

Action IS1206 *Femicide across Europe*
Guidelines for the use of policy-makers
Template

1. Identify the **main aims** of the WG

In recognition of the debate over the use of the term femicide and the difficulties in establishing a common, agreed upon definition, the first working group of the COST Femicide team was tasked with coming up with a definition of femicide and discussing the importance of issues pertaining to defining femicide. The first working group therefore explored the following topics: (1) an overview of the history of defining femicide and the subsequent development in the field, (2) recognition of distinct femicide types (with attention given to victim-offender relationship, victim and offender characteristics, and event characteristics) and their impact on definitions, and (3) methodological issues pertaining to defining femicide.

In terms of defining the term femicide, the focus was on the following:

What is femicide?

Does femicide include girls as well as women?

Does femicide include infanticide?

Is femicide the murder of women, because they are women, or is femicide simply a non-gendered homicide (of a woman)?

2. Identify the **main achievements** of the WG: what do we know now on femicide?

The achievements of the working group included identifying the most important definitions of femicide, deciding why and how the definitions are relevant and whether the different definitions imply different notion of femicide.

The following definitions/statements related to femicide, and sources were consulted:

1976, I chose the new term *femicide* to refer to the killing of females by males *because* they are female. I defined it implicitly as a ***hate killing of females*** perpetrated by males [...] I finally defined it very simply as ***"the killing of females by males because they are female."***

Source: Rusell, D. (2012) «**Femicide**—**The Power of a Name**», as cited in Claire Laurent, Michael Platzer and Maria Idomir (2013) *Femicide A Global Issue that Demands Action*. Ed. Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Vienna Liaison Office.

Femicide, the misogynous killing of women by men, is a form of sexual violence. Liz Kelly has defined sexual violence as “any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act” experienced by a woman or girl, “at the time or later, as a threat, invasion, or assault, that has the effect of hurting or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact” (1988,41). Underlying this definition is a recognition of the dissonance between women’s and men’s perceptions and experiences of the social world and of sexual violence. It gives women’s experiences and understandings priority over men’s intentions and as such is consistent with one of the basic tenets of feminism — women`s right to name our experience”

Source: Radford, Jill & Russell, Diana (1992) *Femicide. The Politics of Woman Killings*. Twayne Pub. NY.

While the concept has drawn attention to the particular ways in which women are selectively targeted, **the definition has become progressively diluted and confused**. Indeed, it is now often conflated with a broader understanding of violence against women (such as any killing of a woman) and has thus lost much of its original political connotation. The broadening of the definition may be connected to a growing interest in generating quantitative information of violence against women to facilitate comparability across countries and jurisdictions.

Source: Alvazzi del Frate, Anna. 2011. ‘When the Victim Is a Woman.’ In Geneva Declaration Secretariat, pp. 113–144.
http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV2/GBAV2011_CH4.pdf

VIENNA DECLARATION ON FEMICIDE, 2013

femicide is the killing of women and girls because of their gender, which can take the form of, inter alia: 1) the murder of women as a result of domestic violence/intimate partner violence; 2) the torture and misogynist slaying of women; 3) killing of women and girls in the name of “honour”; 4) targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; 5) dowry-related killings of women and girls; 6) killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; 7) the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; 8) female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; 9) genital mutilation related femicide; 10) accusations of witchcraft, and 11) other femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking, and the proliferation of small arms.

Source: **“Femicide”—The Power of a Name**, en Claire Laurent, Michael Platzer and Maria Idomir (2013) *Femicide A Global Issue that Demands Action*. Ed. Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Vienna Liaison Office.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence **is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women**. It is the obligation of the state to fully address it in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence



against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. Failure to do so would make it the responsibility of the state. The convention leaves no doubt: there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye.

Source: Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), 2011

The gravest violence against women is murder. Femicide is the murder of a woman, simply because she is a woman. Femicide occurs everywhere. Most commonly, women die at the hands of an intimate partner. Other forms of Femicide include dowry-related deaths, so-called “honour” crimes, and sexual violence. Measuring Femicide is problematic for a number of reasons related to the data available. If the murder is recorded in the criminal justice system it may be impossible to tell why or how it took place.

Source: Bloom, Shelah. 2008. *Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators*. Chapel Hill, NC: MEASURE Evaluation. p.147

The killing of women on the basis of their gender represents the ultimate form of violence against women. In some countries, legislation recognizes the vulnerability of women to violence and makes a link between homicide and violence against women. **Terms such as “femicide” or “feminicide” have been used to define the gender-related killing of women, which itself can take many forms.** For example, “honour”-related killings, dowry-related killings, as well as witchcraft or sorcery-related killings, are direct forms of gender related homicide that almost exclusively target women, whereas more indirect forms include other types of killings that may not be counted as homicides. Such homicides are poorly captured by official statistics, which rarely provide information on homicide motives. But what does emerge from available statistical evidence relating to the relationship between victims and offenders is that a significant portion of lethal violence against women takes place in a domestic environment.

Source: UNODC (2014) **Global study on Homicide, 2013**. p. 52.

Mexico, the General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007) defines femicide violence as **“the most extreme form of gender violence against women, produced by the violation of their human rights in public and private spheres and formed by the set of misogynist actions that can lead to the impunity of society and the State and culminate in the homicide and other forms of violent death of women.”** (article 21).

Source: UNODC (2014) **Global study on Homicide, 2013**. p. 52.

Femicide: the killing of a woman because some man or men, although occasionally also some women who accept men's values, has or have sentenced her to death adducing whatever reasons, motives or causes, but nonetheless actually and ultimately because he or they believe she has defied (the words they often use are 'offended' or 'insulted') patriarchal order (in their words 'honourable' societies) beyond what her judge (often but not always the same person who kills her) is prepared to tolerate without retaliating in that way.



Source: IRANZO, Juan Manuel 2015

EIGE’s Gender Equality Glossary definition of femicide (2017)

"The term femicide means the killing of women and girls on account of their gender, perpetrated or tolerated by both private and public actors. It covers, inter alia, the murder of a woman as a result of intimate partner violence, the torture and misogynistic slaying of women, the killing of women and girls in the name of so-called honour and other harmful-practice-related killings, the targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict, and cases of femicide connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers and trafficking in women and girls."

Developed definition of femicide for statistical purposes:

"The killing of a woman by an intimate partner and death of a woman as a result of practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim."

Following the review of texts and definitions of homicide, the following questions remained or were raised:

Is femicide to be considered an extreme form of violence against women?

Is femicide a gender-based killing?

Is femicide only a killing of women by men?

Is femicide to be considered only in cases of voluntary killings of women?

Is femicide only when women are killed in the context of intimate partner violence?

Does the term femicide of women, also include girls, infanticide?

Can gender-based pre-natal sex selection, also known as "son preference", count as femicide?

Are the above questions meaningful to elaborating a definition? The questions are meaningful, because in order to be able to compare and analyze data on femicide, there must be clarity as to what is being counted. The questions can also not be considered important since women die regardless of the definition that is placed on the act. In the end, what is of utmost importance is that 'we want our counting to count for women!'

On 18-19 March 2015, a COST Action on Femicide meeting took place that included the following contributions from other working group as related to the definition of femicide:

Working Group 2 – REPORTING

In principle, the working group supported the definition of femicide as killings of females because they are female. In practice, from the perspective of data collection, the importance of beginning with a broader definition and separate categories was pointed out. This should allow us to move forward to a deeper analyses, as the motives and reasons of the cases is often not known, neither in statistics nor in other information systems. Thus, the following was suggested for pragmatic reasons:



In the first step, all killings of women on national and international levels should be counted as a possible case of femicide.

In the second step, specific categories of cases that are often counted and where it is known that gender and gender relationships play a relevant role, should be extracted: e.g. Intimate Partner Killings (as one of the most common forms), killings in the context of sexual violence, sex-based abortions, honour related killings, hate crimes against lesbians/transgender and gay persons as well as against women and girls. In most countries it will be possible to count at least Intimate Partner Violence in an extra-category.

In the third step other cases of killings of women and girls should be investigated more deeply in order to demonstrate whether or not gender might play a relevant role here; helpful could be case studies on the basis of newspaper reporting, court and police information and further qualitative studies. This information should also be collected in systematic databases to be built up within monitoring systems.

Working Group 3 – CULTURE

The conversation began by discussing the meaning of culture - “what is culture?” and an agreement was reached that it includes social norms, gender roles and the ideas of femininity and masculinity.

We asked “how does murder come to happen in a specific culture?” And while there is an understanding that culture is used to legitimate murder and to justify honour killings, we must be cautious not to use culture to explain everything. This means that we must go “beyond culture”.

This is especially important because often when culture is the topic, it may shift to the idea of “migrant’s culture” although all communities may also have cultures that need to be taken into account, but we need to be careful not to essentialize various communities. Additionally, there must be an awareness of discourse on multiculturalism, and debate on migration, integration and rights, as it may impact how femicide in the context of culture is explained.

We also spoke about risk factors for femicide, mainly whether culture is a risk factor. Our definition of femicide includes women killed by men or women, because they are women. Not only men kill women but mothers or aunts or grandmothers reproduce patriarchal system and kill baby girls or young girls. This means that restricting the definition of femicide to only women killed by men would not be appropriate.

In conclusion, the definition of culture is multidimensional along different layers and in relation to femicide one must look at the emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives in intercultural situations and transnational contexts.

Working Group 4 – PREVENTION

The discussion began with the following question in the context of prevention:



What is femicide in the view of its prevention?

A summary of the discussion is as follows:

A complete definition of femicide according to its prevention takes into consideration different levels of prevention: Primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary. The real prevention of femicide has to be based on all of these levels, as carrying out an intervention only when there is clear risk and the threats posed are high, is not enough.

Prevention of femicide has to deepen its roots in a much broader framework as it is acknowledged that in all these years, even in most evolved and democratic countries, with well-intended policies, legislations and services, women are still killed as a consequence of male dominated culture (whether overt or covert).

A clear agenda that addresses femicide and more broadly violence against women has to address all parties at all of the 4 levels of prevention. The quaternary level of prevention and therefore definition should take into account also the needs of victims after the apparent end of risk. In this regard, there was an acceptance of Russell's (1992) definition, based on the opinion that femicide has cultural rooted origins in masculine and a misogynist context.

3. What **recommendations** can we make to policy-makers? Consider the 3 basic policy-making levels: **local authorities** (city councils), **national authorities** (central or federal governments), the **EU**.
 - Can we recommend: special legislation, best practices, improved methodologies for treating cases, improved coordination among services, new services, etc.?

The Istanbul Convention calls for integrated policies and data collection (Chapter II). Furthermore, the Istanbul Convention:

... requires that one or more **official bodies** (in every state) is designated or established to be responsible for the co-ordination of the collection of data, analysis and dissemination of its results.

This same body is also to be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat the various forms of violence against women and domestic violence

...requires that states 'allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes' to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, including those carried out by 'non-governmental organisations and civil society'

A coordinated approach helps in the availability of data. This is especially important as currently data on violence against women and domestic violence is not easily available at a national level in most European countries. Data on femicide is even more difficult to acquire.



A complete definition of Femicide is important. But that in itself does not solve the problem. In policy making terms, the target is to solve the violent deaths of women and girls everywhere.

In order for the monitoring system to work, clear data based on a complete definition is needed. This is needed for awareness raising, which is a piece of the puzzle in order to create policies to prevent the violent death of women and girls everywhere. Data is needed in order to raise awareness, to persuade, to show, to prove, to provide a clear picture of what is happening, to enable us to create and implement evidence based policies and practices, and then to monitor and evaluate.

... **in other words** collecting the **data**, to show them (raise **awareness**), together tackle the problem (**policies**), work towards **prevention (practice)**.

4. Summarize the **activities** that the WG carried out in 2013-2016

1. Jerusalem, October 2013 (*Lisa Muftic*)
 - Defining Femicide-The South African Case - **Naeemah Abrahams**
 - Femicide & Fatality From IPV - **Jacquelyn Campbell**
 - When Men Murder Women - **Rebecca & Russel Dobash**
2. Lisbon, March 2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE (*Lisa Muftic & Chaime Marcuello*)
 - INITIAL POSITION PAPER: Working Group 1: Definitions Femicide Across Europe, COST Action IS1206
3. Hafnarfjordur, Iceland, September 2014, WG1 MEETING (*Ch.Marcuello*)
 - International Definitions of Femicide - **Capitolina Diaz**
 - Building concepts and definitions: A practical proposal - **Janet P. Stamatel**
 - Femicide: A Global Issue That Demands Action - **Michael Platzer**
4. Zaragoza, March 2015, ANNUAL CONFERENCE (*Ch.Marcuello & Marceline Naudi*)
 - Each WG came out a definition, as common discussion target in all the WGs
5. Ljubljana, May 11-13, 2016. ANNUAL CONFERENCE (*Ch.Marcuello & Marceline Naudi*)
 - GUIDELINES FOR POLICIY MAKERS

5. **List names** of MC members, MC substitutes and other people who helped drafting this report

All the action members were initially involved in the WG1. This was a decision adopted at the first meeting. Originally, the plan was to disband WG1 after the initial period of the action, but it was realized that the issue of definitions would remain important and valid throughout the action.

