



FEM-UNITED

united to prevent femicide in europe

**FEM-UNITED ACTION PLAN:
PORTUGAL**

Context & Needs Analysis

As part of the EU-funded project '**FEM-UNITED - United to prevent IPV/DV Femicide in Europe**', the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Porto, together with UMAR – Alternative and Response Women's Association organised three online meetings with stakeholders held on the 19th October 2021, 11th February 2022 and 4th July 2022 respectively.

The stakeholders who attended all three meetings were from various State Institutions that cover various aspects of violence against women in Portugal. These included representatives from Police Agencies, the Supreme Council of the Magistrature, the Commission for Equality and Citizenship (CIG), the Ministry of Internal Administration, the Entity for Regulation of the Media (ERCS), the Public Prosecution Office, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support, the Team for the Retrospective Analysis of Domestic Violence Homicides, and the National Child Protection Commission.

Moreover, the Project organized five training workshops with front-line professionals: four workshops with professionals from the health sector, education, social work and law enforcement; and one workshop with media professionals. These workshops were focused on not only on capacitating professionals but also on listening to their opinions and perspectives regarding the gaps and challenges they face in their professional activity that hinder acting with due diligence.

Despite the important changes in recent years that occurred in Portugal regarding domestic violence victim protection, a number of gaps and challenges in the prevention of gender-based violence and femicide were still identified during the meetings with stakeholders and the training workshops with professionals.

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

- **Lack of evaluation of measures and policies in place.** In Portugal, there has been a significant evolution in recent years regarding the number of policies and measures put in practice to protect victims of domestic violence. However, few of these measures and policies are the target of rigorous and continuous evaluation. This makes it challenging to understand which of these measures are being adequately applied and which are actually effective in victim protection and femicide prevention.
- **Lack of adequate training.** Although there has been an increase in training actions and courses for professionals, their content is often not adequate, and there seems to be a tendency to focus on quantity instead of quality. This runs the risk of not only overworking professionals, but also spending valuable resources on ineffective training which does not adequately cover these issues nor help professionals act with due diligence in femicide prevention.
- **Lack of communication and cooperation between institutions.** There is insufficient communication and coordination between the different entities and institutions that handle cases of domestic violence or violence against women. This leads to important information not being shared amongst all professionals who deal with the victims and the impossibility of adequate and continuous follow-up of each case by the professionals who have had contact with the case.
- **Lack of support for victims' families.** Not enough is being done to protect the other direct victims of femicide. This crime has a long-lasting impact on the victims' families, especially their children, and there are often psychological and social consequences that are not being addressed by the existing policies and legislation.



- **Lack of human resources.** Professionals from the sectors targeted by the FEM-UnitED capacity building workshops (healthcare, education and social work, police and criminal justice) voiced that they feel constantly overwhelmed and pressured, due to handling too many cases simultaneously and then lacking the time to adequately dedicate themselves to each case.

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

1. **Official data collection** on femicide should be implemented in Portugal so that information on femicides could be more systematic and complete. In order to do this, a working definition of femicide needs to be established in Portugal so that agencies and institutions can perform an accurate, coherent, and reliable country-wide data collection. These data should then be accessible to academics and ONG researchers for scientific purposes.
2. **Campaigns to raise society's awareness on femicide** should be developed more frequently and follow a gender-centred approach with a focus on victims' protection. Different and varied campaigns should be created to target different kinds of populations, such as frontline and media professionals, and also the general public.
3. **Better communication and cooperation between institutions** and entities that handle domestic violence cases. This would facilitate a continuous follow-up with the case by the different professionals that had contact with the victim, ensuring that they are aware of any developments with the situation and can put in motion faster actions to more effectively protect victims.
4. **Training for frontline professionals** that deal with domestic violence. Specific training for professionals from the justice system, health, and education, among others, is crucial not only to ensure that professionals from all regions of the country understand the recent measures and policies in place, but also to take domestic violence reports, the presence of firearms, and death threats seriously. Moreover, there should be multidisciplinary training to allow professionals from different institutions to understand how to better cooperate with each other in the field. This should have the consequence of creating more specialized multidisciplinary teams which would also improve cooperation between institutions.
5. **The prevention of this form of violence needs to be systematic and continuous** in different contexts, namely, via intervention in schools and communities. Education is the key for the prevention of femicide and homicide in a domestic violence context.
6. **More investment in human and material resources.** Resources for victim protection and support should have the adequate human and material resources for a more effective protection. Moreover, there should be victim-focused physical spaces inside specific locations (police stations, schools, social security offices, hospitals, health centres, etc) in all regions of the country. These spaces should ensure the adequate privacy for victims and should be prepared to accommodate children.
7. **Continuous and rigorous evaluation of measures and policies.** Measures and policies that are being applied need to continue being evaluated by competent entities. This



evaluation should focus on what measures work and are effective and how to improve the existing measures in order to prevent femicide.

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

List of acronyms of Stakeholders:

Commission for Equality and Citizenship (CIG)
 Judicial Police (PJ)
 Public Safety Police (PSP)
 National Republican Guard (GNR)
 Child Protection Commission (CNPDPJC)
 Regulating Entity for the Media (ERCS)
 Public Prosecution (MP)
 Supreme Council of the Magistrature (CSM)
 Ministry of Internal Administration (MAI)
 General Directorate for Probation and Prison Services (DGRSP)
 Working Group for Construction of the Domestic Violence Database (WG)
 Team for the Retrospective Analysis of Domestic Violence Homicides (EARHVD)
 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
 Ministry of Education (ME)
 Ministry of Justice (MJ)
 State Secretariat for Equality and Migrations (SEIM)

Research & Data Collection		
	Activity	Stakeholders involved
1.	Create a working definition of femicide for data collection, with the contribution of institutions and research groups specialised in femicide research and NGOs specialised in victim support.	CIG NGOs CSM MJ SEIM PJ
2.	Using the working definition of femicide, official data on the national official reports (Annual Report of Internal Security, domestic violence quarterly reports, etc) should specify the number of femicide cases within the number of total killings and domestic violence killings.	CIG PJ MP MJ SEIM
3.	For the database of domestic violence being constructed, allow access to not only the police and judicial institutions but also victim support institutions that are handling the case, and research groups for research purposes. This should always be done in such a way as to protect victims' privacy, ensuring that only relevant professionals can access the data.	WG CIG MP MJ SEIM
Support Systems		
4.	The domestic violence database should have information on the offenders for a fast access to information by the OPCs and the MP at the time of a domestic violence report and to assist in risk assessment.	WG
5.	The existing support structures should have the adequate human and physical means and resources to ensure an adequate work load for professionals, in order for victims to be effectively supported and protected. More investment in specialized professionals so that these professionals are prepared to support	CIG PJ PSP GNR NGOs MP



	the different victims that need support (including victims with disabilities, LGBTI+, belonging to marginalized groups, among others).	SEIM CNPDP CJ
6.	More investment in perpetrator programmes, both in a prison context and in the community.	DGRSP
7.	Forums and spaces should be created for victims to talk and be heard.	ALL
Legislation		
8.	Multidisciplinary cooperation between frontline professionals.	ALL
9.	The evaluation of measures and policies should be continuous and rigorous and performed by multidisciplinary teams.	ALL
10.	The primary prevention of violence should be present in all schools and kindergartens, focusing on promoting human rights and gender equality. The guidelines for minimum requisites have been developed, but it is necessary to cement this in policies. The primary prevention programs in schools should be applied by specialized professionals.	SEIM CIG NGOs ME
Training & Awareness Raising		
11.	Professionals should receive initial and continuous training in their field in order to be kept up to date with national and international laws, guidelines and manuals.	ALL
12.	The training needs to be developed and applied by specialized entities with long-standing work and knowledge on violence against women and gender violence so that the training's curriculum is adequate and appropriate to the specific sector's needs and challenges.	ALL
13.	Creation of awareness-raising campaigns focusing on the role that victims' friends, family, and neighbours play on the prevention of femicide and the importance of taking death threats seriously, given that a significant number of femicides happen after death threats and violence becoming known to other people.	CIG NGOs SEIM
14.	The campaigns dedicated to the general public should be developed in different mediums and through different types of media, so that they can reach all kinds of audiences: not only through audio-visual means such as TV channels, social media, and radio stations, but also through physical means, such as leaflets and posters available in strategic locations (metro and bus stations, schools, courthouses, social security offices, community centres, etc).	CIG NGOs
15.	Creation of a campaign and new dissemination products about the adequate media coverage of femicide, providing examples of appropriate coverage. This campaign should be developed with the cooperation between media professionals and experts on femicide and gender-based violence.	CIG ERCS NGOs