

# Policing of domestic violence: Strategy, competence, training

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## Abstract

*An effective implementation of domestic violence strategy and policy requires well-trained and competent employees. The article describes domestic violence training provisions offered for the basic degree police students in the partner countries (Austria, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Scotland, and Slovenia) of an EU funded IMPRODOVA project<sup>2</sup>. Contents of available training courses are assessed in relation to policy recommendations, especially the Istanbul Convention. Competencies that are relevant in identifying, intervening and preventing domestic violence are usually presented to students in the context of more general courses. Consequently, although many important subject materials, such as the rights and needs of the victims, are covered well in most courses, domestic violence related items tend to be scattered throughout the curriculum without forming a coherent unity. Competencies are rarely studied in a separate and comprehensive course focusing specifically on domestic violence related materials. Generic competencies form the foundation of policing skills and knowledge and have a wide applicability in many situations, including domestic violence. If domestic violence related items and learning materials are dispersed around the curriculum, which seems mostly the case currently, the students would need more support to join the dots in order to acquire adequate competencies and comprehensive understanding of domestic violence.*

**Keywords:** domestic violence, police, training, competence, strategy

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## Introduction

Human resources, including the competencies of staff, should be analysed and defined in close association with broader strategic planning. There is an expectation that competent and well-trained staff is necessary in order for any organization, including the police, to achieve strategic and policy goals (Balogun et al., 2015; Dosi et al., 2008). Consequently, now that the prevention and detection of domestic violence and violence against women has been highlighted by several European Union Member States as one of the major policy goals, there is an expectation that the police is also ready to accomplish this goal.

One particularly important international policy document on domestic violence is the Istanbul Convention<sup>3</sup>, which strongly suggests, among other things, the parties to strengthen the education and training of all pertinent professions (Article 15, paragraph 1), highlighting multi-agency co-operation. The transformation of formal policy goals and legislation into effective action requires competent professionals, who are able to identify domestic violence, intervene at the right time and with appropriate measures, provide services to victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

Competences are inculcated in professional education and training in different formal, informal and non-formal learning situations. The concept of competence is not limited to professional skills and knowledge, but covers also employee's attitudes and motivation (Crick, 2008; Hoskins & Crick, 2010). Even competent professionals cannot produce tangible results in the real world of professional practice if their organisations do not provide necessary psychological support and material resources (Niklander et al., 2019). Moreover, professional competence is becoming a key ingredient for planning the content of education in a curriculum. Indeed, many training organizations have adopted so called competence based curriculum, which does not only describe the content of individual courses, but it also defines what the students should be able perform at work after completing the course. Therefore, performance criteria for effective and ethical police conduct described in the curriculum should respond to the requirements of actual working life.

A recent study (Awan et al., 2019) in one UK constabulary shows, for example, that citizens' experiences of the police conduct during the first encounter predicts citizens' future perception of the police. One of the most important areas of public's assessment gears towards the competence<sup>4</sup> of police officers. Consequently, citizens are very attentive to how police officers carry their tasks. Likewise, people expect the police to do their work

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3 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 12 April 2011.

4 Other areas of assessment found in the research were Police Duty, Police Conduct, Experiencing Prejudice and Expectations of the Police (see Awan et al., 2019).

well and produce concrete results, not abstract statistics and numbers that describe police organizational performance (see Mastrofski et al., 1996). Thus, the translation of competencies into practices should be one of the main priorities when defining a strategy for establishing professional competencies. Citizens' perceived fairness and effectiveness of police conduct is associated with police legitimacy (Taylor et al. 2015).

An effective implementation of a new organisational strategy usually requires previously untried competencies that may seem at first sight strange or even opposite from the perspective of prevailing professional practices, attitudes and cultures. In such conditions, the implementation of strategy is likely to encounter resistance. Consequently, it may take a relatively long time to overcome such resistance, for instance, by learning new competencies, or by recruiting new staff. Given the typical characteristics of police occupational culture (Paoline & Gau, 2018; Loftus, 2010), we expect that new strategies for improving the detection and prevention of domestic violence will be resisted at least by conservative fractions within police forces. For instance, a more effective intervention to domestic violence would require that the police officers have competencies to identify and uncover the subtle and hidden forms of the "wicked problem"<sup>5</sup> (Rittel & Webber, 1973) of domestic violence. Furthermore, police needs to be more open to cooperation with social work, health care and various non-governmental organizations in order to be able to meet the various needs of the victims. How well police forces are prepared to respond to the demands of domestic violence strategies. In particular, how does training prepare police officers to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to implement these strategies? In order to have an overview of the current situation, the IMPRODOVA project<sup>6</sup> gathered data on domestic violence training provisions for frontline responders in each IMPRODOVA partner country.

## Methods and Procedures

The purpose of the study was not to produce an exhaustive list of all available training options in partner countries, but to focus on reasonably available illustrative material. The inventory of domestic violence related training covered three levels of education: basic, specialist and managerial training. The basic training provides an entry-level degree to a profession. Specialist training involves various courses, units, or programs to improve skills and knowledge often formally required to work as a frontline responder in the area of domestic violence. Finally, we wanted to explore whether managerial training contains any domestic violence related content. We mainly focus in this paper on basic degree lev-

5 Particularly when violence and abuse does not leave manifest physical marks, but consist of psychological violence and coercive control, it is more difficult to detect (e.g. Robinson et al., 2018).

6 Improving frontline responses to high impact domestic violence ([www.improdova.eu](http://www.improdova.eu)).

el of police training, but highlight some noteworthy aspects of specialist and managerial training too.

We checked to what extent policy recommendations regarding training, particularly in the topics presented in the Istanbul Convention, were integrated in sampled courses. The topics in the training content that we used as a baseline for assessing each identified course are presented in Table 1. We built the inventory at a rather general level and did not go to the details of the course content, and thus asked the IMPRODOVA partners to check whether the most salient subject materials were covered in courses that the partners identified as potentially relevant for domestic violence training. We wanted to determine, for instance, whether training materials covered basic skills to identify, detect and prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, was domestic violence discussed more broadly as a societal, economic and psychological problem? Were the multiple types and forms of domestic violence, including the seriousness of violence and risk assessment covered too? Istanbul Convention highlights the rights, services and vulnerability of victims. Were these topics also presented in the course? The effective prevention and intervention rests on cooperation among multiple agencies. Was this aspect also considered? Finally, we also asked about whether role-playing, simulations or scenario were used as pedagogic methods.

**Table 1:** Most Salient Topics of domestic violence Related Training

Identification, detection and prevention of domestic violence
domestic violence as a societal, economic, and psychological problem
Types and forms of violence and abuse
Seriousness of violence
Fundamental human rights
Rights of victims
Services to meet the needs of victims
Protection of victims
Means to prevent secondary victimization
Services to perpetrators
Cooperation between different agencies
Risk assessment tools
Case documentation
Special groups, such as children, elderly, ethnic minorities, disabled
Mediation
Simulations, scenarios, and role-playing as a didactic method

We searched for police training in courses and programs that could potentially contain references to domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, violence against women, family violence, violence in close relationships or violence against children presented. However, a course title is not always a clear indication of the content. We soon realized that quite many relevant topics related to domestic violence are covered in courses that touch rather generic policing skills and knowledge. These courses do not have a specific focus on domestic violence, although the learning of these more general policing skills and knowledge have also relevance and applicability in domestic violence situations. Domestic violence cases and related competencies can arise in these more general courses for instance as exceptional cases or typical examples, but this often depends on an individual teacher responsible for planning and organizing the course.

The structure of our paper is straightforward. We first describe the types of courses in which domestic violence related material is introduced. After that, we offer some examples of training provisions in each IMPRODOVA partner country. Finally, we draw some conclusions of the relations between police competences, training and strategy implementation in the area of domestic violence.

## Results: Generic and Specific Courses

In comparative policing research, European countries are commonly regarded as constituting distinctive policing regimes or systems (Devroe et al., 2017). For instance, Devroe and Ponsaers (2017) distinguish Nordic countries having a 'unified police system', setting it apart from 'territorially divided systems' of UK and Wales, the 'federal systems' of Germany, Switzerland and Belgium, and 'historically diverse police systems' of France, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The diversity of policing regimes is also reflected in how police training is organized in different countries, which force of police unit is responsible for training, whether training is delivered at the regional (territorial), federal or national level. The police education and training commonly consists of a combination of theoretical studies with practical training and traineeship. The common structure varies in terms of the length of training, the time devoted to "theoretical" subjects and the timing of apprenticeship period.

Our findings suggest that skills, knowledge and attitudes that are relevant to identifying, intervening and investigating domestic violence are usually presented to the students in the context of more general courses. Policing of domestic violence is rarely offered explicitly as a distinctive course or a clearly defined section in a larger module, although the cases of domestic violence can be presented as examples in which policing skills could be simulated, learned and tested.

Numerous courses provide police students with generic skills that have a wide applicability in multiple areas of policing, in both patrolling and investigation. The relevance and value of these generic policing competencies in specific circumstances of domestic violence is not necessarily made explicit to students during training. Therefore, it is often left to the students themselves to take that intellectual and practical leap from generic to specific forms of intervention. The reasoning from generic to specific occurs, if at all, occurs in a practical state of awareness, however, without much conscious effort or reflective thinking. If the information of domestic violence is scattered in the curriculum and appears in general courses without a systematic planning, students may not be able to form linkages between different items and reach a comprehensive understanding of the domestic violence issues. Consequently, this mode of learning is vulnerable to non-optimal outcomes if the generic skills and knowledge deviate from the specific competencies required in identifying, intervening and investigating domestic violence. Students should be helped find linkages between separate items presented in different courses. This could be accomplished for instance through a simulation exercise in which students are given an opportunity to observe and experience how a domestic violence case is processed in the policing system and how and when the other services agencies come in on the process. Such exercise would integrate separately learned items into an understandable totality showing how a case moves on e.g. from a house call to an investigation and cooperation with other frontline responders such as health care, social work and non-governmental organizations.

Another possibility is to produce a specific course that is entirely focused on domestic violence. Given that the entry level degree training for police officers seem to be filled up with vast amount of details and subjects, and training in some countries is currently rather short, it is not likely that specific courses on domestic violence can be organized during the basic degree training, say, as an elective or optional course. However, if training is modelled based on work life requirements, then it would be rational to focus on those areas of policing, which consume much of police officers' working time (e.g. driving), in which a right outcome is critical (e.g. the use of force), or which both consume much time and require a successful outcome (house calls).

## **Examples of Domestic Violence Training in IMPRODOVA Partner Countries**

In this section, we describe some examples of domestic violence training provisions in IMPRODOVA partner countries, focusing mostly on the entry-level training. These examples do not cover all material we have collected during research, but it serves an illustrative purposes.

## Austria

In *Austria*, domestic violence is presented during the two-year basic training in the context of so called “specific police competencies”. domestic violence is referred to as “violence in private sphere.” The length of the course is 24 lessons covering the fundamentals of relevant legislation and a seminar on violence in private sphere. The seminar is a joint effort with an expert from a violence protection center or a women’s shelter. Later in the competence trainings, there is one additional module of 16 teaching units about violence in private sphere. Overall, 40 units out of 2612 units is explicitly devoted to domestic violence, which is only 1.5 % of total units. However, teachers often bring out domestic violence relevant topics in other learning modules too.

The training at the basic level in the Austria did not include the following topics: domestic violence as a social, economic and psychological problem, risk assessment tools, case documentation and mediation. It is unclear if the seriousness of violence is discussed explicitly although different forms and types of violence are covered. In addition, even though simulations and role-playing are an intrinsic part of teaching methods, it is not evident that they are used in the context of domestic violence. Overall, it seems that even though not much time is devoted to domestic violence, numerous relevant topics are covered including the victim services, support and protection, in addition to the cooperation between different agencies.

## France

In *France*, the national police do not offer training courses at the basic degree level that are solely focussed on domestic violence. However, relevant materials are presented during other, more general classes and practical exercises. Various generic policing competencies learned in training provide the basic skills to police domestic violence incidents too. French national gendarmerie has one three-hour training devoted to domestic violence, which is a part of the basic training module on how to receive a report of an offence at the police station.

We want to highlight a specific training that is offered since 2016 for investigators in French national police. The training is aimed at those who are appointed to special units investigating crimes and misdemeanours against the person within the family context. These police officers have a possibility to complete 4 days (36 hours) of specialized training. Officers in national gendarmerie who are appointed to a special unit investigating domestic violence can undergo this training too. The training is provided by the regional training offices of the French national police. The coverage of domestic violence topics is broad. The course is remarkable in stressing women’s rights in society, including the history of women’s movement and the development of gender equality.

The training covers also cooperation with medical doctors, the prosecutor's office and the family court. Indeed, police services are presented as one element of a larger system and the purpose of victim support and protection. Risk assessment and case documentation belong also to the content of this specialized training course. Finally, the course applies various less conventional methods, such as case studies, videos and round-table discussions.

## **Finland**

Since 2014, the basic police training in *Finland* is a 180 credit-points qualification of bachelor's degree. The studies take approximately three years leading to Bachelor of Police Services and qualifies a person to the position of police officer, such as a Senior Constable. The curriculum is modelled on the policing competencies required in working life. There is a strong emphasis of human rights and equality throughout the course. Students are also supported to become critical and self-reflective on their own practices and attitudes in different situations.

The main aspects of domestic violence are dealt with in the context of public order and security operations, criminal law, criminal process, and private law. These courses pertain for instance to the essential elements of an offence and how to consider the presence of children in field operations, different processual aspects from the perspective of a plaintiff (victim), securing and presenting evidence in domestic violence, claims for damages and the needs of victims.

The pre-trial investigation studies contain several domestic violence related topics too, such as the investigation of crimes against children, confidentiality, protection of victims, and the possibility of mediation in domestic violence cases. There is also a mock trial seminar, where cases of domestic violence are presented. Finally, a lecture on the psychology of interrogation covers also the hearing of children and the questioning of persons who have traumatized and suffering from violence.

Overall, the materials that explicitly relate to domestic violence are given approximately 45 hours of lectures and seminars. The training applies several types of pedagogies from traditional lectures to role-playing and simulations based on real cases. Apart from services to perpetrators, all subject materials listed in Table 1 are seemingly covered at the basic degree level.

During the field-training period in different police departments students work in a position of Junior Constables both as patrol officers and detectives. Consequently, students respond to house calls, encounter the victims and suspects of domestic violence incidents and obtain practical experience. It is worth mentioning that during the past

years or so, a dozen BA theses have dealt with violence in close relationships, or violence against children.

We want to offer an example managerial level police training in Finland. Managerial and leadership training is focused on how to lead field operations and pre-trial investigation in a legal, fair and effective manner, and how to fulfill various kinds of managerial roles. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the legal and administrative questions, but also the planning and allocation of resources, assessment of results, and staff management.

In the studies towards the Master of Police Services, violence in close relationships and domestic violence is explicitly dealt with in various courses and contexts. The program does not contain a course that is focussed only on domestic violence, but most of the relevant topics covered in other courses. For instance, the protection needs of the victim is highlighted during the course on pre-trial investigation process. The students also learn about the services provided by other agencies such as the Victim Support Finland, special aspects of pre-trial investigation involving children, questions related to coercive measures, restraining order and risk/threat assessment. There is also a separate discussion session about the challenges in identifying, detecting and effectively intervening at occurrences of violence in close relationships.

The focus is on learning competencies for leading a pre-trial investigation as an inspector or chief inspector. Therefore, the broader societal, economic and psychological questions are not covered very broadly. However, the importance of fundamental human rights is stressed throughout the degree program. There is also a seminar on criminal procedure where these subject materials are learned through cases. Based on a conservative assessment, time devoted to domestic violence related aspects is approximately 32 hours. Within this short time most subject materials are covered, save services available to perpetrators is often rather condensed.

Finally, we want to introduce multi-professional training produced in an EU funded project, EPRAS (Enhancing Professional Skills and Raising Awareness on domestic violence, Violence against Women and Shelter Services<sup>7</sup>). The project launched an online training<sup>8</sup> for all frontline response professionals in May 2019. The target group for this continuing education consists of those police officers, social workers, and health care professionals in Finland who need to improve their competencies to detect, intervene and prevent violence in close relationships. The training takes about a day. A recommendation is to go through material in a study group, preferable in a multi-professional group consisting representatives of all frontline responder agencies.

7 Information about the project at Police University College of Finland's web page [https://www.polamk.fi/en/rdi/projects/epras\\_eng](https://www.polamk.fi/en/rdi/projects/epras_eng).

8 Online training is available in Finnish <https://verkkokoulut.thl.fi/web/puutu-vakivaltaan>.

## Germany

*Germany* is divided into 16 federal states, and consequently the German police, police laws, and basic trainings differ on a federal level. For instance, Berlin police - a partner in IMPRODOVA consortium – offers basic level and middle management level training.

The basic education of police in Germany usually grants a bachelor's level degree. It is common that issues related to domestic violence are covered during courses focusing on general policing skills and knowledge. Consequently, basic police training offers several learning opportunities that have relevance to the detection of and intervention in domestic violence. For instance, a police education institute of one federal state offers a module on prevention of crime consisting of 328 lectures or 8 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) that has also relevant material to domestic violence. In addition to "theoretical" studies, German police students must complete five ECTS of training, during which they encounter domestic violence cases.

We observed many different ways to deliver domestic violence related training in federal states. In some federal states and police education institutions, it may also be possible to obtain more in-depth training on how to intervene in an extremely difficult and stressful police operation of domestic violence. Interestingly, police training in one federal state has a special focus on equality of persons with LGBTI-background and on stalking. Furthermore, a certain federal state has introduced a module on domestic violence with a total of 86 hours training, while in another, issues related to domestic violence are covered in communication training, even also in English.

Overall, most important topics of domestic violence listed in Table 1 are covered in the trainings provision we observed in Germany, apart from risk assessment tools and mediation. Services available to victims and perpetrators, and the cooperation with other service agencies are covered briefly. Police training in all federal states uses scenarios and simulations for learning.

Berlin police offers several in-service specialist courses relevant to domestic violence. Most of these courses deal with some important aspects of domestic violence, but no individual course covers all topics listed in Table 1. The content of courses range from victim protection to restraining order and stalking. These courses can also cover some aspects of victim services. There is also a four-day-course entitled as "domestic violence". The course is for individual police officers who are then able to pass specialist knowledge forward. This course covers a wide area of subject materials on domestic violence except services to perpetrators and mediation.

German Federal Criminal Investigation Office offers a national three-day specialist course on crime prevention. The course covers rights, services and protection of victims and the

prevention of secondary victimization, but not services to perpetrators. The cooperation between different agencies is also on the training agenda. This course does not cover services to perpetrators.

The German police officers at the top management level receive a 2-year master's level education under the supervision of the German Police University in Münster. The program does not contain a course that focuses exclusively on domestic violence. Nonetheless, domestic violence related materials are presented in various courses ranging from subjects such as Law, Sociology, Psychology and Criminology to Criminalistics, Interrogation, Victim protection and Management of police action. The totality of domestic violence related subject materials in various courses could be more than 150 hours. Moreover, fundamental human rights and other legal issues that are important in leading police operations and investigation are naturally covered.

### Hungary

In *Hungary*, the entry-level police training is offered at four police secondary schools. After that, the Faculty of Law Enforcement at the National University of Public Service (NUPS) offers three-year full-time and part-time BA programs, and two-year part-time MA programs. The Faculty also offers specialization and further training courses and a doctoral program.

The four secondary police schools can have somewhat different emphasis in the content and methods of domestic violence relevant training. For instance, in one police secondary school, a course emphasizes the importance of empathy and supportive attitude in situations of sexual, physical and psychological violence, verbal abuse, and economic violence. Simulations are used as a pedagogical tool and learning is demonstrated in practice tests. In another school, domestic violence related materials are taught in several courses ranging from Law, Law Enforcement Administration, Criminology and Forensics, to Public Order Policing and Communication Studies. Overall, these topics consist of 58 lectures, and they address all significant domestic violence related materials, except measures of prevention, risk assessment tools and mediation. Children and disabled people are discussed as special groups. In a third police secondary school, domestic violence is highlighted in courses on Public Order, Criminal Studies, District Police Officer Course, and Social and Communications Studies. Again, much of the subject materials mentioned Table 1 are covered. However, services to victims, secondary victimization, risk assessment tools, seriousness of violence, fundamental human rights, and mediation seem not to be on agenda. Simulation is often used as a pedagogical method.

A fourth police secondary school offers an optional course entitled as "Violence between family members and restraining orders", which consists of 10 lessons of 45 minutes. Six lessons are organized as simulation training. This course also touches upon the services

available to the perpetrator, restraining order, forms of violence and the tools to detect and identify domestic violence, services to the victims, and cooperation between agencies.

National University of Public Services offers several courses in different subjects and disciplines that are relevant in detecting, preventing and intervening domestic violence, but we are not describing the details here due to space restrictions.

## Portugal

Domestic violence related training content is presented at different levels of police training in *Portugal*. The basic training for police officers provides students with preliminary competencies to manage all types of policing situation and therefore it must cover at least some aspects of domestic violence too. Senior police officers who work in supervisory or management roles receive training for leading domestic violence detection and investigation operationally and strategically. Furthermore, proximity policing model offers specialisation training for domestic violence teams. There is also training of domestic violence risk assessment, and criminal investigation focusing on the securing evidence of domestic violence.

Since 2012, domestic violence training has been comprehensive covering all the above-mentioned layers and aspects of policing. Training is delivered by police training institutes and police forces. domestic violence training provisions of the Portuguese Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR) should be in principle comparable to Portuguese Police.

The basic degree training lasts 36 weeks and offers police officers general competencies to solve various policing incidents, gather evidence and support the victims. A specific module of 12 hours deals with domestic violence incidents. The course covers the main phases of policing of domestic violence incidents from initial response to criminal investigation. The course emphasizes that the police must support and ensure safety of domestic violence victims, properly investigate domestic violence incidents, and prevent any future situations to emerge. The course covers the subject materials presented in Table 1 other than mediation.

In Portugal, there are four short courses on domestic violence for specialists: Proximity Policing Integrated Model Course (6 hours), Train the Trainers' Proximity Teams and domestic violence (9 hours), Training on domestic violence Risk Assessment (7 hours), and domestic violence Policing and Criminal Investigation Course (5 hours). These courses are mandatory for a police officer entering a domestic violence specialist role. The content of the training courses covers all significant topics of domestic violence except for mediation. Moreover, Portuguese police have a domestic violence Policing Manual that

helps police officers to detect domestic violence cases. In addition, a risk factor list supports police officers to identify and prevent domestic violence. Case studies, scenarios and role-playing are regularly used in training.

### Scotland

The Scottish Police College provides Initial Training Course in *Scotland*, which lasts 11 weeks. Basic training courses for police officers consist of teaching units that introduce students to legislation, police procedures and techniques. One unit of six hours is dedicated to domestic abuse, which is the preferred term instead of domestic violence in Scotland. The content of the unit covers most of the significant subject materials listed in Table 1, except for services to perpetrators and mediation. Matters related to children are given a special emphasis. After graduation, police officers undertake a probationary period of two-years during which they deal with various policing tasks including domestic abuse.

Police officers promoted to the rank of Police Sergeant complete Operational Command Training, which prepares them into a supervisory role. The training includes one hour of domestic abuse training. Again, most subject topics are recapitulated, except for mediation and services to perpetrators. Children are again highlighted as a special group.

Detective specialists must pass the Initial Investigators Program that covers multiple subject materials relevant to domestic abuse and the National Investigation Exam. Detective Officers who want to specialise in the investigation of domestic abuse must pass a week-long Domestic Abuse Investigating Officers Course. The course consists of 40 hours of work in total and covers all relevant aspects related to prevention, detection and intervention of domestic violence, with the exception mediation.

Police Scotland has developed a new program entitled as Domestic Abuse Materials (Scotland), which will be delivered by the UK Charity SafeLives. The training aims to change attitudes and behaviour of police officers to better understand and meet the needs of the victims. All police officers and staff up to the rank of Chief Inspector must complete the one-hour online training<sup>9</sup>. In addition, those police officers who serve in frontline roles must pass a-day-long face-to-face training. This training aims to support the impact of domestic abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 by improving police practice and services to victims of domestic abuse.

### Slovenia

*Slovenian* police offer eight hours of training at the basic degree level providing skills and knowledge for prevention, detection and intervention of domestic violence. The training

<sup>9</sup> More information about the training, including content and costs can be found at <http://www.safelives.org.uk/training/police>.

covers most topics that are relevant for policing domestic violence, apart from services to perpetrators and risk assessment tools. In addition, simulations or scenarios seemed not to be used, but there is also an online e-learning and distant learning option. For specialist police officers, Slovenian police provides a mandatory domestic violence training of six days, which covers all other topics in Table 1, save services to perpetrators and risk assessment tools.

At the managerial level, Slovenian police is utilizing various training options offered by many organizations and agencies. We do not have detailed information concerning the content these courses. However, we know that risk assessment tools are not covered in these training courses, because based on the Slovenian law on the prevention of domestic violence NGOs are responsible for risk assessment.

Training provisions for specialist are also produced by the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security of a Slovenian University. The length of the course is five ECTS, and it is available for the programs in Critical Victimology (MA), Organization of Police Work and Police Powers (BA), and Criminology and Victimology (BA). The course has a wide coverage of domestic violence related materials, but does not cover risk assessment and case documentation tools. The course focuses on the use of coercive means, but it also highlights hidden victimizations too.

## Conclusion

In IMPRODOVA partner countries<sup>10</sup>, domestic violence related training during the basic degree, or entry-level, police education is most commonly presented in general courses that convey competencies that can be applied in many policing situations. Courses specifically focussing on domestic violence are rare, but we observed some interesting examples. It seems that important topics of domestic violence are covered rather broadly in all countries. Yet, some particular items, most often mediation and risk assessment, are usually not discussed at the basic degree level. Risk assessment is likely regarded a specialist's skill and therefore left out. Knowledge about mediation is not regarded being relevant for the police in many countries.

The possible weakness of the current situation in training provision is that subject materials that are important in policing domestic violence are scattered and isolated in different parts of the curriculum. Curricula of basic policing degrees tend to be organized in terms of general competencies and areas of police operation rather than specific phenomena. This organisation usually means that specific phenomena such as domestic violence

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<sup>10</sup> i.e. Austria, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Scotland, and Slovenia.

pop up here and there in the curriculum. domestic violence could emerge through an interesting example or a typical case in which more generic skills and knowledge could be applied. Then the presentation of domestic violence can depend on the interests of an individual instructor. Consequently, there is a risk that entry-level police officers do not have an opportunity for a comprehensive picture of domestic violence and the training may leave gaps in their competencies to identify, intervene and investigate domestic violence. The current situation is understandable as the curricula are packed full of content, and there is little room for special courses. In the long term, it may be beneficial to learn well the general principles and procedures of policing, which form a solid basis for further and continuing training. Then, it is also easier to participate in the specialist training, such as domestic violence specialist, if the principles are learned well. However, it is also important to ensure that basic degree students are exposed systematically to different aspects of domestic violence during their studies. Students also need help so that they can form comprehensive understanding of domestic violence regardless of whether the relevant materials are scattered in different parts in the syllabus.

We emphasized in the introduction of this article that competencies are more than simply skills and knowledge. A competent professional has also incorporated appropriate values and strong motivation, so that they achieve tangible results by ethical means in the real world (Crick, 2008; Hoskins & Crick, 2010). Moreover, skills and knowledge should not be seen separate from the personal development of a learner in his or her social and cultural context. New strategies, policies and legislation require changes in organizational practices and processes. Thus, the success of legislative and policy reforms depends also on professional dispositions, which contain certain inertia resisting change (Bourdieu, 1990). In other words, the implementation of new legislation and policy depends on professional bodies and minds. In particular, if new legislation and policy requires practices that do not align with the existing professional culture, the change is harder to achieve.

In many IMPRODOVA partner countries, police officers who want to become specialist in domestic violence have a possibility to participate in courses that focus solely on domestic violence related issues. Specialist courses also aim at influencing students' dispositions, so that specialists develop right attitudes and behaviours towards victims and broaden the understanding of the complexity and seriousness of domestic violence as a psychological, social and cultural phenomenon. These courses also instruct how to use various tools and procedures that are created specifically for domestic violence, such as risk assessment, case documentation and collaboration with other frontline responders. Indeed, in some IMPRODOVA partner countries specialist courses are organized in collaboration with social and health services and non-governmental organisations. The multi-professional aspect is important, since the prevention, detections and investigation of domestic violence requires joint effort. Collaboration requires creating trusting relations between many organizations and agencies that have quite different professional,

organizational and cultural constellations. This is not necessarily an easy task. In addition, important strategic goals cannot be achieved even with competent frontline responders, if they are not supported and valued by their organizational managers.

To understand what professional competencies should be covered in the curriculum and courses, one needs to understand what constitutes effective and ethical work practices and processes in working life. However, one needs also to be aware that the actual work practices and processes may not be desired or ideal from the perspective of new policy and legislation. Indeed, in some cases they could be quite far away from the ideal situation or desirable goals. There are forces of inertia in organizational structures and professional practices. Professionals may adhere to inappropriate routines and make virtue out of necessity. Individuals may argue: "This is the right way, because it is the most effective way." In reality, the argument should be read as follows: "This is the right way, because this is how I do it, and I am too tired (disinterested, old, etc.) to change my routines." As human minds and bodies contain inertia, it may be hard to achieve change merely by enacting new legislation, or formulating official policies and strategic goals. Professional groups are known to protect their jurisdictions (Abbott, 1988) and tend to resist change, particularly if it is dictated from the outside. This type of inertia and resistance is partly related to professional interests, but it can also be explained by professional cultures and dispositions of individual professionals. As professional inertia in the long-run gives leeway to more killings of victims of domestic violence, already basic police education should train students to acquire a growth-oriented and open mindset, as there is far more to learn about domestic violence than can be taught within the boundaries of few lectures.

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