004/1633345154-06580.pdf>); in **Portugal**, the government allocated 6.7 million euros on domestic violence prevention and intervention in 2020 (information available at: [https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/orcamento-disponibiliza-67-milhoes-de-euros-para-combater-a-violencia-domestica\\_a1200136](https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/orcamento-disponibiliza-67-milhoes-de-euros-para-combater-a-violencia-domestica_a1200136)). There is no information available for **Malta**.

**Cyprus, Germany and Spain** are countries that have already achieved quite good levels of cooperation and coordination of professionals at a high level (e.g. in the form of roundtables, workshops, conferences etc.)

In **Germany**, a country with a long tradition regarding roundtables, multidisciplinary networks operate at the regional and municipal levels on VAW and GBV; what has yet to be established is a systematic, nationwide process to improve multidisciplinary interventions in high-risk cases specifically to prevent femicide. While various frameworks have been developed by the police on the federal, state and regional levels to identify high-risk cases and prevent DV and stalking, and to implement effective multidisciplinary intervention measures (including NGOs support services and perpetrator work), these do not carry out targeted risk assessment with regard to femicide, nor are they implemented nationwide. Also noteworthy, is that the nationwide network of women's counselling centres and women's shelters in Germany receives state funding for their cooperation and networking centres. Furthermore, in 2022, the new government announced plans to set up a national coordination group with representatives from the federal and state governments, as well as the municipalities in order to implement the Istanbul Convention and help key policymakers make connections with each other and network.

Meanwhile, **Malta and Portugal** have recently established inter-agency networks to address the challenges of DV and GBV. In **Malta**, a multidisciplinary network has been set up consisting of a specialised police force, Legal Aid Malta (by the Ministry of Justice) and the social welfare services (Agenzija Appogg) to support victims of DV. Furthermore, a new strategy issued by the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBDV) for the period 2021-2022 will seek multidisciplinary cooperation and coordination between different institutions, including civil society. In **Portugal**, many improvements in police and judicial measures to support victims of DV have been achieved in recent years, as evidenced by documents, protocols and initiatives at national and local levels (e.g., the manual for intervention in DV in the 72 hours following a report). In **Cyprus**, the Woman's House was established in 2020 as a result of the efforts of the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, bringing together professionals from different sectors and agencies in order to provide coordinated and integrated services to victims of violence against women and their children.

In **Spain**, NGO representatives cooperate with the Government Delegation for Gender Violence (which now includes femicide), with broad multidisciplinary support; the network offers psychological, social, legal professionals and includes a large number of organisations within the care and intervention network. It is also worth mentioning the importance of local institutions and social services at the local level. In some municipalities, inter-agency ideas on prevention have already been implemented.

## 2.7 Femicide and VAW in the media

With the exception of Malta, the countries that took part in the FEM-UnitED project have all conducted studies on media portrayals of VAW or femicide; there has also been increased discourse across all the countries on the way in which the media reports on such cases, also in the context of ethical considerations.

The media coverage of femicide in **Cyprus**<sup>54</sup> reveals a lack of understanding of its gender-specific dimensions and link with VAW and DV. Furthermore, Cypriot media often adopt and project a male perspective and the perpetrator's point of view, and tend to deploy sexist, victim-blaming language, normalising the VAW committed by men.<sup>55</sup> However, we note increased attention in Cyprus recently on femicide and more frequent use of the term in the media, particularly when reporting on international events.<sup>56</sup>

In **Germany**, the media has had a tendency to sensationalise, and even romanticise the killings of women with phrases such as "crimes of passion", "love tragedies" or "family tragedies". Femicides are perceived as a private matter or as isolated cases rather than as part of a wider social and gender-based problem.<sup>57</sup> Some improvement has been noted in recent years with more and more female journalists politicising the murder of women by their partners, using the term femicide and reporting on the patriarchal and gendered backgrounds of the crimes, which is also a result of the women's movement and of the awareness-raising work of the EOF. Nevertheless, the findings of a very recent study on reporting on VAW<sup>58</sup> show that the media still treats femicides as isolated incidents, instead of framing it as a structural problem. Additionally, media coverage tends to focus on extreme cases such as femicide and severe physical violence, while issues such as stalking and sexual harassment receive less attention, even though the latter are more common. This too is currently changing due to the intensified awareness-raising by the women's movement and gender violence research on sexual

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<sup>54</sup> For example, during coverage of International Women's Day: Sigmalive News, "Διαδηλώσεις στην Κωνσταντινούπολη για τη βία σε βάρος των γυναικών" [*Protests in Istanbul on violence against women*], 08.03.2021; ANT1.com.cy, "Μεξικό: 19 τραυματισμοί σε επεισόδια κατά την κινητοποίηση για την Ημέρα της Γυναίκας" [*Mexico: 19 injured in clashes during mobilisations for Women's Day*], 09.03.2021; increased media attention is also a result of NGO action and activist pressure.

<sup>55</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou, E. and Zorba, A., 2019, Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study, Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 77. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539519302444>.

<sup>56</sup> Based on a study of media portrayals of femicide committed in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus during the period 2010-2016; the analysis of the articles was based on the main newspapers of the two communities for the period between 2010 and 2017.

<sup>57</sup> (Goldenberg, 2020): [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-24\\_IK1\\_Femizide.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-24_IK1_Femizide.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Christine Meltzer (2021): [https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user\\_data/stiftung/02\\_Wissenschaftsportal/03\\_Publikationen/AP47\\_Tragische\\_Einzelfaelle.pdf](https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_data/stiftung/02_Wissenschaftsportal/03_Publikationen/AP47_Tragische_Einzelfaelle.pdf)

harassment over the last few years. It seems that various actions and campaigns of NGOs and activist researchers had a positive effect on media coverage of GBV.<sup>59</sup>

Both **Malta** (since 2017)<sup>60</sup> and **Portugal** (since 2019)<sup>61</sup> have developed guidelines for journalists and media content producers on reporting on DV to ensure that reporting does not promote violence (by portraying it in an irresponsible manner), but instead protects victims and highlights available positive action and protection measures. In Portugal, guidelines were developed for professionals reporting on domestic violence cases by the Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media.<sup>62</sup>

In **Spain**, on the other hand, where there is a lot of media coverage on GBV, the media themselves have produced guidelines for their actions (e.g., Diario Público, La Marea, eldiario.es, etc.) dealing with GBV. At the state level, agreements have been signed with the main audiovisual groups to improve the situation.<sup>63</sup> Especially in the last ten years, there has been a clear change, mainly in the print news media, with specialised teams dealing with these issues; there has also been an increase in national and regional conferences and congresses on the subject. Although progress has been made in television news programming, for example through the inclusion of key terms, discussion of perpetrator sentencing and a reference to the 016 helpline after each report of a femicide, there is still a lot of work to be done.

## 2.8 Gender values and gender (in)equality as a background to femicide

Given that violence against women and girls is not only a cause but also a consequence of gender inequality, it can also be seen as an expression of the structural inequalities between women and men. It is reinforced by patriarchal structures of power, control and dominance.

Looking at gender (in)equality, according to EIGE's Gender Equality Index (GEI) all five partner countries are still far from equal living conditions and access to resources for women and men, but at least some have shown improvement in recent years. Germany's rank has improved since 2010 and currently stands at 68.6 points.<sup>64</sup> Malta's score is currently 65.0 and has

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<sup>59</sup> In Germany, in 2020 and 2021, NGO lobbying and advocacy, and projects for the prevention of femicide resulted in increased attention on femicide. Much work has been carried out by the EOF, the One Billion Rising campaign and the NGO campaign *Keine mehr* (no more). These actions led to more critical media reporting on the gender dimensions and patriarchal background of femicide.

<sup>60</sup> The Commission on Domestic violence, in collaboration with the Malta Broadcasting Authority: <https://stopviolence.gov.mt/en/Documents/Docs/Reporting%20Domestic%20Violence%20-%20consultation%20document.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> The State Secretariat for Citizenship and Equality: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GuiDeBoasPraticas.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.erc.pt/pt/estudos-e-publicacoes/representacao-de-genero/estudo-representacoes-da-violencia-domestica-nos-telejornais-de-horario-nobre> (summary in English)

<sup>63</sup> <https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/sensibilizacionConcienciacion/LaSociedad/mediosComunicacion/home.html>.

<sup>64</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/DE>.

increased by 1.6 points since 2018.<sup>65</sup> Portugal currently ranks at 62.2,<sup>66</sup> and Spain is above the GEI average at 73.7.<sup>67</sup> Cyprus currently ranks 57, 11 points below the EU average score.<sup>68</sup>

This reveals a common point among all the partner countries, namely that, to a lesser or greater degree, gender inequality and patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes still generally exist in society. In **Cyprus** and **Germany**, there have been some positive developments, but not enough progress has been made in regard to gender (in)equality; sexist stereotypes still persist in social, economic and political life.

In **Germany**, girls and women have already achieved a high level of education in recent decades and there are successively better working conditions for women. However, tasks and roles in the family remain as traditionally gender-segregated as they always have, showing that inequality persists.

In **Cyprus**, despite important legislative achievements in the area of gender equality, mechanisms for effective implementation are lacking. There is a fragmented approach to policy implementation with different bodies often overlapping in competences and responsibilities, and with insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating policy measures are absent.

In **Malta**, despite the high levels of women graduates, society remains patriarchal, hindering women victims of VAW from accessing support.<sup>70</sup> Women in Malta are still relatively financially constrained, even if they have their own independent income, as their income is usually used for the family's daily needs, leaving them at a financial disadvantage.<sup>71</sup> **Portugal** and **Spain** also have in common that they are countries with a family-centred tradition that relies heavily on family support and retains the notion of the *pater familias*, especially in structures such as the justice system.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/MT>.

<sup>66</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/PT>.

<sup>67</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/ES>.

<sup>68</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/CY>.

<sup>69</sup> Kofou, E., Kouta, C., Pavlou, S., Shakou, A. (2021). Country report on femicide research and data: CYPRUS. Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies.

<sup>70</sup> Naudi, M., Clarke, M., Saliba, H. (2018). Full Cooperation: Zero Violence Barriers to help-seeking in Gender-Based Violence against Women: A Research Study. University of Malta & Ministry for European Affairs & Equality:

[https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants/results/daphne-toolkit/file/3383/download\\_en%3Ftoken%3DT-Fho\\_Ll+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=mt](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants/results/daphne-toolkit/file/3383/download_en%3Ftoken%3DT-Fho_Ll+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=mt).

<sup>71</sup> Naudi, M., Dimitrijevic, L., Farrugia, M., Galea, E. (2021). Country Report on Femicide Research and Data: MALTA. University of Malta & Women's Rights Foundation, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> Reference selection: Bodelón, E. (2010). Gender equality laws in Spain and Europe: Towards a new citizenship? Yearbook of Philosophy of Law, (26), 85-106; Larrauri, E. (2009). Sound, silent and forgotten inequalities: gender and criminal law. Yearbook of the Faculty of Law of the Autonomous University of Madrid, 13, 37-55; Lombardo, E., & León, M. (2014). Gender and social equality policies in Spain: origin, development and dismantling in a context of economic crisis. Feminist Research, 5, 3-35; Rubio Castro, A. (2013). Innovations in the measurement of inequality. Madrid: Dickinson;

In **Portugal**, national laws tend to reflect family values, as well as the values enshrined in the EU and Western societies. Laws targeting work–life balance tend to assume that the Portuguese family consists of a heterosexual dual-earner couple who have small children. The endorsement of traditional, gendered values is still prevalent and influences gender inequality, which is for instance reflected in the gender wage gap and the fact that women assume most of the family and household work.<sup>73</sup>

With regard the interplay between dominant values in society and femicide: not only do traditional gender relations increase the risk of VAW and femicide, the onset of social change (where women become more likely to leave controlling/abusive partners) without an accompanying change in men’s perception of gender roles, may also lead to an increased risk of femicide. In short, the process of transforming changing gender values and achieving gender equality in a society must be accompanied by intensified intervention and prevention strategies by states and institutions.

## 2.9 Impact of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic

No specific legislation, measures or action plans to prevent femicide were enacted in the five countries during the pandemic. However, Spain adopted new legislation and Germany introduced amendments to existing legislation, while new measures were taken in Cyprus, Malta and Portugal to address the impact of the pandemic on women in the context of DV.

In **Cyprus**, the Ministry of Labour provided emergency funding to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) to expand its services. The association thus secured additional accommodation for victims and their children to ensure that the demand for these services could be met.

In **Germany**, given the increased risk of DV due to the pandemic, the Federal Ministry of Social and Women’s Affairs (BMFSFJ, 2021) within the framework of the online initiative “Stronger than Violence” launched a campaign under the slogan “Not safe at home?” and promoted it at 26,000 supermarkets by providing information to women (and men and perpetrators of violence) affected by DV about available support.<sup>74</sup>

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EMAKUNDE – Basque Institute for Women (2017). "Qualitative evaluation of Law 4/2005 for the Equality of Women and Men in the CAE. 2015". Vitoria-Gasteiz. Available online: [https://www.emakunde.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/politicas\\_evaluaciones/es\\_def/adjuntos/2015\\_evaluacion\\_cualitativa.pdf](https://www.emakunde.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/politicas_evaluaciones/es_def/adjuntos/2015_evaluacion_cualitativa.pdf); Nicolás Lazo, G. (2013). Feminisms, sex-gender concept and law. In Sánchez Urrutia, A. and Pumar Beltrán, N. (coords.), Análisis feminista del derecho. Theories, equality, interculturality and gender violence (15-34). Barcelona: University of Barcelona.

<sup>73</sup> Matias, M., Monteiro, I. & Coimbra, S. (2021): Intergenerational Family Solidarity: A Brief Overview of Research in Portugal. In I. Albert, M. Emirhafizovic, C. Shpigelman, U. Trummer & C. Kelleher (Ed.). Families and Family Values in Society and Culture. Perspectives on Human Development Series. Information Age Publishing.

<sup>74</sup> <https://staerker-als-gewalt.de/english>.

Contact numbers to DV services and other information were also distributed in **Maltese** pharmacies, and rent subsidies were offered to victims who had to flee their homes. A platform against homelessness was also launched, which provided a mechanism for temporary accommodation, COVID-19 tests and transport for those at risk of homelessness.<sup>75</sup>

The **Portuguese** government also took measures – including awareness-raising campaigns – to address DV and improve protection by providing help and support to victims, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown periods.

Under Royal Decree-Law 12/2020, **Spain** enacted measures for women experiencing GBV. It defined them as a vulnerable group in situations of domestic isolation due to social restriction measures, and six articles of the law guaranteed comprehensive assistance and protection services for victims of GBV. In addition, the Ministry of Equality promoted a Contingency Plan against GBV due to the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>76</sup>

Only **Portugal** and **Spain** gathered any data on the prevalence of femicide during the pandemic.<sup>77</sup> In **Portugal**, the UMAR Observatory on Murdered Women (OMA) published a report in August 2020 on the incidence of femicide in March, April and May 2020, when Portugal had its first lockdown.<sup>78</sup> According to data collected since 2004, the incidence was lower than the average for these months in previous years; this report also accounted for lower numbers of femicide when compared with previous years.<sup>79</sup>

In other European countries, no indication of an increase in femicide in 2020 or during the lockdowns could be found (see also Section 3.3.1). According to data collected for the purposes of the FEM-UnitED project, there is no indication of a relevant increase in femicide between 2019 and 2020 for all five countries (see also Section 3).

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<sup>75</sup> Once they tested negative, they were placed in homeless shelters or shelters for people experiencing domestic violence, as needed. One of the DV emergency shelters designated an area for new residents until they were cleared by a negative Covid test, so they did not have to be placed in temporary accommodation first.

<sup>76</sup> Information available at: [NOTA INTERIOR \(igualdad.gob.es\)](https://igualdad.gob.es)

<sup>77</sup> The available data includes number of murders/homicides, arrests, calls to emergency numbers and restraining orders. They can be found in the monthly bulletins of the Government Delegation for Gender Violence. Information available at:

[https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/boletines/boletinMensual/2020/docs/Principales\\_Datos\\_Abril\\_2020.pdf](https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/boletines/boletinMensual/2020/docs/Principales_Datos_Abril_2020.pdf); on deaths information available at: <https://www.poderjudicial.es/cgpj/es/Temas/Violencia-domestica-y-de-genero/Actividad-del-Observatorio/Datos-estadisticos/>

<sup>78</sup> Including two weeks before and two weeks after the official lockdown, as most of the population was in voluntary lockdown.

<sup>79</sup> OMA-UMAR (2020). Final Report 2020 [in Portuguese]. Available at: [http://www.umarfeminismos.org/images/stories/oma/Relatorio\\_Final\\_OMA\\_2020.pdf](http://www.umarfeminismos.org/images/stories/oma/Relatorio_Final_OMA_2020.pdf). See also: [http://www.umarfeminismos.org/images/stories/oma/Femicide\\_in\\_Portugal\\_during\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic.pdf](http://www.umarfeminismos.org/images/stories/oma/Femicide_in_Portugal_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic.pdf).

However, in terms of DV, higher prevalence was reported in some European countries, while in others this was not the case or unclear. For **Cyprus**, it is noted that reported incidents of DV increased by 58% during the first lockdown (March to April 2020).<sup>80</sup>

The recent results of a study in **Germany** on the impact of COVID-19 in relation to violence against women and children appears to confirm an increase in VAW, but the data is not valid at this point as comparable data is lacking.<sup>81</sup> As for **Malta**, the 2020 Crime Report indicated that the number of reports of domestic violence increased by 24% compared to 2019. This significant increase of 319 cases compared to the previous year reflects the vulnerable situation of victims, exacerbated by a pandemic that led to double victimisation of vulnerable persons.<sup>82</sup> In addition, a position paper on the effect of COVID-19 was issued by the Consultative Council for Women's Rights in June 2020, highlighting that women are suffering disproportionately as a result of the pandemic.

In **Spain**, there are also studies that assessed the impact of the pandemic on women experiencing violence; of particular note is the study by Ferrer-Perez (2020) that examines the consequences of forced cohabitation, especially for women and minors who experience GBV.

Although the total number of women reporting DV has, on average, not increased during the first year of the pandemic and lockdowns in most European countries, there are clear indications that the situation of women already living in violent home situations has dramatically worsened as the option to leave has been curtailed. This may have led to higher or lower reporting to the police or to different support centres; thus, institutional data are not sufficient metrics by which to measure the real effect of the pandemic on VAW. Nevertheless, additional measures to safeguard women in these difficult situations are and have been very important in all countries contributing to this study.

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<sup>80</sup> In addition, the overall number of calls to the National Counselling Centre for Victims of Violent Crime during the COVID-19 pandemic increased by about 47% in 2020 (Pilavaki A., (2020) Gender consequences of pandemic, Hypatia, p. 28. Available at: <https://www.hypatia.org.cy/assets/files/1-Covid19.pdf>.)

<sup>81</sup><https://www.hfp.tum.de/globalhealth/forschung/covid-19-and-domestic-violence/>; A lay summary of preliminary descriptive project results: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Wqpby9nwMNjdgO4\\_FCqqlfYyLJmBn7y/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Wqpby9nwMNjdgO4_FCqqlfYyLJmBn7y/view)

<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that of the 319 cases, 316 were due to psychological harm (Malta Crime Report, 2020, p. 2).

## 3. The prevalence of femicide

### 3.1 Data sources and methods of data collection

As described in Section 2.3, statistical information on femicides can be obtained through the official police crime statistics and/or through court statistics in all five countries participating in this project. Some of these statistics contain not only the number of women killed, but also background information on victims and perpetrators, as well as on the victim–perpetrator relationship, on the method of killing, and/or on the results of the trial. Only **Spain** provides in-depth case-specific information on motives, prior interventions or prevention measures by the state. The official data is not comparable between the countries due to different legal definitions and different methods of counting, reporting and documenting the cases.

The most detailed official monitoring system has been developed in **Spain** within the Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence of the General Council of the Judiciary. It provides official statistics on gender-related violence and killings of women by an intimate partner or ex-partner. An annual report is published on the number of victims, the main characteristics of victims and perpetrators and the circumstances of the murder.<sup>83</sup> The report contains the following information:

- Number of cases
- Characteristics of the victims
- Children who became orphans
- Circumstances of the aggression
- Characteristics of the perpetrators
- Previous complaints
- Protection measures
- Cases with multiple victims

However, data on family femicides where the perpetrator has another type of relationship with the victim (the perpetrator is the son, brother, father, son-in-law, etc.) is not collected. As a consequence, two data sources are used to provide a complete picture: a) for intimate partner femicides (IPFs), we draw from the official data of the Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence; and b) for family femicides, the data is provided by *Feminicidio.net*, who collect data from the media on all murders of women.

In **Germany**, the official police statistics include cases of murder, manslaughter and bodily harm resulting in death. An annual report on IPV has been published since 2016 (based on the

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<sup>83</sup> The latest report is for 2019 and is available at: <https://www.poderjudicial.es/cgpj/es/Temas/Violencia-domestica-y-de-genero/Actividad-del-Observatorio/Informes-de-violencia-domestica-y-de-genero/Informe-sobre-victimas-mortales-de-la-violencia-de-genero-y-domestica-en-el-ambito-de-la-pareja-o-expareja-en-2019>.

cases reported to the police in the year prior). The report documents cases of violent crime against both women and men committed by current/former intimate partners, including murder and manslaughter. It reports the number of female and male victims, their age group, nationality, drug or alcohol use, marital and household status, as well as possible disabilities and health problems of the victims, however it does not include in-depth case-specific or victim-specific information on women who were killed by their intimate partners. Another official source of data in Germany are the statistics on suspected perpetrators, which however are not combined or cross-referenced with the statistics on victims of IPV. The annual report on IPV reported to the police provides some information on the perpetrators of IPV in general, but no information is specified on perpetrators of murder/manslaughter in relation to femicide. Thus, no case-related statistics on either victims or perpetrators of IPF are officially documented in Germany, nor is case-related information on prosecution and the outcomes of trials for cases of IPF.

In **Portugal**, the Annual Report on Internal Security<sup>84</sup> mentions the number of homicides of women killed by intimate partners and of women killed by other family members. Furthermore, there is a Judicial Police report on intimate partner homicide investigations conducted between 2014 and 2019 that documents the number of women victims killed by intimate partners, as well as characteristics of the crime, such as modus operandi, risk factors, among others.<sup>85</sup>

In **Cyprus**, the police collect and report data on the murders/homicides and attempted murders that are committed each year. Like in the other countries, femicide is not a separate offence and is thus not recorded separately; instead, it's categorised as homicide or attempted homicide. Specific information on homicides of women is available only by request to the authorities. In relation to DV, official police statistics include DV cases disaggregated by type of violence, sex of victims and perpetrators, and age.<sup>86</sup>

In **Malta**, the police collects data in the National Police System (NPS) database on reported domestic violence. All individuals in these cases, including children, are recorded separately. Additionally, the NPS contains information gathered from the Police Incident Reporting System (PIRS) that collects information from all police districts and stations across Malta and Gozo. The system records a case according to the main crime category. Data on killings of women by partners can be accessed upon request.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3D%3DBQAAAB%2BLCAAAAAAAAAABAAzNDA0sAAAQJ%2BIeAUAAAA%3D>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.policiajudiciaria.pt/homicidios-nas-relacoes-de-intimidade-estudo-dos-inqueritos-investigados-pela-policia-judiciaria-2014-2019/>

<sup>86</sup> [https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical\\_en/dmlstatistical\\_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3](https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical_en/dmlstatistical_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3)

Besides official governmental statistics and data, NGOs from across the participating countries also collect information on femicide cases. In **Malta**, data on domestic violence and femicide is collected by the Women's Rights Foundation; in **Cyprus**, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) collects data on femicide through the systematic monitoring and cataloguing of media reports and analysis of police data; in **Germany**, the One Billion Rising (OBR) project lists cases of women murdered by their partners; in **Portugal**, the Observatory on Murdered Women (created by Alternative and Response Women's Association - UMAR) has been gathering annual data on killings of women (including femicide) since 2004, analysing variables/information about the victim, perpetrator, the crime, trials, protection measures for victims, among others, all available to the public on the institution's website.<sup>87</sup> Finally, *femicidio.net* systematically collects the figures of the different types of femicide that occur in **Spain**. It contains not only IPFs, but also killings of women by other family members.

To gain Europe-wide comparable data and in-depth information on femicide, research teams in all participating countries, except Spain, use the data collection tool from the European Observatory of Femicide (EOF) that was set up in 2019. As mentioned in earlier sections, these data collection tools have been further developed and adapted for the purposes of the FEM-UnitED project in order to systematically collect all available femicide data for the years 2019-2020. They provide more in-depth information on the cases than that in official crime statistics. As mentioned above, the Spanish research team used statistics from the Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence and the *femicidio.net* register in this context.

### 3.2 Quantitative methodology

As mentioned in Section 1.2 above, the quantitative and qualitative tools used in the FEM-United project relied on a revised and adapted version of the EOF data collection tools. Sources of data included media reports and police press releases, and the information gathered was then verified through official police and judicial data.

The variables included in the quantitative tool were considered highly relevant for the collection of femicide data in the partner countries, and highly comparable across countries. In the case of **Spain**, data collection was conducted differently to the other partner countries, as official statistics on gender-related deaths of women are collected by the Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence of the General Council of the Judiciary and the variables do not correspond to those indicated in the data collection tools or other variables are not included. Thus, the data sources used in the Spain national report included official data of the Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence and data provided by *Femicidio.net*. As

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<sup>87</sup> <http://www.umarfeminismos.org/index.php/observatorio-de-mulheres-assassinadas>

a result, the comparability of the Spanish data with the data of the other countries participating in this project is therefore limited due to different measurement and sources of data collection.

This points to the need of further developing the data collection tools to provide the highest level of comparability with other existing national data collection tools on femicide.

### 3.3 Prevalence of femicide in the partner countries

#### 3.3.1 Femicide in official statistics (2019-2020)

In **Malta**, two cases (and three victims) were officially registered in 2019 and 2020. In **Cyprus**, there were a total of 11 cases in that same timeframe (with seven women killed in 2019 and four in 2020). In **Portugal**, according to the quarterly state reports on DV, 26 women were killed in the context of DV in 2019, and 27 in 2020. The Judicial Police report on intimate partner homicide, on the other hand, documents 22 women killed by an intimate partner in 2019.<sup>88</sup> In **Spain**, the number of women murdered by their male partners or ex-partners in 2019, according to data from the judicial investigation, was 56, and 46 in 2020. It is worth mentioning that Spain is the only country with a significant decrease in cases in the past ten years. In **Germany**, in relation to intimate partner killings, the federal crime office reported 117 cases of IPV against women which resulted in death in 2019, and 139 women killed by their partner in 2020. Though the number in 2020 was higher than in 2019, neither a long-term increase nor a decrease of femicide could be found in the official statistics, but rather annual fluctuations.

#### 3.3.2 Quantitative data collection on femicide

A comparison of official police crime statistics on killings of women with the data collected on the basis of the quantitative data collection tool within the framework of the FEM-United project, showed almost identical prevalence rates. For Spain, this is simply the case because the analysis was based on the official data provided by the state monitoring system.

In smaller countries like Malta and Cyprus that have a lower overall number (as opposed to *rate*) of femicide, most cases are known to the police as well as reported to the media and thus become public.

Based on data collected in the partner countries, in total, 629 women have been killed in Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal and Spain in the years 2019 (n=324) and 2020 (n=305). Most killings took place in Germany (360) and Spain (187), followed by Portugal (68), Cyprus (11) and Malta (3). The annual population-based rate varies between 0.19 and 0.78 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the five countries.

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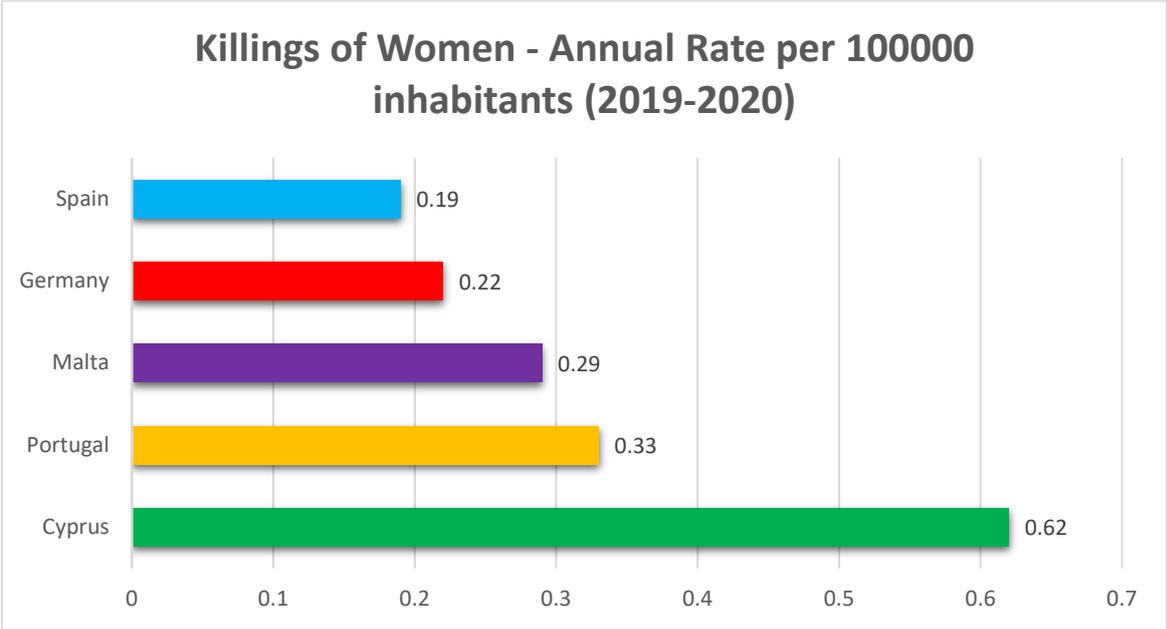
<sup>88</sup><https://www.policiajudiciaria.pt/homicidios-nas-relacoes-de-intimidade-estudo-dos-inqueritos-investigados-pela-policia-judiciaria-2014-2019/>

The annual average rate per 100,000 inhabitants for both years is highest in Cyprus (0.62), followed by Portugal (0.33), Malta (0.29), Germany (0.22) and Spain (0.19) (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

**Table 1: Women killed in 2019 and 2020 per country**

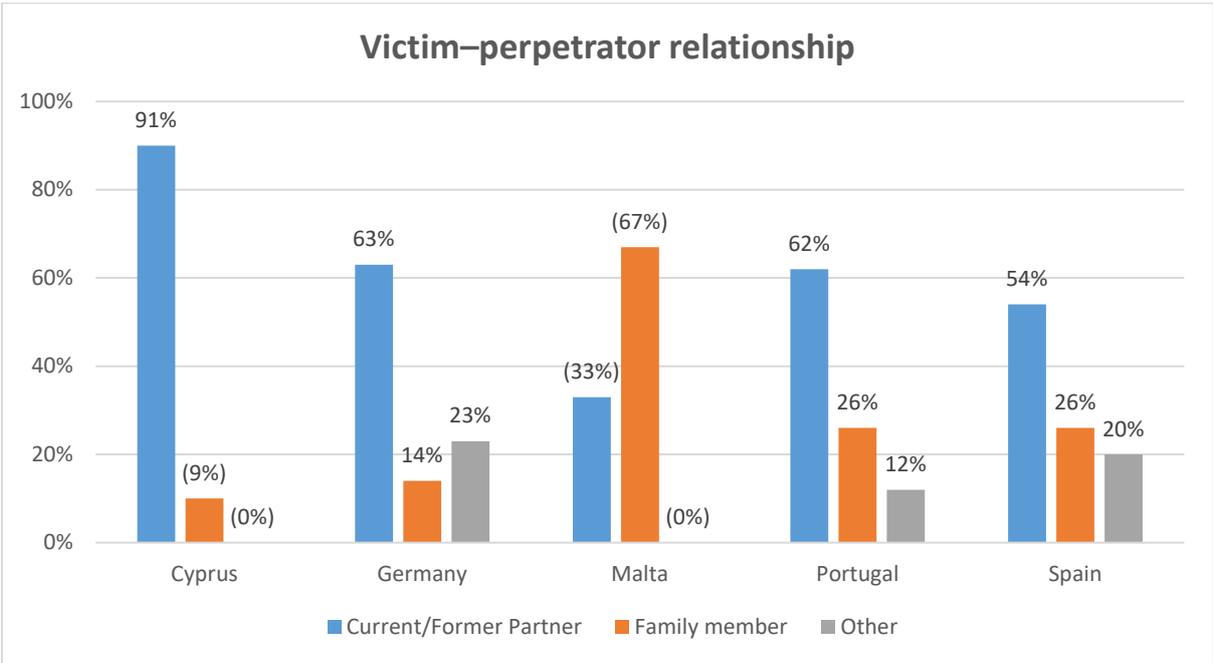
Country / Year	Number of all women killed (age 16+)	Annual rate per 100,000 inhabitants	Number of women killed by partners	Number of women killed by other family members	Number of women killed by other or unknown persons
<b>Cyprus</b>					
2019	7	0.78	7	0	0
2020	4	0.45	3	1	0
<b>2019 / 2020</b>	11	0.62	10 (91%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
<b>Germany</b>					
2019	177	0.21	109	30	38
2020	183	0.22	116	22	45
<b>2019 / 2020</b>	360	0.22	225 (63%)	52 (14%)	83 (23%)
<b>Malta</b>					
2019	2 (one case)	0.38	0	2	0
2020	1	0.19	1	0	0
<b>2019 / 2020</b>	3	0.29	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)
<b>Portugal</b>					
2019	34	0.33	23	6	5
2020	34	0.33	19	12	3
<b>2019 / 2020</b>	68	0.33	42 (62%)	18 (26%)	8 (12%)
<b>Spain</b>					
2019	104	0.22	55	22	27
2020	83	0.17	46	26	11
<b>2019 / 2020</b>	187	0.19	101 (54%)	48 (26%)	38 (20%)

**Figure 1: Average annual rate of women killed per 100,000 inhabitants (killings of women by any perpetrator)**



Overall, **60%** of the women victims of femicide were killed by a current or former intimate partner. With the exception of Malta, in all participating countries the majority of women have been killed by a partner or ex-partner.<sup>89</sup> The rate of women killed by intimate partners ranged between 33% in Malta and 91% in Cyprus. In countries with a higher case number, the rate was 54% in Spain, 62% in Portugal and 63% in Germany (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Victim–perpetrator relationship (killings of women by any perpetrator), 2019-2020**



<sup>89</sup> The rate of IPF cases recorded in Cyprus for the year 2019 includes 5 women who were killed by a serial killer.

(% ) = fewer than 5 cases; please interpret cautiously

A significant number and rate of women had been killed by other family members (19% of all women killed): 9% (n=1) in Cyprus, 14% (n=52) in Germany, 26% in both Portugal (n=18) and Spain (n=48), and 67% (n=2) in Malta. In some countries like Germany and Spain, the perpetrators of killings of women by other family members were almost exclusively men, and most often adult sons who killed their elderly mothers. In Portugal, considering the total killings perpetrated within a family context, in 39% of cases, women were killed by a son or son-in-law (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

One in five women have been killed by persons other than partners and family members (21% of all women killed), with the highest rate in Germany (23%) and Spain (20%), followed by Portugal (12%), and 0% in Malta and Cyprus (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

The victim–perpetrator relationship per country documented above shows that most women had been killed by partners or family members while other relationships and unknown perpetrators play a subordinate role. These results correspond to worldwide data of the UNODC Global study on Homicide (2019).<sup>90</sup>

### 3.4 Types of killings

Looking at the types of the killings of women (see Figure 3), we can see that most women that were killed by a partner had not yet been separated but were still in the relationship, as far as we know (in most cases, the database information is missing on whether the woman had planned to end the relationship with the perpetrator). Thus, the higher number of cases of IPFs during the relationship than in the context of planned separation should be treated very cautiously. The result contradicts several studies from European countries that found the context of separation as the most prevalent characteristic/factor in IPF.<sup>91</sup> These studies were usually built on knowledge from the trials that might be more accurate on this aspect. Also, the qualitative analysis in Section 4 of this report demonstrates that (planned) separation is one of the most important risk factors of femicide.

Other forms of femicide, like killings of women in the context of sexual violence or killings of prostituted women are relatively rare (0-3%) in all the countries contributing to this project (see Figure 3).

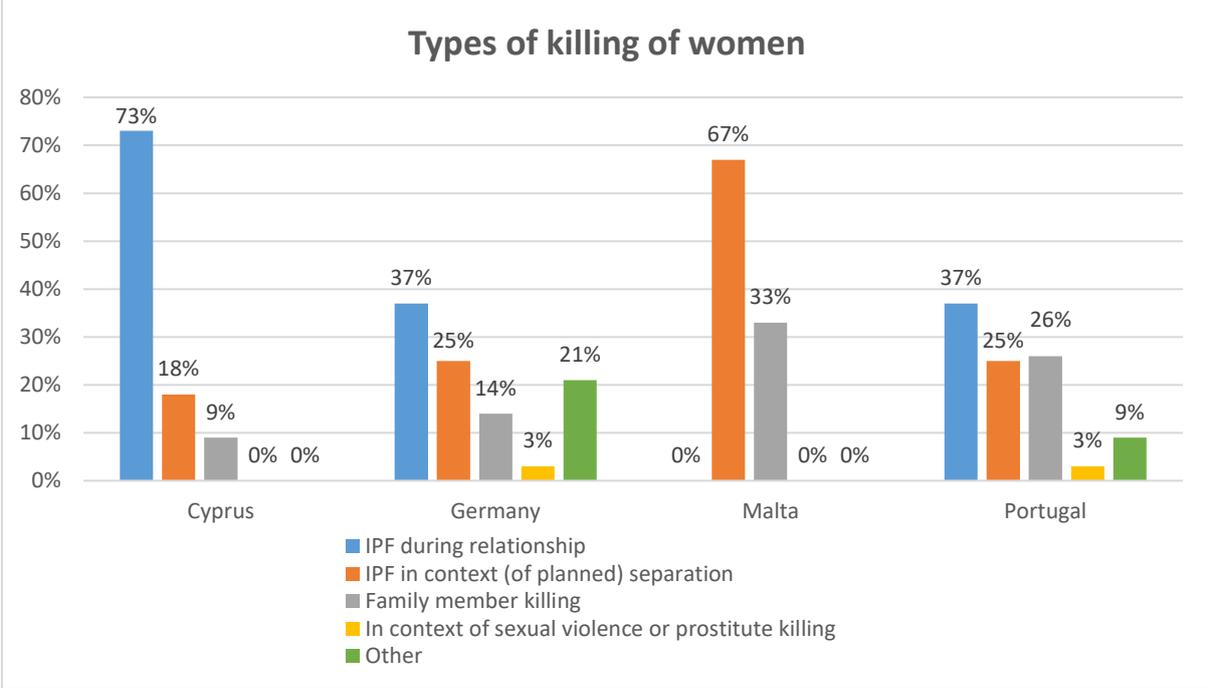
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<sup>90</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) (2019): Global Study on Homicide. Internet: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> For example see Greuel, L. (2009): Forschungsprojekt “Gewalteskalation in Paarbeziehungen“. Institut für Polizei und Sicherheitsforschung (IPoS), available at [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf).

Other types of killings were only documented for Germany (21%) and for Portugal (10%); here, types are often not known, or types of killings were not clearly related to GBV (e.g., killings in the context of a robbery, terror attack or by unknown persons). Therefore, the great majority of killings of women in all countries are gender-based killings and can be counted as femicides. For Spain, no comparable data on the types of killing is available.

**Figure 3: Types of killing (all killings of women by all kinds of perpetrators), 2019-2020**



## 4. Quantitative Data Analysis

### 4.1 Additional victims

The analysis of killings in the five countries contributing to this project shows that, in addition to the women killed, 12-18% of the cases included further fatalities, like children of the victim, other family members, friends or other persons (e.g., new partners).

In **Cyprus**, in addition to 11 women killed in 2019 and 2020, there were two additional victims (two girls) who were the children of the femicide victims. In **Germany**, in 12% of the 360 cases of women killed, additional victims had also been killed; of the 87 additional victims (in 43 cases), 10 were young or adult children of the women, 31 were other family members, 8 were friends and 38 other persons. In **Malta**, in one case two women were killed by the same perpetrator, with a mother and her daughter being killed by the son/brother. In **Portugal**, where 68 women were killed in 2019 and 2020, additional victims were also killed in 15% of the cases; of the 10 additional victims, 4 were other family members, 3 were young or adult children, and

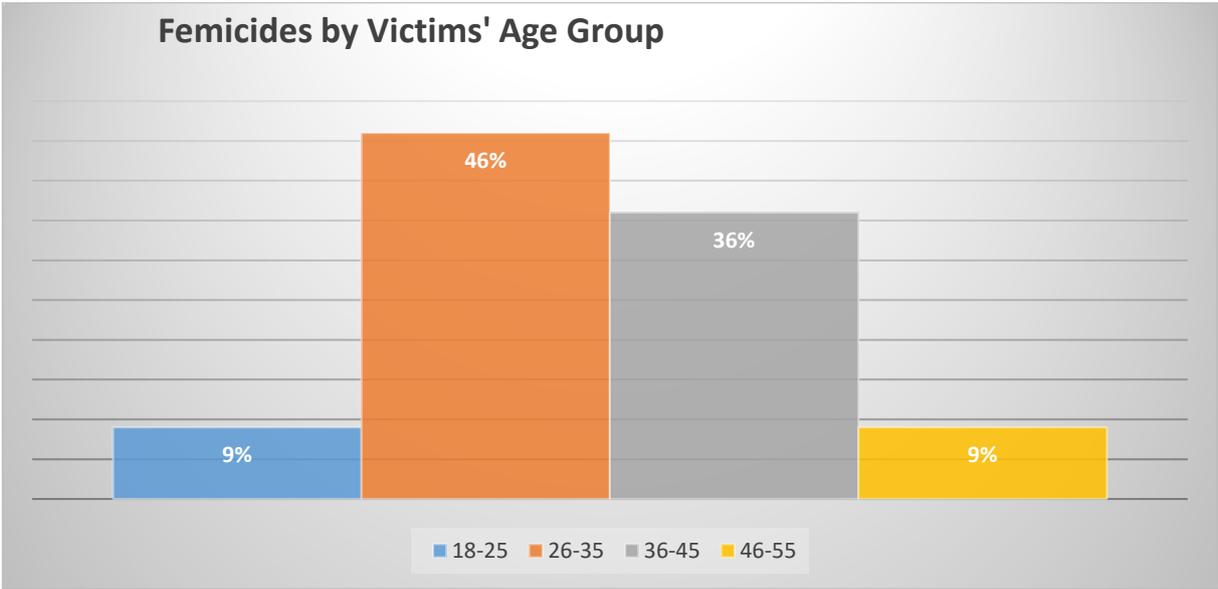
one was a victim’s friend (in two cases, the relationship between the women killed and the additional victim was not identified). For **Spain**, intimate partner killings seem to be especially dangerous for other family members and persons close to the women killed. According to official data on the number of minors killed by their parents in connection to GBV, there were three cases in Spain for each of the two reporting years. Based on non-official data (femicidio.net and the press), there were the so-called "familial femicides by association" – people murdered to explicitly harm their partner or ex-partner (son-in-law, brother-in-law, etc.) – with four in 2019 and two cases in 2020. Other cases were familial femicides (committed by sons, brother, uncles etc.).

## 4.2 Characteristics of victims of femicide

### 4.2.1 Age of women killed

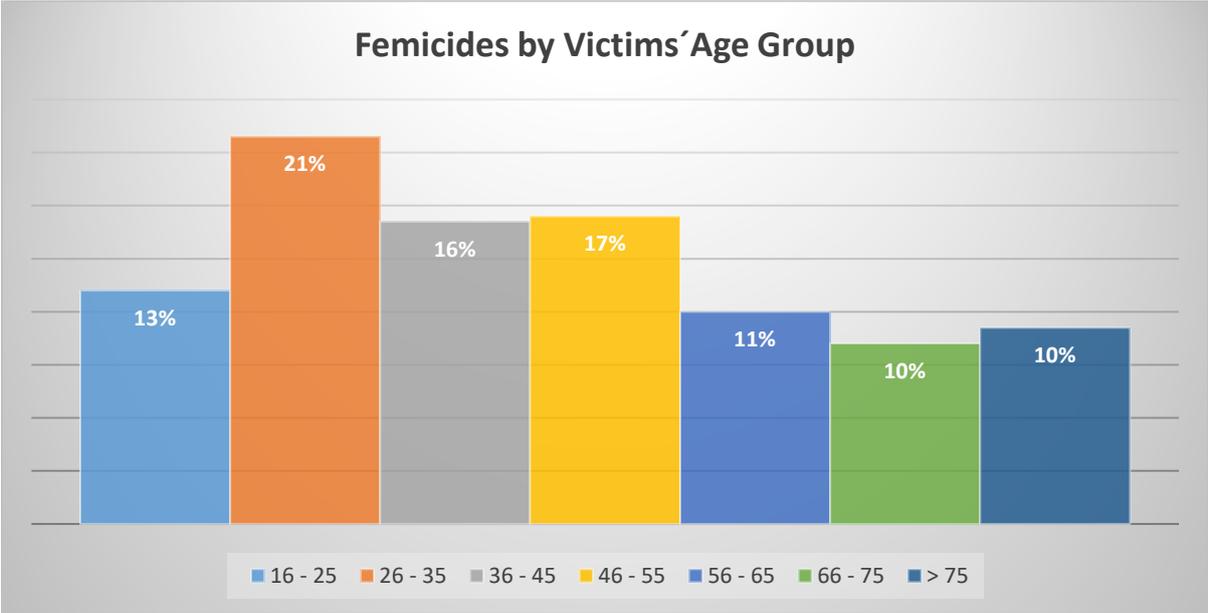
As can be seen in country related Figures 4 to 7, women of all ages have been killed, with the majority between 26 and 55 years old.

**Figure 4: Percentage of femicide by victims’ age group in Cyprus (2019-2020)**



In **Cyprus**, 82% of women killed were between the ages of 26 and 45. Specifically, 46% of the women victims were in the age range of 26 to 35 years old, and 36% between the ages of 36 and 45; meanwhile, 9% were aged 18 to 25 and the same percentage were 46 to 55 years old.

**Figure 5: Percentage of femicide by victims' age group in Germany (2019-2020)**

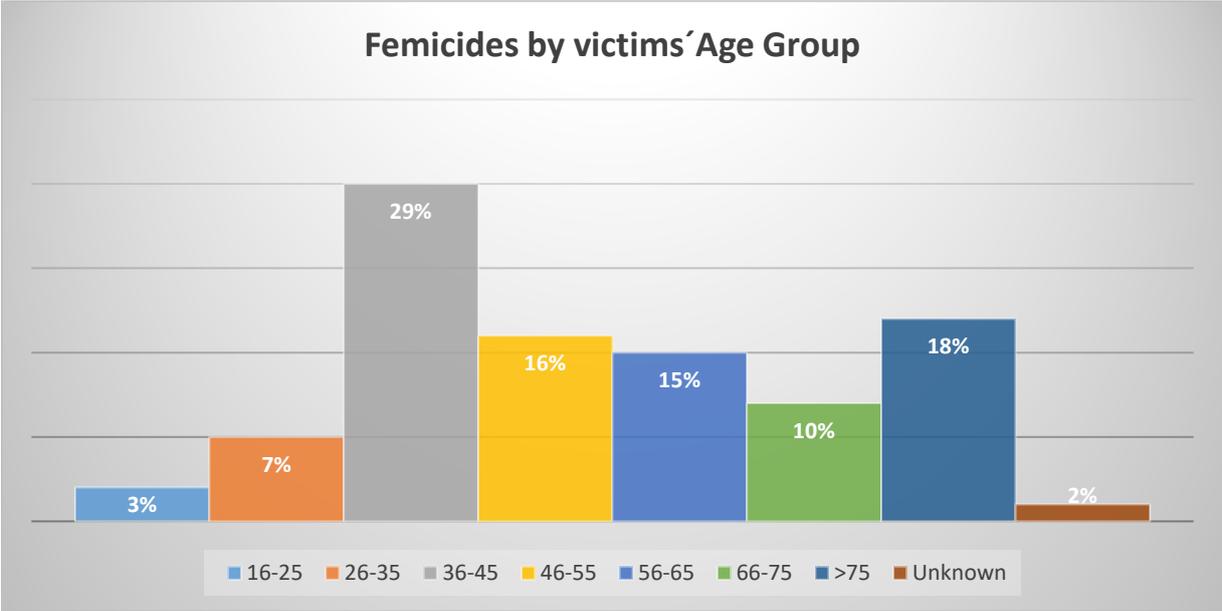


In **Germany**, in contrast to Cyprus, more elderly women were killed: one third of the victims (33%) were 16 to 35 years old, another third (33%) 36 to 55 years old and almost one third (32%) 56 years and older; in 3% of the cases, the age of the victim was not known.

In **Germany**, victims of IPF tended to be younger, while victims of killings by family members were significantly older than the average age of women killed. Also, for victims of killings outside of intimate partner and family contexts, the relatively older age is significant and underlines the high risk of older women in relation to killings by others rather than intimate partners. In further analysis, it should be investigated whether elderly men were at similar risk to be killed by their family members/descendants, and if relevant gender dimensions in the killing of elderly family members could be found. Of the female victims of killings by family members, 37% were elderly women (with about 10% of them in need of care).

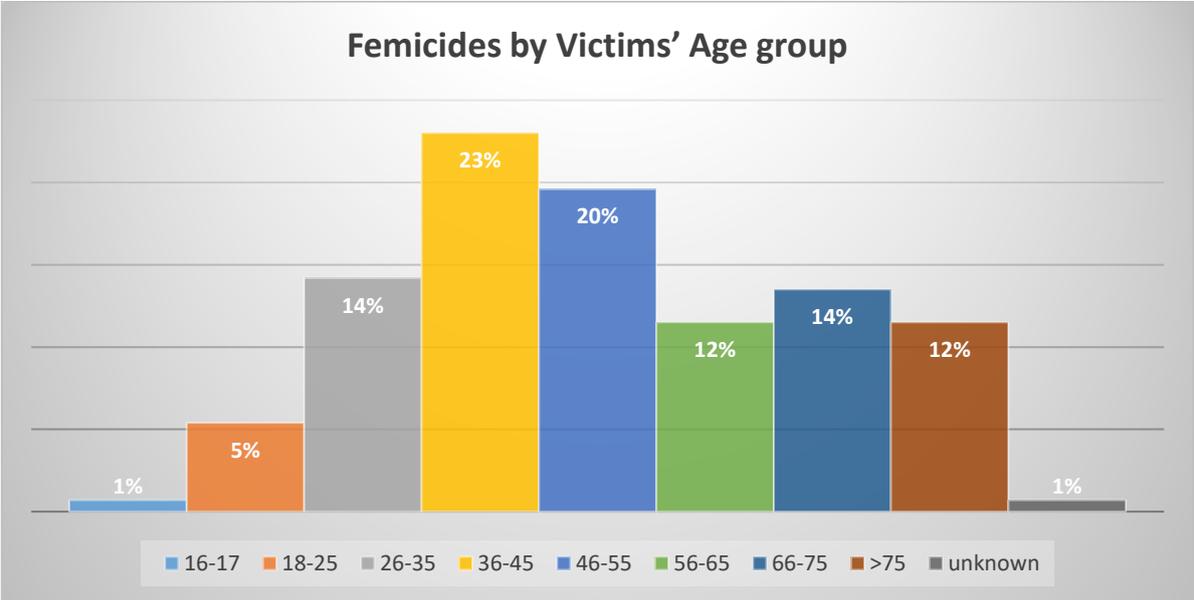
In **Malta**, the case basis is too low for statistical analysis of age groups. Two victims were between 26 and 34 years old, while one victim killed by a family member was 70 years old.

**Figure 6: Percentage of femicide by victims' age group in Portugal (2019-2020)**



In **Portugal**, although women of all ages were killed, most women were older than 35. Almost one third of the victims (30%) were 36 to 45 years old, and 28% were 66 or older. Women over 35 were at higher risk of homicide/femicide, as well as older women. Special attention to these vulnerable groups is deemed urgent.

**Figure 7: Percentage of femicide by victims' age group in Spain (2019-2020)**



Also in **Spain**, the range of women killed spans all age groups, with a high average age of murdered women of 58.4 years. However, as in Germany and Portugal, there is an important difference as the average age of the women in IPF cases is 45.8 years, while in the case of killings by other family members it is 62 years.

## 4.2.2 Further characteristics of the victims

Further characteristics of the victims show a great diversity in terms of employment, profession and ethnic/national backgrounds of the victims, but as this information is not available for most cases, the data cannot be generalised.

A significant finding from the data collected is that minority ethnic women in Cyprus and Spain were found to be at greater risk of femicide, however no such indications of greater risk were found in Germany, Malta and Portugal. No indication of greater risk of femicide was found with respect to unemployed and/or disabled women in all the partner countries.

In Germany, it was found that elderly, ill or suicidal victims, as a category used in the data collection tool, appear to be at higher risk of femicide.

As too much information on the situation of the women victims is missing, these results are preliminary and call for further research based on other sources like detailed case information from the trials.

## 4.3 Characteristics of the perpetrators

### 4.3.1 Gender of the perpetrators

The killing of women is clearly gendered in relation to both victims and perpetrators. More than 99% of all perpetrators of whom the gender is known, were male; only very few cases of female perpetrators were identified in the 2019 and 2020 cases of all participating countries (two female perpetrators in Germany and three in Portugal, none of them related to IPF and femicide). In **Spain, Cyprus** and **Malta**, all perpetrators were male.

### 4.3.2 Age of the perpetrators

Similar to the victims, the most common age group of perpetrators in all countries was between 26 to 55. As Figures 8 to 10 show, 63% of the perpetrators in Germany, 58% in Portugal, 57% in Spain and Cyprus and 100% in Malta were of that age group. 13-30% of the perpetrators in the countries were 56 years and older, with lower rates in Spain and higher rates in Portugal and Cyprus.

When disaggregated by type of killing, in **Spain** and **Germany** the average age of the perpetrators of IPF is older than the average age of the perpetrators of killings by family members (49 against 41 in Spain and even younger in Germany with most perpetrators of family violence being aged between 18 and 35 years old). This is related to the fact that in cases of family femicides it was often the sons killing their mothers.

### 4.3.3 Other characteristics of the perpetrators

The marital status, the employment status and the ethnic minority backgrounds of the perpetrators were not known for the great majority of cases. Therefore, in the database no indication could be found that unemployed men or those with a low occupational status, or

men with a migrant background, dominated the perpetrator samples against the average population. Only in **Spain**, the rate of perpetrators of foreign origin was significantly higher than the rate in the average population.

In **Germany**, for 22% of the perpetrators, an ethnic minority background was identified; this rate is not higher than the rate in the average population. The list of occupations of the perpetrators shows a high number of men working in qualified jobs and also in management positions. Low social status is also not identified as a relevant risk factor. This corresponds to the results of an aforementioned German study on femicide that found no specific perpetrator profile in regard to the social status in cases of femicide (Greuel, 2009).

Also in **Spain, Portugal** and **Malta**, the majority of the perpetrators were employed and working in various professions.

The mental health of the majority of the perpetrators was unknown. However, according to the German database, 27% of the perpetrators were described to have mental health issues such as schizophrenia and depression. Nevertheless, this information has to be interpreted cautiously as it is also a defense strategy to excuse the murder due to mental health problems of the perpetrator.

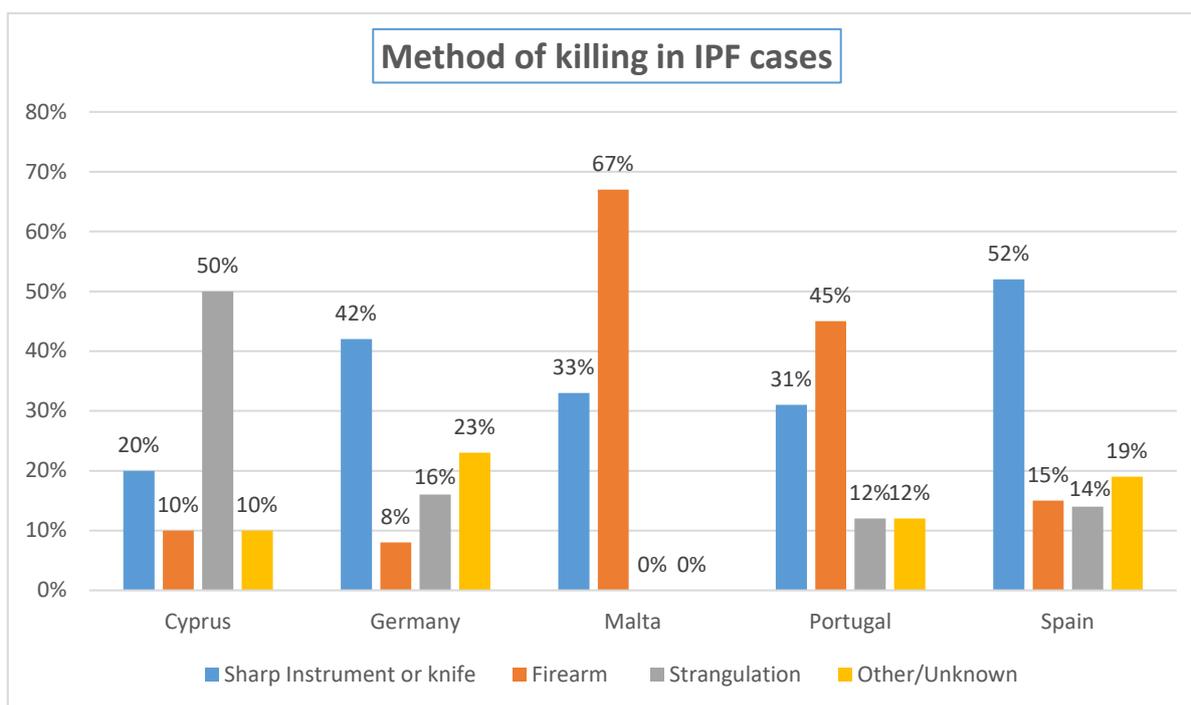
A clear indication for suicide is found in several country samples: after the crime, in every fifth to third case of IPF, the perpetrator committed suicide (29% in Portugal, 33% in Spain, and 20-21% in Germany and Cyprus, see also Section 4.5.2). This high proportion of suicides is important information for the further development of risk factor assessments and warning sign tools for the police and other institutions.

#### 4.4 Further background information on cases of IPF

The database provides further background information on cases of IPV regarding place and methods of the femicides. The majority of killings took place in the victims' and/or perpetrators' home (70-74% in **Germany** and **Cyprus**, 84% in **Spain** and 69% in **Portugal**).

The most prevalent methods of killing in most countries were killings by a sharp instrument or knife (52% in Spain, 42% in Germany, 31% in Portugal, 20% in Cyprus), strangulation (50% in Cyprus, 16% in Germany, 12% in Portugal and 14% in Spain) and killings by firearms (with highest rates of 45% in Portugal, followed by 15% in Spain, and 8-10% in Germany and Cyprus). Hitting, kicking and blows were used as a killing method in 19% of the cases in Spain and in 10% of the cases in Portugal; for the other countries this is unknown (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7 – Method of killing the women in IPF cases (2019-2020)**



Witnesses were present in every fifth to fourth case (26-27% of the IPFs in Germany and Portugal, 20% in Cyprus, and one case in Malta). Often children and family members had witnessed the crime. For Spain, no comparable data is available.

## 4.5 Institutional knowledge in advance of the killings and institutional reactions

### 4.5.1 Prior case knowledge

In most countries' analysis, there was no information available on prior DV, threats or stalking, nor on prior case knowledge and complaints to the police or support systems. This was, for example, the case for 87-97% of the IPFs in the German database. Here follows the information that was available, but more insight is required for an in-depth statistical analysis, especially around trial proceedings, as well as support and justice systems.

In **Germany**, in 11% of the cases, prior violence or threats were known to the police. In 3%, there was knowledge that the perpetrator threatened to kill the woman prior to the femicide (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Prior knowledge and state interventions in Germany (IPV, N=225) (2019-2020)**

	Yes (%)	No / not known (%)
Prior domestic violence by same partner	8 %	92%
Prior stalking	6 %	94%
Prior threats to kill	3 %	97%
Prior violence or threat known to the police	11 %	89%
Prior state interventions	8 %	92%

More information is available on prior violence, institutional interventions and visibility of the cases prior to the murder for **Portugal** and **Spain**. This is a result of more activity to collect data on the cases by the police, the justice system as well as the social services.

In certain countries, stronger social networks also tend to account for details of private lives being known to the community. For example, in many of the news articles in Portugal, journalists cited neighbours as information sources, which suggests that neighbours in Portugal tend to be somewhat connected and share information on each other's lives.

In **Portugal**, with regard to all 42 IPV cases, there was prior DV in 62% (n=26). In 24% (n=10) of all cases, this violence was known to the police. In one out of these 10 cases (10%) in which the police had been aware of the violence, protection orders had been issued. One case (2%) was known to the support systems. In 43% (n=18) of all cases, the violence had been known to others (family members, neighbours and friends). These results indicate that a significant number of cases were known either to the social environment or to the police or support systems and could, perhaps, have been prevented (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Prior knowledge and state interventions in Portugal (IPV, N=42) (2019-2020)**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not known (%)
Prior domestic violence by same partner	62%	12%	26%
Prior stalking	5%	36%	59%
Prior threats to kill	12%	7%	81%
Prior violence or threat known to the police	24%	29%	47%
Prior state interventions	2%	22%	76%

In **Spain**, whose database is different from the other countries, a significant section of the cases was also known to the state systems prior to the femicides. In 2019 and 2020, 17% of

women victims of femicide had filed a previous complaint against the perpetrators. This is lower than in 2018 (34%) and the average for 2003-2018 (25%). Furthermore, in half of the cases, prior threats to kill the woman were registered and in every sixth case, DV by the same partner.

**Table 4: Prior knowledge and state interventions in Spain (IPV, N=101) (2019-2020)**

	Yes (%)	No / Not known (%)
Prior domestic violence by same partner	18%	82%
Prior stalking	-	-
Prior threats to kill	50%	50%
Prior violence or threat known to the police	7%	93%
Prior state interventions	7%	93%

In the IPF case in **Malta**, close friends and family members knew of prior threats and domestic violence was known to the police.

For **Cyprus**, the perpetrator had threatened to kill the victim prior to the femicide in 2 out of 10 IPF cases, and there was only one case in which the violence or threat was known to the police and prior state interventions were made.

**Table 5: Prior knowledge and state interventions in Cyprus (IPF, N=10) (2019-2020)**

	Yes (%)	No / Not known (%)
Prior domestic violence by same partner	10%	90%
Prior stalking	-	-
Prior threats to kill	20%	80%
Prior violence or threat known to the police	10%	90%
Prior state interventions	10%	90%

## 4.5.2 Trial proceedings

Tables 6 to 9 give an overview over the results of the trials (cases that went to court).

Considering the timeframe within which the data collection was carried out in all the partner countries, it is important to note that, due to the lengthy processes of the criminal justice system, some information on the outcomes of the trials and/or the sentencing of the perpetrators may not have been available or publicised by the media as of the date the data collection ended (May 2021).

**Table 6: Trial results from cases that went to court 2019-2020 in Germany (as of May 2021)**

Results of the Trials	All Cases (N=360)	IPF (N=225)	Family Members (N=52)	Other (N=83)
No outcome yet	12%	11%	14%	10%
No trial (suicide)	16%	21%	14%	6%
Not known	23%	26%	23%	17%
Guilty of manslaughter	12%	15%	6%	6%
Guilty of murder	12%	12%	14%	10%
Mental health institution	9%	4%	27%	9%
Not guilty	1%	0%	0%	3%
Other	2%	2%	2%	3%
Unresolved	2%	1%	0%	5%

For **Germany**, we can see that for about half of the cases, there is no information on the outcome, or no outcome yet, or no trial, because the perpetrator had committed suicide; this was the case for 51% of all killings, for 58% of killings perpetrated by intimate partners, for 51% of other family killings, and for 33% of killings by other persons (Table 6, first three rows).

For those cases where the perpetrator was found guilty (Table 6, rows 4 and 5), in half of the cases the killings were qualified as manslaughter and in the other half as murder. The relative percentage of cases that qualified as murder is lower in cases of IPF than in cases of other killings. The rate of perpetrators who were remanded to a psychiatric institution is relatively high in cases perpetrated by family members (with 27%, see Table 6, row 6).

**Table 7: Trial results from cases that went to court 2019-2020 in Portugal (as of May 2021)**

Results of the Trials	All Cases	IPF	Family Members	Other
	(N=68)	(N=40)	(N=18)	(N=10)
No outcome yet	26%	19%	50%	12%
No trial (suicide)	25%	29%	11%	38%
Guilty of homicide	28%	33%	11%	38%
Mental health institution	4%	0%	18%	0%
Not guilty	2%	2%	0%	0%
Outcome not known	12%	14%	5%	12%
Other	3%	3%	5%	0%

**Table 8: Trial results from cases that went to court 2019-2020 in Cyprus (as of May 2021)**

Results of the Trials	All Cases	IPF	Family Members	Other
	(N=11)	(N=10)	(N=1)	(N=0)
No outcome yet	0%	0%	0%	0%
No trial (suicide)	18%	20%	0%	0%
Guilty of homicide	64%	60%	100%	0%
Mental health institution	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not guilty	0%	0%	0%	0%
Outcome not known	18%	20%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%

In **Cyprus**, two thirds of the cases went to trial and the perpetrator was found guilty of murder. In two cases, the perpetrator committed suicide following the femicide, and in the remaining two cases, there is no information on the result of the trial. In one case, a family member committed the murder and was found guilty by the court (see Table 8).

For **Malta**, both cases went to court, but have no outcome, yet.

For **Spain**, no comparable data is available. By May 2020, trials had not yet been held for most of the cases that had occurred between 2017 and 2019. The average time between the events and the sentence is two years, so the only information Spain can provide for now is that of suicide (of the 55 femicides committed in 2018, one third – or 18 perpetrators – committed suicide). Results of the trials for 2020 are not as yet available.

The analysis of the trials and outcomes is difficult due to the high rate of cases without final information. The research team suggests to conduct more research, potentially in collaboration with the EOF, when the trials have been finalised, together with an analysis of court statistics and documents.

#### 4.6 Summary of quantitative data analysis

The quantitative analysis is based on 629 women who were killed in 2019 and 2020 in five European countries. Most of the women were killed in Germany, however the population-based rate was highest in Cyprus, followed by Portugal and Malta. The lowest rate was found in Spain.

Sixty per cent of the women were killed by an intimate partner or ex-partner and these cases can be clearly identified as IPF. This confirms / is in line with existing research on femicide which indicates that IPF is the most common form of femicide. Every fifth woman (19%) was killed by other family members, often by sons killing their elderly mother. Thus, almost 80% of the recorded killings of women were perpetrated by partners or family members in the domestic sphere (almost exclusively by men). Other forms of gender-based killings (like killing in the context of sexual violence) were relatively rare.

Femicide is often connected with killings of other close persons like children and friends of the victim or new partners. This was the case for 12-18% of the crimes in the five participating countries. Witnesses (family members, friends and others) were present in every fifth to fourth case of IPF.

Victims and perpetrators of IPF show a great range in relation to age, education, occupation, social status and migration background. Some indications could be found for mental health problems on the side of the perpetrators; significantly, every fifth to third perpetrator of IPF subsequently committed suicide.

Warning signs in advance of the killings, like prior threats and stalking, prior DV and complaints to the police or support systems emerged in a number of cases; however the sources are unreliable here as in countries without a monitoring system by the state and justice system, (such as in Germany, Cyprus) the case information on this aspect is not available. Further

analysis of police and court case files would be necessary to gather valid information on this topic that is highly relevant for improved prevention.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the trials of the cases in 2019 and 2020 are not available for a high number of cases in all participating countries and further analysis is necessary to gain more knowledge on the sanction systems and practices. A tendency to downgrade IPF cases to manslaughter rather than murder, with the consequence of less severe sentencing, was found in the German dataset, however, more information is needed to verify these early observations.

## **5. Qualitative analysis of femicide cases**

For this report, ten femicide cases (which had 11 victims)<sup>92</sup> from across the five project countries have been analysed to find patterns concerning the circumstances of the crimes, as well as the reactions of the social environment and institutions.

### **5.1 The victim, the perpetrator and their relationship**

Most of the eleven victims were young adults, six aged between 26 and 35 years old, and two even younger, between 16 and 25 years old. Two victims were middle-aged, between 44 and 53 years old and one victim was an elderly woman (70 years old).

The perpetrators were mostly middle-aged, with five between 36 and 55 years old and the oldest being 62 years old. The other four were young adults aged between 25 and 35. In most cases, the perpetrator was older than the victim, seven of them with a difference of at least nine years and one of only three years. In three cases, the perpetrators were younger than the victims.

At the time they were killed, most victims were employed, with four exceptions:<sup>93</sup> a university student, a pensioner, and two unemployed women. The victims had mostly low- or semi-skilled jobs, such as factory or supermarket workers, with the exception of a social worker. As for the victims' educational background, there is not much information, although it is specified that in one case from Cyprus, the woman's education was limited to primary level. Two of the victims were migrants/refugees. In one of the cases from Cyprus, the woman had also been a victim of child marriage.

Regarding the perpetrators, two perpetrators were unemployed at the time of the killing, one was a university student, and the remaining had less qualified jobs, with the exception of one man from Spain, who was a police officer. Three of the perpetrators were migrants/refugees.

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<sup>92</sup> In one case, two women were killed by the perpetrator.

<sup>93</sup> There was no information available regarding the professional occupation of one victim.

Both cases from Malta were characterised by criminal antecedents: in one case, the father of the perpetrator was convicted of murder, and in the other, the perpetrator was described as having a drug addiction. Mental health issues prior to the femicide were reported regarding one of the perpetrators. Three perpetrators were described as obsessively jealous, aggressive and antisocial. There is no information regarding the educational background or occupation of three perpetrators.

With respect to the relationship between victim and perpetrator, in almost all cases, victim and perpetrator were or had previously been in an intimate partner relationship for a period of time that varies from around one year to 18 years. The exceptions include one case from Portugal, in which victim and perpetrator were university classmates and the latter was romantically interested in the former, and one case from Malta, in which the perpetrator was the son and brother of the victims and his sister had accused him of sexual abuse. In the case of four of the IPF victims, they already had children from previous relationships. In another two cases, the victims had children with the perpetrator.

In almost all cases, prior conflicts were known or formal complaints from the victims had been reported. In almost all the situations in which the victim and perpetrator were in an intimate relationship, there were ongoing or prior attempts to end it (the only exception is one case from Germany). In fact, the relationship dissolution, or its imminence, was identified as the main trigger for several of the femicides in the qualitative case analysis. This differs from the quantitative analysis in which in-depth information about the womens' attempt to end the relationship was often not available.

## 5.2 Coercive control and the victim's response strategies

Coercive control behaviours emerged throughout the analysed cases, which can be grouped into three periods: before, during and after the killing, respectively.

Coercive control before the killing was found in most cases across the countries, and includes behaviours such as stalking, as well as physical and psychological violence. In one of the cases from **Malta**, the perpetrator would use their daughter as a means to control the victim. Other strategies of control from this same perpetrator include preventing the victim from engaging in employment, using emotional manipulation, and threatening the victim's mother. In fact, threats were often used as strategies of coercive control, including death threats (**Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal**) and threats to commit suicide if the victim continued to reject them (**Malta, Cyprus**). Moreover, manifestations of jealousy and prohibition from speaking and contacting other people were also reported in cases from **Malta, Germany** and **Spain**. One of the perpetrators was described as intimidating the victim using his height and physical build. As for the type of physical violence used to control the victims, it was often

nearly lethal, including one case from **Germany** where the victim was strangled until she spat blood.

Coercive control strategies during the killing were also identified, namely in cases from **Germany, Malta** and **Cyprus**. These strategies included luring the victim to the crime site using a suicide threat, meticulously planning the femicide, and preparing the weapon. It is also possible to recognise that coercive control does not end with the victim's death – the perpetrator continues to control the victim's body (e.g., disposing of the body, in one case from **Malta** and another from **Portugal**), and even tries to escape and control the course of the investigation (in one case from **Portugal**, the perpetrator involved himself in the police search while the case was being handled as a disappearance).

Meanwhile, the victims had all used diverse strategies to deal with the violence and try to survive. Two victims hid friends or current intimate partners from the perpetrator to avoid violent reactions. In one case from **Malta**, the victim would try to appease the perpetrator with compliance to diminish the risk of retaliation. In one case from **Germany**, the victim's strategies included hiding sharp objects from the perpetrator, sleeping separately and pretending to sleep to avoid being touched. Separation or attempting to separate was noted in advance of several femicides, as victims attempted to get away from the perpetrators, even including, in one case from **Portugal**, moving to a different city. In one of the cases from **Cyprus**, the victim not only reported the crime to the police, but also asked for help from friends and relatives.

### 5.3 Family, and formal and informal networks

Regarding the victims' families, most of the victims had children, with whom they lived. In a few cases, the children were in some way present in the process leading to or during the femicide: in one case from **Malta**, the perpetrator called their eldest daughter to ask the location of the victim shortly before perpetrating the femicide; and in one case from **Germany**, the victim's underage daughter was in the apartment as the crime occurred. In some cases, the victims were described as having a very close relationship with their families, such as their parents and siblings, as well as other relatives.

As for the perpetrators' families, there is less information available than about the victims' families. In one case from **Malta**, the perpetrator's father was a well-known businessman who hid his relationship with his son due to the latter being the result of an extramarital affair. One common theme in a few cases is that the perpetrators' relatives are described as supporting him in some way, such as helping him hide after the crime, praising him in the media or even testifying in court on his behalf. By contrast, in one case from **Portugal**, the perpetrator's father

went to the police to talk to the perpetrator while he was in custody to urge him to confess the crime, which he did after the conversation.

With regard to the victims' informal networks, in several cases the victims are described as having very close friends, who encouraged the victim to seek help, and appeared in court or spoke to the media in her memory. On the other hand, in one case from **Malta**, the aunt of the younger victim with whom the victim had disclosed sexual abuse committed by the perpetrator claimed that she did not believe her, due to her alleged promiscuity.

As for the perpetrator, in some cases the people who knew the perpetrator describe them negatively, as antisocial or harsh. In other cases, the perpetrators are described in the media as having a close relationship with their friends and their informal networks speak about them in a positive light. In one case from **Malta**, the perpetrator's previous partner had committed suicide in his residence, allegedly due to the perpetrator's mother disapproving of their relationship.

Regarding formal networks, there is not much information in most cases. In one case from **Cyprus**, the family was under the supervision of the social welfare services and was receiving psychological support and some necessities (food, clothes, toys) from the children's school.

A common theme is that the victims' and/or the perpetrators' networks were aware of prior violence by the perpetrator against the victim. Relatives or friends are described not only as being aware of the violence, but also, in some cases, as trying to convince the perpetrator to stop the violence, being told of his intention to kill the victim, or even also being a direct victim of physical and verbal abuse by him.

However, in a few cases, the reports suggest that not many people knew about the violence. Such is the case of the femicides in **Spain**, with only one person being aware of the violence or the people who knew the couple only having suspicions of it. Moreover, in one of the cases from **Portugal**, the victim's friends have different accounts, with some reporting that the perpetrator was obsessed with the victim and others mentioning they were not aware of any issues. Finally, in one case from **Malta**, despite the testimonies about previous sexual abuse, the perpetrator's network completely denied being aware of any other violence.

#### 5.4 Social and economic background

The victims and perpetrators had diverse social and economic backgrounds. Many lived in their own houses, whether owned or rented. In one case from **Malta**, they lived in their family's house. Most lived in urban settings, although in one case the victim had moved from a rural town to a bigger city, to get away from the perpetrator, and in one case the victim lived in a small town. A few victims and perpetrators are described as middle class. However, in one

case from **Cyprus**, the victim and perpetrator were both refugees and had economic difficulties, receiving help from a victim's friend and the children's school in order to cover basic necessities such as food and clothes.

### 5.5 Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities

In four cases, there is no information available on previous help-seeking or reports to the authorities, either because there was no source information available, or because there was no history of previous violence reported between the couple. In one case from **Spain**, despite evidence of previous violence, there was no information about prior reports or help-seeking. In two cases, despite not having information regarding previous reports to the authorities or official support services involved, the victims disclosed experiencing victimisation and violence to their friends or family members. In both cases, the informal network did not intervene.

In one case from **Malta**, there is no information on the previous help-seeking, apart from family support and a previous DV report seven years prior to the femicide. However, the court had proceeded with an acquittal due to the victim's refusal to testify and her request to drop charges. At the time the victim had filed the report of DV, authorities did not as yet carry out risk assessments in Malta.

In two other cases, victims had also filed DV complaints to the authorities. Nevertheless, the system's reaction was insufficient to protect both victims. In one case from **Cyprus**, the killed woman and her five children were identified as potential victims of DV upon their arrival in the country and allocated to a separate apartment. This victim made several reports to the police with the support of the social welfare services, and the perpetrator was imprisoned for 48 hours. The court issued a restraining order against the perpetrator with the obligation to present himself at the police station twice a week. Nevertheless, he continued to terrorise the victim and invaded her home, stealing various objects. In one case from **Portugal**, although there is no specific mention of risk assessment being made, sources indicate that the Public Prosecutor delineated a safety plan (which usually happens right after a risk assessment is completed), which was not effective. In one case from **Spain**, despite no previous report by the femicide victim, there were prior reports regarding GBV involving the perpetrator and his previous intimate partners.

### 5.6 Social and cultural norms

There is a common theme in most of these cases regarding the perpetrator's sense of ownership towards the victim, demonstrated by obsessive jealousy and refusal to accept the separation and the refusal of rejection. This sense of male possessiveness is reinforced by

cultural values surrounding a woman's role as a subordinate and as 'belonging' to her male partner. In one case from **Germany** – and in contrast to this stereotype – the perpetrator had a more insecure economic status than the victim. In one case from **Spain**, the man's perceived superiority seemed to also have been fueled by his position of power and access to weapons due to his profession as a police officer.

In one case from **Malta**, the importance of maintaining family unity and the factor of perceived shame seemed to have contributed to the lack of reporting of the previous sexual abuse to the authorities, as well as the disbelief shown towards the victim's account of the abuse by a close family member. In one of the cases from **Cyprus**, the couple's status as refugees may have also increased the victim's difficulty in leaving the relationship due to the language and cultural barriers when accessing support services.

It becomes extremely important to note the media discourse surrounding the femicides, especially with regard the victims and the perpetrators. In one case from **Portugal**, media outlets engaged in victim-blaming, using sensationalist headlines and biased narratives, and even reporting incorrect information (such as the existence of an intimate relationship between victim and perpetrator, which the media initially reported as being the case), which was later discredited by the victim's family and friends. On the other hand, one case from **Spain** brought to the fore the positive evolution of the country's media's coverage of GBV. In this case, the discourse seemed to be devoid of victim-blaming and perpetrator justification, focusing instead on the facts and highlighting the gender-based dimension of the crime.

Patriarchal values around the family and women's roles and bodies, as well as gendered power relations persist throughout the five countries investigated in this report; this facilitates men's feelings of entitlement towards women's bodies. These values may act as obstacles to witnesses and third parties (informal networks) in unraveling men's coercive control strategies and believing women's experiences of suffering. Furthermore, these patriarchal values are also pervasive in the institutional networks of victim support, as evidenced by the frequent failure to issue rapid and effective protective measures. At times, some protective measures were implemented, yet they were not sufficient. Society in general, and institutions in particular, still do not pay sufficient attention to the danger these perpetrators pose. Often, they assume that a simple measure will be enough to stop the perpetrator. However, the pervasive sense of entitlement to women's bodies needs to be deeply challenged to decrease femicide and to improve women's safety, as well safeguard their human rights.

## 6. Preliminary recommendations for prevention and multidimensional action

The national reports produced by the FEM-UnitED project, as well as this resulting comparative report, have documented the high prevalence of femicide across the participating countries and underline the urgent need for effective prevention and multidimensional action to end the gender-based killings of women, which are most often perpetrated by intimate partners.

Given that in a significant number of IPFs no prior domestic violence or threat was reported to the police or other institutions, both primary and secondary intervention is necessary, as well as awareness-raising across society and institutions. Here, the close social environment of victims and perpetrators plays an important role. Furthermore, improvements have to be made in the intervention and sanctioning practices of the police and justice systems. Further, for women (and their children) in danger of severe violence and femicide, immediate support and shelter have to be ensured.

The FEM-UnitED team suggests the following measures for governments to better protect women, to adequately intervene and issue appropriate sanctions, and to raise the awareness of institutions and the public.

### 1. Consistent intervention and comprehensive protection for women at risk

- **Standardised, systematised and gender-sensitive risk assessment** must be implemented in institutions dealing with women at risk of femicide (and with potential perpetrators), especially in the police force and legal system, in support systems, youth offices, the education system, therapists and the medical and care system. The risk assessment must contain a set of shared criteria to properly evaluate the risk of femicide.
- **Improvement of existing risk assessment tools** for DV to better and more quickly identify potential risk of femicide, so that multidisciplinary interventions can be initiated. A central aspect of improved risk assessment tools is to identify patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour, possessiveness towards women, isolation and extreme emotional reactions to (impending) separation, even if no prior DV by the male partner is known to the police or other institutions. The tools should not only focus on prior physical violence, but also include gender dynamics, coercive or controlling behaviour, stalking, threats, threat of suicide, aggression against and blaming of the woman. The victim's own assessment of risk should be taken into consideration. Training for frontline professionals on the use of risk assessment tools is essential.
- Notwithstanding that firearms are used in a minority of femicide cases analysed in this report, any assessment of the risk faced by a victim should take into consideration, at

all stages of the investigation and application of protective measures, **whether the perpetrator legally or illegally possesses or has access to firearms.**

- Risk assessment must include **clear risk management strategies.** Each institution and professional group within a multi-agency framework must have clear instructions on what should be done in the event of a risk situation, regardless of risk level, in order to prevent escalation of violence.
- **More effective use and monitoring of protection measures.** The use of protection orders should be increased and their effectiveness improved. Breaches of protection orders should be appropriately sanctioned in order to act as a deterrent.
- **Permanent multidisciplinary intervention systems** (with police and justice, NGOs, support organisations, social services, perpetrator work, and other relevant institutions) have to be implemented in every region nationwide. These must initiate coordinated multi-agency intervention strategies in risk situations and provide support for women at risk (and their children).
- **Women's specialist services, including counselling services and shelters,** have to be supported through a comprehensive framework of funding at the structural level, with guaranteed sustainable funding. This is even more crucial considering how women's specialist services have been severely affected by the continuing crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased demand for their services. Services should be available so that women at risk (and their children) can get immediate help and protection from further violence, threat or control by an intimate partner, as well as counselling.
- **Decisions on child custody and child contact after separation must put the protection of women and children first,** against the background that the separation process is associated with an extremely high risk of exposure to violence and killings for women (and their children and also other family members).
- **Perpetrator prevention and perpetrator work** has to be further developed and implemented to reach men at risk of perpetrating a femicide; therefore, not only men who have been perpetrators of violence, but also men who cannot deal constructively with a woman's freedom to decide for separation. Perpetrator programmes should operate within a multi-agency framework and prioritise victim safety.

## 2. Primary prevention and awareness-raising

- As the patriarchal cultural background forms the central causal context of the femicides, **primary prevention is crucial** in order to achieve a long-term reduction of IPFs and other femicides.

- **Promotion of equal gender relationships in education and culture, as well as in the media**, where gender roles and expectations are addressed. Work with boys and men has to be expanded to deconstruct the perceptions of toxic masculinity, machismo and dominance, as well as to educate on the benefits of power-equal relationships and equality.
- **Awareness-raising campaigns and work with media**, as well as community engagement (in neighbourhoods, at workplaces, schools, health centres etc.), on providing more information about warning signs and risk factors related to femicide within the social environment, combined with knowledge and instructions on how to act in cases of risk for women and children.
- **The media must be trained and engaged** to improve knowledge about the gendered background of dominance and control against women that leads to femicide, as well as on individual and collective strategies to prevent and end violent male behaviour and violent situations for women and girls, also with the support of diverse institutions. Media training should also include ethical reporting, and reflect the perspective of surviving family members and friends who can be re-traumatized by media portrayals. It is essential to establish ethical guidelines for the media regarding the portrayal and coverage of DV and femicide and to analyse and monitor media in the countries that have produced and published such guidelines.

### 3. Multi-agency and multidisciplinary training

- **Mandatory and systematic training for all frontline professionals** has to be implemented, aimed at raising awareness on the issue and taking warning signs seriously, but also reflecting on one's own professional role in prevention and intervention; this should include legal professionals and civil lawyers dealing with separations.

### 4. Legislative change and updating of judicial practices

- Femicide must be identified and defined as a **clearly gendered crime** during the entire process of investigation and sanctioning of the crime.
- The background of gender discrimination and gender inequality has to be taken into account as an **aggravating circumstance leading to higher sanctions**, rather than mitigating the crime.

### 5. Data collection, monitoring and research

- Governments have to **monitor femicides and evaluate system responses at different levels**.

- **Disaggregated administrative/institutional data** (by police and justice system) on all forms of VAW, including femicide, have to be collected and regularly published on national- and EU-level in a comparable way (and with standardised EU measures). Data should contain information on victims, perpetrators and additional victims, as well as on the circumstances of the killings.
- **Monitoring of protection measures, prevention strategies, investigation and sanctioning practices** by the state on a case-by-case-basis; the data should also be made available as well as reported regularly, in order to continuously improve prevention (and sanctioning practices).
- **Existing data collection initiatives on femicide** at national and international levels, such as the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF) should be funded and supported by the EU and the Member States, in order to gain in-depth knowledge on individual cases and overall knowledge for improved prevention strategies. In every state, based on the existing work, an observatory on femicide has to be established and funded.
- **Further in-depth research on femicide and femicide prevention** should be promoted and sufficiently resourced by the state.

## 6. **Protection and measures for specific at-risk groups**

- **Development of protection measures for target groups** who are at higher risk, for example for migrant women and women with disabilities, in order to remove barriers to support and adequate protection.
- **Women who want to separate from controlling/dominant partners** should be specifically addressed in policies and measures to prevent femicide and support women at risk.
- **Children should be recognised in their own right as victims and a group at risk** of IPV and IPF, with specific prevention and protection measures, and considered in their own right for shelter and support. They must also be acknowledged as victims after their mother has been killed, with their need for specific support in situations of grief and traumatisation, but also during the investigation and sanction process through specific training for police officers, prosecutors and judges. Furthermore, children have to be informed about their rights during court proceedings, and also their rights to compensation and reparation.

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