

Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences

Letter from the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, concerning the topic of the prevention of femicide or gender-related killings

Reply of the Government of Finland

December 2019

- a) *The existence of, or progress in, the creation of a national femicide watch and/or observatory on violence against women*

The Government Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin for 2019–2023 states that the Government will establish a post for an independent rapporteur on violence against women. The preparations will begin in 2020. The Government has allocated 200 000 euros for the preparatory work in 2020. The mandate and organisational setting of the rapporteur are yet to be determined. Ensuring the independence of the rapporteur is of paramount importance. It is estimated that after the required preparatory work and legislative amendments, the rapporteur would be operational in 2021, with an allocated budget of 200 000 euros per year.

- b) *Administrative data on gender-related killings of women for the last three years (2016-2019), disaggregated as follows:*

- i. *The number of intimate partner killings (i.e. based on the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the number of women killed by their partners/ex-partners, husband/ex-husband etc.)*
- ii. *The number of killings by family members or other killings by unrelated persons but gender-related or with a sexual motive;*
- iii. *Other femicides*

a) *Number of killings of children, disaggregated by sex, in the context of gender-related violence against women;*

b) *Number of suicides by women and man, as a result of gender based violence (including domestic violence and abuse, forced marriage etc.)*

Year	Total number of intentional killings/homicides			Total number of women/men killed by intimate partners		Total number of women/men killed by a family member		Other gender related killings women/men		Number of killings of children, disaggregated by sex, in the context of gender-related violence against women	
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Girls	Boys
2016	22	52	74	12	5	4	8	N/A	N/A	0	0
2017	30	37	67	16	3	6	2	N/A	N/A	0	0
2018	24	59	83	16	8	3	8	N/A	N/A	0	0
Total	76	148	224	44	16	13	18	0	0	0	0

According to the data available, during the last three years (2016-2018) there were three cases involving a killing by (an) unrelated person(s) with a sexual motive or where the crime included a rape of the victim. Two of these victims were women, one a man.

In spite of the fact that the Police National Reporting System (PATJA) contains a flagging mechanism on domestic violence, it is not possible, at the moment, to provide as detailed statistical information as requested by the special rapporteur. The gaps are taken into consideration when the new system is being built, expected to be in place 2021.

In Finland, data on all intentional homicides against women are collected systematically by the Finnish Homicide Monitor (FHM). The FHM is a joint project of the Institute of Criminology and Legal Policy at the University of Helsinki (KRIMO), the Finnish Police University College, and the Finnish Police Board. The FHM is based on police data produced during preliminary investigations and includes detailed information about all homicides committed in Finland since June 2002, covering victim, offender and incident characteristics (over 1,000 different variables). The data is gathered directly by the police officers investigating the cases, who fill in an electronic questionnaire designed by researchers from KRIMO.

Information on national activities to prevent femicide or gender-related killing of women

Generally, violence or threat of violence can be physical, emotional or sexual. It can, for example, be intimate partner violence or domestic violence and take, for instance, the form of emotional submission, intimate partner rape, hitting, kicking and beating, and can at worst be fatal. Violence against women and girls includes but is not limited to sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, and online and street harassment and persecution. It can also take the form of trafficking-related subjugation and sexual exploitation, or of female genital mutilation, child marriage and honour-based violence.

Violence has harmful psychological, sexual and reproductive consequences. Although anyone can become a victim of violence, some groups of girls and women are more vulnerable than others, in particular young girls and women, girls and women with disabilities, immigrants, refugees or from ethnic minorities or if they identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex. In Finland, female homicides are mainly related to domestic and intimate partner violence and most prevalent among the economically inactive working-age population often linked to alcohol abuse. To reduce femicides effectively, the measures should target the high-risk population groups.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) entered into force in Finland on 1 August 2015. In implementing the Istanbul Convention, Finland has, for example, developed its work to prevent sexual violence and help victims, and continues to identify more efficient ways of combating violence against women. Finland adopted a National Action plan for 2018–2021 for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.¹ The Action plan contains a total of 46 measures

¹ http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160401/16_2017_Istanbulin%20sopimuksen%20tps%202018-21_suomi.pdf

for different administrative branches, with NGOs involved in the implementation of several articles. The Action plan was drawn up for a four-year period, but the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which is the co-ordinating body referred to in Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, will monitor its progress on an annual basis, supplementing it as required.

In 2017, Finland established a nation-wide 24/7 operating hotline, Nollalinja. It is a free-of-charge helpline for anyone who has experienced violence or threat of it in a close relationship. Nollalinja is also available for contact for family members of victims of violence and for professionals and officials who require advice in their work with customers. Anyone can phone the helpline without giving their name, and all calls are confidential. Nollalinja is staffed by trained and experienced professionals in healthcare and social services, who provide psychosocial support in Finnish, Swedish or English.

Currently, the professionals answering the telephone lines are provided by an NGO, Setlementti Tampere. The funding for the hotline operations in the year 2020 will increase to 960 000 euros (from 745 000 euros of 2019). Next year the hotline will provide 24/7 telephone interpretation for several new languages, including Russian, Arabic, French, Sorani (Kurdish), Somali, Spanish and Persian/Dari.

In recent years, Finland has expanded considerably its network of shelters for individuals and families suffering from intimate partner violence or threat of such. Access to the free-of-charge shelters has improved, as the funding has been increased by 70 % in the past five years, growing from 11,55 million euros in 2015 to 19,55 million euros in 2019. The number of shelter places will continue to grow further in the coming years, as the government has stated so in the Government Programme. Finland currently has 28 shelters with 202 available places, each County hosting at least one shelter. The total number of clients in the shelters during 2018 was 5 063, 2 697 of them being adults and 2 358 children. 2 498 of the adult clients were female and 196 were male.

Shelters offer immediate crisis help, round-the-clock secured housing and psychosocial support, advice and counselling related to acute situations. Shelters are available regardless of place of residence and free of charge to customers. Shelter places are offered to families and individual clients, regardless of age or gender and if necessary, available anonymously.

There are four low-threshold research and support centres for victims of sexual violence in Finland. These Sexual Assault Support Centers (Seri Support Centers) operate as part of the university central hospitals. A fifth centre will start its operations in February 2020. In the Seri Support Centres victims of sexual violence can get all the help they need in one place. Among the services offered are forensic examinations, laboratory tests, medication and vaccination, overall assessment of the situation, acute psychosocial support, guidance and continued care. The centres also provide information on other support services available.

A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) method has been introduced across Finland to help victims of serious intimate partner violence. A multi-professional working

group puts together personal safety plans to safeguard high-risk victims of intimate partner violence. In 2019, there has been 37 local MARAC groups in operation in Finland.

The Finnish Police is putting special effort in preventing and investigating domestic violence. This is done in close cooperation with Social and Health Authorities. One of the policy priorities of the Strategy on Preventive Police Work (2019–2023)² and its Action Plan is to prevent domestic violence, intimate partner violence and violence against women. Accordingly, the police will enhance its work in the multi-professional MARAC risk-assessment scheme. Police with specialists' training are investigating cases of domestic violence.

Domestic violence risk assessment and the MARAC method are, however, still relatively unknown, and not all actors use the method, even in the municipalities where the method has been officially adopted. Awareness of the method and its use should be further raised through means of communications. There is still a great need for training on domestic violence and risk assessment for professionals in the fields of policing, health care and social work.

Since its adoption, Finland has followed the affectivity of the MARAC model by a study conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare. The results proved that the MARAC method successfully reduced the number of recurrent domestic violence reported to the police. The spiral of recurring violence ended in more than 80 per cent of the cases, and no new reports of recurring violence filed with the police during the six-month follow-up period. Victims themselves reported similar results, and many of them no longer felt threatened by violence and persecution.

During an EU-funded project called Enhancing Professional Skills and Raising Awareness on Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Shelter Services (EPRAS), an online training package was developed for professionals in police, health care and social work to recognize Domestic Violence and different phenomenon related to Violence Against Women. The training was published in 2019.

Supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is coordinating the work to develop the activities of the Nollalinja helpline and the network of shelters for victims of domestic violence. THL will also further strengthen activities of the Seri Support Centers and MARAC groups.

The Police University College is supporting the work on preventing and eliminating violence against women in preventing and investigating cases both by assuring that it is well integrated in the curricula and by carrying out research in this area. The research *Police Response to Domestic Violence Emergency Calls* done in 2016 focused on how the police is dealing with calls of domestic violence. The Police University College is at present time taking part in an international research project, *IMPRODOVA - Improving Frontline Responses to High Impact Domestic Violence* (2018-23). It is a research and innovation project for improving the work

² <https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/4024872/Poliisin+ennalta+est%C3%A4v%C3%A4n+ty%C3%B6n+strategia+2019-2023.pdf/aee0d1f5-8fc9-fac6-1e60-68c0374e296f/Poliisin+ennalta+est%C3%A4v%C3%A4n+ty%C3%B6n+strategia+2019-2023.pdf.pdf>

of the police and other frontline responders to domestic violence in European countries. The project studies the human and social factors that shape institutional interference with domestic violence. The IMPRODOVA project aims at providing comprehensive solutions, based on extensive empirical research, particularly in addressing high impact domestic violence.

Further, the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI) functions under the auspices of the Finnish Ministry of Justice as an independent research and policy-making institute. HEUNI received funding from the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the project: "Co-creating a Counseling Method for Refugee Women GBV Victims" (2017-2019), the overall objective of the project was to inform and support refugee women who have been victims of gender based violence and to improve their access to services. The project, carried out with numerous partners has now issued a number of policy recommendations and a hand-book.³

³ http://heuni.education/ccm_gbv_outcomes?fbclid=IwAR1xGCEQrDIvhaCgrMHi1E4m1k7ocboteOkwMZjfEnz-QYYz3PeoLoKT1Wa4