

Response of Croatian Authorities to the Letter from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

- 1. On additional steps taken to create a national femicide watch and/or femicide observatory and/or observatory on violence against women with a femicide watch role; observatories at Ombudspersons' office or Equality Bodies; academic institutions and/or NGOs, or any plans to create one, as applicable.**

In 2017, based on a decision of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia, a monitoring body called Femicide Watch was founded. The members of the Femicide Watch are representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the High Misdemeanour Court, the Ministry of Justice, the Faculty of Law and organizations of civil society. This monitoring body collects detailed (gender) statistics on femicide cases, monitors and analyses individual cases and situations which resulted in femicide for the purpose of finding out the key omissions by the relevant authorities, as well as for the purpose of enhancing the legislative framework and practice, prevention of violence and protection of victims. It also aims to improve the education of police and judicial officers dealing with femicide and gender based violence issues.

- 2. On new measures taken including research and studies undertaken to analyse femicide or gender related killings of women and girls, or homicides of women by intimate partners or family members and other femicides. If available, please share a copy of such studies.**

The Ombudsperson was a holder of the EU project „*Building more effective protection: transforming the system for combating violence against women*“¹, worth 427,762.27 EUR, and was implemented in the period from April 1, 2017 until December 31 2019.² The project addressed the role of the police, judiciary and the media in cases of violence against women, with special emphasis on femicide. It included various target groups – judges of county and municipal courts, state attorneys (120), police officers (160), media representatives (75) and 464 women victims of violence within the counselling activities of the project partner - Woman's Room. Special efforts were made to sensitize the public about the importance of combating violence against women and femicide. Conducted expert analyses of final misdemeanour and criminal verdicts in the cases of violence against women in the period from 2012 to 2016, were published in 2 publications.³

Within the project, the Ombudsperson also conducted two in-depth analyses of media coverage of violence against women and femicide, on the basis of which the “Media Code - Guide for

¹ JUST/2016/RGEN/AG/VAWA/9940286.

² Project partner was an organization of civil society Woman's Room-Center for sexual rights and associated partners: Judicial Academy, Police Academy and Croatian Journalist Association.

³ „Expert analysis of the final misdemeanour verdicts in violence against women cases, 2012 – 2016“, on a sample of 470 final misdemeanour verdicts, and „Expert analysis of the final criminal verdicts in violence against women cases, 2012 – 2016“, on a sample of 655 criminal verdicts. Both analyses are available in Croatian on project web pages: <http://vawa.prs.hr/publikacije/>

Professional and Sensitized Reporting on Violence against Women and Femicide” was developed and published.⁴

The Ombudsperson also held the final conference of the project entitled "Femicide - regional and global challenges" (December 16, 2019), which presented the goals and achievements of the project and within which a panel discussion was held about femicide as a social, regional, European and global problem. As a part of the conference, a dramatic performance "Speak out!" was presented. It was created as part of the "Lily" project of the Ministry of the Interior, aimed at sensitizing citizens about violence against women and femicide.

The Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb has been implementing a project called ‘CROATIAN VIOLENCE MONITOR (CroViMo) – A Study of the Phenomenology, Aetiology, and Prosecution of Delinquent Violence with a Focus on Protecting Particularly Vulnerable Groups of Victims’. This five-year project was launched at the beginning of 2018, and is financed by the Croatian Science Foundation to the amount of 173,294.29 EUR. The project’s objective is to establish a multidisciplinary group of young researchers to conduct innovative studies on violence in Croatia through their ‘Violence Analysis Laboratory’, with a focus on the protection of particularly vulnerable groups of victims (children, elderly, LGBTQ +, women, minorities).

The Office for Gender equality of the Republic of Croatia participated as a partner in the project “HELPLINE – How expertise leads to prevention, learning, identification, networking and ending GBV”, led by non-governmental organization B.a.B.e (Be Active Be Emancipated). The project was implemented in the period 2018-2021. Within the project, trainings for volunteers and training for professionals working with victims of gender based violence titled “Contents of the Istanbul Convention, interpretation of certain provisions and their application” were completed. Other activities also include drafting a Handbook for professionals and policy paper, both published at the following website: <https://stop-nasilju.com/dokumenti-publikacije/>

Two national policies regarding gender-based violence are underway. The National Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2027 includes description of problems and statistics in the thematic area related to gender-based violence. The types of gender-based violence that the Plan addresses are rape, sexual violence, domestic violence, cyber violence, war-related gender-based violence, sexual harassment and femicide. The National Plan’s first accompanying Action Plan 2021-2024 includes the following measures: (a) Improve statistical monitoring of gender-based violence in the courts based on the Criminal code, (b) Improve the competencies of professionals working in the field of protection against violence, (c) Raising the level of awareness of the public and victims about the need to respond to violence, the reasons and ways to combat all types of gender-based violence, (d) Increasing the level of expertise and awareness of stakeholders in the judicial system about sexism and stereotypes, (e) Increasing the level of expertise and awareness of police officers on gender-based violence.

⁴ Available in Croatian language at https://www.zeneimediji.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MEDIJSKI-KODEKS-vodic-za-profesionalno-i-senzibilizirano-izvijestavanje-o-nasilju-prema-zenama-i-femicidu_PRS_VAWA-800a.pdf

3. On recent developments related to good practices and challenges in implementing an evidence-based response to the prevention of femicide.

The Ombudsperson visited 22 courts throughout the Republic of Croatia, where she gained an insight into 3,295 criminal and 1,092 misdemeanour verdicts, out of which 906 criminal and 557 misdemeanour verdicts were taken for the research sample. The analysis focused on problematic aspects of court proceedings that the Ombudsperson had already noticed through individual complaints of citizens, as well as through previous research.

In cooperation with the Police Academy and the Judicial Academy, as associated partners, the Ombudsperson organized and conducted a total of 9 two-day trainings in Zagreb, Osijek, Split and Trilj for a total of 83 judges of municipal and county courts, 63 state attorneys and deputies on municipal and county levels and 108 police officers. The total grade of the lecture content was 4.51 (out of 5). A total of 62% of the participants believe that there is a need for systematic training on gender-based violence, while 77% of all three groups believe that the training has met expectations in terms of topics. Out of the total number of respondents to evaluation questionnaires, 66% believe that the content of education is applicable in practice. A very high percentage of respondents (90%) are satisfied with the trainings. The most pronounced satisfaction with the training was recorded at the trainings for judges of the municipal and county courts, who gave the highest grade to the trainings (4.72).

4. On recent jurisprudence or case law on femicide.

In the last three years, according to the data recorded in the eSpis system, there were 3 cases in which convictions were handed down for aggravated murder or aggravated attempted murder:

- one case involved an attempted aggravated murder of a life partner (i.e. the perpetrator and the victim are male),
- the second case concerns a murder committed in the direction of incompetence and does not involve the murder of an illegitimate wife / partner, and
- in the third case, a final conviction was handed down for the attempted aggravated murder of an illegitimate wife by her husband.

The sentences imposed in these cases are as follows:

- in the first case, imprisonment for a term of three years and six months (unconditional)
- in another case, an incompetent defendant was sentenced to six months in a psychiatric institution, and
- in the third case, a prison sentence of four years (unconditional).

5. On data, if available, on:

- a. Intimate-partner femicides/homicides of women**
- b. Family-related femicides/homicides of women**
- c. Other femicides/gender-related homicides of women**

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER	WOMEN
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	OF HOMICIDE					
		Total number of women killed	Total number of women killed by men	Total number of women killed by men (close persons)	Total number of women killed by their current or former intimate partner	Other gender related killings of women that would not fall under any of the table categories
2018.	22	8	8	5	4	/
2019.	31	13	12	6	6	/
2020.	36	19	19	14	9	/