



# Exchange of good practices on gender equality

Measures to fight  
violence against women  
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Comments Paper –  
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# Measures to fight violence against women in the Czech Republic

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Violence against women in the Czech Republic – available data

Czech Republic has been part of an international comparative research on violence against women in 2003 - International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS). The focus of this research has been on types of violence and also the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Violence in this research has been operationalised as equal to physical and sexual violence. The sample has been a representative sample of 1980 Czech women. The most general and alarming finding is that 58,9 % of Czech women experienced violence at least once in their life. 37,7 % of women experienced violence from their partner and 37,2 % of women experienced violence from somebody else outside the relationship. Concerning the types of violence the violence outside partner relationship has been mainly sexual violence (for example groping in 23,1 % or attempt to sexual intercourse in 8,2 %). The violence where the perpetrator has been the partner is mostly other types of physical violence (slap, kicking, biting, punch in 25,3 %, pushing, firm grip, twisting arms, pulling hair in 22,3 %, throwing things or hit by object in 15,4 %) or threats to physical violence (in 23,5 %). Also forced sexual intercourse or rape is a more often type of violence experienced from partner (in 7,1 %) than somebody else (3,5 %). The experience with various types of violence in the last 12 months has been also investigated. While looking at the data on the experience with violence throughout the life it is not evident how many violent experiences particular woman has, this feature is very informative. 15,1 % of women had experience with violence in the last 12 months (compared to 58,9 % of women throughout their life). 9 % of women experienced in this recent time period violence from their partner and 6,9 % of women from somebody else. These findings show that violence in partner relationship is in fact more often than violence outside partner relationship.

The results show that it is violence committed in a partner relationship that occurs most frequently, more so than “external” violence, and it is characterised by more aggressive forms of assault, leads to more serious consequences of physical injury and lasting psychological effects. Violence in intimate partner relationships has a specific character, which stems to a considerable degree from the gendered power hierarchy within a partnership. Only in 10 % of cases of violence in partner relationship and in 8,2 % of cases of violence outside partner relationship the incident has been announced to the police. (Pikálková ed. 2004)

## 1.2. Policy, institutional and legal context

The issue of violence against women in the Czech Republic is not a subject of policies as such but it is always fragmented according to types of violence that are dealt with separately. The type of violence that is most developed from the point of view of awareness, prevention and victim treatment in the connection to women is domestic violence.

Already the first national action plan for gender equality “Priorities and Procedures of the Government for Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Czech Republic”<sup>1</sup> (Priorities) that has been issued in 1998 (and every year since then) by the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men<sup>2</sup> (Council) contained the task for the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Healthcare to establish interdisciplinary teams of experts and measures against domestic violence. The Priorities issued yearly contain tasks for every ministry to fulfil during the respective year. To combat violence against women is one of the main priority areas of Priorities.

Before 2004 no coordination of measures, which would be aimed especially at the needs of victims of domestic violence, have been ensured in the Czech Republic. The adoption of the amendment of act No.140/1961 of the Criminal Code could be considered a first success (1.6.2004) as it included §215 a) Abuse of person living in the same residence. On 1.7.2004, through act No. 283/2004, a new duty was inserted into the Criminal Code. This new duty commands all authorities active in a criminal procedure to give sufferers or witnesses who are endangered by an accused who is at liberty an opportunity to ask for information about the accused (for example if the accused was released from prison). These partial changes were focused only on the criminological viewpoint in finding a solution for the problem of domestic violence, and did not take into account a gender view of this problem, or an interdisciplinary approach. New Act on domestic violence (135/2006 Sb.) has been valid since January 2007. This new legislation allows police to expel the perpetrator from home for a period of 10 days. This period can be prolonged by the court order to a maximum of one year. Since 2010 there is a new crime – dangerous stalking- introduced by the new Penal Code. It concerns the cases of violence or a danger of violence among partners not living together or separated/divorced partners when it cannot be classified a domestic violence or in other cases.

In 2008 the Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men established a Committee for the prevention of domestic violence<sup>3</sup> (Committee). In 2011 the Committee created the first National action plan for the prevention of domestic violence for 2011 - 2014. It focuses mainly on the practice of assistance to the victims of domestic violence and on the prevention and sets tasks to particular ministries.

The regional distribution of support services has always been very unbalanced in the Czech Republic (Council of Europe 2007) with the shelters and NGOs contact places in big cities – mainly Prague and Brno. Since 2007 the situation is changing with a new legislatively introduced pillar – intervention centres. The amendment of the Law on social services brought this institution. Regional authorities should create intervention centres for victims and vulnerable persons of domestic violence. At

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<sup>1</sup> Original name in Czech: Priority a postupy vlády při prosazování rovných příležitostí žen a mužů

<sup>2</sup> Original name in Czech: Rada vlády pro rovné příležitosti žen a mužů

<sup>3</sup> Original name in Czech: Výbor pro prevenci domácího násilí

least one intervention centre is already created in each region, there are 15 of them in the Czech Republic, and they are in different stages of operation.<sup>4</sup> The activities of the intervention centres are: psychological and social counselling, asylums or other help. The role of the intervention centres is defined as a stage between the police intervention right after or at the crime and civil proceedings of the case.

Prevention programs, treatment and/or support services for victims of violence are still mainly provided by the NGOs. They work on a project basis which makes the continuation of their activities very insecure. There are helplines and shelters to directly help vulnerable persons or victims. In 1998 – the ROSA helpline was established as the first national helpline available for women in the entire Czech Republic. It is solely available for women affected by violence. The helpline can be contacted from Monday to Friday, 8 hours a day. Operating costs are financed by state funding, however they do not cover the charge of phone calls, which means they are not free of charge for clients. Counselling is only provided in Czech and English. In 2001 DONA line, a second national helpline, serving the women survivors of domestic violence, their relatives, their friends and neighbours was launched by Bílý kruh bezpečí NGO (White Circle of Safety) financially supported by an international donor and by state funding. Although 94 % of the clients contacting the service are women, counselling is also available for men and for professionals working with survivors of domestic violence (WHO 2004). Calls are also related to other crimes or serious personal problems. The DONA helpline is available 24 hours a day but not free of charge. There are 6 regional helplines which can be contacted by women survivors of violence: Acorus (Prague), Magdalenium, Persefona (Brno), and Elpis (Ostrava) provide specified support for victims of domestic violence. Most helplines in the Czech Republic are run by NGOs which have local scope in sense of consultancy etc. but they offer service to women from the whole country. There is still no non-stop nationwide helpline that would be free of charge in the Czech Republic.

The online counselling on domestic violence (iDnes.cz) works since 2007. The questions are responded by psychologists and lawyers.

The Ministry of Interior and Police of the Czech Republic is dealing especially with two types of violence: domestic violence and trafficking. Women's NGOs and other NGOs are dealing also mainly with domestic violence, trafficking and violence in general.

The second most discussed and treated type of violence in the Czech Republic is trafficking. There has been a change in the definition of the crime of trafficking in human beings encompassed in the provisions of Section 232a of the Criminal Code. This definition has included, since 2004, also slavery, servitude and forced labour, or other forms of exploitation which drew increased attention of law enforcement authorities to this phenomenon. Such authorities have progressively acquired experience necessary to solve such criminal offences.

## 2. Policy debate and measures

Committee for the prevention of domestic violence is an advisory body of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Members of the

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<sup>4</sup> <http://socialnirvuev.cz/item/intervencni-centra-pro-obeti-domaciho-nasilii>

Committee are representatives of the respective Ministries (Interior, Healthcare, Justice), NGOs dealing with domestic violence issues representatives and experts. Its role is to suggest measures for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence for the Council and further for the Government. The main priority areas of the Committee are:

1. Action plan for the prevention and combat of domestic violence.
2. Development of the institution of secret shelters and corresponding standards.
3. Establishment of standards for the provision of services to victims of domestic violence and development of prevention and treatment programs for the perpetrators.

The Framework for the policy debate and measures is set by the National action plan for the prevention of domestic violence for 2011 – 2014 (NAP). The main goals of the NAP are:

- Support for persons endangered by domestic violence;
- Children endangered by domestic violence;
- Work with violent persons;
- Education and interdisciplinary cooperation;
- Society and domestic violence;
- Analyses and studies;
- Legislation.

The NAP contains 32 tasks and recommendations assigned by the Government to the relevant stakeholders (ministries, Police, local administration, NGOs) with deadlines. The mechanisms of monitoring are:

- Annual Summary Report elaborated by Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
- Submission of the Summary Report to the Committee which adopts its opinion and recommendation as an integral part of the Summary Report.
- Submission of the Summary Report to the Council which discusses it and submits it to the Government.
- Submission of the Summary Report to the Government for the information.

Emergency Intervention Teams of the Police are part of the system of psychological support for victims. They provide continuous training for emergency intervention and phone intervention.

**Use of ICT in the NAP:**

The goals of the NAP in this area are:

- To establish a non-stop nationwide helpline free of charge (by 2014).
- To develop and implement new technologies for the achievement of immediate assistance to persons vulnerable to particularly serious form of domestic violence - an electronic system which sends automatic information to the relevant persons in case a domestic violence is discovered by the Police (by 2012 – 2013).

**Work with perpetrators of violence in the NAP:**

The goals of the NAP in this area are:

- To ensure therapeutic services for violent persons, to establish nationwide centres for systematic work with violent persons within the framework of re-socialisation programmes and to support social work with violent persons.
- To launch a pilot programme for violent persons and ensure its continuous assessment. The experience obtained through the pilot project will form the basis for further expansion of services for violent persons and for assessing the most effective model of work.
- To build a network of counselling centres for work with violent persons and to create relevant standards. On the basis of foreign experience and examples of good practice, the establishment of therapeutic and re-socialisation programmes for violent persons either as obligatory therapy or on the basis of voluntary participation, is assumed.
- An analysis of the possibility for introduction of the optional or compulsory participation of violent persons in therapeutic programmes in the area of civil law, criminal law and within the framework of hearings of administrative infractions and for the proposal of any potentially needed legislative changes.

Financial Support of Work with Violent Person is newly provided through grant schemes to NGOs working with violent persons by the Ministry of the Interior (since 2011). Recently the focus is on programs aiming at re-socialisation of violent persons and on establishment of working group for preparation of the concept of work with violent persons.

In 2011 there was a special call for projects by the Ministry of Interior in a program „Prevention of domestic violence with a focus on work with violent persons“ for 2012. Seven projects were financially supported.

Practice of work with perpetrators:

- Ministry of healthcare implements treatment programs for aggressors.
- Information and advisory centres for the perpetrators are being created (VIOLA, White ribbon). Viola is an example of a project (that started its pilot in 2009) operating a helpline and personal advisory for perpetrators.
- Police has prepared fliers with information on the intervention and advisory centres for violent persons.

### 3. Transferability issues

There are three general problems of the transferability of both good practices as presented in the discussion papers from Spain and Ireland to the Czech Republic:

1. Lack of commitment to deal with the issue of gender based violence / violence against women and the “gender blind” approach that is typical for the treatment of the issue of violence against women in the Czech Republic. The recognition of the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence did not yet generally happen in the Czech Republic neither on the political level nor by all NGOs dealing with violence or domestic violence.

Political level: Even though the NAP cites statistics showing that more than 90% of the victims of domestic violence are women, the approach is rather gender neutral.

NGO's: Part of the NGO's notices the gender dimension of violence and domestic violence as crucial including for the fight against it (for example ROSA or Profem). On the other hand for example the NGO Bílý kruh bezpečí is an organisation systematically denying the gender dimension of domestic violence. The list of vulnerable persons of domestic violence on their webpage is as follows: men, children, seniors (!).<sup>5</sup>

2. The practical reduction of the issue of violence against women on the issue of domestic violence.
3. Lack of resources and long-term support for the services provided that would make them sustainable – project based financing makes provision of services very insecure.

These are the three main and structural constraints of the transferability. The basic condition of the transferability is education of actors on all levels – from the politicians and policy makers, judges, social workers to the general public.

The first Czech NAP 2011 – 2014 for the prevention of domestic violence shows that there are plans and activities starting in the directions of the respective good

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.domacinasili.cz/ohrozene-osoby/>



practices. As presented in chapter 2 of this brief report, work with perpetrators is an issue of debates, pilot projects and activities on various levels. The general goals defined in the NAP need to be developed into concrete activities such as systematic and coordinated programs of work with perpetrators and the question of compulsory participation needs to be followed. Also the involvement of the partner in the work with perpetrators deserves consideration. At this stage the goals are too general.

As the Irish discussion paper demonstrates a significant budget for these activities is needed. The practice in the Czech Republic shows that the project basis of financing that is not long-term makes the activities and provision of the services insecure. This is an important problem in the Czech Republic and again the call for projects on work with perpetrators run only once - in 2011.

The use of ICT services is also planned by the NAP for 2011 – 2014. It is mainly the nationwide non-stop helpline free of charge and a monitoring electronic system for the cases of domestic violence. The general webpage summarising all the information needed mainly for the victims could be part of the planned media campaign.

The telematics tracking system as an alternative to imprisonment recently started to be used in the Czech Republic generally as a monitoring of a new institution of a house arrest. Therefore there is a potential for the use of this system also for the monitoring of the restraining orders in the field of gender-based violence as it is described in the Spanish case.

There are NGOs with significant and long-term experience in the area of domestic violence and other types of violence against women. This experience could be used if the activities are more coordinated and for the systematic actions and measures implemented at the state level. The good practices presented in the two discussion papers bring several examples of actions that can be implemented in the Czech Republic.

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