



# Building a uniform system for the prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Estonia.

Helve Kase

Project manager

Estonian Institute for Open Society  
Research

Duration of the project: 28.11.2013 – 31.12.2015

Project accomplisher: Estonian Institute for Open Society Research  
[www.eaui.ee](http://www.eaui.ee)

Project partners:

1. Resource Centre on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention, Western Norway [www.rvts.no/vest](http://www.rvts.no/vest)

2. Police and Border Guard Board [www.politsei.ee](http://www.politsei.ee)

3. Estonian Academy of Security Sciences [www.sisekaitse.ee](http://www.sisekaitse.ee)

4. Tallinn University, Institute of Social Work  
[www.tlu.ee/et/sotsiaaltooinstituut](http://www.tlu.ee/et/sotsiaaltooinstituut)

5. University of Tartu, Faculty of Medicine (Department of Family Medicine) [www.arpo.ut.ee](http://www.arpo.ut.ee)

6. University of Tartu, Faculty of Law (Institute of Public Law)  
[www.oi.ut.ee/et/kontakt/avalikuoiguseinstituut](http://www.oi.ut.ee/et/kontakt/avalikuoiguseinstituut)

# Crime statistics show that intimate partner violence is increasing in Estonia

- In 2013, 2,752 cases of intimate partner violence were recorded in Estonia, in 2012 – 2,231 cases and in 2011 – 1,939 cases.
- 92% of abusers were men; 84% of victims were women. 75% of cases occur between current or previous partners.
- Out of all domestic abuse cases physical violence amounts to 78%.
- Every fifth case is a repeated offence.
- There were 19 domestic violence-related homicides and murders in 2013(20 in 2012).

# Problem 1

## Shortage of skilled specialists

- Current system mainly based on three institutions: the police, victim support, shelters.
- Number of cases growing rapidly, shortage of specialists/resources.
- Social workers, medics, lawyers professionally facing domestic abuse stay remote from the issue, tend to blame the victim, lack professional knowledge and skills.
- Domestic abuse issue is absent or insufficiently reflected in professional and operating guidelines, syllabi of universities/colleges, which train specialists.

## Problem 2

### Simplified approach

- **Priority is children**, women as main victims need not receive timely help, putting their health and life at risk.
- **Priority is to keep the family together** by conciliation, psychological aid, anger management etc. This could lead to unforeseeable consequences.
- **Response to incidents.** No specialists, resources etc. for prevention.
- **Gender inequality as primary cause of domestic abuse is often ignored.** Resulting in simplified and incorrect idea of domestic abuse.

## Problem 3

### Erroneous understanding of the causes of violence

Erroneous attitude prevails that intimate partner violence is caused by:

- alcohol or narcotics
- economic hardship, poverty, unemployment, stress
- inability of abuser to control his emotions
- the victim's (provocative) actions.

## Problem 4

### Domestic abuse training is often case-oriented

- Traditionally, **specialists are mainly trained to solve cases**, rather than to analyse the nature and underlying causes of violence.
- **This trend is dangerous**, since the specialist's theoretical base is weak, knowledge is superficial, **decisions for solving the situation may prove incorrect.**
- In order to make the intervention strategies work efficiently in specific cases, a **precisely formulated theory of domestic violence should be used.**

## Problem 5

### Weak legal basis (1)

- Only one case out of four reaches the court.  
**Only 13% of cases lead to actual prison sentence.**
- **Evidence often remains superficial** and insufficient for bringing criminals to justice.
- **Conciliation procedure** predominates in Estonian legal practice in the regulation of abuse cases.



## Problem 5

### Weak legal basis (2)

### Estonia lacks a law on domestic violence

- Absence of the law is one reason, why abusers enjoy the sense of impunity
- Countries without specific laws often use conciliation of parties (e.g. in Russia in 90% of court cases). **In USA (the law exists) 20 states have forbidden partnership counseling and conciliation of couples with domestic abuse record**
- Women suffering from abuse rarely dare to complain to law enforcement. Female victims lack confidence in law enforcement due to the predominant attitude in the society, which also blames the women for violence. As a result the abusers mostly go unpunished.

## Problem 6.

### Insufficient cooperation

- Cooperation in handling domestic violence cases between specialists of different fields is very weak or practically nonexistent in Estonia. Cooperation exists effectively only when violence concerns children.
- Cooperation is viewed as an additional burden, extra work, which is done mostly done as a favour and in free time.

## Problem 7

Domestic violence issue is practically absent in university syllabi

Estonia needs university graduate specialists (lawyers, police officers, social workers, medics), who have received special training on intimate partner violence and:

- are not afraid of the subject,
- are free of stereotypic attitude,
- are capable of empathy, do not blame the victim,
- can provide professional advice

The victims would not hesitate to approach such specialists, they can be certain that they will be understood.

# Goals of the project (1):

To integrate all parties dealing with IPV:

- medical staff;
- police personnel;
- social workers;
- legal specialists

# Goals of the project (2):

To develop an integrated model of action:

1. Harmonisation of and agreeing on terms, so that all specialists of the different fields could understand the use of terms like gender violence, intimate partner violence or domestic violence in exactly the same way.
2. Mapping the initial situation in all aforementioned systems. Organisation of expert interviews among specialists dealing with IPV (medical staff, the police, social workers, lawyers).
3. Development of a specialists' training system based on common understanding; expert assessment of training programmes and their development or improvement dependent on necessity

# Goals of the project (3):

To develop an integrated model of action:

4. Development or improvement of training materials for carrying out basic or additional training
5. Expert assessment, updating and, if necessary, writing of professional and operating guidelines, which would allow violence prevention, adequate risk assessment and timely intervention in IPV cases by all institutions according to uniform principles
6. Training of teachers, who hold lectures on gender and domestic violence at universities (Academy of Security Sciences, University of Tartu, Tallinn University etc) to specialists of various fields , presentation of new study programmes and materials developed within the project

# Goals of the project (4):

To demonstrate the financial cost of IPV :

- to employers (absence, sick leave)
- to the medical system (hospital places, emergency and specialised medical aid)
- to the police and judicial system (handling the cases, trials, etc.)
- to the social welfare system (shelters etc.)

## Goals of the project (5):

- Drafting of proposals for the improvement or amendment of legislation
- Awareness-building of the risk groups, the general public, as well as specialists and legislators, based on facts and new information on the IPV problem obtained during the studies.



# Project activities (1):

Harmonising the activities of institutions dealing with IPV (the police, medics, lawyers, social workers):

- Carrying out interviews with experts, 4 studies (the police, medics, lawyers, social workers)
- Expert assessment, updating, development of professional guidelines, questionnaires etc.
- Expert assessment, updating, development of training programmes and materials for basic and additional training
- Expert assessment, updating, development of training programmes and materials for advanced training
- Training of teachers (trainers)

## Project activities (2):

The form of work of the project shall be based on round tables of two types:

1. inter-departmental, involving top specialists of the field (8 round tables);
2. a supra-departmental group of experts, which would be formed of representatives of all project partners (12 round tables).

## Project activities (3):

The cost of violence or what does IPV cost to the Estonian state?

- Study “Violence and Female`s Health”
- Calculation of the cost of violence (spending on health care, loss of workdays due to sick leave, disability, expenses on solving IPV cases : the police, social workers, medics (emergency medical services, general practitioners) and other expenses)

# Project activities (4):

Improvement of general awareness of the public as well as specialists

- Five media presentations of the results of the studies (the police, medics, lawyers, social workers and Study “Violence and Female`s Health”)
- A series of studies-based articles on the media throughout the duration of the project (two years)
- Two seminars for the parliament members and the parliamentary legal committee, lobbying the parliament in support of the law amendments and the domestic violence prevention act throughout the duration of the project (two years)
- Awareness-building campaign: “If he hits you, he doesn’t love you!”



Thank you!