

Regional responses to Gender-based Violence

Current leverages and the way forward

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Abstract

In March 2022, the European Commission released the [proposal for a directive](#) on combating violence against women and domestic violence. In the current consideration of the European Commission, gender-based violence can take multiple forms, defined as including all acts of such violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Although Member States are the main recipients, the proposal does underline the necessity for implementation at regional level. Member States are required to ensure effective mechanisms for cooperation and coordination with several bodies, including local and regional authorities. The proposal also notes an even more important fragmentation of knowledge at regional and local levels on the approaches to address violence against women and domestic violence in legislations and policies, which creates legal uncertainty about the victims' rights across the EU. In June 2023, the ambition to act and cooperate at an international scale was further confirmed when the EU Council approved the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This creates a legal framework with a broad range of measures from data collection, awareness raising, to legal measures on criminalizing different forms of violence against women.

In this timely political context, the CPMR Gender-Task Force put Gender-based violence high on the agenda of its WorkPlan 2022-2024. CPMR regions addressed this issue during the seminar "*Regions at the forefront of a Union of Equality: How can regions contribute to the fight against gender-based violence in Europe and its Neighbourhood?*" hosted by Tuscany region on the occasion of the Political Bureau of June 2023. Considering the utmost necessity to build a gender equal future with the new generation, the CPMR Gender Task Force worked hand-in-hand with the Youth Mediterranean Council and North Sea Youth Committee to prepare the seminar and with an interactive discussion held on May 26, 2023, on challenges and solutions identified by the youth.

Based on the debates and exchange of practices, this technical note supports the identification of the current leverages of regional authorities to contribute to the objectives of the future directive. Ultimately this note may support regions to identify commonalities and synergies for interregional cooperation and draw recommendations for adequate support to regions in their fight against gender-based violence.



1. Regions are enabling coordination mechanisms with local actors for a place-based approach

In keeping with existing regional laws on gender-based violence or application of national law, regional authorities have the ability to facilitate common action against gender-based violence on the territory. By enabling a coordinated and transversal approach across different sectors and stakeholders, regions provide the means for place-based action and regional data collection, which can become adequate resources to design public policies against gender-based violence with consideration of specific challenges of the regions.

In this respect, **Basque Country Government** created Emakunde, the Basque institute for Women. Since 1988, Emakunde has been an autonomous body in charge of advising, coordinating, and evaluating equality policies for the Basque Country government. In order to reinforce action performed at national level, Basque Country government reinforced its legal framework with a regional equality law in 2005 that has been amended in 2022 to further include gender-based violence challenges. Emakunde is also in charge of cultivating relationships and participation of the civil society within and outside of Basque Country government to contribute to the region's gender equality objectives.

Catalunya institutionalised gender-related actions with the creation of a Ministry of Equality and Feminisms, granted with a General Directorate for the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence (CNVM). This inter-institutional framework is composed of three permanent working groups in charge of policy coherence, monitoring, and analysis of data in addition to other thematical working groups. The CNVM reunites regularly throughout the year, with the aim to ensure participation and collaboration with regional stakeholders (social organisations, economic and social agents, professionals, women's associations). In order to strengthen local impact, the CNVM coordinates the *territorial circuits* framework that operates as a common network of nine circuits across Catalunya¹, providing advice, resources, and technical support to implement and coordinate measures against gender-based violence on the local level.

In **Wales**, actions are performed within the context of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence Act (2015). In order to implement the related strategy, the Welsh government set in motion a Blueprint approach including *a survivor voice, scrutiny, and involvement panel* to be consulted with the national boards and workstreams activities on gender-based violence.

In **Tuscany**, coordination of actors also serves data collection purposes on gender-based violence. The *Codice Rosa* regional network ("Pink Code") is a regional project connecting and coordinating an inter-institutional task force made up of professionals (health, social, psychological, policies forces) working to provide the adequate support and services to victims of violence and abuse. In the framework of Codice Rosa, the Regional Observatory on gender-based violence monitors the activities through the collection, processing and analysis of data provided by the Anti-violence centres present in the region.

How does the proposal for a directive address the issue?	How can regions contribute to the objectives of the proposal?
❖ <i>Article 39: Coordinated policies and coordinating body</i>	⇒ Facilitate the collection and analysis of data through existing methods and regional observatories

¹ Circuit Territorial de les Terres de l'Ebre, Circuit Territorial del Camp de Tarragona, Circuit Territorial de les Comarques de Lleida, Circuit Territorial de l'Alt Pirineu i Aran, Circuit Territorial de la Catalunya Central, Circuit de la Demarcació de Girona, Circuit Territorial del Penedès, Tots els circuits comarcals o locals organitzats dins de les comarques de: Baix Llobregat, Vallès Oriental, Vallès Occidental, Maresme i Barcelonès, Circuit Barcelona



<p><i>“Member States shall designate or establish an official body responsible for coordinating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered under this Directive. That body shall coordinate the collection of data referred to in Article 44, and analyse and disseminate its results. It shall be responsible for coordinating policies at the central, regional, and local levels.”</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Article 40: Multi-agency coordination and cooperation</i></p> <p><i>“Member States shall put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure effective coordination and cooperation, at the national level, of relevant authorities, agencies and bodies, including local and regional authorities, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, public prosecutors, support service providers as well as non-governmental organisations, social services, including child protection or welfare authorities, education and healthcare providers, social partners, without prejudice to their autonomy, and other relevant organisations and entities.”</i></p>	<p>⇒ Support multi-level cooperation and implementation of supra-regional initiatives through well-established networks of regional actors</p> <p>⇒ Provide insights on regional realities to improve national policies</p>
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2. Regions are funding immediate support and recovery

Proximity and awareness of available care are key for victims of gender-based violence to feel comfortable seeking external support. Regional-level action can enable a homogenous awareness of care at disposal while ensuring a familiar socio-economic environment to the victims, which ultimately supports a sustainable recovery.

Sicily deploys several instruments to support victims of gender-based violence. The region set different plans and funds in order to strengthen the network of anti-violence centres and shelter houses and grants for their operating expenses, support housing expenditures and trainings, as well as resources for victim’s job placement (e.g grants, internships). The region pays special attention to the development of secret-addressed shelters, providing financial support for their construction, accreditation to victims, and further financial support to municipalities for them to ensure smooth running.

Murcia also places high importance on the development of shelters for victims of gender-based violence. The region has funded different programmes depending on the needs of the victims with specialised centres for comprehensive care, emergency shelters, and also free-of-charge personalised shelters considering intersectional vulnerabilities (e.g migration, young children, victims of trafficking, mental health issues). They also provide psychological support for the victims’ children and rescue animals assisted therapy.

For a long-term recovery, **Catalunya** follows the principle of full reparation as stated in the regional *Protocol Marc*, a conceptual framework of action on gender-based violence that has been approved by the Catalunya government in November 2022. From a political to technical actions, the protocol provides guidelines on initial and continuous detection of gender-based violence, individual support, victims’ access to rights, comprehensive assessment of risks, investigation, and sanctions in order to avoid repetition of violence and enable a sustainable recovery.

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<p>❖ <i>Article 32: Shelters and other interim accommodations</i></p> <p><i>“The shelters and other appropriate interim accommodations (...) shall address the specific needs of women victims of domestic violence and sexual violence. They shall assist them in their recovery, providing adequate and appropriate living conditions with a view on a return to independent living.</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Article 35: Targeted support for victims with specific needs and groups at risk</i></p> <p><i>“Member States shall ensure the provision of specific support to victims at an increased risk of violence against women or domestic violence, such as women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, women with dependant residence status or permit, undocumented migrant women, women applying for international protection, women fleeing from armed conflict, women affected by homelessness.”</i></p>	<p>⇒ Provide specific knowledge on the characteristics of the victims of gender-based violence in the region (e.g undocumented migrant women, rural areas)</p> <p>⇒ Monitor spatial planning of shelters</p> <p>⇒ Support local relays (e.g local helplines and centres)</p> <p>⇒ Provide close rehabilitation opportunities (employment opportunities, internships) for a sustainable socio-economic recovery of victims</p>
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3. Regions are deploying prevention measures towards the eradication of gender-based violence

In addition to immediate support for victims of gender-based violence, prevention is essential to eradicate gender-based violence in the long run. In this respect, some regional authorities have already put in place several types of prevention measures.

Prevention through education

With the support of Emakunde, **Basque Country** set a high importance on the role of education and dialogue with the youth to eradicate gender-based violence for the next generations. Emakunde has especially developed three programmes:

- *Nahiko*, a co-educational programme addressed to children from age 6 to 12;
- *Gizonduz programme*, a set of resources and training activities on gender equality;
- *Beldur Barik*, an inter-institutional programme together with the Department of Language and Education of the Basque Country, provincial and municipal councils, and the University of Basque Country. The programme aims to generate dialogues and debates with the youth on gender-based violence, notably with an annual campaign, events and creation of tools and resources on identifying and preventing gender-based violence.

Through its *Sensibiliza T* programme, the region of **Murcia** has also conducted activities with primary and secondary schools focusing especially on the prevention and detection of gender violence among minors in the region. Professionals from different fields work as professional educators and psychologists specialized in equality delivered training activities and awareness in the prevention of gender violence and how to build a more egalitarian and fair society, without stereotypes and free of any form of mistreatment of women.

In **Brittany**, the region disseminated “[Violent-o-meter](#)” material in high schools as a guidance for the youth to identify types and graduation of abusing behaviours. The document also provides helplines numbers.



Intersectional action in public policies

Catalunya government must guarantee general prevention of gender-based violence as part of the region's Intervention Programme against gender-based violence. Other public authorities must articulate the intervention programme to prevent sexist violence in line with Catalunya's general strategy. The *Protocol Marc* especially provides guidelines for structural prevention across public policies to ensure a societal and cultural change. It encourages the use of awareness raising (education, communication), dissemination and promotion of rights, research, co-education (considering emotional and sexual education), transversal promotion of anti-sexist behaviours across public policies, and communal action to be developed across all public policies.

Building international cooperation and shared engagements

[COPPEM](#) (the Standing Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of the Local and Regional Authorities) is a network of European and Mediterranean Local and Regional Governments funded by **Sicily** region as a tool for external cooperation. With the support of EU funding, it developed the [EuroMed Charter](#) to provide regional and local authorities some ethical guidelines and concrete objectives to fully achieve equality rights. On a dedicated chapter about gender-based violence, the Charter addresses a series of commitments to fight against honour killing, coercion, assault and battery, stalking and sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, forced marriage, and engagements in favour of social assistance units. Although non-binding, the signatories of the charter commit to a set of proposals and lines of actions to fight against gender-based violence, enabling shared cooperation on a common basis for action.

Developing prevention tools for a potential immediate aggression

Funded by NextGenEU, the region of **Murcia** developed two tools to prevent situations of immediate risks of gender-based aggression:

- *The Avisia Protocol*, developed and disseminated to tourism and hotel professionals with guidelines to prevent sexual violences and act consistently in case it occurs;
- A phone line for women to call while walking, accompanying them on the phone and asking for their location in case of immediate danger.

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<p>❖ <i>Article 36: Preventive measures</i></p> <p><i>“Preventive measures shall include awareness-raising campaigns, research and education programmes, where appropriate developed in cooperation with relevant civil society organisations, social partners, impacted communities and other stakeholders.</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Article 37: Training and information for professionals</i></p> <p><i>“The training activities (...) shall include training on coordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in cases of violence against women or domestic violence.”</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Article 38: Intervention programmes</i></p> <p><i>“Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that targeted and effective intervention programmes are established to prevent and minimise the risk of committing offences of violence against women or domestic violence, or reoffending. The intervention</i></p>	<p>⇒ Share existing guidelines and protocols as good practice for supra-regional initiatives</p> <p>⇒ Ease the implementation of awareness campaigns and prevention measures thanks to a tighter connection to regional actors</p> <p>⇒ Enable educational initiatives with the support of regional actors to raise awareness on local care and support at disposal</p>

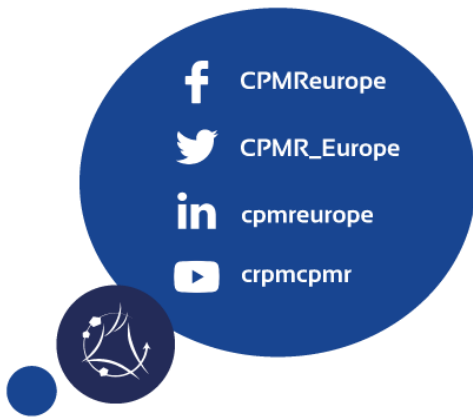


programmes shall be made available for participation including topersons who fear they might commit any offence of violence against women or domestic violence.”

4. Recommendations to boost regional action

With a place-based knowledge and means to facilitate initiatives based on a coordinated cooperation with local actors, regions are essential to implement measures consistent with territorial realities. Although actions are already performed, regions can face limits in resources to tap in their potential. The following elements may be considered to boost regional action:

- **Establish a structured dialogue between regional and national level.** In the context of the future directive, regions must be considered as key actors for successful implementation. Regular dialogue on the topic of gender-based violence should be secured in order to voice not only regional expertise but also their financial and resources challenges to act consistently.
- **Encourage gender-disaggregated data.** The use of data on gender-based violence can be a powerful tool to design coherent public policies, but also to apply gender-budgeting (e.g in EU funding) with a transversal approach to address a maximum of forms of gender-based violence.
- **Scale-up with interregional cooperation.** Regional authorities may share best practice and set up a collaborative initiative to address shared challenges. The EU Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme ([CERV](#)) is composed of four strands of action, with one dedicated to fighting violence including gender-based violence and violence against children (*Daphne* strand). Although cities have been regularly involved in such projects, no regions have been included in a project on gender-based violence, although eligible for CERV funding. Dedicated calls for proposals on regional authorities’ challenges may be a point to advocate for. Interreg Europe could also be considered for regional policy-making projects.
- **Creation of an EU platform for technical support.** In the past, a Daphne Toolkit had been developed to support organisations interested in applying for Daphne funding. As the toolkit is no longer in use, DG JUST/CERV programme could revamp the initiative with the creation of a broader platform, supporting matchmaking, initiatives, best practice, and use of EU funds towards eradicating gender-based violence.
- **Engage actively with the youth.** For an effective legacy of actions against gender-based violence, the involvement of the youth is essential, not only as recipients of prevention but also as active contributors to the design of policies. Inter-generational dialogues and consultations may be set. The proposal of directive especially addresses the growing challenge of cyberviolence towards the youth. CPMR regions collaborated with the Mediterranean Youth Council and the North Sea Youth Committee that shaped messages and proposals for actions on this specific challenge.



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