



IMPRODOVA

Improving Frontline Responses
to High Impact Domestic Violence

Work Package 2: Exploring the Frontline Response (field study results)

WP2 leaders: CNRS (France) with University
of Maribor (Slovenia) and Foresee (Hungary)

Status

- WP2 was carried out between June 2018 and September 2019

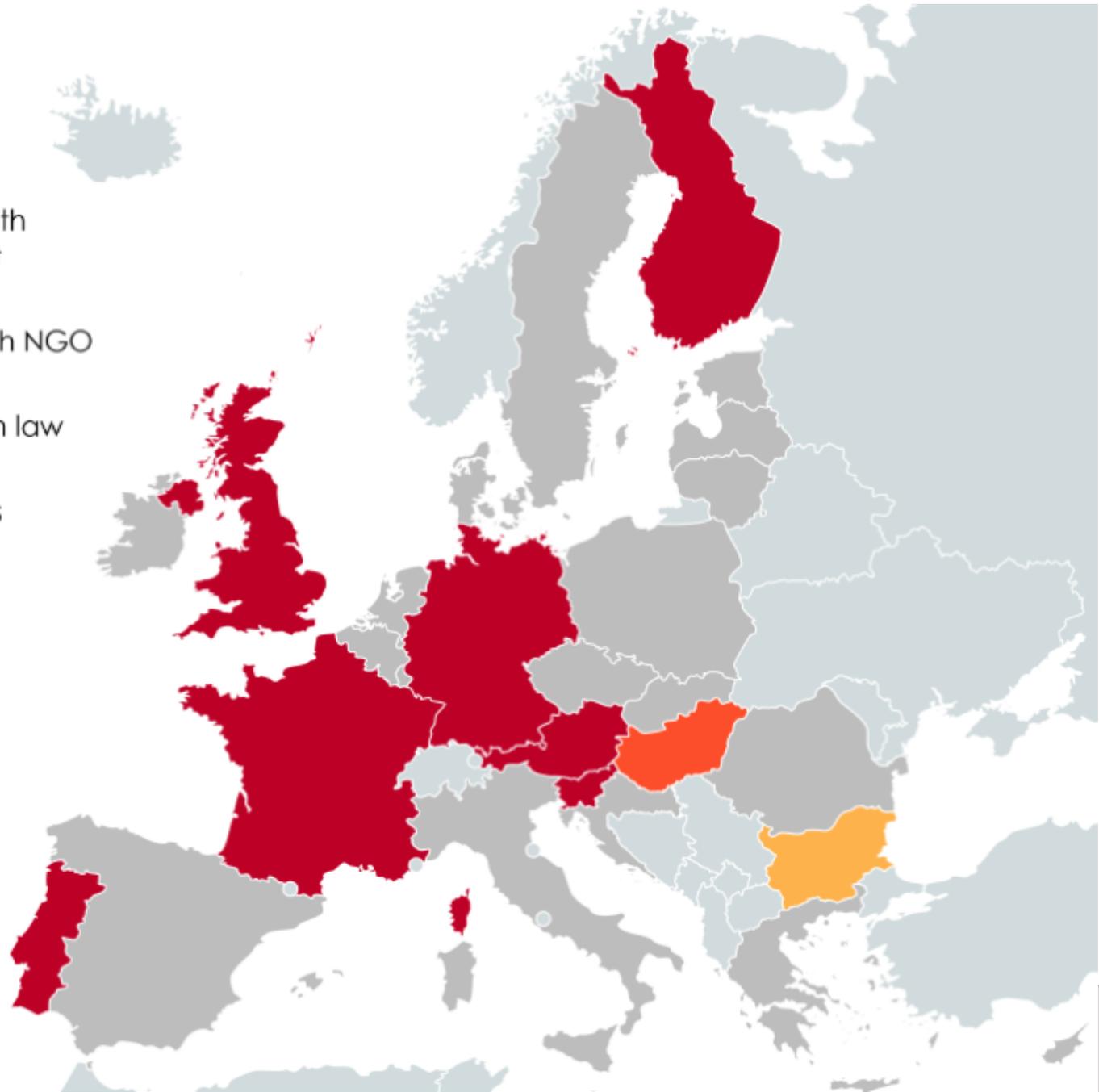
WP2's objectives

- To generate an informed assessment of the frontline response to DV on the ground
 - IMPRODOVA first WP was dedicated to an overview of national regulatory frameworks and policies. We wanted to examine how these policies are implemented in the real world.
- To understand what works and what doesn't regarding the response to DV victims
 - What was at stake here was to document best practices as they are actually implemented.
- To provide a sound empirical basis for the development of WP3

Research Design

- To meet these objectives we have developed a comparative field study of the frontline response to domestic violence in 8 countries
- WP2 was divided into 3 separate studies:
 - T2.2 Cross-national comparison on the implementation of international norms and national best practices of frontline responders
 - T2.3 Cross-national comparison on the risk assessment tools and case documentation used by frontline responders
 - T2.4 Study on identifying gaps and bridges of intra- and inter-agency cooperation

- Consortium members with formal law enforcement partners
- Consortium member with NGO partner
- Informal partnership with law enforcement
- Other EU member states



Research Design

- Research plan:
 - Qualitative interviews with police officers, social workers, NGOs and health professionals
 - A minimum of two locations in each country, one with average reported rates of DV, the other with higher-than-average
- We brought together 17 case studies of particular locations and 18 analyses of “good practices” in combating DV
- We conducted 288 interviews

Ethics

- The fieldwork was carried out in a way that followed a series of ethical rules
- We have obtained informed consent from our informants
- To make sure that confidentiality and anonymity are ensured, we have implemented a strategy for the management of personal data
- We are also careful with the potential misuse of research

Results: T2.2: Overview of the frontline response to DV

- Our research material consisted of actors' accounts of their work experiences
- They told us how they perceive DV,
- what are the steps through which DV cases go,
- and what are the problems faced by victims
- This allowed us to determine to what extent international standards are met

T2.2 Our main finding is that specialization is a condition for better handling of victims

- FLR who are specialists of DV serve the needs of victims in a better way than FLR who are generalists.
- Generalists are typically less knowledgeable about DV, less inclined to take non-physical violence seriously, more inclined to rely on personal discretion, and less likely to make informed and helpful referrals.
- Conversely, specialists are better trained, more knowledgeable about the different types of DV, more likely to follow protocols and procedures designed to safeguard the victim's interests, and more likely to be part of a network of professionals from other sectors.

- Specialists do not face the problem of managing conflicting priorities—a problem typical of generalists. They have more reasons (and perhaps more time) to attend additional trainings, academic workshops, and to visit NGOs.
- Specialists play the role of internal and external experts for DV prevention and investigation. They work inside and outside their own organization to increase awareness of their non-specialized colleagues.
- In some countries virtually all police officers on the frontline response to DV are generalists. In other countries most frontline response is made of specialists. In other, it varies according to locations, with some places served with specialized units and other with only generalists.

Results: T2.3: Risk assessment

- Risk-assessment tools may help predict the relative severity of the situation of a given victim. Best case scenario:
 - Tool is standardized and validated
 - All relevant stakeholders participate in the assessment
 - The assessment is followed by an action plan
- Reality is obviously more uneven

Results: T2.3: Case documentation

- Case documentation: how different professions register information on the cases they treat.
Common issues:
 - “Double accounting”
 - Different agencies register different information, sometimes not filed under “DV”
 - Detrimental to victim protection
- Importance of better coordination (partnerships)

Results: T2.4- Inter-agency collaboration

- Effective partnerships are key to improve the frontline response
 - Within the organization: Embedded social workers in France, “Anchor teams” in Finland
 - Between organizations: MARAC/MATAC in Scotland, “BIG” in Berlin

T2.4 main findings = identification of facilitating factors of multi-agency cooperation

- The case studies gathered reflect a broad range of partnerships that are notable for their overall “good organisation” and “good performance”, which does not mean that these collaborations are free of limitations and defects.
- The cross-referenced analysis of the 18 case studies makes it possible to recognize the features that characterize the “good practices” of multi-agency cooperation against DV.
- We identified 5 characteristics of a “good partnership”.

1- An action that target priority audiences

- “Good partnership” takes targeted actions. That is, it targets specific types of perpetrators, or acts to mitigate or manage risks posed to particular types of victims (typically “high risk”).
- Such targeting allows the partnership to focus its attention and resources on a limited range of situations. It helps to set up services suited to the specific nature of the cases handled.
- The counterpart of this requirement for tailor-made public action, and the resulting need for targeting, is the risk of leaving out or mismanaging non-priority populations. Many of the collaborations studied pay less attention to victims perceived as being at low risk.

2. An extended steering body that is an authority

- “Good partnership” has a system for managing its action that is both capable of imposing its authority on partnership members and of performing a range of functions such as strategy elaboration, advocacy, internal communication, inter-institutional diplomacy, HR and research and development.
- Factors which are likely to strengthen the authority of a steering body are: openness; quality and equity of deliberation procedures; consensus-building in decision making; enjoying financial independence from partners; precise agreements that define participants’ rights and duties.

3. An extensive organisation for information sharing and use

- “Good partnership” is based on procedures for collecting, sharing, managing, and analysing information on DV cases. These partnerships can be qualified as “knowledge multi-agency cooperation”. It does mean that knowledge work and knowledge management are structuring features of the cooperation.
- “Good partnership” makes intensive use of tools and procedures helping decision-making, intended to provide steering bodies with both multidisciplinary and in-depth knowledge of cases handled.
- In several good practices (Scotland, Austria, Finland), the backbone of this knowledge-based partnership is the risk assessment procedures and instruments.

4. The presence of specialized relays in each partner organisation

- “Good partnership” has specialised relays in each partner organization (not “generalist” relays).
- These specialised units or staff, who represent, promote and implement the partnership in their respective organisations, enjoy a high status within their own partner organisation.
- These relays are characterised by a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the multiagency cooperation, and they play a leading role vis-à-vis less involved actors.

5. An effort to train professionals and produce knowledge

- “Good partnership” make substantial investments in training their staff responsible for carrying out partnership missions. This training gives an important place to working methods designed to facilitate inter-organisational cooperation, such as communication in meetings; working-group facilitation; project design; promotion and management; shared evaluation of results.
- The most developed partnerships have knowledge production activities. It can take the form of handbooks, practical guides, operations blueprints, advisory and expert activities, participation in studies and research projects, contribution to professional or scientific publications, invention and experimentation with new instruments or new methods.

Limitations of our field studies

- No direct voice to DV victims
 - Cause: project on frontline responders, ethical protocols
 - Mitigation: multiple interviews in all countries with NGOs
- Case studies cannot pretend to be representative
 - Criteria of selection: rates of reporting
- Nonetheless, findings on partnerships are coherent across case studies

The use of WP2 results

- WP2 fed into WP3, especially for...
 - the integration module of HIDV risk assessment tools and case documentation (D3.2)
 - trainings formats and materials enhancing inter-organisational cooperation (D3.3 and 3.4)
- WP2 field studies are the basis for several projects of academic articles:
 - On police's use of risk-assessment tools
 - On conflicting definitions of domestic violence
 - On the mechanisms by which partnerships produce professionalisation



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 787054.

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