



# Recommendations for data harmonisation and consolidation

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## Introduction

### Scope of the work

Following the work undertaken in IMPRODOVA task T1.2 (Mapping and Interrogating Data Sources), led by POLAMK, this report focuses primarily upon data harmonisation recommendations in respect of two key data sources about domestic violence:

- 1) Administrative data produced by the police
- 2) National victimisation survey data

While other front-line responder (FLR) agencies and some research projects may record and analyse information about domestic violence, police data and victimisation surveys are prioritised since they are recognised as official data sources with the capacity to record trends in the nature, prevalence and reporting of domestic violence over time. Police and victimisation survey data are complementary. Police data - coupled with data from other criminal justice agencies - provides important insight into cases coming to the attention of the police and the associated criminal justice response (e.g. the number of crimes reported, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced). At the same time, victimisation surveys illuminate understandings as to the nature and extent of domestic violence that is *not* reported to the police. This is important in the context of domestic violence since many victims do not self-classify their experiences as a crime (Groves and Thomas, 2014), nor do they wish to bring their situation to the attention of criminal justice agencies.

Whilst this report focuses on police and survey data, the existence of other data sources should be acknowledged. In particular, NGOs possess a wealth of knowledge about the experiences and needs of victims, and NGO data should be viewed as an important source of information in relation to domestic violence in that light. Likewise, FLR agencies, such as health, housing and social work gather varying degrees of detailed information about their service users. Whilst different FLR agencies engage with different populations, and the inclusion of data sources other than police and survey data is challenging, future attempts to include data from major NGOs, Women's Shelters and the Medical Sector would be advantageous. As IMPRODOVA D1.2 (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019) indicates, however both NGO and other FLR data may lack in comparability within and between sources.

Together, administrative and survey data can be appreciated as an essential part of understanding and responding to domestic violence in three interrelated ways. First, these data sources document trends over time and monitor the criminal justice response, highlighting areas for improvement, public spending and innovation. Second, insights gleaned through administrative and survey data can contribute to public understandings and prevention work. Third, the data that is gathered, as well as the analyses that are performed on it, don't simply report upon domestic violence but also constitute how it is understood through definition of what is and what isn't counted; what *is* and what *isn't* seen.

This report provides recommendations in relation to data harmonisation and consolidation for improved data practices as they relate to each of the three facets outlined. Its principle aim is to enhance administrative police data for FLR decision making, resource allocation and policy making; and improve survey data for monitoring, evaluating and researching domestic violence and relevant interventions.

In doing so, it begins with an overview of existing European data frameworks and guidance on data collection. It then turns to specific consideration of police and survey data, drawing upon IMPRODOVA material gathered in WP1 and WP2, and upon existing data reports and relevant academic literature. Finally, the concluding points reflect critically upon the purpose and utility of data gathering and consolidation, and the range of ways in which such data might work to inform frontline practices and policies designed to address domestic violence.

### **Data collection and analysis process**

This report is informed by the gathering and analysis of three main sources of information:

#### 1) European data frameworks and guidance, including:

- Council of Europe study on administrative data collection on domestic violence in Council of Europe member states (2008);
- The Istanbul Convention;
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) administrative data reports and recommendations to improve data collection.

#### 2) IMPRODOVA data

- WP1 reports:
  - D1.1 (Mapping and interrogating DV policy framework; confidential report)
  - D1.2 (Map of available data) by Fagerlund and Houtsonen (2019)
- WP2 reports:
  - D2.2 (Analysis of the implementation of policies and guidelines into frontline responder practices) by Bradley *et al.* (2020)
  - D2.3 (Reviewing the use and scope of risk assessment and case documentation across frontline responders) by Hera & Szegő (2020)
- Consultation with all IMPRODOVA partners at, and following, the November 2018 Consortium Meeting in Portugal.

#### 3) Research reports and literature on domestic violence data, including:

- FRA Violence Against Women Survey (2014)
- Contemporary debate within academic and policy literature on survey data (e.g. Walby / Myhill)

## Results

### European Data Requirements

A range of studies and reviews identify good practice or minimum standards in relation to administrative data collection on violence against women, including that undertaken by the police. The Council of Europe (2016) reports on data collection and research on violence against women and domestic violence across Europe using Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention as a guiding framework. Within this report, the following reviews are identified as sources of guidance on administrative data collection:

- the Council of Europe stocktaking study in 2006 (Council of Europe 2006);
- the Council of Europe study of administrative data relevant to violence against women (Council of Europe 2008a);
- the Council of Europe monitoring reports on the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2002)5 (Council of Europe 2014b);
- the European Institute for Gender Equality study of administrative data (EIGE 2014a);
- the EIGE study of the provision of specialised services to victims in EU member states (EIGE 2012); and
- the European Commission review of relevant EU legislation (European Commission 2010).

The guidance offered in these reviews is not fully harmonised, though collectively, they have either informed or reiterated the data collection principles as set out by the Istanbul Convention. Of particular relevance here is the Council of Europe (2008) study of administrative data collection on domestic violence. It recommends that agencies (the police, the public prosecutor, the courts, the health-care services and the social services) collect the following data, as a minimum:

- ✓ distinguish cases of domestic violence from other cases;
- ✓ sex of victim and perpetrator;
- ✓ age of victim and perpetrator;
- ✓ relationship between victim and perpetrator;
- ✓ type of violence; and
- ✓ the outcome of cases

As outlined below, these data categories form the basis of those required by the Istanbul Convention.

### ***Istanbul Convention***

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the ‘Istanbul Convention’) introduced, for the first time, legally binding obligations for Member States in relation to tackling violence against women and domestic violence. The convention came into force in 2014 and by the end of 2019, all eight IMPRODOVA partners had signed the convention and six had ratified it. The obligations cited in the Istanbul Convention and its explanatory notes include data collection requirements.

Specifically, *Article 11* of the Istanbul Convention sets out national data collection requirements in respect of domestic violence (and violence against women more broadly). In sum, parties to the convention should gather administrative and survey

data, and support research on violence against women. The *Article 11* requirements, detailed below are complimented by *Article 10*, which stipulates that a national body should be responsible for this data collection. Further, data should be gathered on a 'regular' basis (though no specification of how often this should be is provided) and made available to the public.

#### *Article 11* – Data collection and research

- 1) For the purpose of the implementation of this Convention, Parties shall undertake to:
  - a) collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention;
  - b) support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention.
- 2) Parties shall endeavour to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
- 3) Parties shall provide the group of experts, as referred to in Article 66 of this Convention, with the information collected pursuant to this article in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking.
- 4) Parties shall ensure that the information collected pursuant to this article is available to the public.

*Article 3* defines 'domestic violence' as "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim".

*Articles 33-40* define nine types of violence against women, including physical sexual or psychological violence though no specific definition of economic violence is provided

The Explanatory Report of the Istanbul Convention (para 76) notes that the data categories used should remain at the discretion of parties. However, as a minimum, the following should be gathered:

- ✓ victim and perpetrator sex, age
- ✓ relationship of the perpetrator to the victim
- ✓ type of violence
- ✓ geographical location
- ✓ other factors deemed relevant by parties such as disability
- ✓ conviction rates of perpetrators
- ✓ the number of protection orders issued

***European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)***

EIGE is an autonomous body of the EU, working to provide technical assistance to EU institutions and authorities of its member states. EIGE has undertaken considerable work in relation to administrative data collection on violence against women as part of their 2015-18 strategic framework on combating violence against women (See EIGE, 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). It should be noted that EIGE focuses on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), defined as violence that occurs between ‘former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim’ (EIGE, 2017a). In this context, IPV is considered distinct to domestic violence since domestic violence is defined as incorporating other forms of family violence beyond that which occurs between intimate or ex- partners. The EIGE definition of IPV does not include violence against children, or that perpetrated by children against their parents (though EIGE do recognise the impact of IPV on children).

Of particular interest here is the EIGE review of *Police and justice sector data on intimate partner violence against women in the European Union* (2019). Within this review, 13 indicators are developed as a minimum standard for data collection on IPV: nine in respect of police data and four in respect of justice sector data. The nine police data indicators comprise three indicators to count the annual number of adult<sup>1</sup> IPV victims, perpetrators and offences. The remaining six indicators measure victimisation by type of violence: physical, psychological, sexual, economic, rape and femicide. The four justice sector indicators relate to the annual number of protection orders, prosecutions, sentences, and custodial sentences. Within the 13 indicators, only women are defined as victims and only men are defined as perpetrators.

Following assessment of the feasibility of all 28 member states to populate the 13 statistical indicators on IPV, the following recommendations were made to improve comparability of data collection:

- 1) Standardise the definitions of intimate partner violence across the EU, following the common system of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), for increased data comparability;
- 2) Adapt data recording systems to include specific breakdowns essential for identifying intimate partner violence;
- 3) Make comprehensive data publicly accessible;
- 4) Improve coordination at national level between administrative institutions in recording, processing and sharing data.

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<sup>1</sup> aged 18 and over

## **Administrative Police and Survey Data**

Using European requirements and guidance as a framework, police and survey data are reviewed below by drawing upon information gathered in earlier stages of IMPRODOVA research (WP1 and WP2).

### **Police data**

#### ***Overview***

Administrative data is routinely gathered by FLRs such as the police in their daily work. This form of data has the advantage of being collected regularly, though it is gathered primarily to meet administrative and operational needs rather than for research purposes. For this reason, the categories of information gathered are likely to fall short of broader research or data requirements, including those set out by the Istanbul Convention, and have limited comparative value due to variations in legal codes.

#### **IMPRODOVA Partner Country Police data**

Table 1 provides a comparison of data categories gathered across IMPRODOVA partner countries. It updates and expands upon the police data table provided in the earlier D1.2 data mapping report (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019).



**Table 1: Police data on DV country map**  
(y = yes, n = no, NA = information not available)

Measures	IMPRODOVA Partner Countries							
	AT	FI	FR	GER	HU	PT	SCT	SLO
1) Existence of a specific offence of DV	n	n	n	n	y	y	y	y
2) Counting DV								
a) Acts reported but not recorded as crimes or offences	n <sup>7</sup>	n	n <sup>5</sup>	n	n	n	y	y
b) Number of victims	y	y	y	y	y	y	y <sup>2</sup>	y
c) Number of perpetrators	y	y	y	y	y	y	y <sup>3</sup>	y
3) Definition of violence								
Varied types (physical, psychological, economic and sexual)	y <sup>1</sup>	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
4) Relationship between the perpetrator and the victim	y	y <sup>2</sup>	y	y	y	y	y	y
5) Indications of gender								
a) Victim	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
b) Perpetrator	y	y	y	y <sup>6</sup>	y	y	y	y
6) Age								
a) Victim	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
b) perpetrator	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
7) Indicators for repeated and serial offences	n	n	y	n	y	y	y	y
8) Indicators for the seriousness of harm	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
9) Indicators of police actions/proceedings	n/a	y	y	n	y	y	y	y
10) Availability of data								
a) Publicly available (without request)	n	y <sup>8</sup>	y	y	n	y	y	y
b) Raw data with research permission	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y

<sup>1</sup> Including offences against physical integrity, offences against personal integrity, offences against sexual integrity.

<sup>2</sup> Certain crimes can be categorized as family violence, although this categorization is optional.

<sup>3</sup> Data on the number of victims could be requested from police Scotland, but this is not reported in the publicly available Domestic Abuse in Scotland Statistical Bulletin published online by the Scottish Government.

<sup>4</sup> Data on the number of perpetrators could be requested from Police Scotland, but this is not reported in the publicly available Domestic Abuse in Scotland Statistical Bulletin published online by the Scottish Government.

<sup>5</sup> Acts other than crimes can be reported as informal claims, but the police crime report data only includes reported crimes.

<sup>6</sup> Not consistent.

<sup>7</sup> In Austria, DV is usually counted as the number of restraining orders (a police intervention), not necessarily linked to a criminal act. Criminal acts, although counted in crime statistics, may not be identifiable as DV. Calls which police respond to happening in a "domestic context", regardless of the outcome, are not counted. Crime statistics do show perpetrator-victim relationship giving an indication of a "domestic/relational" status.

<sup>8</sup> Aggregate data is publicly available and is presented by Statistics Finland; individual cases are not publicly available.

### ***Frequency of data collection and availability of data***

The work undertaken in IMPRODOVA task T1.2 reviewing police the availability, utility and quality of DV data in IMPRODOVA partner countries indicates that police data is systematically available. It is collected regularly and is usually reported on an annual basis providing scope for monitoring trends over time. Police data is publicly available in partner countries. That said, most of the country reports also flagged concerns about the quality and limited scope of police data, linked to their primary purpose as internal administrative and operation tools.

### ***What is being counted?***

In all partner countries, data is collected on the number of offences. However, data on incidents reported but not recorded as a crime or offence is only systematically recorded and published in Scotland. Yet, this measure provides important information about incidents coming to the attention of the police and how the police response to incidents reported to them. This analysis is important since there are long-standing concerns across a range of jurisdictions about whether the police always treat domestic violence seriously and respond accordingly.

In Scotland, in 2017-18, more than half (56%) of domestic abuse incidents reported within the police interim Vulnerable Persons Database (iVPD) did *not* include the recording of at least one crime or offence. In the *Domestic Abuse in Scotland: 2017 - 2018* statistical bulletin (Scottish Government, 2018) additional information is provided on the reasons why domestic abuse incidents reported were not recorded as crimes, based on a review of 400 randomly selected cases from the iVPD.

The availability of data on the annual number of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence is variable. In Scotland and Germany, data is publicly available on the number of incidents rather than number of victims or perpetrators (i.e. it is offence-based data). The number of victims and perpetrators is likely to be lower than the number of incidents due to the repeated nature of domestic violence and the likelihood that individuals will experience more than one incident.

### ***Definitional and comparability issues***

Comparability across countries is limited by the differing legal and criminal codes that operate within each jurisdiction. In four of the eight IMPRODOVA partner countries there is no specific offence of domestic violence, domestic abuse or intimate partner violence. Findings indicate that there is some scope for comparability since definitions of domestic violence used in police data for each partner country include a range of abusive acts as identified in the Istanbul Convention definition of DV (physical, sexual, psychological, and economic). However, populating indicators about the type of abuse (as recommended by EIGE and drawing upon the Istanbul Convention) may not produce reliable results since criminal codes have to be used as a proxy in order to do so. While physical and sexual abuse may be relatively easy to identify in crime codes, the clear identification of psychological and economic abuse is more challenging, and some crime codes relating to domestic violence may not fit easily into one of these abuse type categories (e.g. vandalism of property).

Most importantly, in all IMPRODOVA partner countries, police data recorded the sex of the victim and perpetrator, and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. Irrespective of the definition of domestic violence adopted in each country, the identification of intimate partner relationships (or ex-relationships) is an important part

of understanding the gendered dynamics of domestic violence and the way in which this permeates personal relationships.

### ***Understanding the dynamics of domestic violence***

To understand the dynamics of domestic violence and, in particular, its gendered dynamics, indicators for the impact of violence and abuse and the identification of repeat offending and victimisation are important. These indicators are especially important to understanding IPV since they are grounded in an appreciation of domestic violence as an ongoing pattern of behaviours rooted in the attempt of one partner to exert control over another. In practice, acts which may appear to be trivial - or at least not considered a criminal offence - can have a profound effect on victims and their liberty due to their coercive and controlling impact (Stark, 2007).

It is especially challenging for police data to capture the full range of abusive and controlling behaviours that constitute domestic violence. Regarding the 'seriousness of harm' caused by domestic violence, all but one of the IMPRODOVA partner countries were able to confirm the availability of data to populate this indicator. It is important to note, however, that this indicator was defined in relation to the type of offence committed and how this is coded within criminal law. This legal classification does not necessarily correspond with the harm experienced by victims, nor the impact upon their lives. There are implications here for understanding the gendered dynamics of domestic abuse. Attempts to understand domestic abuse that neglect impact (or perpetrator intent) by simply focusing on the acts perpetrated are of little value and risk generating spurious findings, which suggest that domestic or intimate partner violence experienced by men and women is at a similar level (Walby *et al.*, 2017). While it is acknowledged that both men and women may experience domestic violence, research consistently highlights that victimisation varies by sex: namely, that women experience a greater range of abusive acts, more frequent abuse, higher levels of fear, and are more likely to be injured as a result of the abuse (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Walby and Allen, 2004; Hester, 2013).

With regard to identifying repeat and serial offences, only four of the eight partner countries were able to confirm the presence of indicators in police data. Again, this is an important indicator since domestic abuse is an ongoing course of conduct rather than an isolated incident. Where this indicator could be populated in national police statistics, the figures relate to overall number or repeat offences and offenders rather than to the level of repeat offending or victimisation within a particular relationship. This level of information, specific to individual relationships, is crucial to frontline responders during their case work but it appears to be recorded for operational rather than statistical purposes.

### ***Indicators of police actions and links with other judicial data***

In most (six), but not all eight IMPRODOVA partner countries, data is available on police actions taken in response to domestic violence. This data is essential to understanding and monitoring the frontline response and its collation should be a priority for all countries as a means of ensuring transparency in police work on this issue.

Fieldwork undertaken in WP2 revealed that monitoring responses to cases beyond police action in the criminal justice process is very difficult due to a lack of electronic links or unique case identifiers across police databases and the information systems

and databases used by prosecutors and the courts. This difficulty is by no means unique to domestic violence related crimes, but it is a pertinent issue given established concerns about criminal justice responses and resultant attrition rates in relation to domestic violence. The capacity to monitor cases as they progress through the criminal justice system is key to understanding and informing frontline responses, although this needs to take into account GDPR concerns about anonymity and the rights of the accused.

### ***The needs of frontline responders***

It is important that the data collection needs and responsibilities that lie with FLR such as the police are considered. Interviews with FLRs in WP2 revealed that case documentation was a time and resource intensive activity that was subject to unhelpful duplication in some instances due to the requirements of recording cases on different operational systems.

Interviews also revealed FLRs' status as data providers rather than recipients, indicating that information flowed primarily on one direction. Feedback about the 'bigger picture' in relation to domestic violence and case outcomes would be beneficial in allowing FLRs to contextualise their work, increase their job satisfaction and understand the contribution made by their work. This, arguably, is of even greater importance in the context of the introduction of new legislation, policy and practices, whereby the lack of feedback makes reflexive monitoring, and therefore the personal and organisational learning necessary for the normalisation of new interventions, difficult to achieve (Mackenzie, et al., 2019).

FLRs have practical data needs which markedly depart from headline insights gleaned from administrative and survey data, suggesting that data serves a different purpose in such practical contexts. Informal approaches for the documentation of case data observed in a number of countries reveal the active ways in which data is used to progress cases. This data is of a different nature, specific to both the case and the FLR in question.

## **Survey data**

### ***Overview***

Police data on recorded crime is insufficient on its own, as administrative data cannot tell us about the extent of domestic violence. Victimization surveys can facilitate a broader understanding of crime as well as a better assessment of its effects on victims.

Victimization surveys typically take a nationally representative sample of people living in private households, with those sampled asked about their experiences of crime whether or not the victimisation was reported to the police, as well as their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. By including non-reported crimes, national victimisation surveys provide a different (and larger) count than police data, and advantageous in producing data that is nationally representative. Surveys implement a standard questionnaire, with interviews usually administered face-to-face or by telephone, although it is acknowledged that partner abuse is underreported in face-to-face surveys, due to lack of privacy for respondents (Walby, 2005). In some countries, so-called 'hybrid' surveys in which specialised modules on violence against women are attached to mainline surveys, to enable collection of data, while maintaining specialist framing and modes of questioning have been developed.

### ***Challenges in using surveys to capture data on domestic violence***

There has been significant academic debate about the suitability of survey methodology and the use of victimisation surveys to capture data about violence against women, including domestic violence (see for example, Walby, 2005; Farrell and Pease, 2010). The repeated and continuing nature of domestic violence renders it especially difficult to accurately measure within surveys (Farrell and Pease, 2010). It can take place over long periods of time, or it may occur at a specific point in time, when partners are separating for example (FRA 2014: 42).

Drawing upon the work of Hearn (1998), Kelly and Westmarland (2016: 125) contend that the 'incidentalising' approach adopted in crime surveys reflects the way that violent men account for their behaviour rather than the experiences of survivors and fails to capture the 'heart and reality' of domestic violence as an ongoing course of conduct. It may also be difficult for victims to enumerate each incident of violence, especially when these are of frequent occurrence (FRA, 2014: 42). These challenges are exacerbated due to the likelihood of domestic violence being sustained in various ways within, and following, a relationship. It is now recognised that priority should be given to modes of enquiry that generate a high response rate, and ensure confidentiality, so as to include more marginal groups of women who are most likely to be risk.

More fundamentally, attempting to capture data about domestic violence in a crime survey (or indeed within police statistics) is particularly challenging given that much of the controlling behaviour that constitutes domestic violence (e.g. a particular glance or expression, or restricting clothing or spending choices) does not, on its own, equate to a criminal act.

### ***Definitional and comparability issues***

It is widely accepted that for victimisation surveys to be useful, the development of consistent definitions of different forms of domestic violence is necessary in order to produce data that is *comparable over time and between countries*. This allows for the development of benchmarks against which policy development may be evaluated. Without such indicators and relevant data, it is not possible to evaluate policy developments, nor reliably compare findings from different surveys in different countries. Walby (2005) argues that indicators of violence against women need to capture the extent (as measured by both the rate of prevalence and the number of incidents); to measure severity by including injury levels (physical and sexual), and; distinguish between acts carried out by intimate partners (including former partners), other family or household members, and others (Walby 2005).

Recently, it has come to be recognised that 'coercive control' is a key feature of many abusive relationships (Stark, 2007: 2009). Coercive control refers to an ongoing pattern of incidents whereby one partner uses various means to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate and dominate the other. This can extend beyond physical violence to a range of tactics, including psychological, financial, emotional and sexual abuse (Stark, 2007: 2009). Research has shown that this type of abuse is strongly gendered, with women comprising the majority of victims (Johnson, 2006; Myhill, 2015). Situational couple violence, by contrast, is perpetrated by both men and women and can be mutual, and commonly arises in the context of specific arguments that escalate to verbal aggression and physical violence and does not have the same underlying dynamic of domination and control (Myhill, 2015). Moreover, unlike coercive control, situational couple violence is not motivated primarily by traditional attitudes towards

gender roles (Pence and Dasgupta, 2006; Stark, 2007, 2009). In order to capture data on coercive and controlling elements of domestic violence, victimisation surveys need to include questions which address psychological, emotional and economic abuse

### IMPRODOVA partner country survey data

Table 2 provides an updated comparison of data categories gathered across IMPRODOVA partner countries, based on the information originally included in D1.2 (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019).

**Table 2. Map of data provisions from national victimisation surveys**

(y = yes, n = no).

Measures	IMPRODOVA Partner Countries							
	AT	FI	FR	GER	HU <sup>4</sup>	PT <sup>5</sup>	SCT <sup>6</sup>	SLO
1. The definition of violence covered in the data source								
Broad definition (not only crimes)	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y
Varied types (physical, sexual, psychological and economic)	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
2. The definition of relationship between the perpetrator and the victim								
Differentiate (domestic/relatives/family, acquaintance, strangers)	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
3. Indications of gender								
Victim	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Perpetrator	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y
4. Indicators for repeated and serial offences	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
5. Indicators for the seriousness of harm	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
6. Indicator for reporting to the police	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
7. General information about the data source								
Representativeness (National or Regional)	y	y	y	n <sup>3</sup>	n	n	y	y <sup>7</sup>
Repeated regularly	n <sup>8</sup>	y	y	n	n	n	y	n
Publicly available	n	y <sup>1</sup>	y	y <sup>2</sup>	y	y	y	y

<sup>1</sup> Since 2015 there has been an option for data availability through the Finnish Social Data Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Data analyses results are publicly available, though raw data is not publicly available.

<sup>3</sup> Only partly representative (only women included, not men or children). No response rate documented.

<sup>4</sup> FRA 2014 only includes women as respondents and victims, and no nationally representative survey was identified in Hungary.

<sup>5</sup> Portugal did not report any national victimisation survey, and therefore the summary here is based on FRA 2014.

<sup>6</sup> The partner abuse module within the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey is being reviewed in light of new domestic abuse legislation in Scotland introduced in 2019. Implementation of changes to the existing questions is planned for the 2021/22 sweep of the SCJS.

<sup>7</sup> Only included women as respondents and the response rate was 25%.

<sup>8</sup> The last survey was done in Austria in 2011.

### **Frequency of data collection and availability of data**

D1.2 (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019) states that “[t]he use of victimisation surveys and hence the availability of nationally representative data, gathered at regular intervals and including all forms of violence covered by the convention are not available in all partner countries. Regularly repeated, nationally representative surveys that include DV in some form were found only in Finland, France and Scotland. However, none of these are comparable between countries. The victimisation surveys in Finland, France and Scotland take place regularly and analyses of the modules relating to domestic violence are publicly accessible.

All IMPRODOVA partner countries were included in the FRA (2014) VAW study. The D1.2 report (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019) states that, “*The only victimisation data source available from each country is the FRA 2014 report about violence against women.* For this reason, the FRA survey approach is outlined in detail below.

### **The FRA (2014) Violence Against Women Survey**

The Violence Against Women (VAW) survey was undertaken in 2012, and covered the 28 Member States of the EU (FRA, 2014). The survey was based on interviews with a random sample of around 42,000 women, which was representative of the female population aged 18 to 74 years living in each EU Member State. The survey intended to provide a clearer understanding of women’s experiences of violence across the EU, by collecting comprehensive and comparable data from across all Member States.

The FRA recommendations following the study were that the EU and Member States could signify their commitment to the collection of data, on a regular basis, on different forms of violence against women, in order to provide evidence for the development of policy responses and action on the ground. Further, that this process could be used to feed data to the specific monitoring bodies of the UN and the Council of Europe, as well as EIGE. Importantly the recommendations also state that the EU and Member States should *promote and fund surveys* in a concerted effort to uncover information on the extent and nature of violence experienced by women. These surveys can be repeated every few years to measure developments over time.

The FRA VAW study asked questions only of women, although other surveys, e.g. the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, asks questions of both women and men. The survey uses the term ‘domestic violence’, as defined by the Istanbul Convention: ‘*all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim*’ (FRA 2014).

Questions on partner abuse in the FRA VAW survey are split into two key sections. The first asks about respondents’ experiences with their current partner. This section opens with the statement: ‘When people are in a relationship, they usually share both good and bad moments.’

Women were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including incidents of domestic violence or partner abuse. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by female interviewers in interviewees’ homes. The main questionnaire was filled out by interviewers using either pen and paper (PAPI) or computer assisted (CAPI) interviewing. There was also a self-completion element to

the survey, where respondents were given a paper questionnaire and asked to complete six questions.

Respondents are first presented with a list of psychologically abusive behaviours, and asked how often their current partner perpetrates each type: 'never', 'sometimes', 'often' or 'all the time. These items significant for identifying coercive and controlling behaviours. They include:

- Keeping you from seeing friends
- Trying to restrict your contact with your family of birth or relatives
- Insisting on knowing where you are in a way that goes beyond general concern
- Getting angry if you speak with another man/woman
- Becoming suspicious that you are unfaithful
- Preventing you from making decisions about family finances and from shopping independently
- Forbidding you to work outside the home
- Forbidding you to leave the house, taking away your car keys or locking you up
- Belittling or humiliating you in front of other people
- Belittling or humiliating you in private
- Doing things to scare or intimidate you on purpose, for example yelling and smashing things
- Making you watch or look at pornographic material against your wishes
- Threatening to take the children away from you
- Threatening to hurt your children
- Hurting your children
- Threatening to hurt or kill someone else you care about

Respondents are then presented with lists of physically and sexually abusive behaviours and asked how often each of these have happened to them: 'never', 'once', '2-5 times' or '6 or more times'. In addition, respondents are asked how often each of these have happened in the past 12 months, with the same answer categories. The physical abuse covered includes:

- Threatening to hurt you physically
- Pushing you or shoving you
- Slapping you
- Throwing a hard object at you
- Grabbing you or pulling your hair
- Beating you with a fist or hard object, or kicking you
- Burning you
- Trying to suffocate you or strangle you
- Cutting or stabbing you, or shooting at you
- Beating your head against something



The sexual abuse covered includes:

- Forcing you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way
- Attempting to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way
- Making you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or were unable to refuse
- Consenting to sexual activity because you were afraid of what your current partner might do if you refused

Respondents are asked a range of follow-up questions about abuse by their current partner, including when the abuse occurred, if they were living together at the time, if the respondent was pregnant at the time and if any children were aware.

In addition, respondents are asked to identify which incident of abuse they perceive to be the most serious, and asked various questions about this incident specifically. For example, they are asked when this abuse took place, about their emotional response to the abuse, whether physical injuries were incurred, if time had to be taken off work, if the police were made aware and if support was sought. Respondents are also asked to provide demographic information about their partner.

The next section of the interview asks about respondents' experiences with any previous partners. The questions in this section broadly mirror those in the section regarding current partners, but there are also some additional questions about experiences when the respondent and their partner were splitting up or separating (e.g. did your previous partner make threats concerning the custody of your children, did the abuse take place during or after the relationship). For physical and sexual abuse, respondents are asked to identify how many times the abuse occurred: 'never', 'once', '2-5 times' or '6 or more times'. For psychological abuse, they are simply asked to indicate whether any of their previous partner ever perpetrated each type of abuse by answering 'yes' or 'no'.

Finally, the self-completion section of the FRA VAW survey also has two questions relevant to partner abuse. In this section, respondents are asked if their partner or ex-partner has been physically or sexually violent against them.

Some of the advantages of the FRA VAW study are that the partner abuse questions are interviewer-led, rather than in a self-completion module, and that the questions are framed in the context of 'normal relationships', which may encourage higher reporting. More detail about the frequency of the abuse experienced is sought which can assist in identifying whether the abuse amounted to a pattern of behaviour, and finally it includes types and impacts of physical and psychological abuse, as well as physical abuse (Scottish Government 2019).

However, IMPRODOVA D1.2 (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019) concludes that although FRA data is available for every IMPRODOVA partner country, "*we do not assess the FRA 2014 survey to be able to fill in the gaps in national provisions of victimisation data – concerns include very varied responses rates from 18-85%, different sampling frames, different methods of data collection- phone in some countries, face to face in others*".

*Further, “FRA survey data involves several weaknesses [...] In short, the prevalence rates from FRA survey inform us about violence against women, and therefore do not enable assessments about DV and violence within families and other violence in close relationships in general, but is possibly the best international data source concerning different forms of violence against women.”*

### ***Improving measurement***

In England and Wales, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has recently sought to improve measurement of abuse by commissioning a Domestic Abuse Statistics Steering Group. Two proposals have emerged from this group, which are discussed by Walby *et al.* (2017) and Myhill (2017).

Firstly, Walby *et al.* (2017) propose a new methodological approach which would allow for more sophisticated measurement of physical violence and would align this measurement with crime codes; doing so would, therefore, necessitate a helpful focus on ‘intent’ and ‘harm’. Attention to gender – through a focus on victim and perpetrator sex, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, and whether the violence contained a sexual element – is an important part of this proposal. Walby, *et al.* (2017) contend that this approach has the potential to mainstream gender into the measurement of domestic abuse.

Secondly, with regard to illuminating the gender dynamics of domestic abuse, Myhill (2017: 38) agrees that the approach advocated by Walby, *et al.* (2017) would bring to light the disparities in the frequency and severity of violence perpetrated by men and women. However, as Myhill (2017) observes, this falls short of fully resolving the difficulty or revealing the gendered nature of domestic abuse. This is due to the suggestion by Walby, *et al.* (2017) that conceptualisations of physical violence should not include non-violent forms of coercion. In effect, by excluding the coercive and controlling context that acts of violence may occur in, both the most serious forms of abuse and the primary perpetrators remain obscured (Myhill, 2017). Further, Myhill (2017: 38) warns that focusing on physical violence alone ‘will, paradoxically obscure the gendered nature of abuse in other respects’, including instances where an abused partner ‘fights back’ as an act of ‘violent resistance’ (Johnson, 2008). Drawing upon the concept of coercive control, Myhill (2017) argues that the current unsatisfactory impasse in the use of surveys to effectively measure domestic violence can be overcome. In the contributions of Myhill (2017), as well as Walby, *et al.* (2017), the unintentional consequences of data measurement and collection can be appreciated, and in doing so point to the productive capacity of data to shape its ‘object’ of domestic violence.

### ***Limitations of surveys***

There are limits to what can be measured by a nationally representative household survey, specifically, the ability of a survey instrument to provide meaningful answers about complex experiences within the boundaries of a structured social survey, where answers are grouped into statistical categories. As such, it is important to recognise where victimisation surveys can add most value to the evidence base on domestic violence, and where other forms of research (such as qualitative approaches) are more suitable for understanding the nuance of experience.

## Concluding points

In researching this task (T3.2), it is clear that domestic violence data is gathered across a range of registers and contexts. In looking across these sources, it is apparent that domestic violence data is marked by: its variable categories, definitions and measures; the fluidity of such features to their temporal and spatial contexts; and in some cases, the ambiguity of data categorisations and the meaning of that which is then gathered. This proves true in the internal efforts of IMPRODOVA partners to compile a comprehensive, comparative picture of country data through D1.2 in WP1 (Fagerlund and Houtsonen, 2019), and is apparent in varying categories and definitions specified in European data requirements outlined in the Istanbul Convention, EIGE administrative data recommendations (2019) and surveys such as FRA (2014). In addition, current debates surrounding survey data on domestic violence further underscore the contested nature of data measurements and definitions. The resulting question might well be: *to what extent can data be meaningfully harmonised, consolidated and compared?*

The Istanbul Convention requirements on data collection, and the body of work underpinning these requirements, alongside the guidance produced by EIGE on administrative data collection on IPV provide valuable frameworks for setting out EU-wide minimum (comparable) standards and for facilitating progress towards these standards.

In appreciating the heterogeneous nature of available data and the challenges of its consolidation and harmonisation a prescient question then becomes: *to what end is data harmonised and consolidated?* That is: *what purpose and motivations guide efforts towards data improvement and harmonisation?*

With regard to police and criminal justice data, variation in criminal codes makes comparability across countries – especially in relation to types of abuse - a particularly challenging and time-consuming, although not an impossible, task. Reports of an offence contain sections where the case and events are described using, for instance, victims and suspects accounts, other parties' observations and police officers' observations. Researchers have analysed this 'report' section which can offer information about the context of the offence. The challenge is that the quality of reports varies depending on the skills and motivation of an individual officer.

Arguably, a particularly valuable form of harmonisation within police and justice sector, for example, exists *across* this sector since this provides crucial information about cases entering the criminal justice system and how this system responds to these cases (i.e. in terms of annual rates of crime recording, prosecution, conviction and sentencing). In IMPRODOVA the focus is on the human factors which shape institutional responses to domestic violence, key amongst which are the efforts of FLRs. In addition to the minimum standards outlined for administrative and survey purposes, improvements to data should also be sought in relation to (a) their utility for practical FLR needs and (b) their ability to contribute to wider awareness-raising efforts. These considerations are taken into account within the recommendations outlined below.

## Recommendations for improving data practices

- 1) Efforts to harmonise data should be underpinned by a clear understanding of the aims, meaning and feasibility of 'data harmonisation' and 'consolidation' in relation to different data sources.

*Key to this understanding is clarity about the purpose of data harmonisation and how data will be gathered and used. Data harmonisation may occur within countries (across agencies such as police, prosecutors, health, and housing), or across countries for the purposes of (a) comparability or (b) conceptual alignment (based on research evidence and knowledge about domestic violence and forming the basis of minimum standards/indicators). Surveys are best placed to elicit insights directly from victims and facilitate comparability across countries, while administrative data gathering benefits from conceptual alignment across agencies and countries on key indicators such as age, sex and relationship between victim and perpetrator.*

*It should be noted that a harmonised EU definition of domestic violence is likely to be reduced to High Impact Domestic Violence (HIDV) which privileges physical violence. This could effectively obscure all other forms of domestic violence and, in turn, have adverse implications for national interventions*

- 2) Measuring the extent of domestic violence reported to the police in terms of the numbers of victims, perpetrators and offences, as recommended by EIGE (2019), should be a minimum standard for police data gathering.

*This data works to raise awareness of the scale of the problem, monitor change over time, and inform the allocation of adequate resources to tackle the problem. As it currently stands, police data on the number of offences is more readily available than number of victims and perpetrators.*

- 3) Data should be recorded on police action taken in response to acts (incidents) reported to them as domestic violence, including those incidents not later recorded as a crime of offence.

*This measure provides important information about incidents coming to the attention of the police, and how the police respond to incidents reported to them.*

- 4) Data on types of abuse (e.g. physical, sexual, psychological and economic) should be priority categories for survey data collections.

*The collation of this data within surveys should be prioritised and recognised as complimentary to administrative data due to the limitations of administrative data in relation to these variables. Indicators relating to types of abuse (and their seriousness) are populated using crime codes as a proxy, yet there are notable limitations of this approach since some types of abuse (e.g. economic and psychological) are not well recognised or defined in criminal codes.*

- 5) As identified by the Istanbul Convention, measuring the sex of the victim and perpetrator and the relationship between them, should be a minimum standard for police and survey data gathering. In addition to collecting data on sex, measuring the gender identity of victims and perpetrators would be a further step towards inclusivity.

*This data is crucial to understanding the gendered dynamics of domestic violence and, in particular, intimate partner violence. Data should be able to be disaggregated in order to be of optimum use for FLRs.*

- 6) Where domestic violence data is gathered on violence/abuse perpetrated in a range of family relationships or a domestic unit (as per the definition of domestic violence adopted by the Istanbul Convention), there should be a clear delineation of these relationship categories and this must include categories for violence/abuse perpetrated by intimate partners and/or ex-partners.

*Family and other close relationships form a context of violence in which power relations and other factors relevant to the dynamics of violence contribute to the eminently damaging nature of it in these relationships while simultaneously making it particularly difficult for FLRs to detect and intervene. Such can be, for instance, in the case of parents' violence against their children, violence perpetrated by adult children against their elderly parents, or violence perpetrated by affinal kin. However, violence perpetrated by partners or ex-partners has a distinctive dynamic and should be clearly delineated in the gathering and reporting of data as recommended by Walby (2005).*

- 7) Data should be gathered regarding repeat offending and victimisation, and the impact of domestic violence and abuse on victims a minimum standard for survey data gathering.

*This data is central to understanding the gendered, ongoing and coercive nature of domestic violence. These dimensions are important to operational police responses though they are difficult to record consistently within police administrative data, hence the importance of capturing this information directly from victims within surveys.*

- 8) Consideration should be given to how cases reported to the police can be tracked through the criminal justice system (e.g. through the use of unique identifier for individual cases).

*The capacity to track cases throughout the criminal justice system will provide the basis of an in-depth understanding of individual cases as they progress through the system. While this recommendation extends beyond police data gathering, this process begins with the police. With victim privacy and data sharing concerns in mind, the use of a unique identifier should be strictly in relation to case tracking and it should not be shared with agencies out with the criminal justice system (e.g. health and housing). Unique identifiers pose a threat to privacy and the rights of the accused and so, whilst they have undoubted advantages, any implementation needs to consider data infringement risks very carefully.*

- 9) NGOs, social work services and medical services are important sources of data and can provide information about the incidence and impact of domestic violence across different populations. Consideration should be given to the use of the definition of domestic violence adopted by the Istanbul Convention in data recording, and the utilisation of de-identified and aggregated health or social work services data to identify and respond to domestic violence at both individual and community levels.

*The health and social care needs of domestic violence victims can inform interventions that can improve a victim's quality of life and prevent future abuse; however there are of course significant issues of confidentiality which must be respected in relation to health and social care data,*

- 10) The needs and demands placed upon FLRs should be a key consideration development, implementation and operation of administrative data collections systems.

*Adequate support, resources and GDPR knowledge should be provided for FLRs as they progress their case work and data recording responsibilities. To minimise the data gathering burden placed upon FLRs such as the police, it should be recognised that surveys are best placed to elicit data from victims on issues such as impact, nature and extent of abuse.*

- 11) The unidirectional flow of data from FLRs to data gathering systems should be addressed by ensuring that FLRs are data recipients rather than just providers.

*'Closing the loop' for FLRs will allow FLRs to locate and understand their actions in relation to managing and mitigating domestic violence. This too is something for consideration within the training tasks of IMPRODOVA as the consortium works to consider the learning needs of FLRs in the related tasks of WP3.*

- 12) Administrative and survey data analyses should not only be made available to the public (and FLRs), it should be made accessible to them.

*National (anonymised) domestic violence data should be publicly available without request. Accessibility should also be considered in relation to the format and presentation of statistical information.*

- 13) Raw data should be made available for further analyses.

*Making (anonymised) raw data available to relevant agencies and researchers facilitates analytical insight beyond the headline analyses that are published as standard, and enhances the utility of the data gathered.*

- 14) The EU and Member States should promote and fund surveys that can be repeated every few years to measure developments over time.

*This recommendation concurs with the FRA (2014) recommendation on this issue and its adoption would signify a concerted effort to uncover information on the extent and nature of domestic violence.*

- 15) Alternative methods of gathering and utilising data about the ‘bigger picture’ of domestic violence should be considered, in addition to the use of administrative and conventional survey data.

*In addressing this recommendation, consideration should be given to the important data gathering undertaken by NGOs. Inspiration here might be taken from the innovative methodology illustrated in the Day to Count first used in the UK in September 2000 (Stanko, 2001). This 24-hour snapshot of domestic violence audited every police service, women’s refuge and the national helpline in the UK, as well as some local authority services in Scotland, to request a simple tally of the total number of who had asked for help, assistance, support or advice about domestic violence. A similar approach has since been used by Women’s Aid England in the Day to Count and Week to Count statistics, and by Scottish Women’s Aid (SWA) in their 24-hour census of the number of women, children and young people who were supported that day. Importantly, the SWA census also documents the number of people that they were unable to provide safe accommodation for due to a lack of resources. Such counts offer a way to communicate to the public at large, not simply the scale of the problem, but the demands upon FLRs.*

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