



FEM-UNITED

united to prevent femicide in europe

FEM-United ACTION PLAN: GERMANY

Monika Schröttle / Maria Arnis

I Context and needs analysis

As part of the EU-funded project "**FEM-UnitED - United to prevent IPV/DV Femicide in Europe**", the Institute for Empirical Sociology (IfeS) at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg organised three digital meetings with stakeholders in July 2021, February 2022 and July 2022. All meetings included political decision-makers or representatives from the federal and state ministries. Stakeholders were invited to reflect on current gaps and challenges in the identified fields of action and necessary measures for improved intervention and prevention of violence against women and femicide, taking into account the research findings of FEM-UnitED and the insights gained from the institution-specific and cross-institutional workshops (with police/justice, support system, health system and media). Discussions focused on how the current situation can be improved and which concrete policy recommendations could contribute to changes.

During the discussions with the stakeholders, a number of **problems** related to the prevention of femicide were addressed. **Recommendations for improving the handling of violence against women and femicide** were cooperatively developed in **six fields of action**.

The fields of action and recommended measures are documented below. Finally, an action plan with ten central fields of activity and responsible actors for Germany is presented.

Fields of action: Problems and recommended measures

FIELD OF ACTION 1:

CONSISTENT INTERVENTION AND PROTECTION FOR WOMEN AT RISK

Problems:

- **Risk assessment** and **threat analyses** are carried out by the police in Germany, but they are inconsistently applied across the country and also not implemented comprehensively in all relevant institutions. In addition, the threat situation in cases of femicide without prior domestic violence (DV) is insufficiently recorded.
- **Perpetrator work** is an important building block for the prevention of femicides, but it is not available nationwide. Moreover, it largely only reaches perpetrators who admit to having committed violence, and thus does not reach a large proportion of dangerous perpetrators.
- **The support system for women at risk is inadequate.** Many women and children at risk do not receive effective and timely protection in threatening situations. Women's shelters, as well as intervention and counselling centres are inadequately equipped in terms of staff, space and organisation.
- **Perpetrators are not sanctioned adequately (if at all)** for violations of removal and protection measures.

Recommended measures:

- **Further development of national instruments for risk assessment and analysis in order to recognise the risk of a femicide in the making:** Include patterns of control, coercion and possessiveness towards the partner, isolation as well as extreme emotional reaction to separation/divorce, such as threats (even if no previous DV by the partner is known); take indications of depressive and/or narcissistic personality disorders and suicidal tendencies seriously; include the perspective of affected women.
- **Comprehensive implementation of a uniform, appropriate and gender-sensitive risk assessment system in all relevant institutions** e.g., police and judiciary, protection and support systems, youth welfare offices, the education system and the healthcare sector.
- **Development and nationwide implementation of action guidelines for dealing with identified high-risk cases** for all relevant fields of practice.
- **Consistent application and verification of all protective measures.** Verification of the use and effectiveness of sanctions in case of violation of protective measures by the perpetrator.
- **Nationwide and comprehensive implementation of multi-professional intervention systems with ongoing working case conferences that are convened immediately in risk cases,** involving the police, public prosecutor's office, work with perpetrators, protection and support facilities, youth welfare office, judges, guardians ad litem. The aim of these conferences would be to successfully protect victims in high-risk cases (through the police, women's shelters, intervention centres, youth welfare offices, courts) and to prevent offences (through the police and proactive low-threshold work with perpetrators or fathers).
- **Create concurrent and sustainable prevention and intervention strategies in all fields of practice,** Bring endangered women (with children) out of danger and protect them (provide immediate support, counselling, shelter); impart basic knowledge and action competence for risk assessment and risk management at all levels; consistent crime and perpetrator prevention.
- **Comprehensive, adequate and sustainable provision of protection and support systems for women affected by violence** (intervention centres, women's shelters, specialised counselling centres) in order to achieve **immediate protection and support for all women at risk and their children;** establishment and expansion of flexible protection and support services (protective housing) as well as outreach and follow-up counselling for women at risk.
- **Establishment and expansion of effective perpetrator work throughout the country and further development of the concept** in order to more quickly reach potential threats **at a low level** and effectively prevent further violence.

FIELD OF ACTION 2: PRIMARY PREVENTION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Problems:

- **So far, no effective and comprehensive primary prevention has been implemented to prevent violence against women (VAW) and femicide.** Gender relations have not fundamentally changed in terms of dominance, control,

possessiveness and contempt for women. As a target group, boys and men have been reached to a limited extent.

- **Media coverage of DV and femicide is problematic.** It often focuses on individual cases without presenting the broader social context; sympathy towards perpetrators and tacit victim-blaming are also common. Current media reporting on femicide is likely to lead to a high level of stress and re-traumatisation among children, family members and friends, and survivors of femicide; there is also a lack of sufficient protection for victims during media interviews.

Recommended measures:

- ➔ **Broad implementation of primary prevention across education, culture and media, including:**
 - Addressing gender roles and expectations.
 - Promotion of equal gender relations.
 - Increased targeting of boys and men with regard to controlling behaviour, dominance, possessiveness and disregard for the integrity of women in intimate relationships.
- ➔ **The following should be communicated in awareness-raising campaigns and media coverage:**
 - Understanding of context and motives around femicide as well as background of male dominance and control towards women.
 - Warning signs and risk factors for social environments.
 - Information on how to take concrete action in cases of risk.
- ➔ **Implementation of media training and ethical reporting guidelines:**
 - Ongoing training of media professionals and provision of information for this target group to promote constructive reporting on VAW and femicide.
 - Inclusion of the perspective of victims and surviving family members and friends (incl. the risk of traumatisation).
 - Formulate common ethical guidelines for journalism on dealing with VAW and femicide.
- ➔ **Outreach** activities that also reach **adolescents and young women/men** (via appropriate language and media, online counselling and social media).
- ➔ **Design of educational and awareness-raising projects that are more low-threshold in terms of content** (instead of focusing on violence, talk about control, possessiveness and dominance in gender relations).
- ➔ **In awareness-raising work, address women's experiences of violence in specific life situations without stigmatising them** (e.g., women with disabilities, migration/refugee experiences, for whom it can be more difficult to escape from a situation of danger).

FIELD OF ACTION 3:
INTERDISCIPLINARY AND MULTI-PROFESSIONAL TRAINING(S)

Problems:

- Indications of **danger and warning signals** in the run-up to femicide are **often not recognised as risk cases** by **institutional actors**.
- **Insufficient awareness, knowledge and skills** in dealing with risk situations in a multi-professional context (state and non-state institutions).
- **Inter-institutional sensitisation and cooperation must be improved in order** to effectively prevent femicides; **networking has** not yet been formalised or consolidated sufficiently in many cases.

Recommended measures:

- ➔ **Implementation of obligatory and systematic further training for all professionals who may come into contact with women affected by violence:**
 - a) Raising awareness of the issue of femicide
 - b) Recognise warning signs and take them seriously
 - c) Reflection on own professional role in prevention and intervention
- ➔ **Ongoing training of the entire system.**
- ➔ **Ongoing and compulsory training in the judicial field involving for legal actors:**
 - Compulsory further training for (family) judges, public prosecutors, lawyers (in family law), guardians ad litem.
 - Trainings via key actors such as the German Judicial Academy, Bar Association etc.
- ➔ **Systematic training of health professionals:**
 - Raising awareness among GPs, midwives, gynaecologists, therapists etc. through training (and as a fixed component of training courses).
 - Impart knowledge about warning signs and concrete possibilities for action. (draw up guidelines for different areas); organisation also via the professional associations.
- ➔ **Imparting knowledge and skills in cross-institutional networking and cooperation** to prevent femicide and ongoing DV.

FIELD OF ACTION 4: LEGAL REFORM

Problems:

- **The current legal framework and legal practice is not adequate in protecting women of preventing femicide:** Although cases of DV / intimate partner violence (IPV) have not been considered a private matter for 20 years with the introduction of

the Protection against Violence Act, there is **no consistent implementation of effective protective measures and insufficient sanctioning of violations**; as a result, **DV against women and femicides** are often **not adequately sanctioned**.

- **Femicide and its gender-specific background still receives too little attention in the law; aspects of power, possessiveness and control in gender relations as well as the non-acceptance of women's autonomy are not adequately considered in legislation and legal practice.** Cases in which women are killed by their partners are less often classified as murder (keyword: low motive) and overall sanctioned with a lower sentence than other types of homicide.
- **So far, there is no legal definition of the gender-specific killing of a woman;** femicide and its motivation are not legally defined.
- In the context of **access and custody proceedings, there is a particular risk to women** (and children) as family courts value the father's right to access more highly than the safety of women and their children.
- **There is a lack of inter-agency anonymisation of women's and children's personal data and location to protect them in risk cases during the separation process.**

Recommended measures:

- ➔ **Commission legal experts to assess the current legal framework and practice on femicide and consider where legislative changes are needed** to improve the state response to, and sanctioning of, femicide and attempted femicide.
- ➔ **In the investigation and prosecution process, femicide must be classified as a gender-specific crime.** Furthermore, dimensions of gender discrimination and inequality have to be taken into account, as well as patriarchal control, possessiveness and dominance as motive background and aggravating circumstance in sentencing.
- ➔ **Sanctions for repeated violations of the Protection against Violence Act should be tightened and a ground for detention "repeated violation of the Protection against Violence Act" should be introduced.**
- ➔ **Change legal practice in custody and contact proceedings in the context of separation and divorce:** the protection of women (and children) must be paramount; the whereabouts of the woman and children must be kept anonymous throughout and across authorities in high-risk cases. Violent fathers should be obliged to take part in perpetrator work.
- ➔ **Amendment of the law on data and local jurisdiction:** data in high-risk cases (change of identity and place of residence) should be handled by a neutral body that ensures the connection to the victim's previous place of residence for the victim's protection without involving the perpetrator.
- ➔ **Mandatory perpetrator work in all high-risk cases** (regardless of the perpetrator's admission of guilt; see also activities in Austria in this regard).¹
- ➔ **Free psychosocial process support in cases of DV.**

¹ <https://www.neustart.at/ein-jahr-gewaltpraeventionsberatung/>

FIELD OF ACTION 5: DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND RESEARCH

Problems:

- **There is a lack of systematic collection and evaluation of case-related data on femicides**, which would act as a basis for improved intervention and prevention.
- **A national observatory on femicide** is not funded in Germany.
- There is a lack of comprehensive **monitoring of institutional and political processes that accompanies practice and policy**.
- There is too little **in-depth (national and international comparative) research** on the background of femicides and starting points for effective prevention.

Recommended measures:

- ➔ **Regular collection and documentation of disaggregated administrative and institutional data on a case-by-case basis must be ensured**, compiling information from the police, judiciary and support system and covering all forms of VAW and femicide at both national and EU levels (with information on victims, perpetrators, other victims, backgrounds and circumstances of femicide, as well as interventions, consequences and sanctions).
- ➔ **A targeted monitoring of protection measures, prevention strategies, and investigation and sanction practices of the state on a case-by-case basis** should be implemented, which can serve as a basis for the gradual improvement of prevention and sanction practices. This should also include consistent **monitoring of cases of unsuccessful intervention** (with systematic search for sources of error in order to learn for further interventions).
- ➔ **Initiatives dealing with the statistical processing of gender-specific violence must be networked** (e.g., federal-state working groups in the area of the Conference of Ministers of Justice as well as the Conference of Ministers of the Interior).
- ➔ **All information on femicide cases (whether actual or attempted) should be compiled and evaluated in a national femicide observatory**. This could be set up by the German Focal Point of the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF) and should feed information from the support system, research, file analyses, knowledge of affected persons and relatives (organisations) into a database, evaluated regularly and documented in reports.
- ➔ **Promote research on femicide (prevention); focus on perpetrator/victim typologies, risk factors and background analyses on dynamics in the run-up to homicides as well as elements of effective prevention to support intervention and prevention practice**.
- ➔ **Include the perspective of women survivors of attempted femicide and survivors in research and monitoring to gain a broader perspective and understanding of the problem**.

FIELD OF ACTION 6:
PROTECTION AND MEASURES FOR VULNERABLE TARGET GROUPS

Problems:

- **Women who are** affected by violence and threats **often do not know what rights they have or who they can turn to and are confronted with different barriers** (language barriers for migrant and refugee women, different needs and hurdles in the context of disability and care).
- Against the background of an often **high need for counselling** here, **there is a lack of corresponding counselling services as well as protective measures for vulnerable target groups.**
- There is too little focus on **children as a vulnerable target group** of VAW and femicide; there is also a lack of **specific measures to support children in the investigative and judicial process.**
- **Persons who could play a preventive role in cases of VAW and femicide (e.g., parents, siblings, circles of friends) have not been sufficiently addressed and supported so far.** They are also at risk and insufficiently protected.

Recommended measures:

- ➔ **Focus must be on women who want to separate from controlling partners; these must be addressed and supported at a low threshold.**
- ➔ **In addition, protective measures must be developed for target groups with a higher risk and barriers to protection, and support must be removed for them** (e.g., for migrants and refugees, women whose residence status is dependent on their partner, women with disabilities or in difficult social situations, older women, women in care situations, women with mental health and addiction issues, prostituted women). **An intersectional perspective on threats, prevention and intervention should be established; flexible and low-threshold counselling/support services for vulnerable target groups** should be provided.
- ➔ **Long-term (also therapeutic) counselling and support services for threatened and affected women must be implemented** (with a view to protect from and reappraise violent experiences, counteract PTSD; reduce the risk of new violent relationships).
- ➔ Trained **contact persons** should be available for **traumatised relatives of femicide victims.**
- ➔ **Children must be recognised as victims in their own right** and as a **special risk group in the context of femicide; measures must be developed to support children in the investigation and sanctioning process** (take into account situations of grief and traumatisation; provide training for police officers, prosecutors and judges; inform children about rights in the judicial process and in connection with compensation and reparation).
- ➔ Counselling services for **children/adults who grow up/have grown up in violent families** must be established and expanded in order to **counteract the transgenerational transmission of violence.**

II Action plan

Based on the identified gaps and proposed measures, the following action plan was developed, which comprises ten central fields of activity for effective intervention and prevention of femicide in Germany. The left column of the table lists the relevant articles of the Istanbul Convention,² the middle column lists the recommended measures and the right column indicates the actors responsible for implementation.

1. Consistent nationwide implementation of a (high) risk management system		
Article 51	Activity	Players
	<p>1.1 Further development and nationwide implementation of a national risk assessment and hazard analysis tool to determine the risk of impending femicide: inclusion of patterns of control, threats and possessiveness towards the partner, isolation and extreme emotional reactions to (impending) separation/divorce (even if no previous DV by the partner is known); indications of depressive and/or narcissistic personality disorders, suicidal tendencies; inclusion of the perspective of the women concerned.</p> <p>1.2 Develop and implement guidelines for dealing with identified high-risk cases (for all relevant fields of practice).</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Working groups or commissions on violence prevention / victim protection</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Units for Gender Equality</p> <p>Health and addiction support facilities</p> <p>Youth Welfare Offices / General Social Services (ASD)</p> <p>Child protection services</p> <p>Support system, specialised counselling centres, intervention centres, women's</p>

² See the articles of the Istanbul Convention at:

https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl217s1026.pdf#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl217s1026.pdf%27%5D_1665667382863

		<p>emergency centres, women's and children's shelters, victim protection centres</p> <p>Perpetrator work facilities</p> <p>Institutions and authorities for migrants / refugees</p> <p>Actors in the disability movement and disability support</p>
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2. Multi-professional case conferences

Article 51	Activity	Players
	<p>2.1 National and regional implementation of multi-professional intervention systems with ongoing working case conferences that are convened immediately in risk cases in order to protect victims and prevent crimes.</p> <p>(with the participation of police, public prosecutor's office, perpetrator work, protection and support institutions, youth welfare office, judges, guardians ad litem)</p>	<p>Police</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Youth welfare offices</p> <p>Perpetrator work facilities</p> <p>Support system (specialised counselling centres, intervention centres, women's emergency centres, women's and children's shelters, victim protection centres)</p> <p>Child protection services</p>

3. Protection and support for women at risk		
Articles 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 52, 53	Activity	Players
	<p>3.1 Consistent application and review of all protective measures (+ review of the use and effectiveness of sanctions in case of violation of protective measures by the perpetrator).</p> <p>3.2 Concurrent and sustainable application of prevention and intervention strategies across fields of practice: getting women at risk (with children) out of danger and protecting them (immediate support, counselling, shelter); imparting basic knowledge and competence to act at all levels; consistent crime and perpetrator prevention.</p> <p>3.3 Comprehensive, adequate and sustainable provision of protection and support systems for women affected by violence (intervention centres, women's shelters, specialised counselling centres) in order to achieve immediate protection for all women at risk and their children; Establishment and expansion of flexible protection and support services (shelters), as well as outreach and follow-up counselling.</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Working groups or commissions on violence prevention / victim protection</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Support system</p> <p>Perpetrator work</p> <p>Youth Welfare Office</p> <p>Child protection services</p> <p>Health system / addiction support</p> <p>Institutions and authorities for migrants / refugees</p> <p>Actors in the field of disability</p>
4. Proactive and low-threshold work with perpetrators		
Article 16	Activity	Players
	<p>4.1 Establishment and expansion of comprehensive perpetrator work/offence prevention; further conceptual development of perpetrator work in order to reach all potential perpetrators immediately and at a low level and to effectively prevent further violence.</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments</p>

	<p>4.2 Mandatory requirements for perpetrator work in high-risk cases (regardless of the perpetrator's admission of guilt; see also recent activities in Austria).³</p>	<p>with responsible ministries</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Working groups or commissions on violence prevention / victim protection</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Perpetrator work facilities</p>
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5. Legal reform on contact and custody

Article 31	Activity	Players
	<p>5.1 Change legal practice in the context of custody and access proceedings: in high-risk cases, prioritise protection of the women and children concerned over the father's right to custody and access, and keep the whereabouts of the woman and children anonymous throughout and across authorities.</p> <p>5.2 Amendment of the law at federal level and local jurisdiction on the handling of data to ensure victim protection; in the context of a change of identity and residence: processing of official matters in high-risk cases by a neutral body that ensures reference to the victim's previous residence without informing the perpetrator of the residence.</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Working groups or commissions on violence prevention / victim protection</p> <p>Family courts</p> <p>Youth welfare offices</p>

6. Adequate sanctioning of femicide

Articles 45, 46	Activity	Players
	<p>6.1 Classification of femicide as a gender-specific crime in the investigation and prosecution process. (taking into account gender discrimination and the patterns of patriarchal control, dominance and abuse of power as motive and as aggravating circumstances in sentencing.)</p> <p>6.2 Tightening of sanctions for repeated violations of the Protection against Violence Act and introduction</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p>

³ <https://www.neustart.at/ein-jahr-gewaltpraeventionsberatung/>

	of a reason for detention: “Repeated violation of the Protection against Violence Act”.	Justice
7. Implementation of comprehensive and ongoing primary prevention and awareness-raising		
Articles 12,13,14,17	Activity	Players
	<p>7.1 Implementation of comprehensive primary prevention in education, culture and media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematisation of gender roles and expectations • Promotion of equal gender relations • increased targeting of boys and men with regard to controlling behaviour, dominance, possessiveness and disregard for the integrity of women in intimate relationships. <p>7.2 Awareness-raising campaigns and media coverage to communicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context and motives around femicide • Knowledge about warning signs and risk factors • Knowledge of how to act concretely in cases of risk. 	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries (education and culture)</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Educational institutions</p> <p>Media professionals, media councils of the Länder</p> <p>Cultural workers</p>
8. Training of professional groups and strengthening of cross-institutional cooperation.		
Articles 15, 28	Activity	Players
	<p>8.1 Mandatory and systematic further training for all professionals who come into contact with women affected by violence (raising awareness, recognising and taking warning signs seriously and reflecting on their own professional role in prevention and intervention).</p> <p>8.2 Inclusion of legal actors in training and compulsory further training for (family) judges, public prosecutors, lawyers.</p> <p>8.3 Systematic training of health professionals</p> <p>8.4 Increasing knowledge and skills in cross-institutional networking and cooperation to prevent femicide and ongoing DV.</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Working groups or commissions on violence prevention / victim protection</p> <p>Police</p> <p>All members of the judiciary</p>

		<p>Municipalities</p> <p>Units for Gender Equality</p> <p>Health facilities</p> <p>Youth Welfare Offices / General Social Services (ASD)</p> <p>Child protection services</p> <p>Support system, specialised counselling centres, intervention centres, women's emergency centres, women's and children's shelters, victim protection centres</p> <p>Perpetrator work facilities</p> <p>Educational institutions</p> <p>Institutions and authorities for migrants / refugees</p> <p>Actors in the disability rights movement and disability aid</p>
9. Development of services for at-risk groups and inclusion of victim perspectives		
Articles 20, 22, 23, 24, 59	Activity	Players
	<p>9.1 Establish low-threshold prevention and support services for women who want to separate from controlling partners.</p> <p>9.2 Provide prevention and support services for target groups who are at higher risk of</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments</p>

	<p>violence/femicide and/or for whom access to support and protection is more difficult (e.g., migrants/refugees, women whose residence status is dependent on their partner, women with disabilities or in difficult social situations, older women, women in care situations, with mental health and addiction issues, prostituted women).</p> <p>9.3 Longer-term (also therapeutic) support for affected women in coping with femicide attempts, threats, fears and psychological consequences of violence.</p>	<p>with responsible ministries</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Health facilities</p> <p>Therapeutic facilities</p> <p>Support system, specialised counselling centres, intervention centres, women's emergency centres, women's and children's shelters, victim protection centres</p> <p>Institutions and authorities for migrants / refugees</p> <p>Actors in the disability rights movement and disability aid</p> <p>Senior aid</p> <p>Prostitutes' organisations</p>
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10. Case-based monitoring and promotion of research

Article 11	Activity	Players
	<p>10.1 Introduce comprehensive monitoring of femicides on a case-by-case basis, building on the foundations of initiatives such as the European Observatory on Femicides (EOF).</p> <p>In doing so, also monitor protection measures, prevention strategies, as well as investigation and sanction practices of the state with a view to improve them.</p> <p>10.2 Promote systematic, in-depth research to investigate and improve state intervention and prevention.</p>	<p>Federal governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Regional governments with responsible ministries</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Institutions and organisations for statistics,</p>

	<p>10.3 Include the experiences of women survivors of attempted femicide and the social environments of those affected in all monitoring and research activities to gain a better understanding of the problem.</p>	<p>monitoring and research</p> <p>Science</p> <p>Protection and support facilities</p> <p>Perpetrator work</p> <p>Stakeholder organisations</p> <p>Relatives' organisations</p>
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Contact:

Research and Observatory Gender, Violence, Human Rights (FOBES)

at the Institute for Empirical Sociology (IfeS)
at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg
Marienstr. 2
90402 Nürnberg

Prof. Dr. Monika Schröttle & Dr. Maria Arnis

E-mail: maria.arnis@ifes.uni-erlangen.de

Further information at:

<https://www.ifes.fau.de/forschungsfelder/gender-gewalt-und-menschenrechte/>

https://www.ifes.fau.de/referenzen/projekte/gender-gewalt-und-menschensrechte/#collapse_1