



**FEM-UNITED**

united to prevent femicide in europe

## **WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS: PORTUGAL**

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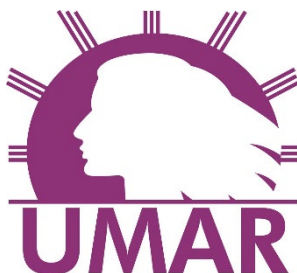
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## Introduction

The project 'FEM-UnitED: United to prevent femicide in Europe', funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union, aims to improve responses to femicide in the context of intimate partner violence and domestic violence, in order to reduce harm to women and children and prevent femicide. The project aims for improved systems-wide responses to intimate partner violence by creating an evidence base for raised public awareness and the fostering of multi-disciplinary cooperation and capacity building, adopting a gender-specific victim-centred approach.

As part of Work Package 4 of Project FEM-UnitED, this capacity building was procured through four Femicide Prevention Workshops, targeted at professionals of four different sectors: Health, Police, Education and Social Work. In Portugal, the workshops were held online, and had an approximated duration of 3 hours each.

The first three workshops followed the same structure and divided these sectors into: i) one workshop with health professionals, held on May 30<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 to 13:00 with 15 participants; ii) one workshop with education and social work professionals, held on May 30<sup>th</sup> from 14:00 to 17:00, with 15 participants; iii) one workshop with police and criminal justice professionals, held on May 31<sup>st</sup> from 10:00 to 13:00, with 30 participants.

The fourth workshop followed a different structure and gathered participants from the previous three workshops to facilitate multi-agency reflection and discussion. This workshop was held on June 27<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 to 13:00 and counted with 14 participants drawn from the participants of the previous three workshops: 7 healthcare professionals, 4 police and criminal justice professionals, and 3 education or social work professionals. A total of 60 professionals participated in all 4 workshops.

This report presents a summary of the main recommendations that stemmed from the discussions and reflections that emerged during all four workshops.

## Main Recommendations

Throughout the workshops, it is interesting to note that most of the concerns and recommendations expressed by professionals were topics that emerged in all workshops, voiced by different professionals of different sectors. Only a small number of recommendations differed from workshop to workshop. As such, this section presents the main recommendations drawn from the most common themes that emerged from all four workshops, with a few mentions of recommendations that came from specific sectors.

Regarding the main challenges and obstacles that hinder or prevent professionals from acting with due diligence, a common theme raised in all workshops concerned the **lack of sufficient human resources**. Because of it, professionals are constantly overwhelmed and pressured, handling too many cases simultaneously and then lacking the time to adequately dedicate themselves to each case.

Another challenge that was transversely echoed by many professionals from all four sectors was the **lack of cooperation and coordination between the different institutions** that handle the cases. These difficulties in building and working in networks lead to important information not being shared amongst all professionals who deal with the victims. As such, professionals in general voiced that there needs to be **better connection and coordination** between different entities.

Connected to this issue, criminal justice professionals in particular, mostly from the police, highlight that there is a **lack of follow-up with the victim after risk assessment**, and that, often, specialized teams are underutilized or allocated to different tasks. Professionals from all sectors highlighted how crucial it would be to implement a system of follow-up with victims that could be **accessible to all institutions handling the case**. This would ensure that professionals from different entities could check up on the situation and be aware of any developments with the case.

**Lack of specialized training** was also pointed out as a problem by professionals from all four workshops, who voiced not always knowing the best practices in handling these cases. Thus, one recommendation that most professionals felt was essential was the **implementation of more specialized training for professionals**, including multidisciplinary training which would allow professionals from different institutions to understand how to better cooperate with each other in the field. Moreover, professionals recommend the creation of **more specialized teams**, and a **better and more frequent use of existent multidisciplinary teams**.

Professionals from the health sector mentioned difficulties regarding **patient confidentiality** and other ethical issues preventing them to act in certain situations. They highlighted how important it would be to **create flowcharts and action protocols** that could be followed in situations of violence in order to reduce indecision and act quicker when dealing with a victim.

Concerning any physical, material or other kinds of aspects that professionals felt should be improved for more effective femicide prevention, one measure that was mentioned by professionals in all workshops was the creation of more **spaces dedicated to receive victims** of the forms of violence that more commonly end up in femicide, i.e., domestic and gender-based violence. Professionals from all sectors highlighted the importance of having more spaces with **privacy** from other people, and that these spaces should be **prepared to accommodate children**. Regarding material needs, professionals from the police sector mentioned the need for more **cars** and **computers** in stations.

A few professionals from different fields also mentioned the need for **more shelters and other support structures**, and more resources for victims in **all regions of the country**. They suggested creating more structures and increasing resources especially in rural areas, as well as broadening existent support resources to be available 24 hours. On the other hand, professionals, particularly from the police sector, also feel that it would be important to **increase the severity of coercion measures**, such as improving the implementation of remote control measures and increasing the application of the removal of the aggressor from the home, in the case of intimate partner violence. A few professionals also brought up the importance of creating more perpetrator programmes.

Moreover, professionals highlighted the **creation of more awareness campaigns** as a necessary step, not only for front-line professionals but also for the general public, in order to make society at large more knowledgeable on these issues and on how to prevent femicide. Additionally, some professionals expressed the importance of **primary prevention efforts** at schools, such as prevention programs and awareness raising actions at schools to reach all children.

### **Summary of recommendations**

- Better communication and cooperation between institutions;
- More spaces to receive victims in all stations/offices, with privacy and prepared for children;
- More specialized training;
- More multidisciplinary teams and better use of existent ones;
- More resources for victims in all regions of the country;
- Creation of flowcharts and action protocols;
- Follow-up system available to all institutions handling the cases;
- Increase the severity of coercion measures;
- More awareness raising campaigns;
- More primary prevention programs at schools.