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Prevention of Intimate Partner
and Domestic Violence 2004-2007

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Safety is a fundamental right

Safety is a fundamental right and basis of well-being for everyone. Violence undermines it and has other multifaceted and serious consequences. Identifying of and intervening in intimate partner and domestic violence at an early stage can even save people's lives. There are deficiencies in the present service system from the point of view of both victims and perpetrators of violence . The supply of services is sporadic and there are regional disparities in their availability. Specialised services are generally provided in the largest cities only.

The Government Programme highlights violence as a gender equality issue and a phenomenon that weakens people's personal safety in society. During the Government term 2003 – 2007 the means to tackle domestic violence are being intensified. The National Council for Crime Prevention is preparing an extensive, cross-sectoral National Violence Reduction Programme. The most important components in the Action Programme to Prevent Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are preventive actions carried out by social policy measures and the development of the overall social and health care service system. The objectives of these programmes are co-ordinated and mutually supporting.

The National Development Project for Social Services implements the Government Resolution to Secure the Future of Social Services, issued in 2003. The aim of the resolution is to ensure the supply and quality of social services, to develop the structures of services and activities, to secure the access to social service staff and staff skills, to develop working conditions, and to ensure the long-term development of the social sector. The Action Programme to Prevent Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence is one of the projects carried out within the framework of the National Development Project. This programme is integrally linked to the National Project on Health Care, the Gender Equality Action Plan and the Alcohol Programme, in addition to the National Violence Reduction Programme.

From 1998 to 2002 the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) carried out a project to prevent violence against women and prostitution. The work to prevent domestic violence was boosted by starting local pilot projects and producing education and textbooks and other information for social welfare and health care professionals.

Objectives of the Action Programme

1 Improve the network of primary, supportive and specialised services for victims and perpetrators of violence

Non-governmental organisations and other service providers have a vital role in violence prevention. The public service system is being strengthened so that in the future victims and perpetrators of violence have access to services and support organised by the public sector. Practices and methods to prevent violent behaviour will be built up within the public services throughout the country. The aim is to break the vicious circle of violence and provide support and care for the victims and perpetrators so that the harm caused by violence will remain as small and as short term as possible.

An appropriate division of labour and co-ordination of services at the regional and local levels will ensure that help, care and support are available regardless of people's place of residence. The municipal social and health services are in charge of providing the necessary primary services. Services produced by non-governmental organisations and private companies are used to complement the public service provision.

A functional and appropriate service and support network for inhabitants of small and outlying municipalities can be created by developing sub-regional co-operation.

2 More effective help for children and young people experiencing violence

The situation of children and young people in violent families and their possibilities of obtaining help are to be improved by intensifying the identification of violence problems and early intervention. Primary and specialised services will ensure that help is available to children and young people witnessing or experiencing violence. Joint instructions and procedures for the provision of help by various authorities and other bodies are to be agreed upon at the local level, and the co-operation of primary services and child welfare services will be strengthened.

3 Improve professional skills

Professional education provides social welfare and health care staff with the potential to identify and help victims and perpetrators of violence or to refer them for help. Professional skills and knowledge are to be maintained and developed by means of further education.

Implementation

The Action Programme continues with practices that have been found to be good. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is co-ordinating the implementation of the programme. The State Provincial Offices are in charge of regional activities, and a regional development group is to be set up in each province. The regional groups are responsible for planning and carrying out various measures in accordance with the policy lines and objectives of the programme that have been approved at national level. Taking account of regional needs, these

development groups plan together with the local responsible bodies the sub-regional service chains for victims and perpetrators of violence. The groups also develop regional training. Ensuring a sufficient supply of services and diversified arrangements requires improved co-operation – not only between the municipal social and health care actors but also with the private and third sectors.

EUR 250,000 has been allocated for the Action Programme for 2004, and EUR 300,000 per year has been proposed for 2005 to 2007. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health grants financial support for sub-regional and local development work from the appropriation for the programme. In addition, the discretionary government grant reserved for the implementation of the National Development Project for Social Services can be used for financing projects whose areas of priority have been defined in the Government Decree on the resources for social welfare and health care. Measures related to the prevention and treatment of domestic violence may also be included in other projects supported by the Ministry. Violence prevention is an essential component in all activities in the social welfare and health care sector.

The main objectives of the Action Programme are

- to prevent violence in intimate partner relationships and families and to improve the country-wide network of primary and specialised services for victims and perpetrators of violence;
- to intensify early intervention in problems, in particular in order to help children and young people witnessing and experiencing violence;
- to develop professional skills needed in the work against violence and in handling different situations.

[National Development Programme for Social Services](#)

Action Programme to Prevent Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence