



FEM-UNITED

united to prevent femicide in europe

FEM-UNITED ACTION PLAN: CYPRUS

Context and needs analysis

As part of the EU-funded project '**FEM-UNITED - United to prevent IPV/DV Femicide in Europe**', the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), together with the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), organised two meetings with stakeholders held on Friday 3rd of September 2021 and 12th March 2022 at the Cleopatra Hotel in Nicosia, Cyprus. The first meeting targeted policy makers and government representatives, including Members of Parliament, and the second targeted women's organisations and wider civil society. The stakeholders were invited to discuss the current challenges in preventing and combating intimate partner violence/domestic violence (IPV/DV) and femicide, and how to improve multi-agency responses, and propose concrete proposals for policy change.

During the discussions with the stakeholders, a number of gaps and challenges were identified in the prevention of IPV/DV and femicide, as well as recommendations for the improvement of system-wide responses to IPV/DV and femicide.

What are the system-wide gaps in the context of violence against women (VAW) and femicide?

- **Lack of data:** Public authorities do not collect comprehensive data on all forms of violence against women disaggregated by sex and age of victim and perpetrator, type of violence, relationship between the victim and perpetrator. Available data only include incidences of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, reported to the police. Limited research or data exists on violence against women of ethnic minority or migrant background in Cyprus.
- **(In)Effectiveness of risk assessment:** In terms of risk assessment, there is a protocol in place for risk assessment in cases of IPV, including in cases of ex-spouses and ex-partners, which has been implemented by the police since 2018. However, no evaluation of the risk assessment protocol has been carried out to date and it is therefore not possible to ascertain the use and effectiveness of the protocol in reducing and preventing IPV, and by extension femicide. Other frontline professionals (e.g. Social Welfare Services, Health Services) do not use risk assessment tools to evaluate risk and to inform responses to violence against women.
- **Protection measures for victims of IPV/DV:** Although the legal framework foresees the issuance of protection orders in cases of IPV/DV, there is no data available to ascertain the number and type of protection orders issued in Cyprus. It is therefore not possible to assess their prevalence or effectiveness in protecting victims or in preventing further violence, including femicide. In addition, there is no information as to whether protection orders are actively monitored or which activities the police/monitoring authorities undertake to check compliance with protection orders.
- **Lack of an intersectional approach:** Despite the significant migrant population in Cyprus and a high incidence of violence against women and femicide among this group, migrant, ethnic minority [and asylum-seeking] women are not specifically addressed in National Action Plans, rendering them invisible on a policy level. Overall, National Action Plans do not make reference to or foresee actions to combat violence against migrant women, women with disabilities, single mothers, and other disadvantaged groups among women.



How can we improve system-wide responses to violence against women in order to prevent femicide?

- **Reliable and regular sex-disaggregated data on VAW and femicide:** The collection of reliable, regularly updated administrative and statistical data on victims and perpetrators of all forms of violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age and victim-perpetrator relationship, should be mandatory for all relevant stakeholders and frontline services. A common tool for statistical data collection in order to reflect the specific circumstances relating to the killings of women/femicide should be adopted by all relevant stakeholders and frontline services.
- **Standardised risk assessment tools and protocols:** A standardised approach to risk assessment must be adopted by all relevant stakeholders and frontline services that would promote a shared understanding of risk across the system, and establish a common language to communicate risk. Risk assessment protocols which are both gender sensitive and culturally competent should be developed for use by all frontline professionals, and risk factors associated with coercive and controlling behaviour should be incorporated in such protocols. Specialized training for frontline professionals on the use of risk assessment tools is also essential.
- **Greater use and effective monitoring of protection measures:** The use of protection orders should be increased and their effectiveness improved by ensuring that monitoring mechanisms are developed and put in place, so that protection orders effectively provide safety and protection for women and their children who are victims or are at risk of violence against women. Breaches of protection orders must be appropriately sanctioned in order to have a deterrent effect.
- **Legal framework:** Changes need to take place both in the legal framework on domestic violence and in relevant family law, as well as in procedures and practices, in order to ensure that both children's rights and women's rights are respected in child contact arrangements in the context of violence against women. Girl children must to be recognized as victims of femicide in their own right.
- **Targeted policies for migrant [including refugee and asylum seeking] women:** Barriers to access to comprehensive protection and support to all women and girls should be removed, particularly women who are in situations of disadvantage and facing multiple discrimination, such as women of migrant background and asylum-seeking women. The Cyprus government's reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention in relation to autonomous residence permits for migrant women experiencing violence should be lifted.

Based on the above, the following plan of action is proposed:

Collect reliable and regular sex-disaggregated data on VAW and femicide		
	Activity	Stakeholders involved
1.	Establishment of data collection tools and processes on violence against women and femicide to be adopted by all relevant stakeholders and frontline services.	Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Ministry of Justice



		<p>Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour</p> <p>Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p> <p>Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior</p>
2.	<p>Mandatory collection of reliable, regularly updated administrative and statistical data on victims and perpetrators of all forms of violence against women and femicide, disaggregated by sex, age and victim-perpetrator relationship, by all relevant stakeholders and frontline services.</p>	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour</p> <p>Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p> <p>Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior</p>
Standardise risk assessment tools and protocols		
3.	<p>Develop a standardised approach to risk assessment and a common language to understand and communicate risk among all frontline services, including developing tools and protocols which are gender sensitive and culturally competent and which capture risk factors associated with coercive and controlling behaviour.</p>	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p>



		<p>Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour</p> <p>Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p> <p>Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Health Services, Ministry of Health</p>
4.	[Mandatory and] specialized training for all relevant stakeholders and frontline services on the use of risk assessment tools.	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p>
5.	Evaluation of risk assessment protocol on intimate partner violence of the Cyprus Police.	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p>
Greater use and effective monitoring of protection measures		
6.	Establish a central register on the number and type of protection orders issued.	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p> <p>Law Office of the Republic, Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Judicial Services (courts)</p>
7.	Collect data on the number and type of protection orders issued	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p>



		Law Office of the Republic, Ministry of Justice Judicial Services [(courts)], Ministry of Justice
8.	Develop and institute monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance by perpetrator(s) with the terms of their protection order	Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Ministry of Justice Cyprus Police Law Office of the Republic, Ministry of Justice
Promote legislative change to strengthen children's rights		
9.	Revise family law legislation to strengthen the right of the child to express his/her views in the context of child contact and communication.	Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Ministry of Justice Commissioner for the Rights of the Child Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family Law Office of the Republic, Ministry of Justice Cyprus Parliament
10.	Revise and amend the Violence against Women Law 2021 to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, in particular article 31 - "take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that, in the determination of custody and visitation rights of children, incidents of violence covered by the scope of this Convention are taken into account" and ensure that "the exercise of any visitation or custody rights does not jeopardize the rights and safety of the victim or children"	Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Ministry of Justice Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family Law Office of the Republic, Ministry of Justice Cyprus Parliament
Develop targeted policies for women belonging to disadvantaged groups including migrant and asylum seeking women and women in special needs/disabilities		



11.	<p>Map and assess the specific needs of women belonging to disadvantaged groups including migrant and asylum seeking women, and women with special needs/disabilities.</p> <p>Develop targeted policies to remove barriers to access to protection and support faced women belonging to disadvantaged groups including migrant and asylum seeking women, and women with special needs/disabilities, particularly language, cultural and geographic barriers.</p>	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour</p> <p>Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family</p> <p>Cyprus Police</p> <p>Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Health Services, Ministry of Health</p> <p>Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior</p>
12.	<p>Revision of the Cyprus government's reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention in relation to autonomous residence permits for migrant women experiencing violence with a view to it being lifted</p>	<p>Coordinating Body on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Ministry of Interior</p> <p>Cyprus Parliament</p>



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