



**FEM-UNITED**

united to prevent femicide in europe

**WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS:  
SPAIN**

## Introduction

Workshops with leading professionals were held in Spain in May, June and July, in the police, social and health fields respectively.

The workshop with law enforcement professionals was held in Bilbao (27 May 2022, 18 participants) with the collaboration of the University of Deusto. We considered it very important that the workshops not only took place in Zaragoza, for reasons of economic efficiency and because, given the distribution of powers in Spain, it is essential to reach all the Autonomous Communities, in this case the police force of the Basque Country (Ertzaintza) who have a relevant role in the prevention of femicide.

The second workshop took place in Zaragoza (29 June 2022, 18 participants) with professionals from the social field: social workers, psychologists, equality technicians, teachers and professors; many of them also activists in various feminist groups.

The third workshop (28 July, 20 participants), was held with health professionals, the area where this type of training has been carried out the least and where it is more complex to link the impact that the professional can have on the prevention of femicide. The target audience was mainly nurses, although the invitation was general. This may be due to the fact that nursing in Spain is a feminised field and the interest and sensitivity to this issue tends to be greater among women (something similar to what happened in workshop 2, in which only one man participated).

A central part of the workshops was to raise awareness of the project, which they recognised as something new, not because there are no others (in fact there are many in other universities in the country), but because they generally do not publicise, disseminate or link the theoretical/empirical work with the daily work of professionals.

In all three workshops, participants agreed on the importance of these actions, with special emphasis on the need for coordinated actions supported by Europe, both in economic and political terms.

The FEM-UNITED project, funded by the European Commission, aims to improve responses to IPV and domestic violence (DV) in order to reduce harm to women and children, and prevent femicide. The project aims for improved systems-wide responses to IPV 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. In other words, FEM-UNITED is about creating evidence for collaborative policy change.

The FEM-UNITED partnership spans five EU countries and includes the University of Malta, the Cyprus University of Technology, the Institute for Empirical Sociology (IfeS) at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg, the University of Zaragoza, and the



University of Porto. The project team is also comprised of advocacy NGOs and women's specialist services including the Mediterranean Institute of Gender studies (Cyprus), the Women's Rights Foundation (Malta), and the UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (Portugal).

## Global evaluation

In general terms, the evaluation was very positive in terms of necessity, relevance and timeliness. "An urgent and global problem"<sup>1</sup>. The news about femicides is not a surprise, between May and July 12 women were murdered by their partners or ex-partners.

In relation to the usefulness, the evaluation was very high, although it is worth mentioning that the organising team adapted the contents according to the degree of previous experience/training, so that this was the case. In this way, each working group went in depth into the contents that in their area would be most useful and even viable in relation to the discourses at their disposal (risk assessment and management, coordination, awareness-raising/stereotypes).

In relation to the impact, all the groups agreed on the need for these trainings to be longer and on different days: "single training actions have a short-term impact", that some of the contents received are not very useful, and that some of the contents received are not very useful. Some of the content received can be applied directly and easily and can lead to improvements in their daily dynamics, but other content, especially with regard to multi-agency coordination, depends on higher levels and even on regulations over which they have no capacity to act.

In terms of coverage, expectations were fully met in workshop nº 3, and only two people (who were registered) were absent from workshops 1 and 2. This shows the interest of the professionals to continue receiving this type of specific training.

Evaluation criteria highlighted: relevance, timeliness, usefulness, impact, coverage, sustainability.

## Workshop Recommendations

### Police 27.05.2022

**Training and gender perspective:** It is necessary to continue to stress that public security professionals must have access to permanent and specialised training for intervention in the face of gender-based violence and specifically femicide. Police training in this area is often insufficient (especially at the local level) in terms of content and quality. The State Pact against Gender Violence supports this training and it is therefore an obligation of the State to promote

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The inverted commas with verbatim quotes from the participants.



practical, cross-disciplinary and up-to-date training in gender violence prevention and intervention for all Security Forces and Corps.

**Consolidation and improvement of risk assessment and management tools:** It is essential to extend the knowledge of the prevalence and risk factors of gender-based violence, as well as the proper functioning of the tools that are already available to the agents. It is also necessary that these tools continue to be reviewed and updated so that they can respond to changing risks, new forms of violence (cyber violence or psychological violence) and as far as possible to the prediction of homicide.

It is important to know, manage and feed databases from the local to the national level, as well as to activate mechanisms to prevent double victimisation.

**Resources:** It is defined as a priority to increase the number of protection agents when the risk is moderate. In many cases, the high volume of data handled by the agents of the special units makes the task of risk management difficult.

**Inter-agency collaboration:** In this sense the demand is reiterated. Police officers expect more collaboration from specialised services in other areas (social, judicial, health) and to be taken into consideration during judicial processes. Judicial decision-makers rarely take into consideration information provided by other professionals in the police or social sphere, and even more rarely ask for it. Between suspicion, disbelief and the principle of hierarchy that governs the judicial system, clinical judgement continues to prevail as the most reliable diagnosis.

The risk or needs reports provided by the police or social services are considered as an "accessory" element for the judge when making a decision, despite the fact that reality itself has shown that the account of the facts at a specific moment in time means dealing with the risk as a static element, which does not allow an accurate response to be offered. For this reason, the creation or consolidation of the UVFIs, provided for in O.L. 1/2004, is essential. The integral forensic assessment unit allows the treatment of cases from a multidisciplinary perspective, which is fundamental, given the multifaceted nature of violence. The need to develop (where this has not yet been done) and consolidate the Integral Forensic Assessment Units, which could become a body where the different systems converge, allowing for a more complete treatment of cases and a more effective response, is also highlighted.

## Social Welfare Services 29.06.2022

**Risk assessment and risk management:** In the case of the social sphere, there is a growing recognition that there is a need for tools to assess risk/needs from a social perspective, and not only from a policing point of view. In the same way, it is considered essential to develop protection mechanisms for women and their children that do not depend on a complaint or a judicial decision.

In general terms, the professionals highlighted the need to reflect on how the tools could value and manage these "other" forms of violence, i.e. economic, psychological, institutional, which transcend gender but are aggravated by it. Similarly it would be timely to rethink those measures in prevention that have been designed "for them" but "without them", because when strategies and policies do not incorporate the voices of the targeted women, the effects can be adverse.



Despite the recognition of general risk factors, each story is particular, so the assessment tool (questionnaires in most cases) should not be the only element in determining the level of risk and the protective strategies associated with it; the axiom would be: more tools-different perspectives-better information-more effective responses. Risk assessment and management can contribute in multiple ways to the transformation of gendered subjectivities and positionings, but its applicability cannot be carried out automatically or unquestionably; we must appeal to the reflexivity of those who design and those who implement, to ensure that transformation.

**Multi-agency collaboration:** More than in other spheres, social professionals, consider fundamental the creation of an autonomous agency, detached from the strategies already existing in the formal systems (judicial, police, social) although constituted by professionals from these same spheres, capable of bringing together data and information coming from other spheres, with the objective of crossing them in order to design secondary and tertiary prevention strategies at the different levels and as personalised as possible.

This could be carried out at the local level, which would, at the same time, allow for the reinforcement of municipal networks for attention to gender violence. Local bodies, because of their proximity to the people, are a very good place for early detection, first steps and accompaniment. Therefore, well-equipped grassroots social services could be a very effective way of preventing risk.

Multi-agency prevention implies real accompaniment and the development of an integral preventive policy capable of articulating channels that allow for the design of a system with a greater capacity to respond to the needs of victims.

**Working with men:** For social professionals it is necessary to recognise that, if progress is to be made in self-management of risk, empowerment of women and prevention of future violence, efforts must go hand in hand with work with men, specifically aimed at renouncing the use of violence and intervention with minors, so that gender-based violence prevention policies should be primarily linked to the children's system, but this will require a prior review of certain principles that constitute both spheres.

Both in this area and in general and despite acknowledging all that has already been done, professionals mention training as a fundamental aspect that needs to be reinforced, updated and extended.

**Compensation and reparation:** Two of the big outstanding issues in institutional responses are, according to frontline professionals, financial compensation and reparation of harm. The former takes a long time to arrive, the bureaucratic procedure is complex and often the compensation from the aggressor is not received (either because he commits suicide or because he declares himself insolvent). In addition to this, as there is no common scale for all the regions of the country (Autonomous Communities), compensation is often unequal in similar cases, which generates a feeling of injustice.

In terms of tertiary prevention, the other fundamental (and forgotten) aspect is reparation. There are no public policies aimed at repairing the damage, symbolic responses that allow the damage to be socialised and help victims in their recovery process. Professionals mention some strategies carried out at the local level (Bilbao City Council, for example) as a good practice and a model to follow.

## Healthcare Professionals 28.07.2022



**Training and tools:** Training in this area remains an unfinished business. Some professionals agree that gender training should already be incorporated into university curricula (medicine, nursing, occupational therapy). Training is voluntary, sporadic and not very formal and systematised in this field, so it is not consolidated among professionals and does not have an impact on the joint response to violence.

In addition, professionals consider that it would be necessary to establish a series of common protocols for action, which would allow for quick and effective responses as well as derivation of a common response plan. It is necessary for health professionals to carry out their own processes and the training is also experiential, taking awareness of their own attitudes, stereotypes, personal processes, ways of relating, conflicts and the impact of mandates *patriarchal* in their lives.

**Resources:** Fundamentally, professionals in this field highlight the need for their resources to be increased in order to be able to participate as key agents in the prevention and management of gender-based violence and femicide. While acknowledging the importance of specialised primary care, they recognise that the lack of time and saturation conditions the action: detection, preparation of injury reports, referral and sometimes even risk perception. According to the professionals, the situation for psychologists is especially worrying. The health system does not provide comprehensive care and mental health has been on the sidelines for many years, therefore psychological violence cannot be prevented, nor can it be treated, much less the recovery processes of children and other family members after a femicide, or at least not as it should be done

**Legal framework:** although both Law 1/2004 and the regional laws make some references to the need for comprehensive actions and even mention the field of health (development of protocols, training, inclusion of gender violence in health plans, and provision of primary prevention strategies, among others), the truth is that in practice, professionals do not perceive that this is being done, or not as well as it could be. This may be so either due to a lack of resources or because the existing legislation is mainly characterized by the predominance of interventions from the judicial and police spheres, to the detriment of other sectors such as health.

They also mention the difficulty of harmonizing the rights of victims (intimacy and freedom) with their obligation to report cases, precipitating situations with adverse effects in many cases.

**Multi-agency collaboration:** Like the rest of the professionals, workers in the health field, they consider that, despite the protocols, multi-agency communication/collaboration is still deficient and should be improved. They consider that in most cases this works well due to a matter of personal will but that cooperation has not been "institutionalized" as a good practice, except in the most serious or extremely urgent cases, the mechanisms are not the best and it is I need to work on it; not so much from the drafting of general guidelines but from the practical work of day to day.

**Multi-agency:** scheduled for september.



Universidad  
Zaragoza



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