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# EVALUATION OF SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

JOINT LITHUANIAN-LATVIAN REPORT



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# INTRODUCTION



## PROJECT PARTNERS

### Association “MARTA Centre”

MARTA has developed its activities in the elimination of violence against women during the last 16 years. MARTA is the leading women's rights organization in Latvia and advocates for domestic violence and human trafficking victims' rights by providing victim-centered services and by lobbying systemic changes in legislation and local, national and European policies. Support services based on a teamwork approach have been developed through different initiatives and projects both - national and international. In cooperation with other institutions, MARTA always represents the victims' needs and rights.

### Liepaja city council Social services

Liepaja Social Services is an agency established by Liepaja City Council to ensure social services and social support for people living in Liepaja city.

### Public Organization Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services Centre, Lithuania

PO Klaipeda Social and Psychological Service Centre (KSPSC) is a non-governmental, the non-profit organization, founded in 2003, which the main goal is to provide a complex help (social, psychological and legal support) for victims of violence (violence in a close relationship, trafficking in human beings, and sexual exploitation for prostitution purposes).

The purpose of the Centre is to seek to empower victims to become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives now and in the future.

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services Centre has a vision where women, children, and families are socially and psychologically safe. In order to meet the social security and mental health needs of children, youth, women, and families the center provides professional staff and volunteers. In addition, the center raises civil responsibility. The center works in cooperation with National and international NGO's, along with the Department of Social Support in the Klaipeda Municipality.

### Budgetary Organisation Klaipeda Family and Child Welfare center

Klaipeda City Family and Child Welfare Center have been founded in 2003 and its main goal is to increase social skills of care of children for disadvantaged adults and adults who are deprived from parental care, to provide the opportunity to live a full life, promoting the restoration of relations with the surrounding environment. In 2013 KFCWC has established the Women Help Subdivision aiming at to provide psychosocial assistance and short-term social care services for women, women with children who are victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and prostitution.

Interreg V-A Latvia – Lithuania Programme 2014-2020 project: “Women and Children – Safe in their City” (“Safe City”), project No. LLI-392

### Project Summary

Recent surveys reveal that Latvia and Lithuania are among European countries where prevalence of **domestic violence** against women is above the EU average. EU-wide survey conducted in 2014 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that 32% of women in Latvia and 24% in Lithuania have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner. 60% of women in Latvia and 51% in Lithuania have experienced some form of psychological violence by a partner. Many women feel unsafe in their families and their intimate relationships and crucial role to provide protection and support for victims lays upon local municipalities.

Project is aiming at elimination of domestic violence in Liepāja and Klaipeda. Project will introduce and improve support and counselling services for women and children – victims of domestic violence. These services will be based on interdisciplinary teamwork approach – where a social worker, a lawyer and a psychologist work as a team to help victim to end violent relationships and to start a life without violence. The project will also address improvement of cooperation between institutions to tackle domestic violence more effective. Experience exchange visits between Liepāja and Klaipeda, comparative analysis on victims needs and accessibility of servic-

es in Klaipeda and Liepaja, joint trainings for representatives of key institutions and development of guidelines for specialists will be carried out within the project.

It is expected that 120 women victims and 40 child victims will receive support and counselling services within project and 100 women victims and 50 children victims will benefit every year after the end of the project.

The project will bring together knowledge and expertise of Latvian and Lithuanian NGOs and municipal agencies.

### Project Approach

Several studies (conducted by WAVE, EIGE, FRA) have shown that in different EU member states vast differences prevail as regards the extent and the service capability provided to victims of violence against women. Thus, the practice and methods of risk evaluation and coordinated response are still to be developed in some EU countries, including Latvia and Lithuania.

The first specific objectives of the project “Safe City” is to create new services - inter-disciplinary teamwork-based approach in domestic violence cases in Liepaja by bringing knowledge and experience of project partners together. Project lead partner MARTA Centre (Marta) has extensive experience of 19 years in implementing victim centered services for domestic violence victims and human trafficking victims. As for now Marta provides interdisciplinary team support services to domestic violence victims in Riga. Klaipeda Social

and Psychological Services Centre (KSPSC) is a local NGO which has vast experience in providing a complex social, psychological and legal support to members of the community of Klaipeda including domestic violence victims. KSPSC has been developing services and trainings for specialists since its establishment in 2003. Liepaja city council Social services (Liepaja Social Services) and Budgetary Organization Klaipeda City Family and Children Welfare Centre (Klaipeda Family Centre) are agencies responsible for coordination of municipal social services.

The second specific objective of the project is to improve inter-institutional cooperation model in work with women and children victims of domestic violence in Liepaja and Klaipeda. Systemic approach is crucial to make new-made or improved services to work efficiently. Improved services alone can't be effective without establishing of a strong framework for systemic inter-institutional collaboration and allocation of reasonable funds.

An inter-institutional cooperation model for domestic violence cases in Liepaja is non-existent. Governmental and municipal agencies and NGO in Klaipeda have their cooperation protocols in place, but there is a need for regular monitoring and evaluation of cooperation. In this project innovative inter-institutional cooperation methods from other countries will be used and adapted as a framework for improvement of these models.

Both cities Liepaja and Klaipeda needs a comprehensive development plans for inter-institutional cooperation model to ensure durability and regular upgrades. Often products of many well-developed projects haven't proved their sustainability after the end of projects due to lack of well-considered follow-up activities and strategic development plans. Project "Safe City" is designed to develop such plans closely together with other stakeholders and decision makers in local municipalities.

The project "Safe City" is unique in the context of INTERREG Latvia – Lithuania cross border cooperation initiatives. Domestic violence as a common challenge has not been addressed by any of projects in of the Programme area of Latvian – Lithuanian cross border cooperation in 2007-2013 planning period.

### **Project Focus**

Improve accessibility and efficiency of well-coordinated, victim focused and needs based support services system for women and children victims of domestic violence in Liepaja and Klaipeda and create effective cross border collaboration practices between responsible institutions of both cities.

### **Project Context**

The project aims to contribute to the consistent and coherent implementation of the EU policies on combating gender-based violence. The European Union has been committed to the value of gender equality since its very beginnings and even more so today, as 2016 came with yet new framework of EU Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 document. This document stresses the importance of strengthening gender equality in all ways but prioritizing five – one of which is combating gender-based violence. The EU is also planning accession to the Istanbul Convention. A Roadmap (2015/JUST/10) that has an overview of the context, objectives, issues and options regarding accession has been created.

In the context of a possible Union-wide accession and considering the current mobility of citizens within the EU, it is very important to contribute to creating Europe as a safe place with more unified protection for victims and the accountability of perpetrators. Therefore, efforts at local, national and European level are equally important to achieve Europe-wide progress in eliminating gender-based violence. Taking in account the actual differences among Member States in protecting and supporting victims of gender-based violence, it is clear that a more coherent approach with common guidelines is crucial in order to mitigating these differences.

Even though this project is aimed at creating new services and improving inter-institutional cooperation to fight domestic violence in Liepaja and Klaipeda, at its very center are the principles stated in the European legislation and the Istanbul Convention. The project is in line with the area for action prioritized by the Commission on combating gender-based violence and pro-

tecting and supporting victims. The project contributes to uniform policies in Europe, as well as to supplement evidence-based strategies to effectively eliminate violence against women and to support victims of violence. The project takes note on good practice examples from other Member states and aims to serve as one more effective instrument complementing the number of good practice examples.

The project would not only be of a considerable added value within Latvian and Lithuanian national policy, but also would become an example of a practical execution of transporting EU and international law standards into national practice. It will contribute to sharing good practices, knowledge and useful tools in the whole European Union, as the issue of gender-based violence gets tackled more and more within national and international agenda..

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## REPORT PART I: SITUATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LITHUANIA

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behaviour used by one person in an intimate relationship to gain power and control over another. In addition to physical violence, abuse includes name calling, humiliating in front of others, controlling what one wears, says and does, controlling financial decisions, destroying property, and using children to control one's partner. Domestic abuse happens between people of all racial, economic, educational and religious backgrounds, in heterosexual and same-sex relationships; whether living together or separately with a partner, married or unmarried, in a short-term or long-term relationship, it can happen to anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one-third (30%) of women, who have been in a relationship, report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to emphasize that several terms are used in this paper: *domestic violence*, *intimate partner violence*, *violence in close relationship* (which is closer to the term used in Lithuanian social and legal practice: *Lithuanian*. “*artima aplinka*” – *English*. “*Close Environment*”). All of these definitions refer to the relations between a *perpetrator* and a *victim* as being partners in an intimate environment.

Needless to say, the numbers of domestic violence in Lithuania remain frightening. In 2018, Lithuanian emergency helpline (tel. number 112) received more than 46 thousand emergency calls about possible domestic violence accidents. One fourth of them were confirmed as real violent acts with minor or major physical injuries, and pre-trial investigations were initiated. However, the official statistics remain doubtful: situations, when victim and perpetrator reconcile or find their way not to start pre-trial investigations, are still quite often.

One more common problem in Lithuania is the fact that a part of the cases of domestic violence are veiled in secrecy. Following the traditions, family conflicts, even

if they cause brutal physical traumas, tend to be considered as internal issue of the family: something that you do not talk about with strangers.

Most victims of domestic violence are women – in 2018, they made up to 80%, while in three quarters of 2019 the numbers remain more or less the same. As most of the researchers agree, Lithuanian culture could be described as patriarchal and male-dominated<sup>3</sup>, that causes inequalities between men and women, especially in terms of violence in intimate relations.

Since 1991, when Lithuania regained its independence, domestic violence has been prosecuted only under general laws, for example, assault-based offenses from the Criminal Code. There were no national programs combating domestic violence at the state level. The *Law on Protection against Domestic Violence* came into force in 2011 (*hereinafter referred to as “The PADV Law”*).

The PADV Law defines the concept of domestic violence, establishes the rights and liability of subjects of domestic violence, implementation of prevention measures, and provision of assistance in the event of domestic violence, and application of protection measures to the victims of violence.<sup>4</sup> Acts of violence within the family or close relations from 2011 can be charged under the aforementioned law.

The PADV Law covers people living in a domestic environment, which means “the environment comprising the persons currently or previously linked by marriage, partnership, affinity or other close relations, also the persons having a common domicile and a common household.”<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, most of the programs of support and rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence are based on the PADV Law and have been implemented according to the methods provided in the national legislation and regulations. This helps non-governmental organizations to develop their methods on the legal basis and to provide professional and reliable help.

This paper aims to analyse and evaluate the current situation of legal and social services provided by various organizations and institutions in Klaipėda (Lithuania) to people, who suffer from domestic violence, in order

to describe restrictions, frames and opportunities of the existing practices.

According to the provisions of the PADV Law, the institutions and organisations (whether NGOs or municipal) shall seek for smooth interinstitutional cooperation. Interinstitutional cooperation is meant to support collaboration and improvement of help provision to the victims of domestic violence, to contribute to modernisation of the existing support system and to ensure closer relationships between supporters and the identified victims.

Cooperation, as one of the main principles of the PADV Law (Clause No. 3), tend to be mandatory in terms of creation of long-lasting and effective support chain, where each involved institution or organisation is aware of the duties and responsibilities of their own and each other to be able to ensure a consistent progress in the cases of domestic violence.

## LITHUANIA REVIEW: FACTS AND NUMBERS

The full extent of domestic violence is not easy to estimate. Violence in close relationship continues to be underreported and stigmatised, meaning only a part of the real cases has been reported.

Statistics Lithuania<sup>6</sup> informs that according to the provisional data of the Information Technology and Communications Department, in 2018, 9 529 crimes of domestic violence were recorded, or 13% less than in 2017 (10 968). These crimes accounted for 17.8% of the total recorded crimes (2017 – 18.2%), and more than a half of the total number of the recorded violence crimes (45 and 66% in urban and rural areas, respectively).

Most (8.7 thousand crimes, or 91.1%) of the recorded domestic violence crimes were related to non-severe health impairment, 654 (6.9%) – crimes related to threatening, 63 (0.7%) – sexual abuse crimes, 38 – severe health impairment, 13 – homicides (25 in 2017), 8 – attempts to murder, 32 – other crimes.

In 2018, there were 5 611 persons suspected (accused) of committing the recorded domestic violence crimes

(8.5% less than in 2017), whom men accounted for 90% of. More than a half (3.1 thousand, or 56%) of the suspects (the accused) were aged 30–49. In addition, 34 juveniles (0.6% of the total number of the suspects (the accused)) were suspected (accused) of committing the said crimes.

More than a half (56%) of the suspects (the accused) were with general upper secondary and vocational education, almost a quarter (24%) – lower secondary education, 10% – higher and post-secondary tertiary education, 9% – primary education or no education. Almost a half (48%) of the suspects (the accused) did not work or study during the commitment of the crime. 63% of the suspects (the accused) were under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the commitment of the crime. Majority of the persons (5.4 thousand, or 96%) were suspected (accused) of physical violence.

The supervision measures were imposed on 2.4 thousand persons suspected (accused) of domestic violence. Intensive supervision (control of the suspected by electronic monitoring tools) was imposed on 2 thousand (86%) persons, 0.5 thousand (19%) were obliged to reside separately from the victim and/or to keep a certain distance from the victim, 101 (4%) persons had an obligation to periodically register with the police, 64 (3%) persons were detained, meanwhile, identity documents were taken from 85 persons, and one person was placed under house arrest.

According to the data of the Police Department, more than 46 thousand domestic violence accidents were reported to the police both in 2018 and 2017, and, in comparison, there were 66.6 thousand reports about domestic violence registered in 2016. It is 28% difference in only few years. Does it show that the level of violence decreases? It is more likely that some reasons emerged and the reporting issue (which existed before 2011) showed up again.

It is estimated that 31% of women have experienced violence in Lithuania, which is roughly the same as in the EU overall.<sup>7</sup> Twenty years ago, in 1999, according to sociological survey, which was implemented due to lack of official statistical data, this number was 42.4%,<sup>8</sup> which is 10% higher than nowadays.

1 <http://www.thewomenscentre.org/docs/SafetyPlanVictimsDomesticViolence.pdf>

2 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

3 K. Jovaisa Smurto šeimoje prevencija: iliuzijų anatomija, 2009

4 REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA LAW ON PROTECTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 26 May 2011 No XI-1425 Vilnius, link: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.410975> (2019-03-29)

5 Ibid.

6 Statistical information about domestic violence is prepared and published according to Article 1(3) of Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No. XII-2629 of 21 September 2016 On Ensuring Protection from Domestic Violence, source: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/informaciniai-pranesimai?eventId=173685>

7 Combating violence against women, EIGE, source: [file:///C:/Users/Olka/Downloads/2016.5483\\_mh0116748enn\\_pdfweb\\_20170215171919.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Olka/Downloads/2016.5483_mh0116748enn_pdfweb_20170215171919.pdf)

8 Smurtas prieš moteris Lietuvoje. Vilnius. WIIC Unifem, 1999, p.133-134, Purvaneckas A., Purvaneckienė G., Moteris Lietuvos visuomenėje, Vilnius, 2001, p. 130.

The results of the survey, conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014, showed that since the age of 15:

- 31% of women in Lithuania have experienced physical and/or sexual violence;
- 8% of women in Lithuania have been stalked;
- 35% of women in Lithuania have experienced sexual harassment.<sup>9</sup>

There is no possibility to collect information on other than physical violence, for instance, other forms of violence, e.g., economical, emotional or psychological. There is no legal evaluation of these types of violence in Lithuania to be able to make judgements on negative interactions and consequences for the victims' well-being.

Criminal statistics on sexual violence are not separated according to the type of sexual violence; especially, it is difficult to identify the statistics on marital rape. Marital rape in Lithuania is still not criminalised either in Criminal Code or in the PADV Law.<sup>10</sup> Even though the police have been receiving an increasing number of calls, regarding domestic violence, since 2011, sexual violence remains invisible. A sexual relationship with the spouse is still considered a *wife's duty*, therefore, complaints by women, who experience sexual violence by their husbands, are not usually regarded as a serious crime, either in public institutions or within the society as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

Stalking activity of a former or previous intimate partner is referred to as *harassment of a person* (Clause No. 145 of Criminal Code of Republic of Lithuania). It is defined as threatening to kill or seriously injure human health or intimidation of a person. These actions are hardly proven and usually go unpunished.

The overall policy on domestic violence could be considered as reactive rather than proactive, putting the focus on recognizing and revealing the violence, as well as providing rehabilitation. The least attention is devoted to prevention of violence. This aspect might be significant for decreasing violence in the long term.

In 2017, the European Institute for Gender Equality published the Gender Equality Index measuring how

the government policy meets the needs of men and women. According to the latter, Lithuania remains one of the EU's outsiders. The peculiarities of the needs of women and men are not rated when the policy is formed at a national, municipal level.<sup>12</sup>

Objectification of women remains the fundamental cause of violations of women's rights, starting from their exclusion from public space and ending with gender-based violence. Women are not only discouraged from engaging in professional activities due to pregnancy, they often face harassment at work (or job interviews).<sup>13</sup> Limitations in pursuing a career and the resulting restrictions of seeking for financial independence, cause vulnerability to domestic violence.

## LITHUANIA REVIEW: LEGISLATION SYSTEM

According to the World Health Organisation, the possibility of experiencing violence is increased by the risk factors as lower level of education, exposure to child maltreatment, witnessing family violence, which tends to create a vicious circle and extends to the next generation, and attitudes in the society that accept violence and gender inequality.

The consequences of intimate partner violence affect both mental and physical health of women, increasing the risk of injuries and even fatal outcomes, e.g., homicide or suicide. Similarly, witnessing violence has a devastating impact on children, who may suffer from a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances, possibly associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life.

Violence shall mean an intentional physical, mental, sexual, and economic or another influence exerted on a person by an act or omission as a result whereof the person suffers physical, property or non-pecuniary damage.<sup>14</sup>

Due to understanding that domestic violence is not an individual issue, but a public matter, Lithuania, as many other European countries, raises up the question of intervention into families, facing the problem of part-

ner abuse. Numerous legal acts have already been implemented in the Lithuanian legislation system with intention to provide prevention, intervention and protection methods to combat domestic violence and minimize its negative effect on the society.

Some important international conventions and recommendations have been discussed harshly at high political level without moving back or forward, and, thus, forming a vicious circle difficult to escape from.

## THE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, is a progressive international treaty aimed at combating violence against women and domestic violence, treating them as serious violations of human rights. The document covers the prevention of violence, victim protection, bringing perpetrators to justice and monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

The Istanbul Convention is a crucial legal instrument to strengthen the states in the fight against violence against women. It is based on the experiences from all over the world, incorporating the best measures to decrease the gender-based violence. Lithuania signed the Istanbul Convention in 2013.

In 2016, Lithuania adopted the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council and made a commitment to ratify the treaty<sup>15</sup>, which entered into force in 2014. The Convention provides a comprehensive set of policy and legal measures to prevent and prosecute violence against women and protect the survivors.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the first discussions about the Istanbul Convention at high political level started more than five years ago. Lithuania's former president Dalia Grybauskaitė decided to submit the Istanbul Convention, i.e., the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, to the

Lithuanian parliament for ratification once again in 2018. The European community considered it as important step forward in the area of human rights in Lithuania.

It is necessary to point out that 30 of 47 members of the Council of Europe have already ratified the convention. Unfortunately, even though the ratification of the Istanbul Convention has stalled in the Seimas, the question has been removed from agenda of the Seimas' Spring Session 2018, and is unlikely to end up in the near future.

The treaty has been repeatedly facing political opposition, as it was demonstrated by the earlier decision to put on hold its ratification. The main reason for the delay was the use of the term gender in the Istanbul Convention. In accordance to Article 3c, *gender means socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men*. The term is central to the Convention since it depicts violence against women as gender-based. In other words, it views gender violence as a consequence of power inequalities between men and women, which are rooted in sociocultural norms. The critics in Lithuania assert that the concept of *gender* is unfamiliar in the national law.<sup>17</sup>

*"The superstitions and the stereotypes in Lithuania are stronger than the good will to tackle domestic violence and women abuse."*<sup>18</sup> That is how the journalists usually start their analysis of the situation, related to ratification of the Istanbul Convention usually, in Lithuanian media. Lithuanian politicians and, usually, the vast majority of Lithuanians, do not seem to be ready for wider interpretation of the term *gender* (Lithuanian term *lytis* is more related to English term *sex*).

According to Ramūnas Karbauskis (2018), the head of the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union: *"The only innovation that this convention would bring to us is the concept of "gender", which can be ambiguously interpreted as a concept that does not recognize the human sex as a human nature. Such an interpretation in the legal system of Lithuania would endanger family policy consistently based on marriage of a man and a woman, and relations between kinship, paternity and maternity"*.

9 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey — Main results, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

10 National Analysis by expert Rugile Butkeviciute, source: [https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/2714\\_lithuania\\_lr.pdf](https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/2714_lithuania_lr.pdf)

11 Ibid.

12 <https://hrmi.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2016-2017-Human-Rights-in-Lithuania.pdf>

13 Ibid.

14 <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/regulatory-and-legal-framework/legal-definitions-in-the-eu/lithuania-intimate-partner-violence>

15 <https://hrmi.lt/en/ratify-istanbul-treaty/>

16 <https://ilg2.org/2018/07/13/debating-the-istanbul-convention-in-lithuania-the-term-gender-is-not-alien/>

17 <https://ilg2.org/2018/07/13/debating-the-istanbul-convention-in-lithuania-the-term-gender-is-not-alien/>

18 Lithuania procrastinates ratification of Istanbul Convention <https://bnn-news.com/lithuania-procrastinates-ratification-of-istanbul-convention-185695>

Almost 70 NGOs urge Lithuanian MPs to better protect victims of domestic violence by complying with the international obligations and ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.<sup>19</sup>

The arguments, given by the Deputy Director of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute Natalija Bitiukova during one of the public discussions, clarify the importance of ratification: *“In recent years, Lithuania has done a lot to protect the victims of domestic violence. The Istanbul Convention, the first international legal instrument aimed solely at addressing gender-based violence, would allow us to systematically analyse our existing legal measures, assess their efficacy and improve them, thus developing a more effective system of protection. Thousands of victims are waiting for this next step, and it is for them that we must take it.”*<sup>20</sup>

Organizations and politicians defend *traditional values* by claiming that the Istanbul Convention is aimed to establish a new social gender in Lithuania and to limit the right of parents to educate their children according to their traditional beliefs. In other words, instead of strengthening prevention, protection and rehabilitation system in accordance to best practice model, interpretation of the concepts remains the focus of the discussions.

Article 10c of the Convention stipulates: *“To eliminate any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim”*. Thus, the Istanbul Convention would neither introduce the term “gender” nor impose the requirement of LGBT-inclusive gender equality — both have been a part of the Lithuanian international responsibilities. It would, however, assist the country in addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, criminalise the latter adequately, and implement victim-centred protection and support measures.<sup>21</sup>

## THE EUROPEAN UNION DIRECTIVE ON THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS OF CRIME

The EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime (2012) emphasizes the need to create a victim-friendly environment in cooperating institutions, to simplify and facilitate the victim’s participation in criminal proceedings, and to provide all relevant information and assistance in a timely manner.

The philosophy of attitude towards a victim is changing as a victim is no longer perceived as the means of proving the crime, but as an independent participant in the process, whom the state has new responsibilities for. The directive obliges the competent public authorities to look at the process through the prism of the victim’s security needs and legitimate expectations, i.e., the focus is not on the rights of an offender based on his presumption of innocence, but on the rights of a victim and the duty of the state to secure them.

The EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime states clearly that victims of crime should be recognized as victims and treated in a respectful, sensitive and professional manner, without any discrimination whatsoever. All contacts with the competent authorities dealing with criminal proceedings and all liaison bodies with the victims should take into account the personal situation and the immediate needs of victims (the EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime, Art. 9 Preamble).

The Directive emphasizes that *“violence in close relationships is a serious and often hidden social problem which could cause systematic psychological and physical trauma with severe consequences because the offender is a person whom the victim should be able to trust. Victims of violence in close relationships may therefore be in need of special protection measures.”*

The Directive (the EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime, Art. 18 Preamble) draws attention to the fact that women around the globe suffer disproportionately from domestic violence, which is recognized as gender-based violence. Those women, who are victims of gender-based violence, and their children often need special support and protection due to the high risk of secondary and repeat victimization, intimidation and

retaliation associated with this violence (the EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime, Art. 17 Preamble). The effective inter-institutional cooperation is required to achieve this goal.

There are several areas, covered by the EU Directive on the Rights of Victims of Crime, which have already been transposed into Lithuanian legal system. In 2017, the Human Rights Monitoring Institute submitted recommendations to the Committee on Human Rights suggesting to create legal preconditions for granting legal aid at least for those victims who are considered as vulnerable according to the Directive. In the same year, the Ministry of Justice prepared the relevant amendments of the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid, which came into a force on 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019.

Victims of domestic violence, along with victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, are provided with support services, which include provision of information, emotional and psychological support, as well as practical support, e.g., provision of necessary accommodation. Thus, geographical coverage of the services is not 100%. Accommodation is provided only in the main Lithuanian cities: Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda. In other smaller cities, even professional psychological and legal help is usually provided by social workers instead of appropriate specialists, which cannot be considered as the best practice.

It is still possible to depict some systemic problems related to the victims’ possibilities to effectively participate in pre-trial and court proceedings:<sup>22</sup> One of the most vulnerable part of defending victims’ interests in criminal proceedings is extremely limited access to legal aid. According to the existing regulation, the state-funded legal aid can be provided for victims, regardless of their level of income or property, only concerning the compensation of damages resulting from the crime. However, with respect to other procedural issues, e.g., testifying in court or appealing against the decisions of the investigator or the court, free legal aid is provided only to the victims of crime with particularly low income. Lack of legal representation of victims may create favourable conditions for defence lawyers to force a victim to make certain procedural decisions, for example, to reconcile with an offender. This is a common practice in cases of domestic violence.

## THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

The National Programme for the prevention of domestic violence and provision of assistance to victims for the period of 2014-2020 was approved by Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 (Resolution No. 485). Participation in implementation of the Programme has been recommended to municipalities, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers.

The Programme defines objectives concerning prevention and provision of assistance to victims of violence, establishes goals for achievement, and presents the analysis that grounds the objectives and goals, as well as lists the assessment criteria and their values. As one of the main facts, among the related substance abuse, latency of the problem, victimization and consequences of long-term violence, the Programme provides that not only victims of violence themselves, but also their family members as well other members of society face the consequences of domestic violence. In addition to severe mental and physical disorders, these implications are also linked to socio-economic expenditures.

There are two efficient objectives of the Programme:<sup>23</sup>

1. to increase public awareness about different manifestations of violence, its consequences and necessity to prevent it as well as to encourage intolerance to violent behaviour;
2. to improve the mechanism of complex assistance provision to the victims of violence based on the co-operation of state and municipal institutions and bodies, nongovernmental organizations, other bodies, organizations and the general public.

The Programme also implicates complex means of assistance to victims of domestic violence and provides recommendations on consequential activities for insti-

<sup>19</sup> <https://hrmi.lt/en/ratify-istanbul-treaty/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://hrmi.lt/en/ratify-istanbul-treaty/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://ilg2.org/2018/07/13/debating-the-istanbul-convention-in-lithuania-the-term-gender-is-not-alien/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://hrmi.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2016-2017-Human-Rights-in-Lithuania.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA RESOLUTION No 485 ON THE APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS FOR THE PERIOD OF 2014-2020 28 May 2014 Vilnius: <https://eseimas.lrs.lt/rs/legalact/TAD/259191b206f511e687e0fbad81d55a7c/>

tutions and organisations, working with domestic violence cases.

## THE LAW ON PROTECTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The legal act, protecting persons from domestic violence in Lithuania, was adopted on 26 May 2011. The aim of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (No XI-1425, hereinafter referred to as the Law or the PADV Law) is to not only provide a clear definition of violence itself and establish effective assistance model, but also to enshrine principles, considering domestic violence as damage to the society.

Since 1991, when Lithuania regained its independence, domestic violence has been prosecuted only under the general laws, for example, the assault-based offences from the Criminal Code. There were no national acts or programmes combating domestic violence on the state level until 2011. The PADV Law defines the concept of domestic violence; furthermore, it establishes the rights and liability of subjects of domestic violence, implementation of prevention measures, and provision of assistance in the event of domestic violence, and application of protection measures to victims of violence.<sup>24</sup> Acts of violence within the family or close relations can be charged under that PADV Law since 2011. It also ensures a prompt response to the threats, as well as prevention and protection measures.

The PADV Law considers domestic violence as violation of human rights and freedoms. It covers people living in a domestic environment, which means “the environment comprising the persons currently or previously linked by marriage, partnership, affinity or other close relations, also the persons having a common domicile and a common household.”<sup>25</sup> A person who inflicts domestic violence is called perpetrator.

Moreover, most of the programs of support and rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence are based on the Law and have been implemented according to the methods provided in the national legislation and regulations.

This helps non-governmental organizations to develop their methods on the legal basis and to provide professional and reliable help and ensures proper communication between the state authorities (e.g., police, prosecutor’s office, etc.) and non-governmental organizations.

Therefore, as it has already been mentioned, on the moment the PADV Law came into effect, domestic violence was considered as a private matter of a person, which caused tolerant and usually ignorant reactions of the society to victims’ “cry for help”. Therefore, it is still extremely important to ensure the public ability to recognize and be aware of indicators of domestic violence.

There are two types of persons recognized as victims of domestic violence by this Law:

1. an adult person, against whom domestic violence has been used;
2. a child who has become a witness of domestic violence or lives in an environment exposed to violence.

Violence here means an intentional physical, mental, sexual, and economic or another influence exerted on a person by an act or omission as a result whereof the person suffers physical, property or non-pecuniary damage.

The Law also provides for a legal evaluation of assistance to victims of domestic violence (hereinafter referred to as “assistance”), which means psychological, legal, social, health care, educational, accommodation and other necessary services provided by state, municipal institutions and non-governmental organizations to victims of domestic violence. Therefore, the state assumes a financial and controlling responsibility to provide support mechanisms and maximise their accessibility.

## DISCUSSION ON LEGISLATION SYSTEM

Legal compatibility in the current law system of Lithuania gradually turns to a question of harsh discussions between politics and supporting institutions. Despite the fact that the National Programme states that family members as well other members of society suffer the implications of domestic violence, difficulties within inter-institutional cooperation remain vivid. Numer-

ous incompatibilities of legal and practical aspects in coordination work within the field of domestic violence could be considered as obstacles to provision of complex support to family members.

For example, in case of domestic violence in families with children, contradictions are the most obvious: the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence is meant to protect a victim from an abuser, and this is considered as public (not private) matter. What does happen when a person informs the authorities about abusive actions? Information that children in family became witnesses of domestic violence is automatically given to the officers and, as a result, they shall be considered as victims of domestic violence too.

The new wording of the Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child was approved in Autumn Session 2017 of Lithuanian Seimas. The new law was scheduled to take effect in July.<sup>26</sup> The main reasoning to make amendments to the child protection system was to protect children from any type of parents’ abusive actions (physical punishment, including negligence). The reform was initiated after the outbreak of violence in Kėdainiai that ended in death of a four-year-old boy (after brutal stepfather’s actions).

Among other obligations and restrictions under the new law, territorial children’s rights protection units now have a permission (or even obligation) to remove a child from the unsafe environment immediately upon establishing a threat to his safety, health or life. Domestic violence is considered as a threat, so if a child becomes a witness of domestic violence, one should be removed (at least temporarily) from the environment, where one parent abuses another.

Furthermore, Lithuanian society usually lacks trust in institutions of the legal system, which causes certain dissatisfaction with these institutions and their activities. The number of reports about domestic violence started to decrease. There were more than 66 thousand calls to emergency helpline in 2016. Meanwhile, the number of calls for the police to domestic violence cases decreased by 10 percent both in 2017 and 2018.

Interinstitutional cooperation is vital in the discussed cases: failure to give a coordinate response to domestic

violence leads to systemic abuse and even hinder s security.

Some forms of domestic violence, considered as potentially dangerous in other countries, are not even covered in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania. For instance, there is no legislation, which could be used in cases then victims are stalked or terrified by a perpetrator after separation. In particular, the risk of the real acts, except for keep standing next to home, workplace, texting or e-mailing victims, remains uncontrolled. There is no evidence or it is not “scary enough” for victims to protect themselves from stalkers because the police do not have any instruments to stop inappropriate behaviour by legal means.

The expert of the Centre for Equality Advancement Margarita Jankauskaitė says (2018) that “A simple example is when a teacher suspects that a child lives in an unsafe environment. In this case, a teacher notifies the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service about his or her suspicions. If the specialists understand that the child’s well-being can only be achieved through his mother safety, they will try to coordinate activities together with the local police officers, guaranteeing protection to t mother rather than blaming her for failing to provide a safe environment to her child.”

Therefore, the specialists, working in a coordinate way and following a non-victim-blaming approach, are able to provide professional support to victim of domestic violence in each case. Protecting abused parent from secondary victimization is a key issue in provision of social services. The specialists are expected to decide whether the child’s interests can be protected in the family by providing relevant services, i.e., social services or psychological assistance, or whether the child must be taken away. In case of domestic violence, it is crucial to support a victimised parent, in order to protect a child from such impediments as becoming victim of direct abuse or witnessing of abusive actions.

There is one more expected amendment in the civil law system of Lithuania, which is considered as a simplifying compound of divorce cases, i.e., mediation. Lithuanian legislation did not provide any alternative non-judicial means of resolving issues relating to divorce, except for court procedures, until 1 January 2019. However, the national law established the obligation to use mediation in family conflicts at the beginning of this year.

<sup>24</sup> REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA LAW ON PROTECTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 26 May 2011 No XI-1425 Vilnius, link: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.410975> (2019-03-29)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Seimas approves children’s rights protection reform, source: <https://en.delfi.lt/culture/seimas-approves-childrens-rights-protection-reform.d?id=75895973>

Mediation is a way of resolving disputes between two or more parties with specific effects. An external expert, the mediator, assists the parties to negotiate a settlement. The theory of mediation claims that the outcome of family mediation is an agreement between the parties, achieved by their mutual consent due to the harmonization of their individual needs.

If we consider the implementation of obligatory mediation in family cases as a relatively functional and inexpensive way to release courts from the long-lasting divorce cases, involving “blame” issues, financial claims, children custody or other spouse disagreements, then the mediation is a solution. Nevertheless, mediation became an inclusive and unavoidable part of court divorce in Lithuania, which equals to even longer and expensive process.

There is another essential issue, related with mediation, the law system does not provide for any individual exceptions for obligatory mediation in family disputes. However, this causes the compatibility issues with the requirements of international law applicable to violence against women. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the European Union Victims Directive, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence do not allow mandatory mediation.<sup>27</sup>

The most radical critics on mediation consider it as an additional institutional violence against victim of domestic violence. It is argued that mediation is strongly not recommended due to inefficiency and potential harm to a woman who has suffered violence and abuse. For instance, usage of mediation in domestic violence cases is prohibited in more than 20 US states (American Bar Association Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence, 2014; Feder & Wilson, 2005). Mediation is usually criticized for transferring blame from a perpetrator to a victim. One more reason against it is a potential danger of face-to-face meeting. The advocacy of the third party might cause unexpected consequences and even become a trigger of brutal violence.

## LITHUANIAN REVIEW: SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

25<sup>th</sup> of November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Every year, from 25<sup>th</sup> of November until 10<sup>th</sup> of December, Lithuania, as many other European countries, holds two weeks against domestic violence. Organisations, supporting victims, or any other related institutions, may participate in the customised social campaigns. These social acts are meant to raise awareness on domestic violence in society and to decrease the level of violence tolerance in Lithuania.

The most recent social awareness campaign, which actually raised many discussions in Lithuania, sounded like that: “If you blame the woman, who has suffered violence, you support the perpetrator.”<sup>28</sup> The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in Lithuania launched this social campaign in 2018 to show support for women who report domestic violence, in order to demonstrate how deeply victim-blaming attitudes are rooted in the culture of Lithuanian society.

According to the survey, carried out by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in 2017, victim-blaming practices are very common in Lithuania. Here are some brief results of the survey:

- 85% of respondents agreed with the statement that a woman could break off a relationship with an abuser if she really wants to;
- 53% agreed with the statements that when men are accused of domestic violence, women tend to exaggerate or magnify the problem and that women often provoke domestic violence against them;
- 27% stated that some women like when men use force against them.

Large visual posters in three major Lithuanian cities – Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, radio and TV advertisements, advertising on social media, in cinemas, supermarkets, and appearances on TV and radio shows were illustrating “quite usual” social situations, where victim’s mother, girlfriend, officer or even priest advices to keep silence and suffer in case of domestic violence. As it has

<sup>28</sup> Social campaign in Lithuania aims to raise awareness of violence against women, by BNS, source: <https://en.delfi.lt/culture/social-campaign-in-lithuania-aims-to-raise-awareness-of-violence-against-women.d?id=79207195>

<sup>27</sup> Privalomoji mediacija šeimos ginčuose – inovacija ar žingsnis atgal? Source: <http://manoteises.lt/straipsnis/privalomoji-mediacija-seimos-gincuose-inovacija-ar-zingsnis-atgal/>

been already mentioned, this campaign was not taken unambiguously. There were many opposite positions from the supportive to radically hostile one.

Social campaigns are not the only mean to raise awareness and provide support. Among other support methods, Lithuania has a helpline called The Women’s Line (8800 66 366), which is free of charge for Lithuanian callers. Helpline provides emotional support to adults, mainly women, as well as to victims of domestic violence.

Forum Women to Women (<https://forumas.visureikalas.lt/>) – self-help forum for victims of domestic violence. For sharing information, helping each other and making social relations between women who has no opportunity to get away from violent relationships, but still seek for understanding and support, even if they are not ready or not willing to get a professional support or receive peer help in addition to other help methods.

There is one question remaining opened – the public presentation of domestic violence cases in media. As it is known, journalistic competences are directly related both to the topics that are chosen and their further development, that is, the selection of the sources, taking a critical look into various pieces of information, provided by distinct groups, recognizing their own prejudice and reflecting on the ways it affects their work.

Moreover, there is still a question of ethics, how journalists present violent cases to public. It remains quite usual for national press and media to consider what was the reason of a violent act within family: economic issues, “misunderstanding” between partners or quantity of alcohol consumed before the fight. It seems that the identified causes are the ones, which can explain or even justify the brutal violence against family members.

## LITHUANIAN REVIEW: THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM IN KLAIPEDA

It is important to present the institutions and organizations, which are involved in a provision of legal and social support to victims of domestic violence in Klaipeda, in order to establish the main functions of each participant in the general support system. Understanding of processes and participants makes it

easier to discuss the questions related with inter-institutional cooperation and to prepare a solid ground for ensuring efficient assistance in case of domestic violence.

As the PADV Law came into a force, three main agents, responsible for its enforcement, were established: the Police, the specialised assistance centres and the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service.<sup>29</sup> This created a precedent for institutions and organizations to cooperate in order not only to ensure protection of victims and proper investigation of cases of domestic violence, but also to provide psychosocial support to individuals, suffering in violent surroundings.

It is important to note that victims are suppose not only to be provided with effective help, but also to be protected from secondary victimization, when a person, seeking for help, is traumatized by unprofessional and inaccurate approach of officers or specialists.

This led to obligations of transferring information from one agent to another. For instance, the police shall notify the specialized assistance centre about the registered crime, and if there were children in the family, report to the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service about minors, who could possibly become victims or witnesses of family violence.

Specialized assistance centres are considered in Lithuania as professionals, having competence and special knowledge about victims’ social and psychological needs. Centres have procedural obligations to provide courses and teachings to police workers and the specialists of the Child Rights Protection, court, prosecutors and other professionals. By the way, this is a step towards closer cooperation between the agents.

<sup>29</sup> SMURTO ARTIMOJE APLINKOJE IKITEISMINIO TYRIMO EIGA REGLAMENTUOJANČIŲ TEISĖS AKTŲ IR VIDINĖS TVARKOS DOKUMENTŲ ANALIZĖS ATASKAITA <http://kurkl.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/analiz%C4%97s-ataskaita.pdf>

## THE MAIN SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS AND FUNCTIONS

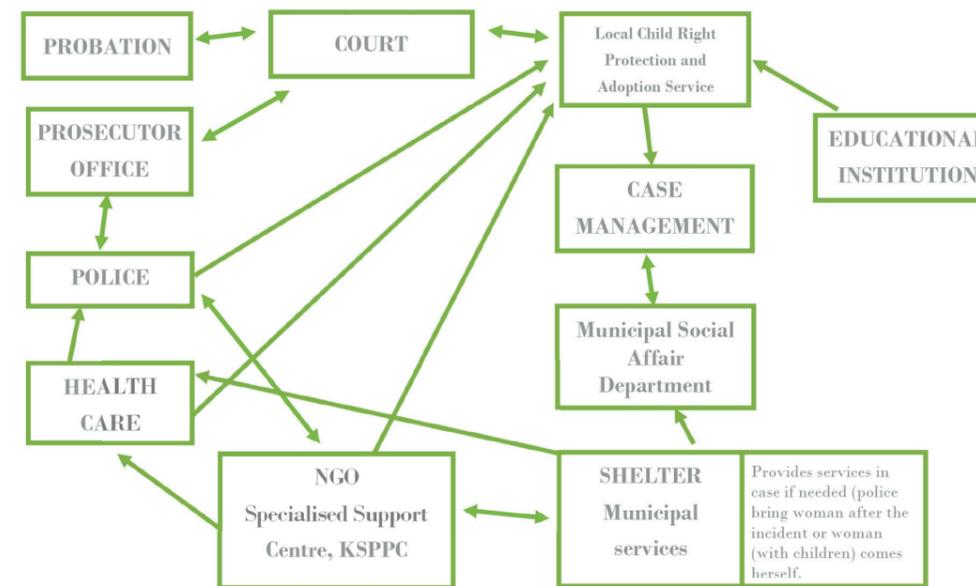
INSTITUTION/ ORGANIZATION	THE MAIN FUNCTIONS
<b>Police / Police officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prevention of incidents of violence and abuse;</li> <li>– Rapid response to a problem: identifying a violence case, taking action to stop the abuse;</li> <li>– Record the fact of occurrence of the incident of domestic violence;</li> <li>– Control execution of a court's decision.</li> <li>– Initiate pre-trial investigation and notify the prosecutor if the prosecutor's order is necessary to initiate the pre-trial investigation.</li> <li>– inform a victim of violence of the possibilities of receiving assistance and, upon informing him, report the incident to a specialized assistance centre</li> <li>– Give a notice to a children's rights protection division where a minor is exposed to domestic violence, becomes a witness thereof, lives in an environment wherein violence is inflicted or where a person suspected of inflicting violence is a minor.</li> <li>– Notify a specialized assistance centre of an obligation imposed by court on the perpetrator of violence to temporarily move out of the place of residence immediately, and in no case later than the next working day following adoption of the decision.</li> </ul>
<b>Prosecutor's Office</b>	Makes a decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To start pre-trial investigation;</li> <li>– To stop pre-trial investigation;</li> <li>– Transfers his/her decision to court.</li> </ul>
<b>Court</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– makes a decision for evicting the perpetrator of violence;</li> <li>– a criminal case concerning the commission of this act must be heard by a district court;</li> <li>– imposed by court on the perpetrator of violence to temporarily move out of the place of residence immediately;</li> <li>– the obligation for the perpetrator of violence to temporarily move out of the place of residence, if he resides together with the victim of violence;</li> <li>– the obligation for the perpetrator of violence not to approach the victim of violence, not to communicate and not to seek contact therewith.</li> </ul>
<b>Probation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Control of perpetrator;</li> <li>– Behavioural change programs.</li> </ul>
<b>Klaipeda Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service</b>	Social services for children involved in violence in close relationship. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prevention of violence against children;</li> <li>– Child protection from potentially dangerous surroundings.</li> </ul>
<b>Klaipeda Municipality Social Services / Affairs</b>	Provides these kinds of services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Shelter;</li> <li>– Information;</li> <li>– Social services;</li> <li>– Legal support;</li> <li>– Psychological support.</li> </ul>
<b>Specialised Assistance Centre</b> <i>(in Klaipeda, it is NGO - Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Contact a victim of violence and offer her the specialized comprehensive assistance;</li> <li>– Organize public education and awareness campaigns promoting zero tolerance of violence;</li> <li>– Organize legal education of the public concerning the acts considered as domestic violence, the legal consequences of these acts and inevitability of liability for commission thereof;</li> <li>– Organise research, collection of statistical data on domestic violence and analysis of these data;</li> <li>– Organise courses teaching the ways of peaceful resolution of domestic conflicts;</li> <li>– Organize training and in-service training courses;</li> <li>– Information;</li> <li>– Legal support;</li> <li>– Psychological service.</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Care Institution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provides medical care;</li> <li>– Provides assistance in order to collect evidences of psychical assault to complete investigation process.</li> </ul>

Most of the identified functions are provided according to the PADV Law and other legal acts, regulating institutional partnership and assistance. However, Lithuanian practice of the actual help and assistance to victims of domestic violence is based on not only legal issues,

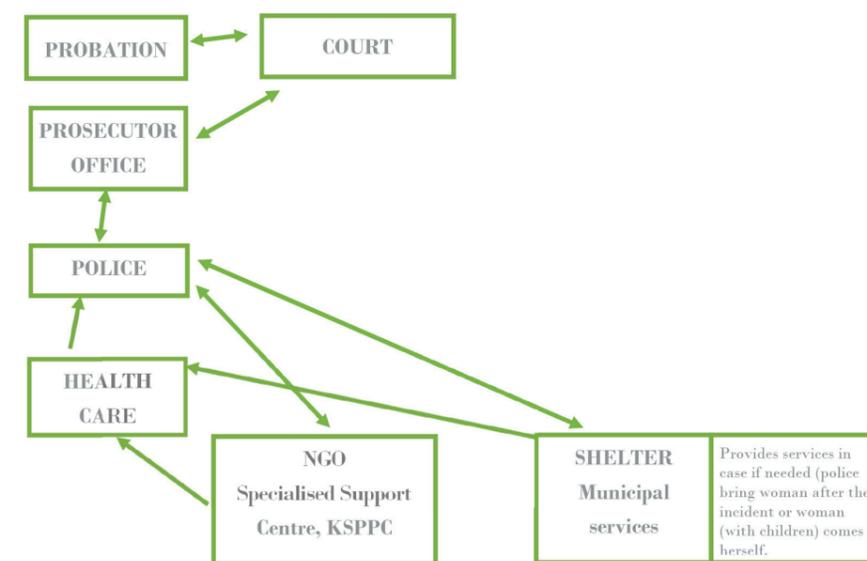
but also stereotypes and cultural features, which influence the overall attitude towards victims and the problem of working with violence.

There are two ways to schematically depict the inter-institutional reporting system in Klaipeda:

a) Institutional competences and the reporting system, when violence is used against women and their children:



b) Institutional competences and the reporting system, when women suffer from violence alone:



As it shown in schemes above, the reporting system becomes explicit when it comes to the child protection no matter whether it is direct domestic violence or witnessing violence. In cases, when women without children suffer from domestic violence, protection system involves only few institutions, i.e., the police and Specialised Assistance Centre. Prosecutor's Office and court step into the case, if police manage to collect and provide evidences of the committed crime. However, in most cases, these procedures are the responsibility of individuals, working

with the specific incident, and if the physical violence is not that evident, there is a chance that the investigator offers the "conflict" parties to "reconcile".

Reduction of domestic violence should be a personal challenge to every investigator, prosecutor, the child rights protection officer or judge. There is no other way to change the behaviour of the participants of the proceedings; however, if you start to create a more humane relationship with vulnerable social groups – victims and the aggrieved, if you are accurate, empathic and more realistic, you may do a lot.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LATVIA

The aim of this paper is to analyse and evaluate the current situation of legal and social services that are provided to people, who have suffered from violence in close relations in Latvia. The most common form of this violence (intimate relations, family, and marriage) is domestic violence.

Domestic violence is one of the most serious threats to stable and prosperous families, leading to a cycle of violence that may go on for generations. Domestic violence is primarily characterized by an existing emotional link between the attacker and the victim (despite of their legal relationship status). The state's family planning policy states that next to the physical violence, psychological and economic violence is prevalent. It might reveal itself as a destruction of one's property, forced isolation from friends and family members, threatening one's friends and close ones, stalking, control over financial means as well as means of transport and communication.

Recently, the society has been increasingly changing its perception of domestic violence from something that is "private" to something that affects the entire society and must be addressed in a larger arena. It is started to be viewed through the prism of human rights violence is a violation of one's right to life, safety, dignity and physical and emotional integrity. The rights of a victim must be valued higher than the rights of the attacker, thus once a state institution becomes aware of a case of domestic violence, it is obliged to get involved and protect the rights of the victim.

## LATVIAN REVIEW: FACTS AND NUMBERS

Within the EU, Latvia has an overall higher rate of women, who experienced violence by their partners or ex partners (32%; average in Europe is 22%). The special Eurobarometer report of gender equality (2014) shows that while in Europe on average 94% of the inhabitants agree that gender equality is a basic right and that actions should be taken to decrease the inequality, in Latvia this number reaches only 87%.

It is also important to note that the survey on the gender equality matters, conducted in Latvia in 2014,

shows similar results to the ones of the equivalent survey of 2001. While in 2001, 60.7% of the respondents expressed the view that gender equality is possible within the family, in 2014, 63,6% of them held the same view.

The Eurobarometer report of gender-based violence (2016) shows that in Latvia, 31% of the inhabitants believe that domestic violence is a private affair and it should be handled within the family. The average number of people, who follow the same view in Europe, is 15%. Only 64% of the respondents in Latvia think that domestic violence against women can never be justified and a violent person should always be held accountable (average in Europe – 84%). The survey also sheds light on the unclear way of getting support in case one suffers from violence - only 54% of the respondents knew that support services for women, who suffered from domestic violence, exist.

Overall, every third person (36%) in Latvia knows someone that has suffered from domestic violence and every fifth person (20%) knows of a case of domestic violence within their family or circle of friends. Although these ratings are quite high, domestic violence is still not widely regarded as a common problem.

An evaluation of the understanding and attitudes towards domestic violence was carried out among the employees and employment candidates of state police in 2015. The gathered data showed that the respondents (both with and without experience in police) did not have enough knowledge and understanding of the specifics of domestic violence and of the professional way of action. This further leads to insufficient ability to successfully handle these cases, while on duty.

The respondents in both groups (employees and employment candidates) were bothered by the existing stereotypes about domestic violence, sense of helplessness and insufficient strategy developed for handling the cases of domestic violence in the work of police.

The domestic violence-related statistics in Latvia have come to the attention of international organizations that recommend Latvia to ratify the Istanbul Convention. However, currently, the majority of the parliament are against ratification of the convention and it has not come into effect yet.

According to the data of "The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control", 654 men and 148 women have received inpatient medical help because of injuries as a

result of violence (in 2016). 35 men (approximately 5% of the total number) have experienced a violent episode at home, while for women this number was 65 (44%). This data backs up the tendency of mainly the partners and the relatives being the ones that harm the women. In approximately 70% of all the cases, where women have suffered from domestic violence, a violent person was her partner.

It is insightful to track the way of how the episodes of domestic violence are brought to the attention of law enforcement institutions: the highest number of cases is revealed through calls to municipal and state police, reporting domestic violence and conflicts within the family. The number of the initiated criminal charges is lower, as either it is concluded by the police that nothing points at a potential criminal offense, or the decision not to initiate criminal charges is made by victim. 99% of the calls reporting domestic conflict do not lead to criminal offence, as no traces of bodily harm have been found. Furthermore, even if the criminal offense is initiated, it can be terminated because of various reasons, thus, the actual number of convictions is even lower.

Article 56 of the Medical Treatment Law provides that all medical institutions should report potential cases of violence to the state police and the amount of these reports is notable (52 cases, whereas no criminal offences were initiated in 51 cases). In addition, there is a discrepancy between the number of cases, reported by the medical institutions, and the number of cases in the actual records, meaning that either there are incoming reports from the outpatient medical institutions or incomplete data about the patients are indicated in the injury records.

While comparing 2016 with the previous years, the decrease of number of calls to police by reporting domestic conflicts is noticed (4701 in 2008; 3881 in 2013; 4084 in 2014 and 3285 in 2016). In 2016, 370 of the calls resulted in detention of one of the involved sides. According to article 12 of the Law on Police, the police can detain a person under the influence of drugs, alcohol or any other toxic or psychotropic substance in care, if a written claim is received, stating that the other involved persons feel at risk. The detention can last up to 12 hours. 90% of all claims, submitted in 2016, were placed by women.

It is also important to look at the statistics of the concluded criminal offences. In cases of domestic vi-

olence, this most often means that a victim won't be protected from potential acts of violence (unless a decision of temporary separation is made), but a violent persons stays out of the sight of the municipal and state institutions. There is no detailed data on what measures have been taken by the prosecutors. According to the article 39 of the Criminal Law, the prosecutor has a right to conclude the criminal proceedings by issuing a prescript of punishment. The person, who committed a crime, can be obliged to pay monetary restitution, do forced labour, can be subjected to restraint of certain rights, as well as to probation. In 2016, 12 cases of domestic violence were closed, in 4 cases, reconciliation was made.

According to the data gathered by the Information Centre of Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia, 5 women were murdered by their partners in 2016 (9 in 2015), while at least 17 were murdered by their relatives. In at least 44 cases, violence against women by their partners resulted in bodily injuries.

The overall policy on domestic violence could be considered as reactive rather than proactive, putting the focus on recognizing and revealing the violence, as well as providing rehabilitation. The least attention is paid on prevention of violence. This aspect might be significant for decreasing violence in the long term.

## LATVIAN REVIEW: THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM IN LIEPAJA

As noted by B. Ābele, A. Žabicka and J. Stakle, the main responsible institution for prevention of violence on the national level is the Ministry of Welfare, however, the bureaucratic and institutional journey by the victim and the violent person may be affected by the decisions of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, etc.

Additional evaluation of the case is implemented by the Legal Aid Administration, the State Centre for Forensic Medical Examination of the Republic of Latvia, the court system, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia, the State Probation Service and the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights.

Several institutions are involved in direct handling of the matters of domestic violence at local level: municipalities, the municipal police, municipal social services, the Custody Court, health care institutions and their employees.

Some problems, related to the support system, result from the lack of common definition. There is no shared definition of “domestic violence” in the institutions, monitoring the domestic violence situation in Latvia. The methodologies differ as well, thus, there are various reasons why a comprehensive and comparable information about the topic is not available. Not all institutions collect data on the gender of the victim and her/his relation to the violent person; there have been changes in the legal regulations affecting the way of qualifying these types of crimes; each report reveals new problematic aspects; furthermore, the databases of these institutions are not shared, which leads to inability to sufficiently compare the data over the years.

The basic mechanisms and services, supporting people, who suffered from domestic violence, have been introduced just during the recent 5 years, thus, an increase

in their application can be observed. The tool of temporary separation, rehabilitation services for victims and persons, the programme of the State Probation Service were also offered.

Collaborative partners may benefit, if there are clear goals, objectives, and well-defined responsibilities. In the situation of violence prevention system, the goal, objectives and responsibilities of the institutions are mostly defined by the law. The following tables list the competences of each institution in the field of violence prevention and the information exchanged between those institutions. One shows the responsibilities in cases when women with children are involved, the other one -when a woman alone suffers from violence. Both tables have two different axis of collaboration – (1) communication and exchange of information and (2) obligations to prevent violence. In cases, where children are involved, the institutional actions are mandatory. In cases, where an adult person alone is involved, some institutions react only if the victim agrees. There are a lot of cases when a person refuses the support, although the specialists see that a victim is in danger.

If a woman with a child seeks for help and if a child experiences violence as well:

Seeks help in	What they do (the competences)	To whom they must report (according to the law)	
		Obligatory	Only with the victim's consent
State Police	Restriction order for the perpetrator (up to 8 days) Initiate criminal / administrative proceedings about fact of violence Escort a child to a crisis centre/ shelter if there is no one who could take care of the child	– Custody Court; – Emergency Health Care services (in case of injuries)	– Court (if a victim wants court protection order)
Municipal Police	Restriction order for the perpetrator (up to 8 days) Initiate criminal / administrative proceedings about fact of violence Escort a child to a crisis centre/ shelter if there is no one who could take care of the child	– State Police (for initiation of criminal proceedings) – Custody Court – Emergency Health Care Services (in the case of injuries)	
Court	Issues an order on temporary protection of victims (the protection order) that is active for one month to one year (or as long as there is a trial for divorce, children custody, alimonies` and other case proceedings). The victim can ask to prolong the protection up to one year after the final decision has been made.		
Custody Court	Temporary take away the custody rights for the perpetrator and file an application to the court for permanent deprivation of custody.	– Court (if parent(s) have failed to file an application for protection order for the child) – State police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings) – Social Services (services for child`s parents) – Emergency Health Care Services (in the case of injuries)	

Seeks help in	What they do (the competences)	To whom they must report (according to the law)	
		Obligatory	Only with the victim's consent
Municipal Social Services	Provides social services for victims, including psychological assistance	– Custody Court – Emergency Health Care Services (in case of injuries) – State Police (for initiation of criminal proceedings)	
Health Care Services	Provides emergency health care and health care after the emergency	– State police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings)	
MARTA (NGO)	Provides assistance of a social worker, a lawyer and a psychologist (multidisciplinary team)	– Custody Court – State Police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings)	
School	Provides education for children	– Custody Court – State Police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings)	
Crisis centre (one of 7 in Latvia)	Provides assistance of a social worker and a psychologist (multidisciplinary team)	– Custody Court – State Police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings)	

If a woman suffers violence alone (she has no children) or if children have not experienced violence:

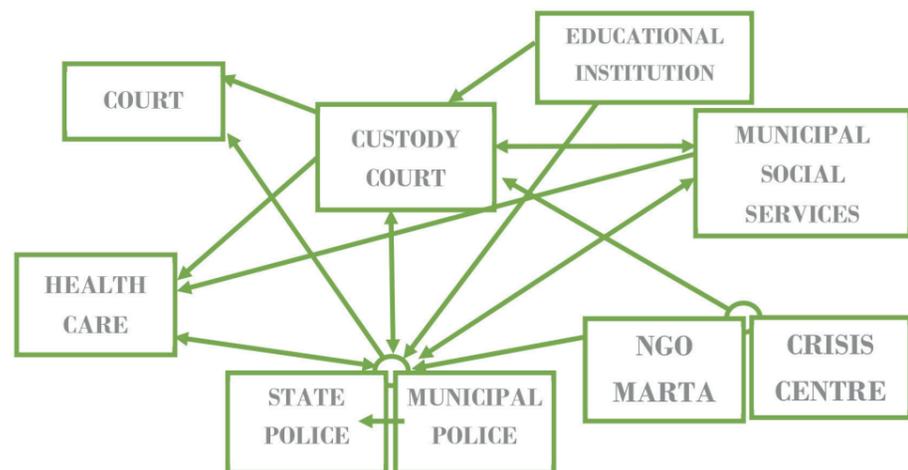
Seeks for help in:	What they do (competences)	To whom they must report (according to the law)	
		Obligatory	Only with victim`s (woman`s) consent
State Police	Restriction order for the perpetrator (up to 8 days) Initiate criminal / administrative proceedings about the fact of violence	– Emergency Health Care services (in the case of injuries)	– Court (if the victim wants court protection order)
Municipal Police	Restriction order for the perpetrator (up to 8 days) Initiate administrative proceedings about the fact of violence	– State Police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings) – Emergency Health Care services (in the case of injuries)	
Court	Issues an order on temporary protection of victims (the protection order) that is active for one month to one year (or as long as there is a trial for divorce, children custody, alimonies` and other case proceedings). The victim can ask to prolong the protection up to one year after the final decision has been made.		
Custody Court	Can temporary take stop the custody rights for the perpetrator and can file an application to the court for a permanent deprivation of custody.		
Municipal Social Services	Provides social services for victims, including psychological assistance		
Health Care Services	Provides emergency health care and health care after the emergency	– State Police (if the injuries are consequences of a violent act)	
MARTA (NGO)	Provides assistance of a social worker, a lawyer and a psychologist (multidisciplinary team)		
School	Provides education for children		
Crisis Centre (one of 7 in Latvia)	Provides assistance of a social worker, and a psychologist (multidisciplinary team)	– Custody Court – Police (for the initiation of criminal proceedings)	

## INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

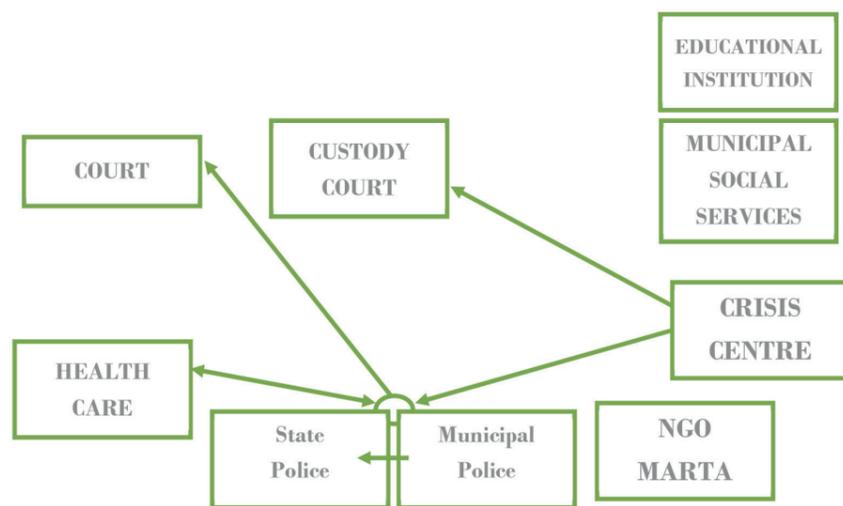
Keleher argues that successful collaborations are characterized by clear communication, true dialogue, active listening, an awareness and appreciation for

differences, as well as the ability to negotiate options. This recommendation is also important in order to create a successful collaboration in Liepaja. In the FGD, exchange of information between the institutions is usually called “reporting”. The current system of reporting is represented in the following figures: (a) and (b).

c) Institutional competences and the reporting system, when violence is used against women and their children:



d) Institutional competences and the reporting system, when women suffer from violence alone:



Both figures clearly demonstrate that in general, it is an organized one-way information flow about a specific case. This kind of information flow results from the requirements of the law. However, the one-way information flow does not support dialogue between the institutions and does not promote collaboration. The

study is a good basis to create an in-depth dialogue for all institutions that are involved in violence prevention in Liepaja and it is important to continue this communication in the future. For example, by creating regular meetings where representatives from all institutions can discuss questions or problems regarding violence, grow

their own expertise, develop joint projects, etc. This is a good resource for all institutions because this inter-institutional group involves different persons with different kinds of expertise.

## THE TOOL OF TEMPORARY SEPARATION

The tool of temporary separation was introduced on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2014. The reviews, received from the specialists involved in the work of relevant institutions, show that this mechanism is widely used and effective, as it gives a chance for both the victim and the police to achieve a solution, even if there is no basis for initiating criminal charges. The number of cases leading to the order of temporary separation increased from 432 in 2014 to more than 800 in 2016.

The cases of domestic violence ought to be handled according to the Law No. 161 of the Cabinet of Ministers “Order of actions to avoid threats of violence and ensure temporary protection against violence”.

While describing the procedure of making a decision on temporary separation, a number of steps should be highlighted: first, when an employee of state or municipal police enters the property, he/she must clarify the circumstances (4.1), then the person, who poses the threat, should be identified (4.2.), the police officer evaluates whether the particular person can cause harm to the protectable person’s life, freedom or health (–hereinafter referred to as the risk of violence) and whether the immediate threat exists (4.3). In case the employee of the police concludes that there is no immediate threat, they inform the protectable person or its legal representative about the right to submit a claim for the temporary protection against violence (that leads to temporary separation). However, in case an immediate threat is recognized, the police employee encourages the protectable person to fill out the claim form forthwith (6.1) and acquires a written explanation from the person, who poses threat (6.2). This written explanation includes the attacker’s personal information, information about his/her relationship with the victim and the household setup, cohabitation period and a description of the violent episode and its character (6.2.1.-6.2.5.).

The decision of immediate temporary separation made by the police states that the person, who has created the threat, has to keep a certain distance (according to the decision) away from the victim’s place of residence. When defining this distance, the police employee must take into account the attacker’s obligations, for example, being present at one’s workplace (7.).

In case the protectable person requests, a prohibition of contact can also be applied - this provides that the person, who poses the threat, is not allowed to contact the protectable person, maintain physical or visual contact, use any tools of communication (including electronic) or any other means of transmitting information to the victim (either directly or through the third party) (8.).

In case the decision of immediate (temporary) separation is made, the police ought to inform the person, who creates the threat, about the accommodation options nearby (11.1)

Alternatively, in case there is no immediate threat and the victim has decided to submit the form, the decision of separation is first ruled by the court and the separation process is carried out by the police right afterwards (19.). The circumstances of introducing the person, who is creating the threat, are agreed on with the claimant and the police pass the information further, evicting the violent person from the property (30 minutes to pack are given) (20.1.,20.3.).

## SOCIAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Law of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 790 “The order of providing social rehabilitation services to adults that have suffered from violence and carried out violence” determines the rights of the persons, involved in violent episodes.

A state financed service for adults, who have suffered from violence, was introduced in 2015 and initially became available in 30 municipalities (25% of all municipalities in Latvia). In 2015, 114 persons received the service, out of which 5 were men and 109 were women. In 2016, the amount of the involved municipalities grew to 48, thus, 294 persons received the service.

Any person of legal age, who has suffered from either physical, sexual, economical or emotional violence or received threats of physical or sexual violence is entitled to receive services that should primarily provide psychosocial support (2.1) and help to evaluate the threats and risks and plan safety measures (2.2.). Additionally, the services should develop the person's ability to function socially (such as have a work life and taking care of one's self) and consolidate those skills (2.3., 2.4.).

There are two ways of receiving rehabilitation services for persons who have suffered from violence: a 30-day course in a social rehabilitation institution (4.1.) or support in a form of individual consultations. The maximum amount of consultations a person is entitled to is 10 times, 45 minutes each. The person can choose whether to receive the consultations of a lawyer, a social worker and psychologist; or a certain number of each type of support (4.2.).

After the first cycle of social rehabilitation services, the receiver may submit a justified application in order to receive further support: either prolong the stay in the institution for another 30 days (5.1.) or receive 10 additional consultations with a social worker, lawyer or a psychologist.

The individuals, who have performed violent actions, are entitled to receive services that aim to avert or decrease the risk of future violence (3.).

When it comes to the social rehabilitation support, directed towards the person that has performed violent actions, two options are available. It can be either an individual consultation held by a psychologist (not more than 10 consultations; 1 session no longer than 45 minutes) or a group session (16 sessions, 2 hours each) involving not more than 12 persons at once (6.1., 6.2.).

In both cases, the services are provided as close to the individual's place of residence as possible, unless the person expresses the wish to receive them in a different administrative area or it is concluded that it is necessary for safety reasons (7.).

The person receiving the services is obliged to involve oneself in the individual plan of social rehabilitation and follow the instructions indicated in the conclusion of the specialist. One must abide the timeframe and the order of receiving services (8.2.).

The services provided to victims of violence are administered by the social institution of the municipality (either a local one or chosen by the receiver of the services). The services targeted to the persons, who have expressed violence, are curated by the Welfare Ministry of Latvia in cooperation with social institutions (9). All decisions, regarding allocation of violence prevention services, are made by social institutions, while the Ministry is responsible for (1) financing the service of violence prevention, (2) training of the social workers, who provide these services, (3) supervision of the service, including consultative and educational support programme for improving the professional qualities, as well as (4) consultations that take place after the service is received.

The decision of whether the provision of the service is justified is made by a specialist (a psychologist or a social worker), except the cases when the State Probation Service has consigned a person to receive these services. The individual, carrying out evaluation, must have a relevant education and experience in the field of violence prevention of at least three years (13.). In addition, a certificate of completed training in service provision for violent persons is necessary (14.1.).

The psychologist is subjected to the Law of Psychologists, providing that one must not reveal any information acquired during the work duties. It is not allowed to request any information about a client and the confidential information gathered in the consultation process. The exceptions are the cases when the information is necessary for law protection institutions and law institutions of executive power, or the information is needed to ensure the protection of children rights or children interests (in both cases, the normative acts have to be followed).

A person is entitled to request rehabilitation service for victims of violence if (1) one has suffered from violence directed towards oneself or loved ones that has caused a disruption in one's ability to function socially; (2) the person has been regarded as the victim in an episode of violence within the records of administrative or criminal law violation or (3) a decision of temporary protection from violence is ruled by the court or a decision of separation is issued by the municipal police.

The claim for receiving rehabilitation services for victims can be submitted to an institution that is registered

as a social service provider (such as a crisis centre, family support centre or social institution).

In order to receive the services of victim rehabilitation, a person or its legal representative has to submit (1) application, (2) a copy of a document confirming the decision of an institutional representative to regard the person as the victim of violence and (3) a copy of the court ruling where the person is regarded as the victim of violence or a copy of a document confirming decision of separation issued by the municipal police (if there are such). These documents have to be submitted to the institution of social rehabilitation or the social service (16.).

Afterwards, a specialist carries out an evaluation of the application in under five business days. Once the specialist's conclusion has been made, the institution of social rehabilitation immediately forwards the person's application to the social service. Then, in under five business days, the decision is made by the social service (19.1). This decision involves information of allocation of the service, the time of receiving the service and the coverage of the transportation costs, if such is necessary (and only in cases when the person has applied for individual consultations in one's residency).

The application might be rejected in cases when the person does not comply with certain requirements stated in the Law of Cabinet of Ministers No. 790: (1) in case 12 months have not passed before the previous episode of receiving social services; (2) in case the specialist has noted in his conclusion that the person should enrol in alternative support mechanisms or social rehabilitation programmes before receiving the service of victim rehabilitation or (3) in case the status of the person is not corresponding or the submitted documents are incomplete (19.).

When comparing the activity in the regions during 2016, the service was mostly provided in Riga (73) and Kurzeme (117). In Vidzeme, the service was received by 51 persons, in Zemgale - 27, in Latgale - 18, but in the adjoining districts of Riga - 8. Although the service may be received by anyone that as experienced violence, it was mostly used in cases of domestic violence (in 75% of the cases the violent person was the partner, in 9% - someone else residing in the same household, but only in 6% of the cases violence came from a stranger).

There is a separate social rehabilitation service for children that have suffered from violence, exploitation,

sexual violence or that have been subjected to any other unlawful activities. It is implemented in accordance with the law of the Cabinet of Ministers nr. 1613 "The order of providing necessary help for children that have suffered from unlawful actions". The aim of this service is to ensure the child's ability to recover physically and psychologically, as well as the ability to integrate in the society. The service is provided by the foundation "Children's Foundation of Latvia" since 2010 in accordance with the law of social services and social help.

The service can be provided at the child's place of residency, childcare institution or a place of imprisonment and it takes place in a form of ten consultations by a psychologist, a social worker or psychotherapist (each 45 minutes long). Alternatively, the child can receive the service in a social rehabilitation institution (in the form of a 30 - 60-day long rehabilitation course).

In order for a child to receive the service, his parent, custodian, custody court or an institution responsible for the child has to request a conclusion from a psychologist or a social worker. The conclusion is provided in 10 days after submitting the request and it includes a description of the child's psychological well-being and the necessary rehabilitation actions that must be taken. In addition, the length of the service and the recommended place of receiving the service is indicated. The process of receiving the service is coordinated by the municipal social service.

## STATE PROBATION SERVICE

The State Probation service offers various probation programmes for their clients - a bundle of activities with the goal to foster the social integration of the client. Usually these programmes are undergone during the time while conditional sentence is in power, as the client is obliged to join the probation programmes. One of such programmes is "The fostering of respectful relationship" that is created for people that have been violent to their partner. In 2012, the programme was completed by 58 persons; in 2013 - by 48 persons, however, in 2016 there was only cycle of the programme that was completed by 7 persons.

Out of 600 people that are under the supervision of State Probation Service, approximately 20% have been violent against a child and 24% have been violent against an adult.

Most often, people enter the sight of Probation service because of violating the order of temporary separation.

## INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION IN LIEPAJA: FOCUS GROUP STUDY

The state police, municipal police, court, the Custody Court, municipal social services, health care institutions, NGO “Marta”, crisis centre and school provide institutional support for victims in Liepaja municipalities. The law determines the competences of each institution.

The State Police control and prevent the cases of violence. They react to the information about violence received, visit the violent scene, stop a perpetrator and, if needed, make decisions on the separation of a violent person and offer the tool of temporary separation. They inform a victim about the possibilities to solve the situation in a court, as well as about the tool of temporary separation and rehabilitation services (both in person and by leaving written information). In the FGD, a representative of the state police noted that the number of cases of temporary separation has increased each year from 2014, however, the last year, this indicator decreased as victims often refused to implement the tool. He believes that this is caused by the cases where the temporary separation had lethal effects (for example, suicide), which became publicly known, although these cases were not in Liepaja.

The state police also control whether the prohibition of approaching is not violated and investigate the criminal proceedings related to violence in close relationships. They escort a child to crisis centre, if there is no one who could take care of a child. They also collect statistics related to the violence in families, for example, a number of calls when violence is reported. They need to cooperate with:

1. The Custody Court, if a violent relationship involves children;
2. Emergency health care services, if a victim is physically injured;
3. Court, if a victim agrees to it.

The municipal police provide services and visit families in case they receive a call about a family conflict or violence. They can help the victims to fill the application to court for temporary separation (up to 8 days) and to

initiate administrative proceedings regarding the fact of violence. They also escort children to a crisis centre in case there is no one who can take care of them. They cooperate with:

1. The Custody Court, if the violent relationship involves children;
2. Emergency health care services, if a victim is physically injured;
3. Court, if a victim agrees to ask for temporary separation;
4. The state police, to provide a reliable statistic on calls mentioning domestic violence in Liepaja that can be used the state institutions;
5. Inform state police, if there is a need to start criminal process in case of visible injuries.

The court solves the issues related to violence in close relationships, it makes decisions regarding the order of temporary protection for victims (from one month to one year, or as long as the trial on divorce, child custody, alimonies and other cases proceeds). A victim is entitled to ask to prolong the protection (up to one year after the final decision has been made). In order to get reliable information, the court can cooperate with all institutions involved, for example, ask for additional information. However, not cases require additional information.

The Custody Court in Liepaja primarily protects the child's interests and can temporarily take the custody rights away from the perpetrator. It can also file an application to the court for permanent deprivation of custody. The Custody Court cooperates with:

1. Court, if parents have failed to submit a claim for the protection order for children;
2. The state police, to initiate criminal proceedings regarding violence against children;
3. Liepaja Social Services, to provide support services for parents and children.

The Liepaja Social Services work with people from families where violence is present. This institution offers and administers rehabilitation services for children and similar services for persons of legal age, who are affected by violence. To reduce the violent behaviour of a perpetrator, they offer rehabilitation services to the persons, who demonstrate violence against their close ones. As the number of cases, when this type of violence is recognized, grows, the usage of rehabilitation services

i increases as well. The Social Services inform the society about these matters on the public and social media. They cooperate with:

1. The State Police, if the victim is involved in criminal proceedings;
2. The Custody Court, if violent relationship involves children.

Health Care Services provide emergency health care and other types of health care. In case of violence against a child, they are obliged to report it to the Custody Court and the police. They cooperate with the state police for the initiation of criminal proceedings and provide evidence needed for the forensic expertise. Experts believe that many people don't know that violence evidence can be provided by the family doctor or in the hospital. This information is sent to the forensic expert, who evaluates the degree of violence, which can result in an administrative or criminal responsibility for perpetrators. Expertise should be carried out within 30 days.

During research, two **focus-group discussions** (FGDs) were conducted to collect “on go” information on professional perception of the peculiarities of the support system.

One of them took place in 05.04.19. The FGD discussion was organized by representative of the NGO “Marta”: it was attended by 2 representatives from local social services; 1 representative of the state police and 3 representatives of the municipal police. It took place at the NGO “Marta” and lasted for two hours. The main questions discussed were related with the current practices of institutions that are involved in violence prevention process, as well as possible improvements. The second FGD took place in 05.06.19. It lasted one and a half hours. Second FGD also was organized by representative of the NGO Marta. It was attended by 2 representatives of the state police and 1 representative of the municipal police, 2 representatives from the Custody Court, 3 representatives from local social services and 2 from the NGO “Marta”. The results of the study and the recommendations offered by researchers were discussed. This debate allowed to evaluate how the recommendations were perceived: it is an efficient tool to improve and develop recommendations that are grounded at local level.

The FGD experts argue that if a woman has injuries, she will always receive medical help. Speaking about in-

formation exchange, the best collaboration for the police and social services is with Liepaja Regional Hospital, while the family doctors provide information for the instances, only if are asked for.

The NGO “Marta” provides rehabilitation services for persons, who suffer from violence. Most of their customers are women and a large proportion of them have suffered from violence in close relationships. They offer services provided by a psychologist, a social worker and a lawyer. These services are available for adults, however, in the past months, a child psychologist services have also been introduced. The NGO representative believes that some of the clients use their services because they do not trust the services provided by the local governance or state institutions. The services in “Marta” are perceived differently, i.e., as more confidential, although the NGO rehabilitation services also financed by the state.

NGO “Marta” also publicly articulates the violence against women as a major social issue, engaging in public debates with the aim of educating the public on the issues of violence.

They cooperate with:

1. The Custody Court, if the violent relationship involves children;
2. The State Police, for initiation of criminal proceedings;
3. Emergency health care services, if the victim is physically injured;
4. The court in cases when its lawyer provides legal aid.

7 crisis centres in 7 different regions in Latvia provide a safe place for the victim to stay. They offer the service for a period of 60 days for children and 30 days for an adult person. In this period, the victim can receive rehabilitation services, which include assistance of a social worker and a psychologist (multidisciplinary team). The nearest crisis centre for people in Liepaja is in Ventspils – 117 km away.

The State Probation Service provides a program “The fostering of respectful relationship”, developed for people, who have been violent to their partners, however, the FGD experts stated that they have never encountered a person, who has used this service in Liepaja.

Schools are obliged to report to the Custody Court in case there is a suspicion that children are suffering from violence in the family. In the FGD, a police representative reported that the collaboration with schools is good.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### The FGD experts identify the following aspects that characterize domestic violence:

1. Most commonly, a victim is a woman or children. Every year, the Custody Court takes approximately 10 children away from their families in Liepaja. In most cases, the reason is an anti-sanitary environment in the place of residence and/or abuse of alcohol by parents.
2. There are still a lot of people that do not recognize that they are suffering from violence and are not ready to change their life. It can cause growing aggression of a perpetrator. Now, there are a lot of public activities in order to inform the people about violence, yet the amount of information available needs to be increased. For example, it is necessary to make the information about the NGO's activities visible in public places.
3. Violence in family often emerges during the divorce process. When the process is over, violence also ends;
4. Some victims do not report the violence because it can make a perpetrator more aggressive, especially if the relationship is on-going;
5. The victims (most often women) have a high economic dependence on a perpetrator. When the relationship is terminated, and the services are unable to cover the shortage of resources, the woman ends up in poverty or returns to the perpetrator. The social services cannot cover the victim's economic needs.
6. Women often need support in raising the child - it is often the reason for returning to a perpetrator, as she is unable to organize the child's life without support.
7. Seniors are often suffering from violence from their own grown up children. This situation is related to the usage of alcohol. It is hard to work with this group of victims as they feel guilty about the faulty upbringing of their children. There is no tool to make a violent person to go through rehabilitation. A victim often does not report violence, if a perpetrator is her/his child.

8. In most cases, when someone reports about physical violence against children in Liepaja, it is identified. It is harder to identify the emotional violence, even for professionals.

### The FGD experts identify the following aspects that characterize the social support system:

1. There are no clear communication mechanisms to provide more effective support for a person, who suffers from violence. The experts recognize some weak points of collaboration that could be improved. For example, the institution representatives do not have similar perceptions of the available information and on how the cooperation mechanisms should work. The experts do not have a clear idea about how to evaluate the efficiency of cooperation mechanism. The suggested indicators, pointing at a successful collaboration, are (1) a shared understanding of violence between all institutions involved and (2) lower number of repeated domestic violence cases.
2. The support system works more effectively and faster, if children are involved. There are also some enforcement mechanisms that impose the usage of social rehabilitation services for a violent person. If the social services fail to reach an agreement with the family on the necessary rehabilitation for children in case of violence, the Custody Court can get involved and impose the rehabilitation as obligatory. In case of resistance, the Custody Court may remove the child from the family in order to ensure his or her right to receive support.
3. The police do not receive information about the situation in family automatically. They believe - they should be informed about the cases when children are returned to the family in order to monitor whether there are no repeated cases of violence.
4. There is no mechanism that would push an adult person to use the rehabilitation services or stop the violent relationship. The institutions follow up the situation, keep informing a victim about the possibilities and hope that one will eventually decide to change her life. Sometimes, even after

severe injuries, victims refuse to report about a perpetrator to the police.

5. The usage of social rehabilitation by victims of violence is increasing, the experts explain this by a growing social understanding of the forms of violence and support offered by local social services and NGOs. The understanding is growing as the amount of available information is increasing in the public space.
6. In order to improve the rehabilitation services, there is a need to include babysitter services, provided when the woman receives other rehabilitation services. It would be necessary to make the services available after working hours, however, it is not always possible.
7. The experts cannot explain why rehabilitation for children includes 10 state-paid specialist consultations, and t 23 for an adult person. Now the Liepaja local governance is covering 10 more consultations for children.
8. Currently, there are 8 children psychologists, but it is not enough. In case a victim wants to use the rehabilitation service for children, she needs to wait for almost 2 months.
9. The rehabilitation services for a perpetrator is mostly used by violent parents (mothers) because they are intimidated by the Custody Court. There are no mechanisms that would motivate a perpetrator in cases when the violence is present in a relationship between adults. The experts believe that overall, the service is effective, however, there are no statistics on the cases of repeated violence in this situation. The target group, i.e., the persons, who violent to their partners, is not reached.
10. The usage of the temporary separation tool that is offered by the police is reducing, but more people use the possibility to ask for temporary protection in the court;
11. There is no crisis centre in Liepaja right now. If a woman has a job and children are attending school, it is hard to use the crisis centre services in other cities. In Liepaja, there is a specific local service "The room of crisis". It is a place where a family can stay in case of crisis. So far, it has not been used in cases of violence. People can use

this place for a short period of time. In most situations, if people can't stay at their place of residence, they stay at their friends or relatives. The experts see the need for a crisis centre in Liepaja, as it is a notably populated city.

## VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

- The Social Service Lecture "A Guide for Raising a teenager" is offered;
- Lectures by the police in schools on the liability in case of violence;
- There is no safe place for teenagers where they could speak about relationships: it is a taboo for families and a taboo in schools. Most often they discuss these questions with other teenagers or on the Internet. That creates a risk of becoming a victim or a perpetrator by accident. This also overlaps with the perception that young females and their partners lack knowledge about healthy relationship and, therefore, they cannot achieve such.
- *Let's say, I have never had a healthy relationship in my family, and my friends have never had a healthy relationship too. In my opinion, an unhealthy relationship stems from the fact that you do not understand how healthy relationships work. For example, when we got together, we didn't know how it should be. We were watching some movies where everything is of course exaggerated, I think it's not how it happens in real life. (3. Interview)*

## ALREADY PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

The police in Liepaja will use a new form of evaluation in case of violence; it will allow for a more precise evaluation of the situation and will ease the process of providing information to other institutions. It also includes the cooperation guidelines for working with other institutions, including social services.

## REPORT PART II:

## RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN RESULTS

## RESEARCH OUTCOMES: LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

The aim of the project is to analyse the best practices of inter-institutional cooperation model in Latvia and Lithuania and to present effective instruments and strategies of accessing victims of violence in close relationship/domestic violence. The research aims to find out how victims of violence in close relationship perceive the accessibility of services provided by legal and social institutions and organizations in Klaipeda and Liepaja. Their needs and subjective opinion were surveyed. Two types of investigation methods – qualitative and quantitative – were united to get as much as possible information on the related issues. Due to difficulties of encouraging respondents to fill the questionnaire or take part in the interview, combination of two complementary methods gave a more explicit description of the problems existing in service provision.

Therefore, the main research methods used in present study are the following:

1. quantitative research on victims of domestic violence were carried out both in Lithuania and Latvia to find out the perception of the respondents about the services provided to victims of domestic violence by means of *Survey of Opinion about the Supporting Organizations for Persons, who Experienced Domestic Violence*;
2. 20 interviews (qualitative research) were conducted with victims in **Klaipeda** to identify the needs of victims in accordance with their personal perception of the services provided to victims of domestic violence.
3. 20 interviews (qualitative research) were conducted with victims in **Liepaja** to identify the needs of victims in accordance with their personal perception of the services provided to victims of domestic violence.
4. *Specific part from Latvian side*: 2 focus-group discussions (FGDs) with representatives of the NVO “Marta”, Liepaja local government and other institutions, providing the services for victims (the results and discussions are provided in the Part I of present report).

## QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

In order to carry out the research on perceptions of support provided to victims of domestic violence the SURVEY OF OPINION ABOUT THE SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS FOR PERSONS, WHO EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, was created and spread in paper and electronic versions in Lithuania and Latvia (see attachment No. 1, English version). It was prepared in four languages: Lithuanian, English, Latvian and Russian. In Lithuania, survey blanks in Lithuanian were used, in Latvia – in Latvian and Russian languages, thus, respecting the ethnic differences in Liepaja. English version of this survey was developed for reporting and sharing for translation with Latvia.

The informants in Latvia, Liepaja, were recruited by representatives of the NGO “Marta” and Liepaja Social Service. The persons, who have used the service, were called and asked to fill in the questionnaire. The target group is quite small (251 persons) and there is a limitation stemming from the Data Protection Law, therefore, it is hard to collect the data.

Some responses in Lithuania, Klaipeda, were collected in Klaipeda’s Women Support Centre (municipal institution), and some were filled online.

It is necessary to emphasize that there is a **limitation** related to a small sample of respondents in both Klaipeda and Liepaja. The first part of the questionnaire was filled better due to personal questions related with experience and biography facts, meanwhile, the second part, related to evaluation of the received services, was characterized by very superficial answers. It caused difficulties with generalising the obtained answers, looking for correlations between monitoring perceptions or other statistical ways to evaluate results, except description statistics used to show some tendencies. A small number of answers also limits the possibility to draw a general conclusion.

One more limitation is related to the respondents’ gender and age - the answers were provided only by women, and there was no opportunity to find male respondents to have more heterogenic pool of answers.

The questionnaire had three parts. First part includes 16 questions about the experience of violence in close relationship (personal biography facts). The second part

includes 61 questions on the experience with organizations and institutions providing help in case of violence in close relationship. These questions are divided into five blocks and cover the experience with different institutions. The third part includes six questions that for the respondent's age, gender, education, family and income.

Over almost three months of active actions (Facebook posts, personal visits to institutions, asking to share the survey on certain forums and websites for victims of domestic violence) on publication of survey, 105 questionnaires were collected in Lithuania (71 responses) and Latvia (34 responses). Due to secrecy of the analysed problem, researchers in both countries faced a resistant attitude of victims toward participation in the survey. Face-to-face meetings with respondents show the tendency of neglecting the experienced domestic violence,

especially in cases, where brutal physical abuse or obvious evidences of victimization are not clearly exposed.

The main goal of the present survey was to identify the opinion of victims of domestic violence on services provided by institutions (e.g., the police, medical care and courts) and psychosocial service organizations (e.g., the Specialised Assistance Centres and municipal shelters in Lithuania, and rehabilitation centres in Latvia).

Questions were mostly formulated as self-reports towards perceptions of the received services and assistance on domestic violence issues and related difficulties. 99% of the respondents noted that they have experienced domestic violence at least once in a lifetime, and 1 person (eliminated from study) indicated that she has not faced this experience (see Table No.1). All 100% of participants were female.

Table No. 1: Experience of domestic violence of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	104	99.0	99.0	99.0
	No	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Age of respondents varied from 18 to 72: almost 40% were in age gap between 30 and 39 (39 answers). 97 women live in cities, and 8 – in rural areas. 80% answered having children, 20 – do not have. 33% of all respondents have school education, 40% - bachelor or similar degree, more than 20% are with Master's or higher level of education. Personal income more than in 40% of cases was EUR 431-860, almost 40% admitted earning less that EUR 430 or not having any personal incomes, 17% earn more than EUR 861. Nevertheless, the provided characteristics show that there is no reason to state that people without any educational background

or/and stable income are the only ones, who suffer from domestic violence.

## EXPERIENCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Almost 40% of the respondents still face domestic abuse. More than 20% have quite fresh (less than one year) experience on violence, while almost 40% of the respondents stated being in violent relationship more than 1 year ago.

Table No. 2: Answers on experience of domestic violence – time frames

	Frequency	Percent
No answer	1	1.9
I am still facing it	41	39.0
I experienced it less than in one year from now	21	20.0
I experienced it more than in one year from now (from 1 to 10 years from now)	27	25.7
I have experienced it more than 10 years ago	14	13.3
Total	104	100.0

The majority of victims (40%) declare not experiencing violence anymore due to separation from a perpetrator. One fourth of the respondents live or still are in relationships

with abusers, but do not suffer from violence anymore. It is surprising that even 20 women, who notify not living with perpetrators, have still been facing violence from them.

While comparing the data between the first and the second question, it is obvious that 41 respondents (Table No. 2) answer the first question by stating that they are still facing the violence, and while answering the second question (Table No. 2), 13 persons report facing violence from the pres-

ent partner/family member, meanwhile 20 persons notify suffering from the perpetrator, who is not present in same household anymore. We see that there are 2 people, who had difficulties in answering about a real situation of domestic violence in their lives (whether existing at present or not).

Table No. 3: Answers on experience of domestic violence – relationship with perpetrator in present.

	Frequency	Percent
I am still living with perpetrator, but violence has stopped	27	26
I am still living with perpetrator, and I am still facing violence from his site	13	12.5
I am not living with perpetrator, and do not experience violence anymore	44	42
I am not living with perpetrator, but I face a violence from his/her side from time to time	20	19
Total	104	100.0

The question on types of violence (Table No. 4) shows that the most common are physical abuse and emotional/psychological violence: more than a half of women answered facing them. Economical abuse and controlling behaviour are on the second place by their frequency

of occurrence – more than 40% of the respondents find themselves in limitations within financial and optional self-regulation. Stalking and sexual abuse appear in more than one fourth of all cases.

Table No. 4: Answers on experience of domestic violence – relationship with perpetrator in present.

	Physical	Sexual	Economical	Emotional	Control	Stalking
Do not experience	44.8	75.2	56.2	44.8	55.2	70.5
Experience	55.2	24.8	43.8	55.2	44.8	29.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it was expected in the beginning of the research, the majority of women, who have filled the questionnaire, suffer from their intimate partners, whether spouses or

boyfriends (Table No. 5) This corresponds with the general statistics in Lithuania, where from 80 to 90% of victims of domestic violence suffer from their male partners.

Table No. 5: Perpetrator in the present time.

	Frequency	Percent
Intimate partner	93	89.4
Other	11	10.6
Total	104	100.0

More than a half of all features, typical to the behaviour of a perpetrator (Table No. 6), as reported by victims, lay in field of addictions. Victims report alcohol, drug abuse of gambling as a most common problem among their intimate partners or other abusers (56.2%). Almost one third (29.5%) of the respondents know that perpetrators have experienced violence in their own families, while being children. In 16 cases, a perpetrator already have criminal records, 10 respondents specified that perpetrators have important job positions and/or high social status, 8 people note them having psychical issues, and 15 do not agree with any of the statements.

Our results correspond to the official statistical data in both Latvia and Lithuania, stating that the majority (approximately 60% of the registered cases) of domestic abusers have addiction issues.

In the qualitative interviews (Lithuanian and Latvian), victims often blame the addiction as the reason for the behaviour of a perpetrator. This perception makes violence a result of external influences, thus, justifying it. The behaviour is separated from a person. The victim's reaction to violent situations is related to their opinions towards addiction.

Table No. 6: Perpetrator's features as perceived by victim.

	Frequency	Percent
Has an addiction (alcohol, drug or gambling)	59	56.2
Has criminal record	16	15.2
Has diagnosed psychological diseases	8	7.6
Experienced violence in a childhood	31	29.5
Has important job and/or high social status	10	9.5
None of the above mentioned	15	14.5

Table No. 7 illustrates the victims' willingness to deal with case of domestic violence by not involving third parties to the problem-solving process. It was impossible to check some answers, therefore, percentage expression is unavailable. 69 persons state that they try to deal with it by themselves. This reflects the general attitude towards external help in case of domestic problem in the Baltic countries. People are not ready to open up and apply for assistance from organisations and prefer to deal with it by their own.

34 persons answered that they seek for psychological support. Thus, keeping in mind that the majority of

our respondents in Lithuania and Latvia have already been using assistance from the specialised or rehabilitation centres, where psychological support is provided as a part of assistance program, these numbers are mostly exaggerated. The real situation, related to psychological support, is not so *optimistic* and can be expressed as only from 1 to 10 percent of the actual seekers.

31 persons call the police in case of domestic violence, and 27 women go to the closest friends or relatives. Those, who do seek help, usually use support from different sources.

Table No. 7: Victims' actions in case of violence (frequency in numbers).

	Yes	No
Do not seek for help because violence has stopped	27	78
Do not seek for help because I scare of perpetrator	8	97
Do not seek for help because I feel ashamed	19	86
Do not seek for help because I am financially dependent on a perpetrator	11	94
I try to deal with it by myself	69	36
I don't have any energy to change my situation	15	89
I seek for help of my closest people (relatives and friends)	27	88
I seek for law enforcement authorities help (call police or etc.)	31	74
I seek for medical care, in cases of serious bodily harm	6	99
I seek for psychosocial care (psychologists, social workers)	34	71

In addition, there was an opportunity to leave personal opinion on this question; here we translate few of them from Lithuanian:

1.	"I would seek, if there were more and complex help."
2.	"If I only I knew, that they do not give on me, because violence is not physical. My statement was rejected by police, because they don't see that my life is somehow in danger."
3.	"If only I would be sure, that this support helps me to solve problems."
4.	"Still I thing I am scared and will be scared, will not seek for help."
5.	"I am lost, do not know what to do."
6.	"You think that others are more scared than me."

It might be that these women are simply afraid to seek for any kind of assistance. They are not quite sure if the assistance, offered in Lithuania, is the "key answer" to their needs. There is a lot of uncertainty in terms of involving crisis centres or even police into family violence

cases, where victims feel intimidated and frightened by abusers. They afraid that the claim for help will cause them more trouble than relief from fear and pain.

The majority (84 cases out of 104) of women have at least a theoretical knowledge, where to apply for assistance in case of domestic violence, however, the survey shows that there are 11.5% of the respondents (Table No.8) without this information, and even 8 persons think that there is no need for them to know it. Keeping in mind that our survey is not representative enough to generalize the results for Lithuanian and Latvian contexts, it is still possible to make an assumption that there are many people, who do not know about their rights and possibilities to receive proper support not only from police, but also from crisis centres, rehabilitation centres and the specialized support centres.

Table No. 8: Awareness on where to seek for help.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	84	81
No	12	11.5
Never thought it is necessary	8	7.5

According to Table No. 9, there are some beliefs among victims that allow identifying some logical patterns, and some that show certain contradictions in the perception of violence phenomenon. For example, 29 persons believe that a perpetrator can change, 46 respondents think that this behaviour never changes. In the situations, when a victim believes that a person can change, there is a higher possibility that a victim will continue the relationship. In case there is no hope that a perpetrator will change, there is a higher possibility that a victim will try to divorce.

Common sense says that people, who believe that a perpetrator can change his behaviour, might also believe that all couples sometimes direct physical and/or emotional violence against each other, as well as that violence in close relationships is something that might be provoked. In our research, 13 people support these two statements. Therefore, this is less than expected in terms of how many people (29) agree with the statement on the possibilities of a perpetrator to change.

In 61 cases, the respondents believe that violence is not tolerable, 35 respondents think that violence is a public problem.

Table No. 9: Victims' beliefs towards domestic violence (frequency in numbers).

	Yes	No
Perpetrator might change	29	75
Perpetrator will never change	46	58
Violence must be kept in silence: nobody should know about our problems	2	104
Violence is a public problem, everybody has a right to talk about it	35	69
Physical punishments are acceptable in parenting	1	103
All couples sometime use physical and/or emotional violence against each other	5	99
Violence in close relationship is something that might be provoked	7	97
It is useful sometimes to use physical punishment to "teach" person to behave himself/herself	0	104
Violence is not tolerable in any cases	61	43
I do not have any beliefs towards domestic violence	4	100

The most "popular specialists", the victims of domestic violence usually apply to, are police officers – 31 cases in Lithuania and 29 cases in Latvia (Table No. 10). In Lithuania, there is second group of the specialists, victims communicated with the last time their faced violence –

in 31 cases, they were psychosocial care specialists, and in 18 cases –lawyers. This happens because of legislation system in Lithuania, where the specialised assistance centres are obliged to contact a victim of domestic violence and offer her a psychosocial support.

Table No. 10: Specialists victim has communicated with the last time (frequencies in numbers).

	Lithuania	Latvia
Police officers	31	29
Prosecutors	6	0
Medical care workers	7	2
Psychosocial care specialists (shelter services, psychologist, social worker, etc.)	31	6
Lawyers or Court workers	18	0

In 35 cases, the Lithuanian respondents, and in 24 cases, the Latvian respondents notify that they had received a support they were seeking for. 16 Lithuanians and 7

Latvians insisted that they did not get what they expected, and 21 persons in both countries cannot say for sure. High number of positive answers are more related with

the fact that majority of respondents in Lithuania and Latvia have already been using the psychosocial services in the specialized organizations, so there is no opportunity for us to summarize these results for all victims.

Table No. 11: Perception of the received help.

	Lithuania	Latvia
Yes	35	24
No	16	7
Not sure	18	3

If a respondent met someone, who also suffers from violence, in 23 cases no actions would be taken; personal support would be offered in 5 cases and the respondents would recommend asking for institutional help (call police, seek for psychosocial help, etc.) in 11 cases. In 5 cases, the respondents would give a combined support - they would suggest seeking help in institution and offer personal support.

In 91 cases, the most important aspect for victims was security/safety (for one and one's children). Psychological and emotional support was indicated as important need of a victim in 61 responses. In 55 cases, victims expected support from family members and closest people. In 35 cases, they needed a place to stay. The following also were important: legal advisory (32), assistance of social worker (28) and feeling of achieved justice (26).

Table No. 12: The most important needs in case of domestic violence.

	Yes	No
Security/safety (for me and my children)	91	13
Place to stay (for me and my children)	35	69
Psychological or emotional support	61	43
Social worker assistance	28	76
Support from close people	55	49
Spiritual support from my religious community	10	94
Legal advice (e.g., for divorce, etc.)	32	72
Justice (e.g., to convict a perpetrator)	26	78

70.6% of Latvian women and only 1.3% of Lithuanian women expect that institutions and organizations, providing assistance, are meant to **solve** their problems. On a contrary, 70.4% of Lithuanian women and 20.6% of Latvian women would like those organisations to **help** them to solve their problems. Here is a difference in approach towards institutional help. Due to the presence of support model in Lithuania, victims usually are aware that organizations and institutions are able to support and help, only if a victim is ready to make some efforts to change their lives. As for Latvian respondents, the lack of knowledge about organisational responsibilities

makes them seek for more direct help. The answers show quite a passive perception of their own responsibility to change the situation. They prefer to wait for support from outside in order to change the situation.

10% of Lithuanian respondents and 6% of Latvians expect nothing due to negative previous experience with institutional support. Almost 13% of Lithuanian women expect nothing at all and are not willing to seek for help. 14.1% of Lithuanians and 3% of Latvians do not know what to expect. Almost 6% of Lithuanians and 3% of Latvians are afraid to seek for help as they believe that it will make the situation even worse.

Table No. 13: Victims' expectations towards the help providers.

	Lithuania	Latvia
I expect them to solve my problems	1.3%	70.6%
I expect they help me to solve my problems	70.4%	20.6%
I expect nothing, that it is why I do not seek their help	12.7%	-
I expect nothing because I have experienced that they do not help	9.9%	5.9%
I do not know what to expect	14.1%	3%
I am afraid to seek for their help because it will make my situation even worse	5.6%	3%

In Latvian responses, 27 persons would like to know exactly where to go and ask for help. 6 Lithuanians and 3 Latvians would seek for help, if they were sure that this institution will be able to solve everything. In 39 cases in Lithuania and in 5 cases in Latvia, the respondents replied that they have already been using the services.

Table No. 14: Reasoning in seeking for help.

	Lithuania	Latvia
They offer it proactively	6	27
They provide financial support or any other material help	4	1
I know exactly where to go	22	4
I am sure, they solve everything for me	6	3
No need, I am using their services	39	4

Another interesting question related to the violent relationship was asked to collect the data on what victims would advise to others who face similar problems. 23 Latvian respondents answered that they would do nothing. 33 Lithuanians would offer them support, and only 5 Latvians would do the same. 62 Lithuanians would

offer them to call the police or seek for help actively, meanwhile 10 Latvian agreed with this statement. As it is shown in Table No. 15, victims in Latvia would prefer to stay outside the situation of domestic violence, not being ready to provide their support or give advice to others, suffering in the same way as they do.

Table No. 15: Victims' readiness to help others in similar situation.

	Lithuania	Latvia
Do nothing	0	23
Offer them my support	33	5
Offer them to seek for help (call police, seek for psychosocial help, etc.)	62	10
Explain that it is a way, how people live and there is nothing they can do about it	0	0

## EVALUATION OF ASSISTANCE

In the second part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to recall their experiences, while facing organizations and institutions that provide help in cases of violence in close relationship. They were encouraged to remember the impression of cooperation with the

specialists and to evaluate whether the person agrees or not with the given statements. If the respondent has not had any experience with the institution, there was an option to leave the response field blank. This gives an idea of how many people did not use any kind of support in case of domestic violence, no matter whether it is a single or repetitive action.

## EVALUATION OF MEDICAL CARE ASSISTANCE

Block I: evaluation of provided medical care (M)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree
M1. I am not afraid to seek for medical care in case of violence.	8%	68%	24%	6%	65%	29%
M2. I was provided with medical care on time.	10%	72%	18%	6%	74%	21%
M3. Specialists are aware on violence theme.	10%	70%	20%	6%	79%	15%
M4. I did not call police myself, they called it for me.	27%	63%	10%	12%	71%	18%
M5. Medical institution offered me to call a police to record violence case.	13%	77%	10%	9%	79%	12%
M6. Medical workers recorded violence signs with care and delicacy.	14%	72%	14%	9%	76%	15%

Block I: evaluation of provided medical care (M)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>
M7. Medical worker offered information about psychologist assistance.	10%	75%	15%	9%	79%	12%
M8. Medical worker offered information about social worker assistance.	15%	70%	14%	15%	79%	6%
M9. I feel that specialists exercise their responsibilities professionally.	7%	72%	21%	6%	76%	18%
M10. I felt being observed accurately.	6%	77%	17%	9%	76%	15%
M11. I felt being heard and understood.	8%	75%	17%	9%	71%	21%
M12. I think that medical workers do not have enough knowledge about violence in close relationship.	10%	82%	8%	9%	79%	12%
M13. I would evaluate medical care positively.	7%	77%	15%	12%	74%	15%

The majority of respondents in Lithuania and Latvia found it difficult to evaluate their perception of medical services. This allows to conclude that from 63% to 82% of respondents have never used medical care services in case of domestic violence. *I am not afraid to seek for medical care in case of violence* was answered positively by 24% of Lithuanian respondents and 29% of Latvian respondents, and only 8% and 6% respectively disagreed with it (M1).

Only 15% of Lithuanians and 14% of Latvians agreed or fully agreed to the statement *Medical workers recorded violence signs with care and delicacy*, however, 14% of Lithuanians and 9% Latvians disagreed with this statement (M6).

When it comes to the statement *I felt that specialists exercise their responsibilities professionally*, 21% of Lithuanians and 18% of Latvians agreed (M9). Similar results are seen in the statement *I felt being observed accurately*: 17% of Lithuanians and 15% of Latvians agreed on this. The collected data does not allow for making broader conclusions, but some tendencies regarding practices

are revealed. The assessment of the support received from the medical staff depends on the circumstances and the individual approach expressed by the employee.

Two statements about medical personnel and police collaboration were included. 10% of Lithuanians and 18% of Latvians responded positively to the statement *I did not call to police myself, they called it for me*. Same number of Lithuanians and 12% of Latvians agreed with the statement *The medical personnel offered to call the police*. The possibility to call the police was offered only in few cases.

The information on other services was received in 15% of Lithuanian cases and in 12% Latvian cases on provision of psychologist assistance, 14% Lithuanian cases and 6% of Latvian cases – social worker assistance was offered.

Due to lack of answers, it is difficult to summarize the data to make conclusions, however, evaluation of medical care services is supposed to be more relevant. This might be achieved, only if medical care institutions both in Lithuania and Latvia will be engaged into the support system.

## EVALUATION OF POLICE ASSISTANCE

Block II: evaluation of the provided police assistance (P)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>
P1. I am not afraid to call police.	10%	52%	38%	6%	68%	26.5%
P2. I have a trust in police.	15.5%	66%	18%	15%	62%	23.5%
P3. Police officers came to the place on time.	10%	58%	32%	6%	82%	12%
P4. Police officers saved me from violence.	13%	66%	21%	12%	62%	26.5%
P5. I was offered to record violence signs in medical institution.	18%	65%	17%	15%	62%	23.5%
P6. I think that police officers do not have enough knowledge about violence in close relationship.	20%	65%	15.5%	29%	59%	12%
P7. I felt being heard and understood.	13%	61%	27%	12%	56%	32%

Block II: evaluation of the provided police assistance (P)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Cannot evaluate</i>	<i>Agree</i>
P8. Police officers gave information about psychologist assistance.	27%	58%	15.5%	26.5%	59%	15%
P9. Police officers gave information social worker assistance.	27%	58%	15.5%	29%	59%	12%
P10. I was taken to the shelter.	31%	63%	6%	35%	56%	9%
P11. I feel that specialists exercise their responsibilities professionally.	17%	65%	18%	6%	68%	26.5%
P12. I did not have to write a separate conviction statement in police.	28%	58%	14%	18%	71%	12%
P13. Police officers had collected enough evidence to accuse perpetrator.	24%	65%	11%	21%	68%	12%
P14. I would evaluate police work positively.	17%	58%	25%	15%	62%	23.5%

Here, it should be noted that more than a half of the respondents do not have any opinion or have no experience with police officers, so the exact perception of police work, existing among victims of domestic violence, is still difficult to be evaluated.

38% of Lithuanian respondents and 26.5% of Latvian respondents agree with the statement, that they are not afraid to call police in case of domestic violence. Only a few women mentioned that they have some kind of fear to call the police. 18% of Lithuanians and 23.5% of Latvians usually trust police.

32% of Lithuanians and only 12% of Latvians claimed that *Police officers came to the place on time* (P3), 21% and 26.5%, respectively, agreed that *Police saved them from violence* (P4).

When it comes to the statement *I felt being heard and understood* (P7), almost one third of women agreed and slightly more than 10% disagreed. Slightly less respondents agreed with the statement *I felt that specialists exercise their responsibilities professionally* (P11): 18% in Lithuania, and 26.5% in Latvia.

One fifth of women would prefer to evaluate police work positively (P14), however, there is a high number of the respondents with no opinion on this question. This situation was also recognized in the qualitative interviews - the informants criticised the work of police but said that they would still call them, if needed.

Moreover, even one fifth of the respondents do not agree that police did their best to collect evidence to accuse a perpetrator (P13). This shows that aspects related to the investigation process of the case of violence are evaluated more critically.

In 23.5% of cases in Latvia and 17% of cases in Lithuania police officers offered victims to record violence signs in medical institution. This also shows some resistance in collecting proper evidences of committed crime; victims are usually left on their own to decide whether medical approval of their injuries is needed or not.

The information on other services was received in 15.5% of Lithuanian cases and in 15% Latvian cases on provision of psychologist assistance, 15.5% Lithuanian cases and 12% of Latvian cases – social worker assistance was offered. As in case of medical care, police officers are not willing to provide information on different psychosocial services in Klaipeda or Liepaja.

The statement *I think that police officers do not have enough knowledge about violence in close relationships* was confirmed by 15% of Lithuanians and 12% of Latvians, while 20% of Lithuanians and even 29% of Latvians disagreed with that.

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents did not have experience with the police work (*did not call the police, went directly to support centre without claiming the fact of abuse to authorities or under similar circumstances, etc.*), there is a high probability that the first institution people in Lithuania and Latvia think of in case of domestic violence is still the police.

## EVALUATION OF THE COURT ASSISTANCE

Block III: evaluation of the court system (C)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree
C1. I do not understand legal issues.	8.5%	83%	8.5%	-	85%	15%
C2. I believe that court workers were emotionally abusive to me.	15.5%	75%	10%	12%	76.5%	12%
C3. I do not regret I went to court with my case.	7%	79%	14%	6%	79%	15%
C4. I would not understand anything without my lawyer.	7%	84.5%	9%	15%	82%	3%
C5. All perpetrators must be punished.	1%	76%	23%	3%	76.5%	21%
C6. Court decision made me feel safe.	4%	80%	15%	3%	79%	18%
C7. Evidence collected by medical workers was enough for convincing perpetrator.	8.5%	84.5%	7%	6%	88%	6%
C8. Evidence collected by police officers was enough for convincing perpetrator.	6%	82%	13%	6%	79%	15%
C9. I would evaluate court work positively.	3%	82%	15%	-	82%	18%

The majority of respondents in Latvia and Lithuania had no relations with the court system in domestic violence cases, thus, only a few respondents were able to evaluate the court system in our survey.

Most people note that the main reason why they went to the court is to achieve justice. The most “popular” statement among others was *All perpetrators must be punished* (C5). 23% Lithuanian women and 21% of Latvian women agreed with that. Another statement distinguished statement is: *I would evaluate court work positively* (C5): 15% Lithuanian women and 18% of Latvian women agreed with that.

In 10% of cases in Lithuania and 12% in Latvia, the respondents agreed with the statement *I believe that court workers were emotionally abusive to me* (C3). This can be an indicator that there is a need to pay attention on the organization of the institutional process to reduce the possibility of emotional violence in courts.

8.5% of Lithuanian women and 15% of Latvian women agree that they do not understand the legal issues (C5). Only 9% of Lithuanians and 3% of Latvians accept that they would not understand anything without the lawyer

(C4), 7% and 15%, respectively, disagree with that. It is important to note that currently there are no state subsidies for providing lawyers to the victims of violence in close relationship. If a person decides to go to court, there is a high possibility that she does not know how to deal with the legal issues (if one cannot afford a lawyer).

At the same time, in 14% of cases in Lithuania and 15% in of cases Latvia, women agree with the statement *I do not regret that I went to the court with my case*, and still there are less than 10% of persons in both countries who regret this decision. Thus, it can be concluded that even if there were situations when the experience in court was not so good, it was still worth to open the case.

The decision, made by the court, contributed to the victim's safety: 15% of Lithuanians and 18% of Latvians agreed with the sentence *Court decision made me feel safe* (C6), while a few people disagreed. This idea is further explained in the qualitative interviews conducted in Lithuania and Latvia, where the informants noted that violence stopped after divorce process in court. The sense of safety is also related to the aspect that the court allows to clear up the situation and rearrange the relations.

## EVALUATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Block IV: evaluation of psychosocial assistance (PS)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree
PS1. In case of violence I needed a shelter for safety issues.	12%	59%	29%	30%	55%	15.5%
PS2. I got a place in a shelter.	15%	68%	18%	27%	54%	20%
PS3. I did not have any formal obstacles to get a shelter.	6%	73.5%	21%	21%	61%	20%
PS4. I feel satisfied with shelter services.	6%	79%	18%	16%	65%	20%

Block IV: evaluation of psychosocial assistance (PS)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree
PS5. Shelter offered me other services.	3%	68%	29%	10%	54%	37%
PS6. I was directed to the proper specialists.	3%	59%	38%	10%	48%	42%
PS7. I was satisfied with the assistance of specialists.	6%	59%	35%	7%	41%	52%
PS8. Psychosocial assistance used to be offered to me proactively (e.g., by phone).	9%	56%	35%	17%	54%	30%
PS9. I requested for assistance personally.	6%	56%	38%	6%	45%	49%
PS10. I trust psychosocial specialists.	3%	56%	41%	3%	48%	49%
PS11. I wanted to talk to psychologist.	3%	53%	44%	1%	41%	58%
PS12. I was provided with free psychological consultations.	-	53%	47%	7%	38%	55%
PS13. I wanted assistance of social worker.	9%	53%	38%	10%	41%	49%
PS14. I was provided with free social worker assistance.	-	56%	44%	8.5%	44%	48%
PS15. I needed lawyer advisory in my case.	6%	50%	44%	15.5%	41%	44%
PS16. I was provided with free lawyer consultations.	3%	56%	41%	15.5%	45%	39%
PS17. I have solved my problems with assistance.	6%	53%	41%	11%	52%	37%
PS18. I consider psychosocial services to victims as satisfactory.	9%	65%	26.5%	11%	52%	37%
PS19. I think that there is no lack of addiction treatment programmes.	35%	59%	6%	18%	66%	15.5%
PS20. I think that there is no lack of children- oriented services.	30%	71%	-	35%	55%	10%
PS21. I think there is no lack of perpetrator treatment programs.	30%	68%	3%	42%	51%	7%
PS22. I would advise to seek for help to everyone suffering from violence.	3%	56%	41%	4%	42%	53.5%

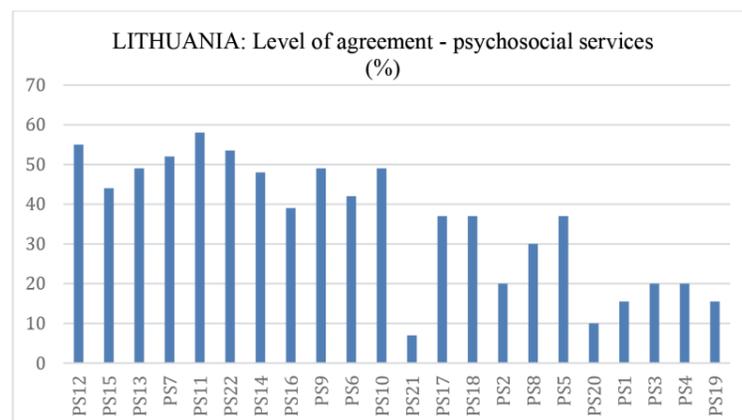
30% of Lithuanian respondents and 15.5% of Latvians (PS1) agreed with the statement *In case of violence I needed a shelter for safety issues*, and almost 20% in both countries confirmed that they have received a place in a shelter (PS2). Some of the respondents, i.e., 6% in Lithuania and 21% in Latvia (PS3), faced formal obstacles to get a place in shelter. It is important to collect information on the possible problems, related with necessity to get a safe place to stay for victims of domestic violence.

Only 18% of Lithuanian women and 20% of Latvian respondents agreed of being satisfied with shelter services (PS4), and more than 65% of respondents in both states could not evaluate them (no experience or have not applied for support). As it shown in responses by the rest of women : more than a half of victims of domestic violence (from 53% to 71% in Lithuania, and from 38% to 66% in Latvia) have no opinion on psychosocial services which could be provided to them by crisis centres, specialised support centres and other similar institutions. The latency of domestic violence could be a possible explanation of these answers. There are many victims, who avoid institutional support, so the possibility to have their evaluation even of psychosocial services (psychologist, social worker and lawyer assistance) is minimum.

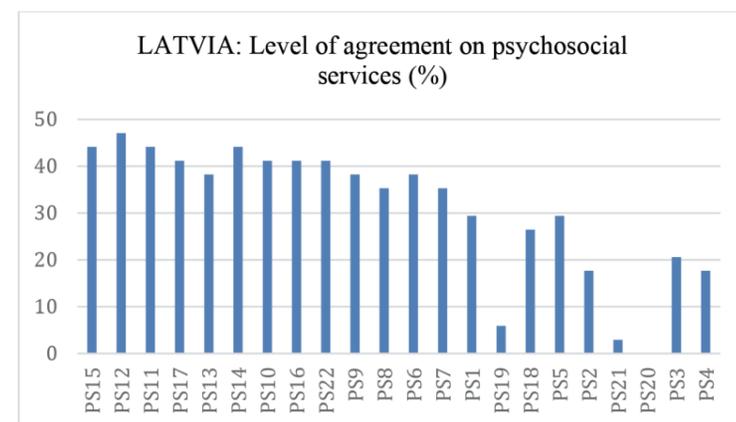
More than one third of women agreed, that they were provided with support proactively (PS8), while 9% of the respondents in Lithuania and 18% of those surveyed in Latvia disagreed. Almost a half of Latvian respondents also agreed that they had *requested the assistance personally* (PS9). These answers do not point at any contradictions – it is a characteristic of institutional processes in Latvia: in the beginning, rehabilitation services are offered, but in order to formally receive them, one must fill in the papers and make an official request. In Lithuania, the situation is quite similar: in order to get a place in shelter, they have to collect corresponding documentation, meanwhile, in order to receive services from NGO – a person must identify herself/himself.

From 38% to 58% of the respondents in Lithuania and Latvia agreed that they needed psychosocial services – consultation of psychologist, social worker or/and lawyer (PS11-PS16). 26.5% of Lithuanian women and 37% of Latvian women state that they find psychosocial services to victims as satisfactory (PS18). Moreover, 41% of Lithuanian women and 37% of Latvian women agree that they have solved their problems with assistance of the centres (PS17).

Some significant observations about the victims' evaluation of psychosocial services are presented below:



LITHUANIAN RESPONDENTS	
MINIMAL AGREEMENT LEVEL (from the lowest)	MAXIMAL AGREEMENT LEVEL (from the highest)
PS21: I think there is no lack of perpetrator treatment programs. PS20: I think that there is no lack of children-oriented services. PS1: In case of violence I needed a shelter for safety issues.	PS11: I wanted to talk to psychologist. PS12: I was provided with free psychological consultations. PS22: I would advise to seek for help to everyone suffering from violence.



LATVIAN RESPONDENTS	
MINIMAL AGREEMENT LEVEL (from the lowest)	MAXIMAL AGREEMENT LEVEL (from the highest)
PS20: I think that there is no lack of children oriented services. PS21: I think there is no lack of perpetrator treatment programs. PS19: I think that there is no lack of addiction treatment programmes.	PS12: I was provided with free psychological consultations. PS15: I needed lawyer advisory in my case. PS14: I was provided with free social worker assistance.

## GENERALIZED EVALUATION OF THE OFFERED SERVICES

Block V: generalized evaluation of services (G)	LITHUANIA			LATVIA		
	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree	Disagree	Cannot evaluate	Agree
g1. I believe that all organizations and institutions providing help to victims, understand violence problem in the same (equal) way.	28%	24%	48%	-	50%	50%
g2. Different organizations exchange information in specific case of violence.	24%	44%	32%	24%	26%	50%
G3. There is no need for me to make additional efforts to explain for different organizations what it means to suffer from violence	21%	46%	32%	12%	35%	53%

The statement *I believe that all organizations and institutions providing help to victims, understand the violence problem in the same (equal) way* was agreed with by 50% of the respondents both in Lithuania and Latvia, meanwhile 50% of Latvians could not evaluate this statement, the same as 24% of Lithuanian respondents did not know how to answer that question. It is important to note that Lithuanian and Latvian institutions still lack knowledge about gender related violence, different stereotypes, and the “victim blaming” approach are still viable among specialists. Victims face the lack of understanding on how to distinguish what is violence.

Another aspect of the social support system is the exchange of information. A half of Latvian respondents agreed with the statement *Different organizations exchange information within a particular case of violence*, and almost one third of them disagreed. Lithuanian responses were almost equal in this case with a small increase of answers for no opinion.

This aspect could be evaluated quite controversially. According to the EU legislation on personal data, there are restrictions and regulations related with sharing information between organisations. On the one hand, it could be more comfortable, if victim does not need to repeat the same story of violence in different institutions, on the other hand, not in all cases the victim wants that institutions would get information on her situation. In other cases, institutions have restrictions on providing information to other organisations (e.g., can provide only limited amount of data).

While evaluating the knowledge about violence possessed by employees of the institution, the respondents noted that police, social workers and the employees of medical institutions lack this understanding. The statement *There is no need for me to make an additional effort to explain what it means to suffer from violence to the institutions* was viewed as true by 53% of Latvian respondents, and only 32% of Lithuanian respondents. Moreover, 46% of Lithuanian women and 35% of Latvian women do not have any opinion on this topic.

Thus, victims’ personal experiences are different; it is crucial to achieve a similar perception of violence among all institutions that are involved in the support system. It is important to continue educating the employees, who are working with victims, on questions related with domestic violence, victimization processes and common behaviour of abusers.

## LITHUANIA: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

20 interviews with persons, who that in Klaipeda and suffer from violence, were conducted. All informants were females. The age of informants varied from 19 to 62. A detailed information on the interviews is given in the table below.

An *informed consent* was acquired for all informants in the interviews. It was explained that informants have the right to refuse to answer the questions, to ask for

some information to be removed from the transcript or to stop the participation in the study at any moment. The researcher also asked for a permission to record the interviews. All records were deleted after they were transcribed. Confidentiality was ensured to every person, who suffers from violence.

The qualitative content analysis was the main method used in the process of analysis. The perspective of the institutions and the perspective of the victims are described separately.

One of the strengths of this study is the fact that it allows to gain an in-depth view of the experience of violence and the support system offered in Klaipėda. However, the study also has a limitation - most informants suffer from violence from their intimate partners, no information about other victims and perpetrators was collected during the interviews.

## VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

### EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There are no doubts that domestic violence, especially if it affects family for a long time, becomes a part of the victim's life experience, which is cannot be eliminated from research on domestic violence. Asking victims about their violence experience causes reflection of harsh life moments and traumatic events. During interviews, it was important to analyze the kind of relationship women during violence and how it changed after receiving support in specialized assistance centres, shelters or crisis centres.

The informants may be grouped by their experience of violence. Some women claim facing only emotional violence, while others faced physical abuse, there are also several descriptions of economic and sexual types of violence. Most of women reported suffering from their intimate partners, few women – from their own children or other relatives.

It is quite common to hear victims of domestic violence comparing different types of abuse by their consequences for overall condition. For instance, women mention physical abuse and emotional violence. Ci-

tation (informant 1): *The physical violence is still only physical violence, when you got beaten there is nothing you can't do about it, you start to fear that person all the time. You can't raise a voice against him, you can't pop out. And when there is psychological violence, it is completely... different. You have no life of your own. Where do you go, what do you do, and how much money do you have?*

Most of the women emphasize the controlling behaviour exposed by their partners. It seems difficult for women after some time of persistent terror to believe in their ability to live without a perpetrator, to have a normal life. They usually find themselves as people with low self-confidence, self-esteem, feel being *stupid* or *redundant*, as abusers usually call them.

A part of the women think that emotional/psychological violence is even more frightening than physical abuse: it feels like they cannot be themselves anymore, have to hide, have to be quiet and do not express their thoughts or feelings out loud. They find it even more traumatising than bruises or injuries, evaluating that as something what is difficult to escape from. This fear spreads to relations with other people, exaggerated reactions to critics or negative statements outside of family communication. All this reduces critical thinking, ability to solve problems, deal with everyday activities and, as a result, does not allow women end up with dehumanising relationship.

It is known that physical violence, if was not exposed before, usually might be “provoked” by the factors as marriage after some time of partnership or cohabitation, woman being pregnant, child's birth, separation or divorce, etc. Informants claim that abuse usually does not emerge at the very beginning of relationship, it takes time to exacerbate. Citation (informant 4): *Everything was fine before the marriage. Then I got pregnant. He somehow decided me being his property, disagreements had started. Obviously, I was very vulnerable, I have just decided to quit and change my job, and there was no support. He just started to denigrate me.* As soon as victim realizes that something is wrong with their marriage or partnership, it become too difficult to get out of pathological situation.

In most interviews, women state that they suffered from violence alone, and their children became witnesses of conflicts only from time to time. Citation (inform-

ant 1): *Because she (daughter) was small, she only participated (in fights) when I was running away from home, meaning his parents used to live not far away, so I was running to his parents. It was only... that she ran with me in the blanket in my hands and that is all. He never touched her.*

Even though children usually are not abused (as observed in the surveyed situations), they still are traumatised. Women understand what kind of negative consequences it may cause to children, but it usually does not become the most important factor for escaping from a violent partner. Usually, some type of outside trigger is needed: close friends, relatives or even complete strangers have to “push” the victim to activate her “self-protection” instincts. Maybe, to buy flight tickets (informant 1), involve into new intimate relationship (informant 2), receive encouragement from friends or relative (informant 3) or do something for the victim to boost her will to move forward, leaving an abusive partner behind.

One of the most outstanding experiences is given by informant 10: *Just I started... The thing is, that all of that made me ill, I was very ill, I was already going to oncology issues. And it just gave me the sign that it is just not right. Well, and that was it.* As we see from this example, sometimes a terrible disease might become a way out of abusive relationship. It becomes some kind of impetus, which gives encourages a person to act, to save oneself and children.

A part of the women state being witnesses or victims of domestic violence in their former families: they usually describe it as a physical abuse their mothers have suffered from their husbands (biological fathers or step-fathers). Some informants also claim being beaten while trying to protect mothers and/or the siblings, others – faced violence in the same way as the rest of their family members.

According to victims, most of the abusers are unstable: it is like one moment everything is fine, one is nice and playful, and the other moment – becomes aggressive and unpredictable. As a result, this uncertainty causes many traumatic implications for personality. Citation (informant 2): *He really broke me at that moment, because there was no trust in other men too <...> because he promised he wouldn't do that anymore, but he*

*kept beating me many times after. <...> Grievances are still present, they do not let me go, I might take them to my graveyard, I don't know.*

Most of the informants are divorced or have started the divorce process (or just living apart, but not divorced yet). The majority of them notify not suffering from physical violence anymore, but some still face psychological violence, stalking and other negative impacts of contact with perpetrator.

There are many deliberations among victims about the cause of partner's abusive behaviour. Most of the informants find explanation of it in alcohol addiction: it seems like a perpetrator was a “normal” person, but turned into aggressive one on only after consuming alcohol. Citation (informant 5): *I didn't even suspect that he is that aggressive, and I think it is because of addiction.* It is quite common to think that addictions make people act abusively, but does it justify domestic violence? The aforementioned informant continues: *We agreed that he would not drink anymore. <...> I believed that he just needs some support, just like a mommy. Like that. I wanted him so much as a man; he was so close to my ideal man. And I was ready, with my sleeves rolled up, to do anything for him. I thought, we will heal him, repair him and everything will be fine. I failed.*

Guilt and self-criticism, which women, even after realizing being victims of abusive and criminal actions, still feel and talk about, is noticed. This irrational way of thinking and feeling is the reason why women suffer from violence for many years without even trying to escape or fight for their rights.

One more unexpected finding is that even 4 interviewed women were talking about their emigration (for work within EU) experience. Surprisingly, at least three of them state facing with first brutal rage outbursts being already outside of Lithuania. There is a possibility that separation from primary families and friends, or problems with assimilation to new environment turned into a trigger of physical abuse.

Neglect of violence is one more problem, which needs to be explored in future research. Some of our informants stated contradicting facts: on the one hand, they claimed experiencing violence only in childhood, on the other hand, when telling about their own families, they demonstrated the signs of emotional aggression towards

them. One of the citations (informant 6): *I have no relatives you know... He, as an aggressive person, looks at me and thinks you have no place to run from me, you have nothing. It is comfortable for him to hold my throat and just manipulate.*

It can be partly explained by the tendency to think that physical, emotional, sexual and financial violence is something that is “meant to be” in the relationship. As one of the informants (informant 12) says: *Now I understand that I faced it, before I thought that it is normal for husband act with me this way...*

Different experiences and overall similarities between the interviewed women show that there are many patterns, allowing to recognize some specific way of interaction with the outside world. Many women tend to keep a distance from people, usually they are not ready to ask or seek for help, as informant 13 says: *I try to do everything by myself. I don't ask anyone for help, I can do everything on my own. As I live here (in Women help unit), I make my own decisions. It seems that I move forward in small steps.* This kind of position might be taken as a positive way of thinking, especially when it comes to recovering from abusive relationship. Unfortunately, the unwillingness to seek for support turns into a big problem, when women keep facing violence from their partners.

#### INFORMATION ON THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

In most of cases, women that there is lack of information about help to victims of domestic violence in Klaipeda. They say that it is not easy to understand what kind of help you can get, what are the steps you should take in order to receive the necessary support.

A half of interviewees insisted that it is necessary to place posters in public places with information what to do if you face domestic violence with specific contact details. A few women think that it would be great, if educational institutions had employees, who could spread this information among parents. Some suggested to advertise on TV or radio. Citation (informant 2): *I have never heard about that Women Help Unit in Klaipeda, neither in commercials nor in the news. I heard about it from one acquaintance. There is lack of that information. Maybe, it might be advertised somewhere. Flyers to people*

*mailboxes. So, that people could know for sure, that they are not alone, that they can get help.*

Online searches give information about the NGO Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre, it is possible to find some information in shelter in Klaipeda Women Help Unit, but informants still face some troubles with interpretation. Citation (informant 4): *Maybe that information was misleading, I thought it is only about physical violence. But I felt terribly. And somebody told me it (help) is free. I was thinking about psychologist or something. And then I just started working and everything cost money. Psychologist would cost too, I thought. Later they said about the free psychologist, free lawyer. I went there.* Moreover, women, even if they get information in shelter, do not actually understand what to expect for. They do not know anything about the services provided in the centres and usually figure this out only after applying to the centres. Thus, it is hard to make the first step, therefore the majority of victims habitually prefer to do nothing to help themselves.

One informant tells about facing troubles, while “googling” for information (informant 5): *Sometimes when you're in a crisis situation and your emotional state is so down, you don't even know how to look for information. Through the internet by yourself... if you are emotionally broken, you are a bit lost, it is difficult to get oriented. So, if somebody would just share contact information on a street or somewhere else, it would help more.*

It seems that women under bad emotional condition struggle not only seeking for help but also doing some “research” on the assistance services in their cities. This makes difficult to access victims and provide them with appropriate information on their possibilities to find a way out of violent relationship.

#### COOPERATION WITH POLICE

Sociological survey conducted in Lithuania showed that 69% of the population in Lithuania tend to trust the police, which is close to the figure in the EU overall (71%).<sup>1</sup> Informants of the present study have also shown their readiness to call police in case of domestic violence.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2016). Eurobarometer. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/18/groupKy/88>

According to the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (Art. 9 part 1), police officers must inform a victim about the possibilities to receive assistance and, upon informing a victim (in practice – a written agreement is required), report the incident to a specialised assistance centre. It is done under a cooperation agreement between the Police Department and NGOs.

When asked to recall their experience with police, some of the informants denied receiving information on psychological or other support opportunities. Most of them report being asked to tell about circumstances of incident or provide this data in writing. Women find police support as more formalized and official. Police officers usually did not mention any kind of crisis centres based in Klaipeda. There were no informants who would remember getting some specific data on crisis centres or other assistance. Even though police officers have contact cards and all necessary information on psychosocial assistance in Klaipeda, they still avoid providing it.

Victims, who suffered violence from their partners, usually tell that the contact with police officers was not very pleasant. Citation (informant 9): *When I went to write a claim here in Klaipeda, there was one room with many officers: ones were working, others staring at you. That is why I felt very uncomfortable in that room. I wanted to ask for help and so on. Well, the officer, who talked to me was really, really cold. Well, completely indifferent and I did not dare (to ask). I thought I will find it by myself.* These situations are very frequent in cases of stalking and bullying. Unfortunately, police officers have not much to do in this case – it is difficult to get evidence or to punish a perpetrator for inappropriate messages, calls or even for stalking children behind the school. So, women usually feel unsatisfied with the police services in these cases.

Informant 9 also tells about her feeling towards the police work: *I do not even know, it seems they are more into men. Maybe they just don't try to get into details more, to show their understanding more. <...> They say like, women come here for 150 times back and forward. <...> Well, like a conveyor. No one is going to seek for help there, it was kind of opinion about their (women who comes to claim their men) stance. Maybe that's why they don't offer any help, because nobody actually needs it.* As it is seen in this statement, the police officers tend to

consider the woman, who comes to write a claim against her husband, as somebody who does not need actual help, and this could be a reason, why the police are not willing to inform them about possible support.

This thinking leads to the situation, when people who need support, even though it might not be legal advisory or an act of justice, do not get proper information from people, actually representing the authorities. Understanding of help in cases of domestic violence is not only about safety and punishment issues, it is also about victims' empowering to believe that they are able to get out of pathological relationship, to improve they problem-solving abilities and find a safe place to stay.

Another misunderstanding between police, prosecutors and victims arises then it comes to collection of evidence of domestic violence. Usually, victims are not aware about criminal regulations, they have a small amount of information on how to prove that personal injuries were a result of domestic violence. Furthermore, they often refuse to go for medical expertise, which actually affects the case negatively. Sometimes women are afraid to put forward their claim as they do not that the perpetrators end up in a prison. There are many of unreasonable doubts, exposed by informants, when facing police and criminal justice. Victims' fears and lack of knowledge about their rights usually lead to a vicious circle: where a perpetrator proceeds manipulating and abusing, police officers refuse to take actions to prevent this, while a victim feels confused and does not know how to escape from the terror and her own ambiguity.

One informant found her way to connect with the police officers in order to receive help she insists on. Citation (informant 4): *I would call (the police), but if I went there, I would just go with my attorney now. I would have better pay to attorney for going with me because somehow my experience was like that.* This is the case, when a person, who understands her own weaknesses and inability to speak up for herself, decides to use legal advice, in order to feel safer in the police. This is a way out for intimidated victims, the only obstacle is the fact that secondary legal advisory is subject to a fee, so these services might be accessed only for people with permanent income.

There was one case, where police reacted differently: a woman was abused by her son. When asked about her

experience with police officers, she says (informant 20): *It was a good cooperation. They looked at my son as a perpetrator. No matter how old he is. Police officer tried to explain him (son) that there must be rules in the family, respect, help and bond between family members. Tried talking to him and defended me.* She continued: *Well, I appreciate the police work. They did everything operatively. The aid was very substantial. Told me where to go for help. Were psychologically supportive. No matter male cops or women. Tried to solve the problem. Tried to find a compromise. Talk to him, to me.*

As it has already been mentioned in previous section, a few interviewed women faced violence, while being in labour emigration (within EU). Some of them had an opportunity to compare how foreign police officers react to violence and how work is arranged in Lithuania. It is common for Great Britain and Scandinavian countries to provide a victim with information on psychosocial support Citation (informant 9): *I have always reported about violence. So, they kept asking me the same questions, which are standard, 47 or some. They asked every time and really cared about me. In the end of the interview always asked if everything is okay. They say: you can get a psychologist at any time. Like write, say, call at any time of the day.*

It is important to point out, that no matter how clearly and logically victims' support system is explained in the legal acts, there still are a lot of possibilities to interpret the requirements freely. In other words, the success of assistance provision to victims mostly depends on the specialists' will to make the necessary steps in order to fulfil the written requirements. If a police officer, prosecutor, child's right protection specialist or any other service provider lacks knowledge on domestic violence or is not willing to provide a person with proper help, it would be very difficult to make the system work properly.

#### COOPERATION WITH COURT

The data, acquired about the informants' experience with Lithuanian court system, are scarce. However, it is still possible to find some statements about the divorce process or other civil law-oriented issues, for example, alimony, financial child support or determination of child's place of residence. Most of the informants tell

about their experience of getting divorce, relationship with lawyers and husbands during this period or problems with ex-husbands.

In domestic violence cases, it is noticeable that most of divorces take a lot of time and efforts to settle everything down and get a proper result for a victim. As informant 4 claims, citation: *It was a long and painful divorce process.* Usually, the most painful part of the process is the decisions on children. Perpetrators tend to use children to stop their wives from getting divorced. Such situations turn into battles for the entire family, even primary families of the spouses involve themselves into fights for their grandchildren.

The most painful experience is when a perpetrator uses his own children to minimize his financial liabilities for ex-wife and children. Citation (informant 10): *He left one child for himself. So, that I don't leave the city, he doesn't have to pay alimony and so on. Like we split children, but we will not split them in realm. Like we deceive the court like they live separately, children actually stay with me, but he avoids of paying alimony. He blackmailed me and threatened to be fired from my work. I just got tired and didn't want to go through the courts anymore.*

The other way of threatening is identified by referring to the following citation (informant 12): *They were trying to deprive me of my child and are now trying to deprive me of maternity rights, so far nothing has happened.* She proceeds: *It is difficult to give him a child because he will not take care of him, but he is trying to prove otherwise. He wants revenge. My kid is very cheerful, nice, self-confident, but if he (father) takes him from me, it will not be so.*

As it is shown in the previous statements, there are many difficulties for women, who suffered from domestic violence, to get through a divorce process. Moreover, there still are a lot of possibilities for perpetrators to manipulate victims in this process. The main instrument, which is used for manipulations, are children, especially when it comes to the situations where husbands earn more, stay in family property, and woman becomes the one who must leave the living place.

One victim stated refusing to start divorce process, even not living with her husband anymore, because of the difficulties and a high cost of the court process. Informant 5: *I just came back (from abroad), having got a*

*new job, I just financially calculated how much it would cost me to divorce, if in court. Stamp duty, other payments.*

The data, acquired during the conducted interview, are not enough to make explicit evaluation of the court system in Lithuania. Separate statements give us some information on the victims' difficulties with divorces and civil law regulations. Since none of the informants has experience in criminal procedures, the description of this part cannot be taken as complete. More information and more informants with different experiences are needed.

#### COOPERATION WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

There are two main organisations in Klaipeda, providing assistance to victims of domestic violence:

NGO Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre. More information in Lithuanian – [www.moteriai.lt](http://www.moteriai.lt)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been actively providing assistance to victims of violence. The Network of Specialised Assistance Centres (SAC), administered by NGOs, has been functioning in Lithuania since 2012. This network of centres implements the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, by creating a special programme financed by the state budget.<sup>2</sup> The aim of SAC is to guarantee the provision of specialised integrated assistance to victims of violence. These centres support victims of violence, inform victims of the types (and locations) of assistance they can receive, mediate and represent them in other institutions, provide psychological and legal assistance, and assist in restoring interpersonal relationships with family members. Information to victims about assistance is provided by phone. Information about the victims the centre receives from police right after the domestic violence incident.

Municipal institution Family and Child's Wellbeing Centre, Women's Unit, webpage in Lithuanian - <https://www.gerovescentras.lt/>

This organization provides shelter (16 rooms) for women, who are registered in Klaipeda municipality up to 6 months in case of domestic violence. Victims might

be also provided with different kinds of psychosocial support: social worker, psychologist and lawyer consultations. This kind of help is considered as passive as the organisation doesn't have to take active steps to reach a victim, support is provided upon the victim's request.

Both organisations provide victims with psychological support. Different specialists can be found there, clients can choose where to go. There is no limitation for the victims' age or kind of violence they have faced. The NGO also offers help to male victims of domestic violence, which is not allowed in the shelter, however, the NGO does offer accommodation services for victims.

Most of the participants are using psychological support, attending consultations once a week for one hour. A part of them use psychologist's services occasionally, i.e., when they feel necessity to talk about their feelings and life. All informants agree that psychologist has helped them to resolve many problems and consider psychological support as an important part of the "healing" process.

It is important that both organizations provide free consultations as not many of interviewees have a possibility to pay for them. Citation (informant 9): *I was happy that I could get consultations free. Ten was enough for me, I still have two left, but I think others might need long-lasting support.* She had evaluated the work with psychologist positively; she also stated that if it helped her, could also be helpful to other. Most women find it very helpful to have unlimited and unregulated consultancy services. Some notice how good it is to have a chance to use them whenever it seems appropriate.

Women, who live in the shelter, raise high requirements for social worker. It seems that a social worker (in the shelter) is expected to know everything about every kind of social services provided in Klaipeda, which is simply impossible. Klaipeda's municipality has few social institutions, where persons in difficult financial situations could apply for material support. Usually, women, who come to live in the shelter, lack knowledge on where to go and what do next after leaving a perpetrator. Thus, they usually expect the shelter's social workers to provide them all necessary data and this expectation is not very accurate.

Sometimes, when not getting information from social workers, victims start asking other women, already living

<sup>2</sup> Specialised assistance centres programme approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour, the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Interior in 2011, reviewed in 2015, order No. A1-665/V-1306/1V-904.

in the centre. They become information sources, share their knowledge where to go, what to do and how to get the allowances or other financial or material benefits.

Informants share that they expect from social workers the characteristics as communication, empathy and understanding. They consider that it is good when you can call to the worker whenever you need, even at night. However, some women did not find a contact with social workers, feel dissatisfaction, notice communication problems and notify being criticized for “incompetency” in upbringing children.

The negative side, identified by the informants, is the fact that there are only 16 places in the shelter, while the number of victims in need of a place to stay can be significantly higher. The other point, which was pointed out during one of the interviews, is that the shelter is not adapted to disabled people; it was not designed as a place for disabled ones. Thus, it would be difficult for person with physical disability to find a convenient and safe place to stay away from domestic violence.

One more specialist, whose services can be used by a victim in both organizations, is a primary legal advisor. Informants notify that it is good to get free consultations, but they are not enough when you go to court to divorce. The lawyers, working with the shelter and NGOs, do not provide secondary legal assistance for free. Representation in court is usually a paid service. This causes some troubles to victims of domestic violence because they have either to find money for costly advisory or to initiate divorce process by themselves. There is also one more option to apply for free or partly free secondary legal advisory in Klaipeda municipality.

A part of the informants stated that they never faced any other institutional support except the shelter: they did not call police, even when perpetrators were brutal in their actions. Women claim that it was too shameful, too stressful to involve somebody outside their close people into the family matters. They manage to come to the shelter and ask for help because it looked like a better choice than involving police or/and Child Rights Protection into their family situations. It was most often in cases of emotional violence, which was hard to prove, or when it was difficult to get a legal evaluation of the perpetrator's acts.

## COOPERATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

There is not much information on women experience with Klaipeda Child Rights Protection Services (CRPS). However, it is important to note that this institution might be very valuable, when it comes to protecting children from witnessing domestic violence. Thus, it should be emphasized that in cases, where the child rights are opposed to the women rights, some unpredictable and negative outcomes, e.g., secondary victimization, might arise.

In some cases, women evaluate the services positively, even though did not get the help they expected. Citation (informant 3): *They visited me at home and recorded my statement. I spoke to the head of their unit, she expressed me her sympathy, but where was nothing she could do. When he comes back, they will just talk to him and report to the police afterwards, they can't help me much here. She tells more: They provide help to kids mostly. I think children rights help children not women, because my child is not harmed. He does not speak yet, but if father communicates with him swearing as he usually does, the child will take this over. That is why I provided them the records how he speaks with a child. He tells our son terrible thing on his mother. <...> He tried to write a statement to police.*

Sometimes women, as they see it, are not provided with any kind of support or information. Informants claimed receiving the standard package of actions: interrogation of perpetrator, a child and a victim, and a letter with offer for mediation. Some steps seem to be done by the specialists, but they are mainly focused on children.

It is obvious that evaluation of the child condition (physical and mental) usually depends on people, who might lack psychological knowledge, understanding of domestic violence. As informant 12 states: *I find communicating with them quite difficult for me, because they have their own position, they have to respect the European rights, what to do with child's parents and so on.* In her words those specialists cannot actually help, she says: *I think they are just bureaucrats sitting there, writing letters, taking notes, recording everything. Simulate work. But in reality, nothing happens there. They do not really solve problems. Sitting there and getting paid for it.*

As for medical institutions, it is difficult to indicate the present level of involvement of medical care institutions into domestic violence issues. At this moment, there are no obligations (or just working properly steps) for medical staff to report about the abused adult person to authorities.

Even if some bodily injuries are ascertained, it is often a lack of objective data that allows categorically rejecting the possibility that a person could have hurt himself/herself, for example, by falling down or taking a wrong step. Those who raise children or work with them often notice scratches or bruises on children's bodies, which occur when they strike against something without any intervention of other people.

There is lack of services related with childcare for women who want to leave abusive environment, search for job, and become independent from a perpetrator. If a child is too small to be taken to kindergarten, or if a woman has other problems with arranging childcare by herself, or if she does not have any relatives to help her in this situation, victims choose to stay with a perpetra-

tor in order to have a place to live, despite the fact that it might be dangerous for both women and children.

Talking about addiction treatment programmes, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, there are possibilities for victims, living with alcohol or drug addictive partners, to participate in group meetings for addicts' relatives. These programmes can become real support, if a person has difficulties with realisation of co-addiction problems: a tendency to “save” a drinker, to make enormous efforts to change him, etc.

## LATVIA: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

20 interviews with persons, living in Liepaja and suffering from violence, were conducted. The informants included 18 females and 2 males. The age of informants varied from 19 to 62. A detailed information on the interviews is given in the table below.

No.	Interview Name	Gender	Age	Length	Date
1	1_intervija_L	female	26	61 min	10.04.19
2	2_intervija_L	female	46	55 min	11.04.19
3	3_intervija_L	female	22	38 min	11.04.19
4	4_intervija_L	female	61	36 min	11.04.19
5	5_intervija_L	female	39	27 min	18.04.19
6	6_intervija_L	female	38	37 min	18.04.19
7	7_intervija_L	female	53	52 min	22.04.19
8	8_intervija_L	male	19	65 min	25.04.19
9	9_intervija_L	female	62	31 min	25.04.19
10	10_intervija_L	female	-	3 h.	25.04.19
11	11_intervija_L	female	37	29 min	25.04.19
12	12_intervija_L	female	42	43 min	10.05.19
13	13_intervija_L	female	45	52 min	10.05.19
14	14_intervija_L	female	51	40 min	22.05.19
15	15_intervija_L	female	40	57 min	23.05.19
16	16_intervija_L	female	46	26 min	29.05.19
17	17_intervija_L	female	27	46 min	29.05.19
18	18_intervija_L	male	26	40 min	03.06.19
19	19_intervija_L	female	34	31 min	11.06.19
20	20_intervija_L	female	30	49 min	11.06.19

An informed consent was acquired for all informants in the FGD and the interviews. It was explained that informants have the right to refuse to answer the questions, to ask for some information to be removed from the transcript or to stop the participation in the study at any moment. The researcher also asked for a permission

to record the interviews. All records were deleted after they were transcribed.

Confidentiality was ensured to every person, who suffers from violence, but the persons, who participated in the study as experts or represented certain institutions, were informed that it is not possible to offer complete anonymity.

The qualitative content analysis was the main method used in the process of analysis. The perspective of the institutions and the perspective of the victims are described separately.

One of the strengths of this study is the fact that it allows to gain an in-depth view of the experience of violence and the support system offered in Liepaja. However, the study also has a limitation - most informants suffer from violence from husbands and sexual partners, therefore, less information was acquired on questions regarding the experience of children and elderly people, who suffer from violence in close relations, and on the effectiveness of the support system in Liepaja.

## VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

It is essential to understand that violence is a part of the experience, related to a person's life, thus, the interviews include various events: attempts to solve the problems in relationships, the working life, raising children, divorce, etc. Therefore, the interviews not only include the stories about the experience with the support system, but also allow to characterize the informants and their everyday lives.

Stories told in interviews can be grouped according to the experience of violence. Some violence in close relationship can be linked to a certain stage of the relationship – most often –divorce. In this period, some of the conflicts become violent, but divorce terminates violence. If there are children, in most situations when violence is directed by one parent to the other, children become witnesses and victims of their parents' relationships. In this case, children are affected or redeemed, sometimes the messages are transferred through the children, etc. Addressing violent relationships negatively affects all family members and rehabilitation may be necessary not only for women, but also for men and children.

Some of the informants associate violence with addictions, excessive use of alcohol, drug use or addictive gambling by the partner or parents. During the period, when a partner or a parent is sober, the relationships may be good, but while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, a person changes and becomes violent. In this

case, people believe that if a perpetrator finds a way quit an addiction, the situation can change.

At least 4 women believe that if a partner had recognized his addiction and had undergone treatment, it could potentially have changed their relationship. In some cases, the partner promises to start addiction treatment in order to bring the woman back to the violent relationship. However, the addicted person usually does not recognize his addiction as a problem and, therefore, does not want to or cannot address the issue.

In three cases, upon becoming adults, children stopped communicating with their parents because of violence and alcohol consumption. They can forgive for violence in childhood, but the emotional violence is present today and the best solution for them is interruption of the relationship. In two cases, it is easy because also other family members exclude a perpetrator from family. In one case, the adult children pushed mother to divorce and move a perpetrator out from home.

In two cases, the women initiated the divorce because the partner's behaviour was not only directed against them, but also against children. Some women criticize the existing law on children's rights. Although the law gives the rights for children to meet both parents, there have been a number of situations, posing a child in danger because of the father's inability to take responsibility for himself and a child.

Some of the informants faced violence in their families in childhood (physical, sexual violence, neglect), and later the violent relationship has repeated in their own families. It becomes a specific tradition of the family.

I am 37 years old, I have grown up in [...] such an emotionally violent environment. It is like that - I have been shagged, shrivelled, blamed, I have not received any love from my mom and I have also been sexually abused in my childhood. And only now I have started to recycle my emotions. (11. Interview)

In one case, mother saw how her husband beat her daughter, but she could not raise 4 children alone, therefore, tried to justify the husband's actions.

In some cases, violence is an integral part of a long-lasting relationship where one person believes that he can punish the other one for some or every failure in their life. In these cases, violence is cyclical and, in order to survive, a victim develops some strategies: for

example, already holding the handbag in a certain place in case she needs to go away from home. Violence becomes an integral part of a cyclical relationship, even if a person is aware that she doesn't want this type of life anymore and is ready to change it.

The reasons why people continue to live in violent relationships are different: emotional affection, economic dependence, fear that the children will be taken away, fear that a perpetrator can kill her, conviction that a victim is to be blamed, a belief that she is not able to raise children by herself, etc. One of the women in her interview pointed out – the most common reason why women continue their violent relationship is fear. They are afraid of a perpetrator and that the institutions can take children away. The fear does prevent from finding a good solution for the situation and, therefore, she lives in violence.

Most of the women, who agreed to take part in the interview, were divorced or planning to do it soon to reduce the likelihood of suffering from repeated violence. However, there were cases when the violent relationship continued even after terminating the relationships. Then, as the only solution, several women mentioned a change of place of residence. In two cases, the reason for changing a place of residence was to avoid negative emotions, but in one, it was the threat to life. One woman was not able to change the place of residence as the other part of the house was owned by the violent partner, who sabotaged her attempts to sell her half, thus, causing the violent relationship to continue.

Informants have survived various forms of violence, most often physical, emotional and economical one, as well as persecution.

In most cases, it was emotional violence, but when I came here (NGO Marta), it was already physical, because ... I can tell how it was. We argued and then we could not solve the conflict at all, and I did not see the point of discussing much. I stayed silent and it provoked him directly. And then he grabbed me by the neck and pushed me into the corner and started shouting. (3 Interview)

It should be noted that most of the informants recognized the effect of violence on health and emotional well-being. Violence used to cause internal anxiety. Informants with children also recognize the changes in child's mental health, attitudes and relations with the surrounding world, friends and family members.

In addition, they name the ambiguity of violence in close relations because you have emotional attachment to perpetrator and anger and fear at the same time, this ambiguity makes solving these relationships more difficult. In turn, continued violent relationship confused the surrounding people, e.g., friends and institutions, contributing to the social isolation of the victims.

## INFORMATION ON THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The interviewed women received information about the support system from friends and family, institutions, from the internet or other media: radio, newspapers, TV, police and representatives of social services.

In some cases, women discussed the support possibilities with their friends, receiving information on support opportunities. It is essential that discussions with friends and family members would allow a victim to recognize that she faces violence, and would motivate to seek for a solution. Some women, who have used support services, become the sources of information for other women. The shared information encourages other women to seek help. This channel of information can also negatively impact the usage of services, if experience with institution was unpleasant or attitude from a person is negative.

The interviewed victims admitted that violence is often hidden from family members and colleagues, and only in some cases the situation was discussed with others. Violence is hidden to avoid condemnation. If a person chooses to talk about violence and is confronted with condemnation, she may not repeatedly seek for help, therefore, the supportive attitude of the surrounding people is extremely important.

A case of unsupportive attitude was reported by the woman whose mother indicated that it was a shame to tell about violence in family because it was she, who chose her husband, and it is her responsibility for misfortune. The lack of support and the difficulty to resolve situation led a woman to a very long-term violent relationship that significantly influenced her health and quality of life.

I am not talking to others (about violence); I once had a conversation with my mother, and she said it was a shame. It's inappropriate, you married him no one else

did. She also told me - nobody pushed you to give birth to the children. These are your problems - you need to deal with everything. I had no place to go, so I lived together (with my husband) for so long.

How long?

28, for almost 30 years. I had no place to go, I waited for the children to grow up, for us to become older and thought that he will become wiser, maybe something will change. Then I realized that the kids already have their own families and there are grandchildren and all continue. (4. Interview.)

A similar situation may be experienced by parents that suffer from violence by their children - in one case, the woman reported that her relatives condemned the fact that she was seeking help in a violent situation and making violence public.

The interviews indicate that other family members, for example, children may be condemning as well. This is a reason why close relatives and friends sometimes may be not a resource for obtaining information about support mechanisms, but an obstruction for terminating the violent relationship. There are also cases where the surrounding people have particular opinions on what can be considered as a normal relationship - in one case, a close friend told a victim that she should not be upset with the partner as it is in the nature of men to enter a state of affect that leads to violence.

In general, the informants think that not only the family, but also the society is not supportive: people do not recognize violence, and if they do, pretend that they did not, or in the worst situations, condemn a victim. Therefore, informing the public is essential in order to change the attitudes towards victims. Victims also believe that it is crucial to spread the message for victims of violence on where to seek help.

While replying on how they became aware of the support that can be received by victims of violence, the interviewed women mostly indicated the internet and social networks. The information was searched for and received. Women state that information about violence available on the Internet is clear and well understood. Researchers recommend posting information on assistance to victims of violence in social networking groups related to Liepaja, e.g., mothers in Liepaja and others.

The women also found the information in the newspapers and received it from representatives of institutions (in cases when a different matter was initially discussed, and a violent situation was revealed).

In several cases, a telephone was used to call to the NGO “Skalbes” or NGO “Marta” Riga office, where they obtained information on the possibilities to receive support in Liepaja. In one case, it was pointed out that the woman used to call the NGO “Marta” for several times, but put the phone down because the call was answered by automatic response. It shows how emotionally fragile and sensitive victims are, and everything can affect their cooperation with institutions.

In one case information on rehabilitation and temporal separation victim receive from municipal policemen. She believes, this information motivates to start rehabilitation.

While most of the women, who agreed to take part in the survey, used to search for information on violence in the Internet, they believe that information on support should also be published in the Liepaja regional newspaper and on electronic media of the local governance. These media are more often used by older women and those who live in the countryside.

They also think that currently, information in public places on where to get support for victims of violence is not enough. Women believe that this information needs to be spread in public places, for example, parks, children’s playgrounds, in cafés or bars and in the urban environment. Recommendations vary; however, women believe that the most effective solution would be small stickers with support phone numbers in public places.

## COOPERATION WITH THE INSTITUTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

Most often, the interviewed persons, who have experienced violence in close relations, mention certain institutions, i.e., the police, medical staff, the Custody Court, the social service and the NGO “Marta”, which are involved in providing support. By the way, one informant also has experience with the crisis centre.

The services, offered in Liepaja, and the institutions providing services for the prevention of violence and support to

victims, are not viewed as a unit system, thus, collaboration with each of the institutions is characterized individually.

The assessment of the institution is related to the individual experience and an actual contact with the service. Some people have had previous experience with the institutions regarding a different matter, for example, when divorcing the first marriage, where the person had to fight for custody rights and for the child’s place of residence, the police, the social service, etc. were involved. These experiences can leave a permanent impression that might affect the willingness to address the institution even if the current case is different.

In some cases, the evaluation of institutions may be linked to an unprofessional or an insensitive attitude of the institutions. However, it is important to understand that sometimes people’s attitudes towards the institution may also be related to their specific objectives - there are cases when the institutions are used to resolve relationships in a specific way, and if they fail to do so, frustration arises. For example, in one interview, the woman mentioned that she went to a social worker because she wanted to make her husband leave the apartment. This is outside the competences of the social worker. However, she sees social workers as non-supportive. This example shows that people have weak knowledge about the responsibility of each institution.

If a person starts to collaborate with institutions and then decides to continue the violent relationship, a victim can feel ashamed to ask for help again.

## COOPERATION WITH POLICE

It is important to note that the informants do not divide their experience with the local or the state police - people view them together, as “police”. Some of the informants from small localities or with high social status explain that they do not call the police because of the shame even if their help is needed. In one case, the victim did not call the police because aggressive ex-husband worked there.

There are some good examples of collaboration included in stories about police:

- A police representative brought women, who have suffered from violence, to the crisis centre with his private car;

- In another case, police helped to find a safe place to stay at night and accompanied the person to a low-cost hostel;
- A police employee gave instruction on the possible support system and helped to prepare papers for temporary separation (and helped to note down the information that was important to the person in the particular situation).

It is important to popularize good examples on police work in Liepaja. The situations in the before mentioned examples took place recently.

Not all information characterizes police in a good light. There are stories that include information about unprofessional attitude to the victim, ignorance of report and phone calls, recommendations not to submit application to the police about domestic violence and failure to provide information about support that can be received by the victim even in cases of sexual violence.

I went to Liepaja court, but before that, as it was a holiday when this event occurred, I went to the state police. And I even came to tears when the policeman said that if he did not see the violence, he didn’t have any evidence to react upon and that I should go to the court on Monday... He did not really believe me. (14 interview)

However, as indicated by the woman, who had lived in violent relationships for 30 years, significant changes in police workflow have occurred after 2014. She had routinely called the police during her 30 year-long marriage and noted that after 2014 the police acquired more effective instruments, e.g., temporary legal protection, that allow the police to provide more support to the victim.

Although the experience is not always positive, the collaboration with the police is mentioned in almost all interviews as a victim sees it as a source of protection in critical situations. It means that women use the services offered by the police. The interviewed women used to call the police when injured or when a perpetrator was destroying the house or other property.

A police representative in the FGD explains that even after serious injuries women are often not ready to report about the violent men to the police. The police representatives observed an inconsistent behaviour of a victim towards an abuser. In some cases, complaints to the police are submitted during the emotional situation and recalled afterwards. In those cases, police officers

may ask the women to reconsider her decision to recall the complaint. Some of the interviewed victims also recognized their inconsistent behaviour, explaining it by emotional affection, economic dependence or fear of even greater violence.

... “when I called (police), they held him only until the morning and then it was worse. Then I knew I had to run away from home. Because then it was even worse as I have called the police - then I received the worst punishment. The police told me that this was nothing, “no one has killed you”, “go and get divorce”. I didn’t get any help at that time. (4\_interview)

Also, the police representative in the FGD explains that they have been in situations where after calling the police, a woman was punished in order not to report to the police again.

At least three women do not believe that someone is capable to stop violence because no one can be near to the woman all the time. They also explain that calling the police does not bring a long-term solution for a victim, but it allows to stop the situation and give at least temporary safety.

The reason why the police cannot influence perpetrators to stop violence is not unprofessional work, but the character of perpetrators. In some cases, women believe that a violent person better will sit in the prison but will continue to be violent. Therefore, some of the informants would like to change their place of residence.

## COOPERATION WITH LIEPAJA LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES

The interviewed women perceive cooperation with representatives of Liepaja Local Social Services differently. There are people who describe it as a positive experience that allows to resolve the violent relationship and is a good possibility to get support. Several people, who have received support from the social service, indicate that the social workers acted professionally, offering information on rehabilitation services, and provided primary support in the crisis. In one case a social worker helped a victim to get from hospital in Ventspils to a crisis centre in Talsi in late evening by her own car. The victim was very grateful for that. There are also different

stories, where collaboration itself was characterized as professional and pleasant.

There are people who would like to collaborate with the social workers, but wish to do it in different circumstances, for example, in a NGO. Victims refuse to use social services, offered by local governance, because they worry about confidentiality.

There are also some informants, who have not cooperated with the social service yet, but, despite of that they have an opinion about the service that is based on the stories, told by other people.

Some informants also feel that the attitude of the social worker was not professional enough. They experienced a distanced and formal attitude; they expected the service to be more personal. In addition to violence, some clients of social services are in a very difficult material situation. A wide range of social assistance is needed, and sometimes a person may be demotivated to cooperate and change the situation because of seemingly insignificant reasons, for example, the attitude of the first met social worker.

The criticism of the social services is also related to the fact that activities for violence prevention is focused on children, but not on adult persons who suffer from violence. In the FGD, the experts agreed with this statement and noted that the situations where children are involved should be resolved immediately. Therefore, if have information about violence against children, all institutions react faster.

I can say that as much as I have been interacting with the social service... They are supposedly more focused on children; it is the primary... For the parents there is no help really... (2. Interview)

In one case, the woman believed that the social worker was unable to influence a person, who is inconsistent and unwilling to cooperate, so there was no real result from the interaction with the social service. She also admits that social service has no tools in order to force a violent person to cooperate.

In another situation, dissatisfaction with the social services was linked to the fact that people address the social service to deal with the issues that are not within the limits of competence of the social service, thus, not getting their attention.

There are also a lot of questions coming from the informants to researchers about the services offered by the

local governance – this shows that not enough information is provided to victims. They also do not know which institutions are responsible for what services. This situation can be solved by some information campaign that should be written in simple language.

## COOPERATION WITH THE CUSTODY COURT

In comparison with other institutions, only some informants have cooperated with the Custody Court. However, the view towards this institution was the most critical. At the same time, this institution was overall assessed A large proportion of women are afraid of this institution even, if they haven’t cooperated with it. The reason of this attitude is that a lot of perpetrators use this institution to frighten a victim by promising to take away their children.

The last time when I initiated divorce, the child was ordered (by ex-husband) to go to the Custody Court to tell that the mom doesn’t give him food, only gives him some residues to eat once a week; that mom does not have anything at home. There are terrible things, of course. But it was a good thing that, of course, when I was interviewed to explain, they understood that... I said “you can come and take a look at how we live at home”. If only every child in Latvia had the kind of life that my child has! ... Well, until the moment he tried to destroy us. (6. Interview)

Using the custody court for frightening people can be also be used by representatives of other institutions, to push the person to stop the violent relationship. This affects the perception of image of the Custody Court and the willingness of people to cooperate with it.

Most women indicated that they would not want to cooperate with the Custody Court because they have heard about situations where children are taken away from family. One person, who has had an experience with the Custody Court, indicated that the cooperation was not successful, and she feels misunderstood and scared. Another woman told that the representatives in the Custody Court did not seem very interested, however, she notes that the person from the Custody Court explained that her aggressive ex-husband cannot take away her children, which was calming.

The Custody Court is so indifferent, maybe it was because they didn’t see anything terrible, they had to react to. I do not know how they would react to another situation, but they didn’t see anything in mine. But they are responsive, they told me everything. My child said, “I will be taken away by the Custody Court and returned to dad, “I called the Custody Court, I said “what should I do now?”. She said “No one will not take anyone away, you are not a drunk, not a drug addict. You work, everything is fine”. (6. Interview)

The negative assessment towards the Custody Court is related to the differing views on the interests of the child. For example, one woman tells about a situation where the rights of the parents are still equal, despite the father being under influence of alcohol on the regular basis:

He’s the father. The Custody Court says he has the same rights. Yes, I agree, but at the same time, if I know that he regularly uses alcohol, if he takes the baby, I don’t know what’s happening with him. There was one time when he was downstairs, and I thought: give him the child or not. [...] In the evening when I picked her up, he was completely drunk [...] if something happens, I will have to answer myself. I’m not going to get it together. How can I be responsible for what I do not know... And here is the law – both parents have the right and the Custody Court is also pushing it. (2. Interview)

She believes that the priority should not be the right of the father to meet the child, but the right of the child to be safe, especially if the father is deprived of his parental rights when it comes to other children.

Women believe that the Custody Court can easily be used by violent persons. One explains that in divorce process it is often the father that looks better in the Custody Court, as he has a place to live and a good job. There are a lot of women who are financially dependent on a man. Therefore, during divorce, parents do not have equal opportunities in the struggle for children. Although unequal economic status is often the result of economic violence, it is not always considered in the evaluation of child’s interests.

Only one woman has decided to use the Custody Court to solve the relationship with the child, indicating the unwillingness of the child to fulfil his responsibilities:

I wanted to go to [the Custody Court] ... my eldest son is still living with granny, and it's wrong, and we do care about it. He does not fulfil his duties, breaks the boundaries, and the granny – she supports him for not doing his duties at home. (6. Interview)

This shows that the current cooperation with the Custody Court often involves refusal from the victim's side, as it is perceived as a repressive institution and not a point of support for people suffering from violence.

One informant, who was involved in children right protection and suffered from violence, indicate interesting contradictions regarding the Custody Court. On the one hand, it is expected that the Custody Court will protect the children and ensure that the rights of the child are preserved, the Custody Court are condemned in cases where this is not done, but on the other hand, people avoid cooperating with it and criticize the Custody Court if their duty is realized. Therefore, the evaluation of this institution will always be negative. Thus, satisfaction cannot be one of the criteria for evaluation of this institution, assessment of whether its decisions correspond to the law and the child's best interests should take place.

## COOPERATION WITH COURT

Although some of the informants have sued the violent partner and used the court services, women had little or no comments on the court work. They do not have the expertise to evaluate it. In several cases, women were involved in difficult court proceedings, for example, in one case, a man burned his former wife's company, while in other cases it was hard to divide the common marital property.

One of the most important problems, related to the court, is the need of a victim for legal advice. There are a lot of situations when a victim cannot afford it. However, legal advice in rehabilitation services does not include representation in a court and has some other limitations.

Some women say that they have never been sued with anyone before and therefore, they did not know how to do it. If they would have known before that this will be of importance, they would have called the police to be

able to provide evidence on violence in family in court. The specific problem is how to prove emotional violence in a court.

The lack of evidence kept two women from initiating a court process regarding the violence: in one case, the woman was trying to gather evidence of manipulation in the form of an audio file, but a violent partner destroyed it, so she was left without any proof. In the other case, the woman experienced a violent episode with no eyewitnesses and she was told by other institutions that physical injury is not enough evidence to open a case against a person.

Well the police told me - you can write an application, but you won't get anything. We were also told at the university - he [the lecturer] said that women often do it when they want to get money or when the children can't be divided or something like that. (7. Interview)

One informant mentioned violence as the reason for divorce in the court and has also submitted a statement to the court stating, that she has received rehabilitation services.

A positive indicator was that one woman used the possibility to attend court through a conference call. The court is far from her place of residence and this possibility is important because it allows to cut her expenses for the lawyer. It also allowed her not to meet her aggressive husband. In the interviews with other victims, a court is mentioned as a place where a perpetrator can try to humiliate them once again.

I chose not to drive (to Court in Ventspils) as these were extra costs. And there was the chance (to use Skype), and I used it. There are additional costs and it takes 1 hour in each direction, in addition to the cost of the lawyer. It was the first time I was in a video conference. I had never participated in the court. It was the first time. (13. Interview)

There were stories where people explained that a court was involved in the temporary separation process. Victims explained that this process was fast and well organized. The social worker or the police employees helped to fill the papers and the court make the decision very quickly (in one day). In one case a person explained that she would never use temporary separation service again, because she wants to stop violent situation, but not to divorce her partner. When she asked for this service, she did not know what it is. This coincides with the

police observations - in FGD, the police representative remarked that lately the temporary legal protection has been used less frequently than the year before. Some of the people, who tried to use it before, now refuse because they just want to scare the partner with the police, not to terminate the violent relationship.

In another case, the person did not understand the conditions of temporary separation and did not know how it works.

I was good fact that this decision on the temporary separation was made in a few hours. The disappointing part was that they didn't call or explain once the decision was cancelled. This was dealt with without me, it seemed like a big minus. In my view, there was a need for a conversation – both regarding the divorce and the consequences that would arise if I did not apply for a divorce. But you simply receive the letter that this decision has been cancelled... It was a minus. (14 interview)

These examples show that there is a need for a more detailed explanation of conditions of temporary separation service.

## COOPERATION WITH MEDICAL STAFF

Cooperation with medical staff in context of violence prevention is described most fragmentary in the interviews, thus, it is difficult to be characterized. Several women say they have not told or even concealed violence in the family from their family doctors because the family doctor knows all the family members and friends. One victim admitted that she did not visit any doctors even after her husband raped and beat her up.

In one case, the woman told her family doctor about the violence only after divorce because she needed some medication to sleep. She did not mention it at the time when direct violence was faced.

Another woman, suffering from violence, indicated that she had depression and visited a psychologist but lied to him and concealed the fact of abuse. This was caused by her partner convincing her that the attitudes towards her is a result of her own wrong behaviour. Without knowing the truth, the specialist could not provide her with real help.

In one interview, the victim mentions that the doctor helped her to hide violence from the employers by issuing a sick leave for the period, while her injuries were visible. The same woman has collected forensic extracts, expecting to use them, in order to separate from the violent partner:

Yes, I also called the police. I was prepared that it might be bad and hoped to protect myself and I kept all the forensic records from the hospital. (4. Interview).

She acknowledged that this was an important piece of evidence in the divorce process.

Most women are not informed about the possibility to visit the family doctor to register injuries. This information will be sent to the forensic expert and can be used in court. None of the informants mentioned that they had been given any information on violence prevention from the doctor. It allows to draw a conclusion that the interviewed women rarely consider family doctors as assistants in preventing violence.

In one case the person had no severe injuries, however, her violent partner hit her children from a previous relationship. The daughter got a concussion. She took her daughter to a hospital and the doctor immediately informed the state police and the Custody Court. This example shows that the system of reporting violent situations where children are involved does work.

## COOPERATION WITH THE NGO “MARTA”

There are a lot of informants that have received support in NGO “Marta”. Victims often find information about the possibility to receive support from “Marta” on the Internet, Liepaja Social Services or from friends and colleagues:

Here at (NGO Martha)? I am working and one of my colleagues, she was there as well and she gave me a number, and I called. She also had problems with her husband and children. (5. Interview).

Among the clients of NGO “Marta”, there are some persons, who have not been informed of any social services – the people that somehow fall out of the system of social institutions. Some women confess that they would not use any other social service because they feel

that the NGO “Marta” ensures their confidentiality best. They noted that if there was a risk that the NGO “Marta” would pass the information about the violent situation to other institutions, they would not use this support.

All women, who had collaborated with the NGO “Marta”, indicated that the attitude was kind of compassionate, and they finally felt understood and heard. The fact that the various services were offered in one place was also important because it allowed to save time.

Women indicated that they chose the rehabilitation in the NGO “Marta” because they do not want to cooperate with the social services offered by local government. They noted that the atmosphere in the NGO “Marta” is friendlier to the customer, the place is pleasant and safe. The second, but not less important reason is that the help is free of charge. The third reason why women chose the NGO “Marta” is sense of privacy. They believe that this information will be not discussed around, and your own wishes will be respected in the rehabilitation process.

In two cases, women saw the NGO as the only place where it is possible to receive support at all, as they were not informed of any services offered by the local social service. The NGO “Marta” was recommended by their friends.

Client needs for rehabilitation services are related to the experience of violence. Each situation is different. The violence leaves certain consequences - confusion, lack of confidence in themselves, fear of men, tentativeness, sleep disturbance, etc.

All women, who had collaborated with the NGO “Marta”, had used the rehabilitation services and almost all received a consultation of a social worker, a psychologist and a lawyer.

The services of a social worker and a psychologist were evaluated very positively, indicating the different positive effect on customers:

In MARTA centre, I received help, there is a psychologist, she helped me to start living and thinking differently. Helped by telling how to deal with different situations. I also felt it. And when I changed my thinking, my attitude towards him, and he - he did not understand (as the psychologist told me) that I can be different. And then there wasn't so much pressure from his side. Before there was no peace even for a week. I no longer respond-

ed to his text messages and calls as I had done before. (2. Interview)

In one case, the woman pointed out, that the service had helped but she would like to continue working with a psychologist. She cannot afford to pay for a psychologist herself, but the existing rehabilitation service conditions do not allow to receive more consultations.

The legal services provided by the NGO “Marta” are extremely necessary for victims. Part of the informants cannot pay for legal consultations - they have no money, but legal advice is needed. It is the reason why some women chose to cooperate with the NGO, as other institution does not offer legal advice. The NGO “Marta” gives advice on what to do step by step - it is important in situations when most of the people don't know what to do and how to solve the existing problems.

However, compared to positive opinion about the services of a psychologist and social worker, the informants were more critical about legal services. Not only the quality of the provided services, but also the number of consultations was criticized – it mentioned that the existing support is not enough, especially, if the situation is difficult. One interviewed remarked that people in Latvia are legally uninformed and need help with writing a simple application. If an application is legally wrong, it is rejected, but this rejection turns to tolerance of violence. As a result, women give up and stop trying to solve their problems.

The informants were also positive about the group therapy offered in the NGO “Marta” because it creates the awareness that different women have similar stories and similar experiences. Victims also share the information about the available support and best solutions in different situations. The different stories and experiences make it easier to understand that the violent situation and the perpetrator most likely will not change. Exactly the opposite - over time, the intensity of violence will only increase. The similar experiences of other victims help to accept and be aware of the situation and motivate a person to change her life. Every woman in the group is dealing with various practical issues and becomes an expert in certain matters. Joint meetings allow them to share this knowledge.

The recommendations from the customers to the NGO “Marta” are related to the needs of children. In several interviews' women recommend introducing the

services for children. In their opinion, it is important that children could receive rehabilitation at the same place where their mothers do:

Well, you know everything I needed ... but maybe we must look at the situation when there is a big crisis and there are little kids, the children also need help. Because not every mom knows how to explain the situation and how to help children. Because different things will be told by the mom and the psychologist. A child psychologist here would be very valuable. And not every mom has a place where to leave the baby. (4. Interview)

The second suggestion is to introduce childcare services for women, who use the NGO consultations and have no place to leave their children.

The NGO “Marta” has started to offer the services of child psychologist to their clients recently. Some of the informants, whose children have been using this service, are very positive about the aforementioned possibility.

## COOPERATION WITH THE CRISIS CENTRE

There are three informants with experience with the Crisis Centre in Talsi. Therefore, it is a concrete case that allows to see a certain experience, there is no possibility to generalize it. Two informants named certain experiences, but one of the stories was very negative.

While cooperation with the representatives of other institutions was described positively, cooperation with the crisis centre was a traumatic and violent one. The woman complained about a lot of aspects. She suffered from violence and the social worker offered a possibility to stay in the crisis centre, so she went there together with her four children. In this institution, her phone and the phones of her children were taken away. This as a negative experience, identified by other persons too.

They could go out of institution only for one hour a day and only with a permission of the employees. Her window was closed and screwed; therefore, it could not be opened.

The food was not suitable for a breastfeeding mother: a pea puree was given in evening, therefore, she had no dinner at all. Two other persons had no problems with food in crises centre.

The written agenda did not meet a real practice of the crisis centre as it had only two staff members and there were many unaccompanied children. They practically did not go out. According to the informant, it is not a part of the healthy conditions for children.

There was the case when another client with mental health problems ran into her room and hit her. In the place, where she needed to recover from violence, violence from another person was not helpful and the woman was afraid to sleep after this event. When evaluating her experience, she said that the crisis centre felt like a prison, while her husband was walking around like a king.

She did not know that she could leave the place and was scared to do it because she was worried that the Custody Court would take away her children.

She classifies it as an institutional violence. She is not ready to use the support offered by institutions in the near future, except for police, if its needed.

## LITHUANIA: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A small number of the answers in the conducted survey shows that there is a lack of motivation for participation in this kind of research. It was difficult for researchers from both countries, Lithuania and Latvia, to encourage women to fill the questionnaire, in order to evaluate existing services. Further researches on victims' perception of service provision are needed to collect more data and provide more explicit recommendation for expansion of service packages.
2. The evaluation of the received services is contradictory, and the limited answers do not allow general conclusions to be made. There is a need to improve the strategies of spreading the information, since the majority of persons have no knowledge about the available support.
3. Lack of motivation for participation in this survey might be caused by unwillingness to recall painful memories in order to describe personal experience of abuse. On the other hand, it might indicate the tradition of keeping domestic violence cases in silence. Long-term social campaigns and information on service provision are essential in order to change the existing situation with reporting on cases of domestic violence.
4. All persons, taking part in this study (both in qualitative and quantitative research), are women, who use psychosocial services in Latvia and Lithuania, and women, who usually have access to the internet. At the same time, it is well known that victims can be of different age, economical or educational level, and not everybody have enough resources to be provided with proper assistance. People, who are hard to reach, might also not be able to get information on possibilities to step out of violence situation. Moreover, collection of data on male victims of domestic violence is a problem.
5. The majority of the respondents claim suffering from combined violence. The most common is physical and emotional violence. Economical violence and controlling behaviour are faced often as well. The Lithuanian law system fights against physical violence only, other kinds of violence are not meant to be resolved under the criminal law.
6. In many observed cases, a perpetrator is reported as suffering from addiction, usually alcohol abuse. Addiction is used to *justify* violence in Lithuanian tradition. Victims tend to report being abused by a partner in changed state of mind (e.g., drunk), it seems like violent acts show up in their families periodically and cannot be controlled by perpetrator's will.
7. Lack of addiction rehabilitation programs, even though remained undiscovered by respondents, is evident in Lithuania. The financial support from the government is not enough to provide timely addiction treatment programmes. Therefore, even people, who are willing to get treatment, have to wait months to start participating in these programs.
8. Many victims still tend to believe that a perpetrator might change someday. This belief usually makes them stick to the abusive partner for many years in a row. Vicious circle of abuse and forgiveness can be hardly interrupted.
9. Most respondents believe that they know where and how to receive support, but the analysis shows that not in all cases people demonstrate good knowledge about the existing services. Most of the victims did not even know that they could be provided with psychological counselling or legal advice before entering the shelter or receiving call from Specialised Assistance Centre.
10. According to the respondents, the most important function of the services is to provide safety. The other need, usually emphasized by victims, is psychological and emotional support, however, their answers on efforts seeking for help show that this need is expected to be satisfied by close friends and relatives. Even though sociological research show high levels of victim blaming stereotypes in Lithuanian society, and, as believed, the situation is almost the same in Latvia, victims still avoid of applying for help until the situation becomes unbearable.

### REPORT PART III:

# RECOMMENDATIONS – LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

11. Even though respondents seemed not ready to give their opinion on the lack of services to victims of domestic violence and their family members, we do believe that the addiction treatment programmes for the victim herself or the perpetrator could become an essential method for domestic violence prevention.
12. Speaking about services to children, who witness domestic violence, it is important to emphasize that special programmes for them are needed in both Liepaja and Klaipeda. The respondents of the current survey are not aware whether there are possibilities to receive support for their children. The information on these services should be visible.
13. Some respondents observe the lack of treatment programmes for the perpetrators. This programme has been provided in Liepaja for several years now, there are behavioural change programmes provided by the Probation Service in Klaipeda. Both in Liepaja and Klaipeda, information on these programmes needs to be more accessible.
14. Medical care services are supposed to match the victims' needs more than it is now. In fact, it is quite common that the exact cause of bodily injuries is ignored by medical workers in case an injured person is adult. In order to achieve more cooperation from health protection system both in Lithuania and Latvia, it is essential to engage medical care institutions into the assistance provision system, and, maybe, to oblige medical workers to notify the police about a possible case of domestic violence.
15. Another important point is collection of evidence during the investigation process. Although there are different strict regulations on transfer of the evidence from the police to the prosecutor, in order to start pre-investigation, there are still misunderstandings between legal authorities and victims in case of necessity to collect evidence for the procedure. Victims are usually left alone to decide whether to get a medical expertise or not.
16. As for Lithuanian cases, there were no informants who would remember getting some data on crisis centres or that kind of assistance. Even though police officers have the visit cards and all necessary information on psychosocial assistance in Klaipeda, they still avoid providing it.
17. Investigators or prosecutors do not always provide sufficient explanations on the rights of victim. Although it is considered that the rights and interests of victim are defended by the prosecutor, the requirement of impartiality implies that victims can hardly expect to receive any advice from the prosecutor on how to act during the court hearing and how to respond to inappropriate questions.
18. The question of involvement of medical care institutions into the system of support to victims of domestic violence remains open. Expertise and collection of evidence are commonly used actions in case of domestic violence. Therefore, it is more likely that medical staff will not assume the responsibility of calling the police, even if they suspect that a person became a victim of domestic violence.
19. Victims usually refuse to go under medical expertise, which actually has a negative effect on the case. Possibility to collect evidences right away after the incident not leaving for victim to decide herself might help not to stop so many pre-trial investigations, reasoning that with lack of evidences.
20. It is necessary to understand the psychological state of victims, especially those, who have been suffering from any kind of violence for many years. This irrational way of thinking and feeling is the reason why women suffer from violence without even trying to escape. Their behaviour and actions usually can be hardly explained by outside observers. This leads to prominent misunderstanding between victims and legal institutions, where victims' inability to stand for their rights is considered like stupidity or even tries to protect perpetrators from justice. It is important for all kind of specialists to understand that victims' critical thinking might be affected by their trauma, and seemingly illogical way of behaviour is the only one that victims might process. Training and raising of acknowledgement are the right methods to make the specialists to abandon the stereotypical way of perceiving the problem of violence.

21. Exclusive focus on the child's needs in cases of families with children creates a negative impact in terms of solving domestic violence problem as a whole. While the laws, combating domestic violence, emphasize the necessity of creating the complex support system, the child protection acts usually exclude other family members from this help, naming them as potential threat to the child's wellbeing. The question of secondary victimization must be raised.
22. Involvement of other organizations into the support system (helplines, State Employment Agency, schools and kindergartens) can provide better results in reducing the time, needed to solve the problem of domestic violence.
23. Lack of knowledge on domestic violence or unwillingness to provide a victim with proper information on the possibilities to get assistance might cause difficulties on making the system to work effectively. A human factor remains the most essential when it comes to violence prevention and rehabilitation.
24. Thus, victims' personal experiences are different; it is crucial to achieve a similar perception of violence among all institutions that are involved in the support system. It is important to continue educating the employees, who are working with victims, on questions related with domestic violence, victimization processes and common behaviour of abusers.

## LATVIA: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A social support system for victims in Liepaja works on two levels: (1) on the institutional level and (2) on the offered service level. The services are determined by the laws of the state, and the local governments cannot affect the content or conditions of the service. The study identifies two recommendations for rehabilitation services offered to the victims of violence: (1) the level of legal and psychological counselling should be increased (in rehabilitation for adults who are victims of violence), (2) psychological counselling (a part of the

- rehabilitation services for children) should be increased from 10 consultations up to at least 23.
2. The local municipality currently covers additional psychological consultations for children. There is a specific local service, "The Room of Crisis", that has been created by the municipality. It is a safe space where victims can permanently reside. At the moment of FGD, no one had ever used this service. The local municipality also offers some services for prevention of violence: a lecture about violence, delivered by the municipal police in schools, as well as some lectures for parents provided by the local social service.
3. Victims do not see the involved institutions as a unitary social support system, they tend to perceive the function of each institution separately. Therefore, the recommendations are not directed towards cooperation of the institutions but are intended for each institution separately. In general, the persons who have used the support services are satisfied. The recommendations, resulting from analysis of the interviews, specifically refer to improvement of each institution's work or some aspect that would make the experience of receiving this service more pleasant. In some cases, people used to criticize the received service or the attitude, demonstrated by representative of the institution without giving any further suggestions.
4. Experts from the institutions see the offered support as a system and are critical about the existing model of cooperation. The exchange of information between institutions and the absence of a common understanding on violence are perceived as the main issues. In contrast to the victims, the representatives of institutions were less critical towards the performance of each institution involved in the violence prevention activities.
5. It is important to create a strategic vision for development and improvement of the support system at Liepaja municipality level and to draw up a cooperation plan, including cooperation practices and common objectives.
6. Experts and victims believe that the support system is available not for all persons that suffer from violence. It is a result of various factors:

some victims are not sufficiently aware about the opportunity to receive support; some victims do not recognize that they are suffering from violence; some fail to cooperate with the institutions because they are convinced that the state cannot protect them from a perpetrator; some cannot divorce because they are financially dependent on the violent person, finally, some do not use the offered services as there is a fear of the institutions (especially the Custody Court and the social services). In order to promote the usage of services for these persons, the institutions need to develop and apply new strategies. Some of the issues can be addressed on the municipal level.

## HOW TO INCREASE THE USAGE OF THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES OFFERED FOR VICTIMS?

While comparing the situation in Liepaja with official statistics included in studies and presented in the first study report, it might be concluded that only some people, facing violence in close relationships, use institutional support and the offered services to prevent violence in their life.

The identified reasons are different and require specific solutions. Therefore, the recommended changes should be closely linked with the reason of non-use. Not all of them can be addressed at the local government level, but even if these aspects cannot be solved institutionally, it is important to recognize the limitation of local support and the possibility of institutions to solve them.

In some cases, people do not recognize that they are confronted with violence, therefore, they do not seek for help, and only when they eventually start talking to the specialists or others about their experience, they are able to recognize violence. To solve this problem, researchers offer two directions. First, communication with the clients should name violence –in the way that allows people to recognize their situation. Second, a constant work with information is needed. This perspective is also supported by the expert from the NGO “Marta” expert: he believes that it is important to create a constant

informative field (that can also be done on a local level). Regular information also allows to educate society about the violence and reduce the tolerance towards it. In the society, domestic violence is still often tolerated – even when the surrounding people are aware of this occurrence, they usually do not intervene as there is a lack of knowledge about the support mechanisms and the responsible institutions. The fundamental document on the family planning provides that it is necessary to raise awareness of domestic violence and educate people regarding the course of action one ought to take.

It is important to keep the public discussion about the violence issues in close relationships visible. Two kinds of information are required. First of all there is a need for local media stories on violence in close relations with personal examples (as it allows people to identify similar experiences that are present in their lives). This is a good way of communicating the matter as it informs about different types of violence. There are some forms of violence that might not be recognized as violence, for example, economic violence or controlling behaviour.

Second, one should regularly post information regarding support for victims of violence in close relationships, offered in Liepaja. It can be specific information on the available support, or the support possibilities can be briefly described in the articles of the aforementioned personal stories.

In order to provide consistent and continuous information, the employees from the institutions, involved in violence prevention, can collaborate with local journalists. The local media representatives can be included as one of the partners for violence prevention system in Liepaja.

There is a lack of information about the existing services and institutions that offer support to the victims. Although a lot of information about these services have appeared recently, it is necessary to make this information public in the city space (stating where exactly the assistance is available in Liepaja).

The information should be posted in different public points:

- Waiting rooms of doctors and beauty salons;
- Children playgrounds;
- Cafés, bars and toilets of the bus stations;
- Trams and buses;

- Libraries;
- Schools, kindergartens and other places where parents are waiting for their children;
- Lawyer’s offices.

The information needs to be provided as a small booklet or a sticker, so that a person can take it secretly (put it in the wallet etc). Otherwise, people could be afraid to take this information as it would break their privacy, thus, it would not reach the target group. The information on the support possibilities also allows to reduce the tolerance towards the violence in the society. The information in different places would allow to inform the different target groups.

An important information channel in Liepaja is the local printed and electronic media (regional newspapers, social media groups related to Liepaja, the website of the municipality). The police recognize that it is hard to motivate the media representatives to include the information on violence prevention in the media content – they are more willing to share the detailed descriptions of a violent situation.

The information about the possibilities to receive support should be available in all state and municipal institutions in Liepaja, as those are the public places where people wait for different kind of social services.

Furthermore, the representatives of those institutions should also possess information about the available support matter. In cases when they feel that support is needed, they should be able to provide qualitative information to the clients. Furthermore, they should be able to indicate the places in Liepaja, where victims can receive support in case of violence. To reduce the possibility that the representatives of institutions are not informed about these services (for example, because they do not have time to learn about it), it would be a good practice to create a concise and simple information that would include the contacts and a list of services provided by the support institutions.

In order to motivate victims to use more of the rehabilitation services, the existing system in Liepaja should be assessed as it is important to understand how the information on rehabilitation services is provided in Klaipeda. In Klaipeda, the system is more victim-focused: upon receiving information on violence in close relationship, the social services proactively call a victim by informing about the possibility to receive support, and

asking how a person feels. If a victim refuses the support, after some time they call again (in total, at least 3 times). This is a way to get in contact with all victims, who become visible to social services, i.e., a chance is given to think about the possible help after some time, when one feels better.

Some people are informed about the possibility to receive support, but they do not use it because of different reasons. One reason is the fear to cooperate with the state or municipal institutions. For example, a person could have heard some bad experiences from other people that have cooperated with state services. Not in all cases, the evaluation of the institution is directly related to offered services. There were some situations when employees of other institutions used the police or the Custody Court to scare either a victim or a perpetrator.

Sometimes, it is related to unprofessional and stigmatizing attitude, demonstrated by representative of the institution towards a person, who suffers from violence. There is evidence that in some cases the police advised the victim no to submit a complaint about the perpetrator. Aggressive and non-supportive attitude from the social services or the Custody Court representatives is also experienced in some cases. All institutions that work with violence prevention need to educate their employees about the nature of violence in close relationship and monitor their employees to ensure professional support in case of violence. It is difficult to change a negative image, assigned to people, who are a part of the institution (based on the attitude demonstrated towards victims), but professional work and compassionate support will contribute to diminishing the fear of cooperating with institutions.

It is important that all institutions have a similar understanding of violence prevention and support available for the victim it is necessary to maintain a professional attitude. Written guidelines for the specialists in each institution, describing the procedure of work with victims of violence in close relationship, would be beneficial. One of the institutions participating in the study – the police – have been attempting to formalize the procedure of communication with victim. They have tested a specific tool (a questionnaire) that allows for the police employees to identify different kinds of violence more successfully. A copy of this questionnaire is also left to a victim as it includes information about the possibili-

ties to get support. This questionnaire could be further improved by including information on the local institutions that offer support in Liepaja.

Some victims do not use state offered support system because they are financially or otherwise dependent on a perpetrator. They do not see how the state institution or the municipality could help to change their life and impact the current situation. Victims are afraid that cooperation with institutions would force a perpetrator to become even more violent. Sometimes, they even plan to divorce, but are waiting until the children grow up, finish their education or find a job. They are not ready to terminate the relationships straight away. It is hard to change the aspect locally. Only good examples and public stories can inspire a person to change one's life. A potential solution would be to offer some additional help, arrange a safe place where to stay, or help to find a workplace. Still, a person is not always ready to change her life.

In this case, it is important for the institutions not only to offer support for victim, but also respect, if support is refused. The idea about a "good solution" can differ for each person. If children are not involved, institution representatives should respect the position of a victim.

Another reason for not using the support services is the fear for losing one's privacy. There are at least two persons, who chose to use the services offered by the NGO "Marta" because they were afraid that by using the state services, the information about the situation in one's family would become publicly known. It is especially important for those, working for the local government or are well known publicly. Therefore, it is important to offer the services for victims, keeping their privacy (for example, organized by the NGO "Marta"). This target group would use the support only if full confidentiality can be guaranteed. Yet, there is need for additional resources from local governance to maintain the aforementioned services.

Some persons do not use the support provided by the state or local governance because they do not want other persons that are involved in situation (most often, a mother) to be punished. For example, when a mother knows that a father is violent, but still leaves her children with him. This reason for non-reporting and failure to seek for justice was most often mentioned in cases when persons talk about violence in childhood. This is very

typical for persons, who suffer from violence in close relationship, as everyone involved in violence also has an emotional linkage. Although a person is violent, he is still a close relative, thus, reporting violence, used by father or stepfather, is seen as an improper action.

## HOW TO IMPROVE THE INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION MODEL IN LATVIA?

It is relevant to raise the level of expertise for specialists working in the area of domestic violence - the document asks for a standardized approach and procedure that is not affected by personal views and attitudes of the specialists. Improvements must be made in respect of cooperation between the institutions involved in the social rehabilitation, the legal regulations and the method of monitoring the domestic violence.

The main goal in Liepaja is to improve the inter-institutional cooperation model. This goal is related with a need to create a better support system for women and children, suffering from violence in Liepaja. Experts believe that cooperation between the involved institutions would allow to reduce violence and create a support system that better satisfies the client's needs. Working together would allow identifying and preventing problems in the support system and finding a better solution by combining the already existing resources.

An important achievement is that the institutions involved in the study are willing to cooperate, but the essential question is how this cooperation will be organized and how the improvements will affect the victims. All institutions involved in the FGD recognize that the improvements need to respect the victim's perspectives and needs. Therefore, the researcher will try to consider how the suggested changes in the cooperation model or offered services may affect the target group and their experience, while receiving support services.

FGD recognized certain weak points of the current communication system (that affect the institution capabilities to fulfil its duties).

A representative from the local police recognized that they do not have enough information about the cases when a person returns home from a crisis centre or when

the period for temporary legal protection ends. They need information, in order to monitor the situation and ensure that the violence does not repeat. Currently, they do not receive this information. Now, the Data Protection Law does not allow for exchange of information, therefore, it is important to propose the necessary changes to the law to the Ministry of Welfare. Currently, the local police regularly check the places, where violence is potential. It also includes visits to households with domestic violence to find out whether everything is good.

Experts believe that another weak point in the reporting system is related to the situations with only an adult person is involved. The institutions can exchange the information only with a consent of victim, and a person often refuses to receive help, even if support is needed. The institutions involved in the violence prevention system in Liepaja would like to have the right to exchange the information, nevertheless. The police want to send information about family conflicts to NGO "Marta", if children are not involved in the family conflict. They justify this need with the observations that there are specific addresses, frequently visited by the police, and they are not sure about the person's security. The NGO "Marta" would then call and offer help to the victim or at least inform about the possibilities to receive it. This idea is good as it allows to offer rehabilitation services proactively for an adult person, who suffers from violence, and to provide this information in a moment when a person is emotionally calm. This system also functions in Lithuania. The institutions that provide the services call a victim and explain the possibilities. In a lot of situations, they do not want to receive support, but at least the information is provided. At the moment, the system in Klaipeda can be used as an example of a good practice.

The motivation to use this practice is enough, but it can cause problems related to the Data Protection Law. Therefore, the researcher suggests modifying this idea. The police need to ask a permission of a victim to give his or her contacts to the NGO "Marta", in order to be informed about the possible services. If a person agrees, his or her contacts are given to the NGO "Marta". If a person does not agree, this information cannot be provided. The institutions need to respect the victim's readiness to receive support. The victim's position on provision of his or her contact information to the NGO

"Marta" can be included into the questionnaire that is used by the police and filled in case of violence.

Another weak point in the current information exchange system was identified by the informant, who is involved in the violence prevention system for children. She argues that a problematic aspect in the reporting system is that doctors rarely report the cases of violence to the Custody Court, even if they are suspicious that children suffer from violence in families. To change the situation, it is important to educate the employees of medical institutions about the violence issue in close relationships.

## WORKING TOGETHER

Another axe for collaboration is "working together" to prevent violence in Liepaja and to offer a good support system. Thannhauser, Russel-Mayhew and Scott believe that "collaboration is achieved through a balance of differentiation, the unique contributions of different professionals, and unified, integrative efforts on both interpersonal and organizational levels. Regardless of definition, agreed upon features of collaboration include common goals, trust, and skills in collaboration."<sup>3</sup> They recognize that in the collaboration process different factors are important:

- building trust,
- establishing strong communication strategies,
- developing common aims,
- addressing power differences,
- establishing organizational structures.<sup>4</sup>

The FGD discussion shows that they have achieved trust and are starting to establish communication strategies. The institutions also have a common goal to improve the support system for the victims and the **first step would be to achieve the same understanding of violence and of the actions that are needed to prevent it.**

In order to gain the same understanding for all involved institutions, it is important to **create a place for meetings and debates on violence prevention in Liepaja, where knowledge would be shared.** Liepaja is not a small city and not all persons, working on violence prevention, have the possibility to get involved in discussions and partici-

<sup>3</sup> Thannhauser, J., Russel-Mayhew, S., Scott, C (2010) Measures of interprofessional education and collaboration. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, July 2010; 24(4): 337

<sup>4</sup> (Ibid.)

pate in collaboration meetings. It would be necessary to gather consent in the inter-institutional meetings, so that one could further share the acquired information with colleagues. One of the risks is that the involved persons cannot affect the processes in their institutions - it can be hard to introduce new practices there. In some cases, the **most effective way of sharing the knowledge are seminars, where the questions about violence in close relationship can be discussed.**

One aim is **to achieve similar understanding of violence, the other aim is to sustain it.** The difficulties can be caused by replacement of representatives from the relevant institutions. The **best practice would be a written document on the common models of cooperation** in case of violence that would be **shared with new employees.**

Additionally, collaborations are more successful, if the partners have respect for each other's strengths and if the help to prevent deficiencies is offered. So, it would be important for everyone involved **to take an honest look at the general process and to try to identify the strengths and weaknesses of one's institution.** This is the reason why the following recommendations will be grouped: (1) the improvements for the system in general, and (2) the specific recommendations to each institution. The recommendations will be organized for each institution separately, to make the suggestions more specific and useful. The following recommendations include the strengths and the possibilities to improve for each institution.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Experts believe that the support system works better in cases, where children are involved, in comparison with the cases where only an adult person is involved. The system for adults works slower and institutions lack a mechanism for making the victim to change the situation. The support system in Latvia is organized on two levels: one involves services that are offered to victims and perpetrators, and the other involves institutions that work with a specific target group. **In order to create a good support system, it is important to take the specifics of the target groups into account.**

It is important to offer **support for everyone that is involved in the violent situation.** In more than half of

the cases, participants of this study were raising children during the violent relationship. Not in all cases those children, who live under the violent circumstances, were classified as the persons who suffer from violence as well. **It is important to teach the specialists to recognize all victims of the situation.**

**It is important to recognize that if a victim refuses the support offered by state, it does not necessarily mean that a victim does not work with this problem whatsoever.** Some of the informants in the study did refuse the support offered by state, as they have different resources for dealing with the situation (one's own psycho-therapist or psychologist, friends, relatives, colleagues).

**It is important to work not only with victims, but also with perpetrators.** In one case, where children have been perceived as victims of violence in the family, the woman, suffering from the same perpetrator, felt a bad attitude from the institutions (she was questioned, she felt afraid to lose her children). At the same time, institutions do not have the tools for making a perpetrator to change - a perpetrator does not attend the meetings, refuse to use the rehabilitation service or to deal with one's addiction. Now, in Liepaja, the rehabilitation services, offered to violent persons, are used only in cases when a perpetrator is a parent (mostly the mother), but the target group of violent men is not reached. The most commonly used strategy is scaring the violent mother with Custody Court. **There is a need for mechanisms that would force a violent person to use rehabilitation.** For example, he would be able to return home to his children only after rehabilitation or only upon dealing with the addiction problems. The work with a violent person is very important because the work with victims can be considered as working with consequences. **It is important to address the cause of violence.**

There were two specific suggestions for improving the content rehabilitation services. **First, the rehabilitation for an adult person should include more consultations from the psychologist and the lawyer (especially, if a situation is difficult and additional support is needed).** Similar recommendation was provided by I. Mileiko and B. Ābele, analyzing rehabilitation services in Latvia.<sup>5</sup> Currently, a person that suffers from violence,

<sup>5</sup> I. Mileiko, B. Ābele „Optimāla pakalpojuma dizaina modelēšanu sociālās rehabilitācijas pakalpojumam no vardarbības cietušām pilngadīgām personām, ņemot vērā dzimuma perspektīvu”.

can receive 23 consultations. Often there is a need for more consultations especially in situations of legal advice and psychological support. It is important to **provide more - at least 23 - psychological consultations for children.** Currently, the state covers costs of 10 consultations (the first and the last is a discussion with a parent). When working with children, it may take more time to create a good contact. Today, Liepaja municipality already covers 10 additional psychological consultations for children. It is important to maintain this additional support to children in all state.

The order and the quantity of rehabilitation services are defined by the state and, therefore, cannot be changed in Liepaja exclusively. However, local solutions can be found, if the problems are identified.

**The local government should think about additional support regarding the legal issues for victims, since in most cases the offered state support is not enough,** - particularly in cases where a person does not have a clear understanding of the legal procedures or the situation is legally complex. In order to provide more legal advice, NGO “Marta” already found a solution and collaborates with “Juridiskās palīdzības dienests” (Legal Advice Centre), which can offer support in a court as well (in cases of domestic violence). However, a different kind of collaboration with local governance would allow the NGO “Marta” to use the already existing resources more effectively.

**There is a need to provide nanny services for the victims under rehabilitation** In order to be able to receive and fully benefit from rehabilitation, nanny services should be provided for women with small children during legal advice or consultation with a psychologist. Currently, the state does not provide this service and its lack prevent women with young children from receiving the rehabilitation services. Organization of nanny services could prove to be hard as the need for services is not very frequent - it can be an hour in a week for some period and then the situation might change. An unstable situation and a small number of working hours can make it difficult to find an employee for this position. In the FGD discussion, a police representative suggested **to cooperate with the Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work of Liepaja University, where the students need to find a place for their internship.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICE

Most people involved in the study have had some experience with the police. Victims use the help of the police to stop a violent situation, to separate an abuser from a victim, or to investigate the situation, but only a few victims are subject to the temporary legal protection. For most of them, the police were an important tool for guaranteeing safety and for changing the situation as a perpetrator respects only physical power. Safety is the most important aspect for people, who suffer from violence, therefore, even if collaboration with the police was not successful, it is still the most important support received for violence prevention.

The study revealed that persons do not recognize whether they communicate with the state or with the local police. Therefore, the recommendations will also be presented together.

The police in Liepaja have different tasks:

- Stop the violent situations and react on report;
- Investigate crimes, including violence-related relationships;
- Separate an abuser from a victim;
- Inform victims about the available rehabilitation services;
- Help to fill the papers for temporary legal protection and check whether they are proper;
- Prevent violence, give lectures to teenagers in schools.

**It is important to popularize good practices of the police employees as it allows to learn by example.** While speaking about the police work in Liepaja, we have identified a few cases where police officers have been especially sensitive and respectful:

- one police employee brought women, who have suffered from violence, to the crisis centre with his private car;
- some police employees helped to find a safe place to stay at night and accompanied the person to a low-cost hostel;
- some police employees simply addressed the violence against victim in a highly sensitive way.

**In order to improve, it is also important to analyze the bad cases.** Unfortunately, there are several in-

interviews showing that in some cases the policemen in Liepaja failed to act professionally. It is hard to precisely define the period of these events as some of the persons experienced violence 35 years ago, some of them have still been experiencing violence today, while for others, violence was a part of their childhood.

- In three cases, the police employees recommended the victim not to report violence in family to the police because one could not prove that the perpetrator was her intimate partner;
- In one case, policemen did not provide information on how and where to ask for forensic expertise to prove the husband's offence after rape;
- In one case, the husband damaged the wife's property, but the evidence about the case was gathered so unprofessionally that it could not be used in court;
- In one case, the police interviewed the victim in the front of the perpetrator - that could be a cause of even more severe violence later;
- In several cases, women did not have a clear understanding on the next steps that should be taken after reporting to the police and the police did not inform the woman about the possibility to ask for temporary separation or rehabilitation services;
- In one situation, the police knew that there was temporary separation, but did not separate the abuser when he had returned, therefore, the eldest son needed to protect the mother from the father.

**It is important for the police to react to every report and each call on a family conflict.** In their stories, the informants tell that the police do not always react to a call in a case of domestic violence. Data from the study of the World Health Organization (2013) show that 35% of all women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse have experienced it from an intimate partner. In total, 38% of all murders committed against women have been committed by their intimate partners.<sup>6</sup> It should be priority cases.

**To prevent the possibility of repeated cases of unprofessional work, it is necessary to create a certain "standard" for police officers on how to react not only in cases where children are involved, but also in the**

**situations where an adult person is involved.** It is important that the police employees would be aware of different kinds of violence and **learn about what can be considered as a respectful attitude in cases of domestic violence** (not to blame, express doubt, etc.). A similar conclusion was drawn in the study by NGO "Marta", highlighting that it is essential to be able to get in contact with the police employees, who have an understanding and respectful attitude in cases of domestic violence: a victim can't be questioned, calmed down, doubted.<sup>7</sup>

**In the process of drawing up the protocol it is important to include all nuances, because an accurate and valuable protocol is an important tool in the court.**

After separating a victim from an abuser, **the police employees should provide information and guide the woman towards social services** that are able to ensure support. Next potential steps should be indicated - what she needs to do, where and how can she document the evidence of violence.

**The police employees must not recommend one not to apply or suggest not to report on violence.** The increasing number of the applications submitted to the police (for violence in close relationships) is a proof that the victims trust the police and use their services to change their life.

**It is important that the police react very clearly, if a perpetrator fails to respect the temporary separation.**

**There is need to provide supervision services for municipal police employees.** Police are an essential resource for preventing violence in Liepaja - they are facing the worst cases of violence and situations where a victim and a perpetrator are emotional. Sometimes the aggression is directed towards the police. These situations can also negatively affect the police officers and increase the burnout risks that can cause insensitive attitude towards the violence. When this recommendation was debated in the FGD, police representatives were present. The state police indicated that they have access to a psychologist - there are some police officers that use their services, but some find a different solution. The obligatory supervision is organized, if the superior officer sees the problems in their employees. Otherwise, it depends on the personal will to use it. The need for this service also depends on the personal char-

acteristics and the perception of violence. The municipal police representatives now do not have the possibility to receive supervision on work but consider this opportunity as useful. It is advisable that these services would be considered at least by those municipal police employees who primarily respond to the family conflicts. The police are not only a resource for preventing violence, but also individuals who can be impacted by the daily work routine.

**The specialization of policemen in domestic violence is needed,** but police representatives believe it is not possible because of insufficient resources. The state police representative indicated that the police are expected to be universal - every policeman needs to be able to work with any case, but in case of domestic violence it would be necessary to have specialized employees with specific knowledge. Currently, there is a specialist in police, who has learned how to work with children, but there is no one with the specialization on violence in close relationships. They recognize situations when co-workers do not know how to solve the situation because they simply do not have this experience. In order to offer high quality services, some cases require specific knowledge gained with experience.

The perception of the violence is related to the persons' education. There are police employees without higher education and without knowledge of how to work with violence in close relationship. There are also some employees, who have been working in the police for a long time, and it is hard to change their perspective towards violence in close relationship. Some of them started to work in the police during the time when violence in family was perceived as a private problem. Therefore, **it would be useful to organize some lectures for the police employees in order to improve their expertise and perception of violence. The NGO "Marta" has expertise on these issues.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES

The social services organize the social assistance in Liepaja and administers rehabilitation services for both the victims of violence and the perpetrators. A wide range of specialization is one of the strong sides of the local social services. The work to prevent violence can be a separate

service for a person or a part of a larger social assistance model. In most cases, people, who had collaborated with the social services, described the attitude of a social worker as professional and pleasant one. For most of the informants, i who received the rehabilitation services administered by the social services, the offered support was very important during the crisis. They emphasized the feeling of being heard, even if the situation was not pleasant. Most clients are satisfied with the treatment provided by the social services - they emphasized the formal and professional attitude. It is essential to maintain a supportive attitude towards the clients in the future. Yet, there is some criticism too: in one case, a person wanted to receive a more personal support, but the social worker's attitude was distanced and formal. This example shows that sometimes a formal attitude or a standard approach cannot provide the support that the person wants to receive, causing disappointment.

It is important to eliminate the existing stereotypes about social workers and their functions and role in the society, in order to overcome bias that might lead people to avoid getting in contact with them. The strongest stereotypes that were identified in the study were the thoughts that municipal social services can take away children from the family and that a social worker offers services only for socially disadvantaged groups. The stereotypes cannot be changed on a national level but only on the local one, therefore, it is important to work with these stereotypes on a local level by explaining to people what social services are doing or how do they work.

One more recommendation that was developed in the study aims to improve the experience of the users of support services: it is important to create awareness about the service among the potential clients and involved specialists by providing an honest, precise and detailed information on where and how the service can be received. The services should be provided when they are necessary for the client: it should be an option to provide psychological consultations (crisis intervention) in one's residency during the evaluation of the submitted application and documents.

There is a need for written information in an easy language where a person could find support in specific cases (a list of responsibilities of every institution).

People, who work with local social services, need to consider how the information about rehabilitation services is being offered to different social groups that suffer

<sup>6</sup> WHO (2013) Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Viewed (20.05.19): [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=8DDE0D23CEDEFF611A5D06D8D87ABBB2?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf;jsessionid=8DDE0D23CEDEFF611A5D06D8D87ABBB2?sequence=1)

<sup>7</sup> Centrs „Marta”. Ziņojums par fokusgrupu interviju rezultātiem ar cietušajām no vardarbības” (2017), p. 1 [http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/projekts/faili/fokusgrupu-interviju-zinojums\\_2017.pdf](http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/projekts/faili/fokusgrupu-interviju-zinojums_2017.pdf) [last accessed 18/3/2019]

from violence but use rehabilitation services rarely (for example, older women, women without children or women who do not consider themselves as the target group of social services). The main message must be that violence is not related to the social status, age or gender and that everyone can receive specific support, if needed. Currently, Liepaja social services mostly target the women with children who suffer from violence. If there are children in the family, there is a higher possibility that the adults will be contacted by local authorities or other institutions.

According to the clients, the legal support component of the service should be improved to match the needs of the clients. Insufficient support was also seen as a notable downside of the service itself. Putting the client's ability to sufficiently function socially as the primary goal, the number of consultations should be increased, if needed (this view was supported in the answers of both the clients and the specialists involved in the service provision). A similar recommendation was identified in a study conducted in 2018. It is not the local government's responsibility to change the content of rehabilitation services, but there is a possibility to develop services that would allow to compensate the additional consultation by the psychologist or a lawyer. Also, a financed group therapy could be offered by the local governance.

An important tool for violence prevention in close relationship is the addiction treatment program. It would be useful if the social services had mechanisms to force a person who has been violent towards a close person to treat addiction and use the violence prevention service. Now, there is no available local solution for this problem.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CUSTODY COURT

In Latvia, the main responsibility of the Custody Court is to protect children rights. The institution can make a decision to take away parental rights if there is a proof that children suffer from violence. The Custody Court is an institution located in each municipality and, therefore, is expected to see the needs of children and their families better. There are no similar institutions in Klaipeda - these responsibilities in Lithuania are divided between the court and the social workers.

**There is a need to change the public image of the Custody Court** The Custody Court in the study was evaluated most controversially, despite the fact that everyone acknowledges that there is a need to prevent violence against children. On the one hand, the public demands that it would ensure the protection of children from violence and the Custody Court is criticized for failure to comply with these obligations in specific situations. On the other hand, most of the informants would not want to cooperate with this institution and are even afraid to cooperate. Persons perceive collaboration with this institution as creating a risk to lose parental rights and, therefore, if they have a possibility, they try not to collaborate with the Custody Court. Also, a representative of the Custody Court recognizes this attitude as a problem.

The existing public image of the Custody Court is the reason why persons avoid reporting violence, even if it is needed. But non-reporting creates a situation when the Custody Court can not realize their function. To change this situation, the **institution should think about how to explain the available support for victims and to inform the public more about the situations when the rights of the parents can be restricted.**

It is important that the society understands that the work of the Custody Court is determined by the rule of law; the representatives of the institution have no freedom to decide on the destinies of children and families. **It is important better communicate the situations that can lead to taking away the parental rights. It would allow people to better recognize the children rights and to reduce unjustified concerns.**

The only advantage from the currently existing image is that it motivates the violent parents to attend the rehabilitation services for violent persons, being afraid that their children can be taken away. However, this often does not work in case when a violent person is the father.

**It is important to prevent the situations where the Custody Court is used to intimidate victims.** Sometimes aggressive husbands or intimate partners intimidate the victims by threatening to complain to the Custody Court in order to force a woman to continue their violent relationship. Bullying works especially well in cases where a woman is economically dependent on a perpetrator - has no work and no place to live. Interpretation of children rights was discussed in the study.

There was a situation when the Custody Court argued that the child has a right to meet with both parents, while mother believed that meeting with father (who was under the influence of alcohol) could endanger the safety of the child. It is essential that parents have clear guidelines on how to act properly, to ensure that children are not in danger, and at the same time fulfil the obligations given by the Custody Court.

The Custody Court also recognizes that some of the parents refuse to use the rehabilitation services because they have no place where to leave their children. **It shows that nanny services would be useful not only for NGO "Marta", but also for different institutions.**

The Custody Court in Liepaja should issue **written guidelines (protocol) how to react in case of violence in close relations.** Currently, they is an oral agreement, resulting in different approaches.

**The Custody Court can be a source for providing information to victims about the possibility to receive support.** Often in the families, where children are suffering from violence, an adult person is a victim of violence as well. Even if the customer has already received information from the police or local social services, some people need time to think it through before using the services. It would be useful if some written information on where to go, and what kind of support can be received in certain institutions in case of violence against adults, was be made available in the Custody Court.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COURT

The courts are currently characterized as neutral in the interviews. In most cases, where informants have had experience in the Court, they tried to divorce and they do not perceive this institution as a source of support in violence prevention. The main function, according to the informants, is termination of relationships and temporary protection.

**There is a need to popularize good practice in case of violence - the possibility to give testimony in the court at a distance.** The study mentioned the case, when a trial took place in Ventspils, which was 100 km away, and the woman testified from Liepaja. This practice

allowed for victim to save resources, which in specific case was important, and helped to avoid meeting with aggressive husband in the court. **It is essential to use this practice in cases of violence, especially if meeting a perpetrator can result in a new trauma.**

**It is important that the next steps would be explained to people, suffering from violence, in plain "human" language.** There was one case, when a person honestly admitted receiving the document on what she needs to do from the court, but the language was so specific that she did not understand the next steps. However, the informants also speak about the lack of possibility to evaluate or organize legal aspects.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NGO "MARTA"

The NGO "Marta" have different activities to prevent violence in Latvia and a lot of informants in Liepaja used the opportunity to have rehabilitation services there. In the NGO, it is possible to receive assistance of a social worker, a lawyer and a psychologist, working in the multidisciplinary team. This is one of the strengths of this institution; another one is the attitude towards the clients. The attitude was described as kind, supportive, healing and even life changing. Most clients were happy and, therefore, did not want to evaluate the offered support critically. This kind of **nice attitude towards the clients is important to be maintained in the long term.** Currently, the NGO "Marta" is a new player in the violence prevention system in Liepaja, however, clients in Liepaja appreciate the quality of the support received and the possibility to receive a consultation of different specialists in the same place. Recommendation from clients were related to additional services that they would like to receive.

There are no concerns about the quality of the services that are offered by the NGO "Marta", but if demand for their services grows in the future, there can be problems with the capacity of NGO "Marta" for offering services for everyone who want to receive them. IA larger place and more specialists could be needed. In this case, there is risk to lose a personal and friendly attitude, which makes the NGO "Marta" attractive.

**There is need to provide psychological counselling for children, nanny services should be available during consultations for clients with children.** To check how the nanny services in the context of rehabilitation services can be organized, the NGO can try to collaborate with the local government, develop projects to receive financial support for this purpose or try to collaborate with the Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work of Liepaja University. In addition, cooperation with LU Faculty of Psychology can allow to provide additional psychological support to victims.

**There is need to organize regular support group therapy for victims.** This service allowed people to meet the persons with similar experience. It motivated the victims to change the life and their perspective on violence. Therefore, it is important to continue offering this service. This service is included in the plans of NGO “Marta”; they try to organize the next group in September. The organization of the group is hard, but they see the benefits from it. One of the problems is availability of nannies.

**It is important to find how to reach different target groups, popularizing that support is available for different persons.** One of the clients, who had used the services, provided by different specialists during the aforementioned rehabilitation, stated that she did not use the support of NGO “Marta”, as she believes that “Marta helps only if the situation is extremely hard”, she did not see herself as the target group because her situation was not so critical.

**It would be useful, if the NGO Marta organized training for specialists, working with the issues of violence in close relations in other institutions or providing support in a form of consultation.** The NGO “Marta” have high expertise in violence, thus, it is an important resource that can be used in cooperation with other institutions in Liepaja. It would allow to promote similar understanding of violence in close relationships in different organizations in Liepaja.

**There is need to organize some lectures or group meetings, including the aspects on how to create respectful relationships.** Liepaja is a safe place for teenagers and youth to speak about respectful relations. Some of youth have grown up in the families with violent family model, thus, they have no knowledge on how to create healthy relationships themselves. The youngest informants tried to find a reliable assistant for advising

on respectful relationships, recognizing that the information found on the internet is not trustworthy.

**The Klaipeda NGO closely collaborates with volunteers in order to achieve their goals - this approach could also be a good solution to explore for NGO “Marta”.** There is a possibility to use more help from people, who want to get involved in the work of NGO “Marta”. The specific target group of volunteers could include both students and professionals with expertise in pedagogy, psychology and law.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SCHOOL

Currently, the experts point out that cooperation with the school and other educational institutions in the case of violence against children is successful. If a representative of the educational institution suspects that a child suffers from violence, they immediately report to the Custody Court. In most cases, the reported suspicion of violence was justified. This shows that employees of the educational institutions are able to recognize the signs of violence.

The experts believe that the school could be used for increased education on peaceful and respectful relationships, for example, including this type of information in social sciences at schools. Currently, the potential of the schools in violence prevention is not used sufficiently.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

There is a need to involve medical practitioners in the violence prevention system to a higher extent. Although medical practitioners are usually included as the violence prevention actors in cases where children are victims of violence, they are not involved in cases of violence against adults. There are many cases when the victims did not inform the doctors about violence and even concealed it. This might be a reason why doctors are not considered to be a good channel of information on rehabilitation services.

The quantitative study shows that that only in half of the cases the medical institutions provided information

on the existing support. There are no clear reasons why, however, it indicates the need for providing written information on where people could receive support (that the doctor could give to a person). This information should be provided in two languages: Latvian and Russian.

It is important to inform victims about the possibility to use the record of physical injuries for forensic expertise at their family doctor. Only in one case the woman knew this information. This message can be included in some information provided in the media or it can be shared by the police employees.

## COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN LATVIA

There are some resources that are needed for several institutions:

- Training of employees of various institutions on violence in close relationships in order to promote a similar understanding of different aspects of violence. The training should not only include knowledge, but also provide motivation for changing the current practices;
- Handouts for institution employees on the existing support and the available assistance of each institution (social assistance road map);
- Handouts on the available assistance for victims of violence in Liepaja with contact information (info on different groups in easy language);
- Unified solution for providing nanny services, as this question is relevant to different institutions;
- Resources of various information activities;
- Written guidelines in each institution on how to deal with domestic violence. These materials should include clear guidance on procedures, information processes and attitudes.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEM MODEL

In the recommendations part, there is a list of activities that should change the violence prevention system and the available support in Liepaja for people that suf-

fer from violence. In order to establish and improve the support system and create an inter-institutional cooperation model in Liepaja, it is important to ask how could one **evaluate the changes that are being implemented in system?** It should be ensured that the services offered are working well and are covering the victim's needs. Otherwise, good ideas may not work or work differently, causing an opposite effect. Sarah Shrader, analysing interprofessional collaboration in Pharmacy Education, offers to use the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model that includes 6 levels to evaluate how system works:

- Benefits to clients;
- Change in organizational practice;
- Behavioural changes of the clients;
- Knowledge and skills including skills on collaboration to organization employees;
- Modification of perception and attitude;
- Reaction to learning.<sup>8</sup>

This is a good tool to evaluate inter-institutional collaboration model in Liepaja, as it allows to measure different aspects of collaboration. This model asks for systematic evaluation of the process because every measurement and new knowledge can be a reason for new changes in the system. This model also asks for systematic quantitative data collection and analysis, and, therefore, it requires additional financial resources. It is possible to find at least 23 different quantitative models that allow to evaluate the efficiency of collaboration - most of them are developed for evaluation of medical practices. They would also be applicable for evaluation of the collaboration model in Liepaja. A potential issue one should keep in mind is that there are numerous perspectives and the need to include number of aspects - it would result in a large quantitative study with the whole system being evaluated before the changes and after the changes. Even if this kind of evaluation would allow to measure how the system works, and how the new practices impact the system, additional financial resources would be needed for measurement.

Evaluation will be less costly and relatively easier to organize, if employees of **all involved institution regularly collect the data.** This can also be a small anon-

<sup>8</sup> A Systematic Review of Assessment Tools Measuring Interprofessional Education Outcomes Relevant to Pharmacy Education. Am J Pharm Educ. 2017 Aug; 81(6): 119. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5607729/>

ymous survey conducted on the Internet. This would allow to identify weak points of every institution and allow to improve the system. This information can be useful for the learning process of the persons, who work in the institutions.

In the FGD debate, one of the indicators proposed for determining the effectiveness of the support system was the time from the moment when the woman was informed about the possibilities for receiving support until the moment she was turning for help. However, researchers believe that this indicator is not representative of the effectiveness of the support system. Interviews show that a person may have different reasons why he/she is not asking for help, for example, the spouses divorced, thus, violence ceased, he/she is not ready to change the life, he/she uses other support options – family/friends, etc. Therefore, this indicates the person's readiness to use the system rather than the effectiveness of its functioning.

Another possible measure to evaluate the support system was mentioned – the data on customer satisfaction. The idea was that regular customer satisfaction measurement allows to determine the quality of the system and services provided. This approach would demonstrate the functioning of the system, however, it is also characterized by several weaknesses. It allows to get information on how the customers evaluate the work of institutions and the received services, however, the attitude towards the institution or service may be negative not because of the quality, but because of the unpleasant and emotionally hard situation that needs to be solved. The rating may also be negative because not in all cases a customer can get what they want. Therefore, the measurement should be more about the content of the received service, not about the satisfaction. The measurement of the content of the services, offered to the victims, allows to obtain additional information about the work of each institution and to identify the things that can be improved; however, it also requires additional financial resources. The best way is regular collection of data after each consultation, but there is a risk of data anonymity and the impact of power relations between the client and the institution.

**The indicator of how the violence prevention system works that could be used without investing significant**

**additional finances is the number of users.** If the number of users is growing (call to the police, usage of rehabilitation services), it shows that people are informed of the service and see it as an opportunity to solve their problems. The usage of the service will indicate their knowledge about the service and their perception of the service. Currently, the number of service users is relatively low in relation to the number of people who might be victims of violence in Liepāja. The indicator is good because systematic compilation of the statistics can be done by the institutions that offer the services. In addition, **the service providers may collect information in order to find out how the service user has received information of the services. This would allow to identify the most frequently used source of information and, therefore, there will be a possibility to better manage the flow of information in the future.**

As a **criteria for the effectiveness of rehabilitation system, may be the waiting time from the moment when the application about the willingness to receive rehabilitation services was made until the first consultation, and the number of the fully completed violence rehabilitation cycles.** However, the reasons for the incomplete cycles of rehabilitation services may be very individualized, for example, some persons attended 2 or 3 consultations with the psychologist, and it was enough to deal with the problems.

Another criterion that would allow to evaluate the quality of the rehabilitation services is a **decreasing number of the repeated calls of the police to the same address after rehabilitation services.** Absence of the repeated calls of the police may indicate a good quality of services, but the reason may be also bad previous experience with the police or change of residence. Sometimes repeated calls can be related with behaviour of a perpetrator and have no direct connection with the quality of the offered rehabilitation services.

The quality criteria for the police work would be an increased amount of the first-time reports on domestic violence. This demonstrates the growing trust in the police in case of domestic violence, and shows the level of how well informed about the violence is the society in Liepāja.

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