

STOP FEMICIDE

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO FEMICIDE IN MONTENEGRO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MARCH 2023



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INTRODUCTION

Femicide - killing of a woman on the grounds of her sex, gender, gender roles - is the most extreme manifestation of violence against women and it is characterised by a hate or contempt for women, the desire to dominate a woman and control her life.¹ Femicide in family-partner relations constitutes a substantial share of all homicides of women in the world² and most killings of women and girls are gender motivated. Globally, in 2021, around 45,000 women and girls were killed by their intimate partners or other family members. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the private sphere, namely 56% of all female homicides are committed by intimate partners or other family members.³

The comprehensive and inter-disciplinary analysis of femicide cases “Social and Institutional Response to Femicide in Montenegro” was implemented within the project *Replicating the Femicide Watch model developed in Serbia in Albania and Montenegro, and lay the foundations for the establishment of a Regional Femicide Watch*. The project is implemented by women’s rights organization FemPlatz and supported by UN Women’s regional programme “Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union. The research, which was implemented by Helpline for women and children victims of violence Niksic and FemPlatz includes analysis of the court case files concluded between 2015 and 2019 on murder and attempted murder of women by men, in depth-analysis of court casefiles in a form of case studies, capacity assessment of institutions relevant for the prevention and protection from violence, and the interviews with the perpetrators of femicide, who are currently serving prison sentences. The overall objective is to identify phenomenology and aetiology of femicide, so that the process of improved data collection, analysis, and identification of gaps in the intervention systems will contribute to prevention and eradication femicide.

This summary presents the key research findings on judicial data and capacities of institutions and gives main recommendations at the systemic and institutional level to prevent, prosecute, and eradicate femicide in Montenegro.

The reports of women’s organizations in Montenegro state that 73 women were killed in the period between 2001 and 2017 and that the majority of femicides occurred in the family home.⁴ In addition, data collected from the media, which however is not fully reliable data source, show that there were at least five femicides in Montenegro in the period between 2020 and 2022, and all were committed in family-related

1 Slobodanka Konstantinović Vilic, Nevena Petrušić, Kosana Beker, “Social and institutional response to femicide in Serbia Parts I and II,” 2019, p. 7.

2 *Ibid*, p. 412.

3 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Women, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide), 2022

4 “Mapping of Policies and Legislation on Violence against Women and the Istanbul Convention in Montenegro”, Director of the non-government organisation “Centre for Women’s Rights” Maja Raičević Available at: https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ewl-montenegro_report_web.pdf

context. The rate of intentional homicide of women by intimate partners in 2020 in Montenegro was 0.63 while zero cases of intentional homicide of man by intimate partner has been recorded.⁵

Research key findings:

- There is no legal definition of femicide or incrimination of femicide as a specific form of gender-based crime.
- Data on femicide are not systematized, reliable, and transparent, but rather scattered across different sectors and institutions.
- Judicial data show that:
 - ➔ The court casefiles contain very little or no information about the victims.
 - ➔ When assessing the type and severity of the criminal sanction, the court had not assessed the mitigating and aggravating circumstances in an adequate manner.
 - ➔ the court generally did not engage in detailed examination and analysis of the previous relationship between perpetrator and the victim, the violence he had previously committed against the victim, nor the court considered the clearly expressed gender dimensions of the committed crime.
 - ➔ Punishments are not always adequate, especially when we consider the gravity of the crime, the gender-based motives of the crime, and the circumstances under which they were executed.
- Cooperation among institutions relevant for prevention and protection from violence against women/femicide is not satisfactory leading to various challenges in practice.
- The survey responses show a significant level of gender-based stereotypes among the professionals responsible for cases of domestic violence, violence against women, and femicide.
- Key challenges to respond adequately to femicide recognized by the institutions are the workload of employees with other jobs (60%), lack of cooperation and poor communication among the institutions, complicated procedures (20%), and unsatisfactory legal regulations (20%).

General recommendations: Remove the structural causes of femicide by proactive actions aimed at advancing gender equality.

Eradicating sexist prejudices and patriarchal customs based on stereotypical gender roles.

Effectively eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of public and private life.

LEGISLATION AND FEMICIDE IN MONTENEGRO

Recommendation: harmonize the criminalization of acts of gender-based violence with the definitions contained in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Constitution of Montenegro detailly regulates a wide body of human rights and freedoms.⁶ Montenegro ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2013,⁷ as well as a number of conventions on the protection of children and women against violence, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁸ the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse,⁹ the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,¹⁰ and the Council of Europe Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights.¹¹ Under the Article 9 of the Constitution, international law shall have primacy over domestic law and it will be applied directly where relations are differently regulated from domestic law.

Montenegro has not yet fully harmonised its legislation with the standards of Istanbul Convention as there are several regulations with a gender-neutral concept of human rights protection in the context of violence.

6 Chapter "Human Rights and Freedoms" (Articles 17-80) Official Journal of Montenegro, 1/2017.

7 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence entered into force on August 1, 2014.

8 The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989, entered into force on September 2, 1990.

9 Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

10 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979, and entered into force on September 3, 1981.

11 Series of European Treaties - No. 160 European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights.

Recommendation: Criminalize femicide as a specific type of crime against woman's life or as a special form of aggravated murder so that it includes every gender-motivated deprivation of a woman's life, done with intent or negligence.

This would ensure an adequate Criminal Code response to femicide and facilitate statistical monitoring and reporting to the public about the extent, distribution, and phenomenological characteristics of this form of crime.

➔ 76% of surveyed professionals think that femicide should be incriminated as a specific type of crime.

Criminal law protection from domestic violence was introduced in Montenegro's criminal law system by the 2003 **Criminal Code**,¹² which incriminates domestic violence. It **does not criminalise femicide**.

It incriminates:

- domestic violence (Article 220) resulting in the death of a member of a family or family community as a separate, qualified form of the criminal offence of domestic violence (paragraph 4),
- the following forms of aggravated murder (Article 144 CC): taking the life of a pregnant woman (sub-paragraph 6) and taking the life of a previously abused family member (sub-paragraph 7).

The ratification of the Istanbul convention imposes upon the State the obligation to pay special attention to femicide, but in Montenegro there are no relevant official data on national case-law on femicide and whether murders of women are more often qualified as aggravated murder under Article 144 of the Criminal Code of Montenegro. One of the first steps in combatting femicide in Montenegro would entail incrimination of femicide and tightening the penal policy. This would ensure the availability of all the relevant data, which would be an indicator of trends in violence, as well as prevention and protection of women.

The experience of women's organizations providing direct services to victims of violence shows that there is a partial overlap of the provisions of the Law on prevention from domestic violence (LPDV)¹³ and the provisions of the Criminal Code in practice. There is a problem of proper qualification of acts of domestic violence, that is, of making the correct decision on whether acts of domestic violence should be prosecuted as misdemeanours under the LPDV or as criminal offences under the Criminal Code. This undermines legal certainty, because it is impossible

¹² Criminal Code of Montenegro ("Official Journal of the Republic of Montenegro", 70/2003, 13/2004 – corr., 47/2006 and "Official Journal of Montenegro", 40/2008, 25/2010, 32/2011, 64/2011 – other law, 40/2013, 56/2013 – corr., 14/2015, 42/2015, 58/2015 – other law, 44/2017, 49/2018 and 3/2020).

¹³ Law on Protection from Domestic Violence ("Official Journal of Montenegro", 046/10 of 6 August, 2010, 040/11 of 8 August, 2011)

to predict with certainty the consequences of the act based on the provisions of the law. Therefore, **it is very important that the Montenegrin legal framework clearly distinguishes between misdemeanour and criminal responsibility in case of domestic violence.** Such a recommendation was also issued by GREVIO in its Baseline Evaluation Report on Montenegro's implementation of the Istanbul convention.¹⁴

Recommendation: Integrate a gender perspective into the regulations on possession and use of firearms, including the introduction of restrictions on ownership and possession, especially where violence against women has been recorded, and run campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of using weapons in family conflicts.

The Government's 2019-2025 Strategy for Combatting Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small-Calibre and Light Weapons (SALW)¹⁵ shows that one out of five people killed in Montenegro (18.8%) were killed by a family member. The Strategy says that women account for most victims deprived of their lives in the context of domestic violence (73.3% of the victims were women while 26.7% were men). All women killed by a family member were killed by an intimate partner, which is the most common type of femicide. In contrast, murder by a female partner accounted for a very small share of the total number of murders of men (only one such killing was registered in the 2012-2016 period). Nearly half of the women murdered by their intimate partners were killed using a firearm (45.5%), while the misuse of firearms is very rarely reported in the context of domestic violence.

DATA COLLECTION ON FEMICIDE IN MONTENEGRO

General recommendation: Establish Femicide Watch, i.e. national mechanism (observatory) for femicide that would collect data, analyse proceedings, and provide recommendations for the improvement of data collection, practice, and legislation.

Provide support for research, collection, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, especially femicide in different contexts, which will provide comprehensive understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics of victims and perpetrators, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and motives of the execution.

¹⁴ Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Montenegro, GREVIO, published on 8 November 2018. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-report-montenegro/16808e5614>.

¹⁵ Government 2019-2025 Strategy for Combatting Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small-Caliber and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition, November 2018.

Statistical monitoring and analysis of the femicide in Montenegro is not possible, because the relevant institutions lack systematised and public information. Administrative data on violence against women and domestic violence are collected by various institutions in the system of prevention and protection against gender-based violence and domestic violence. Pursuant to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights has been publishing data on cases of domestic violence since 2015. Its reports contain data on victims and perpetrators - gender, age, types of violence, geographic locations, types and numbers of court decisions, numbers and types of issued protective measures, albeit without an analysis of the submitted data.

The Statistical Office of Montenegro MONSTAT has been issuing the publication "Women and Men in Montenegro" since 2006. This biennial publication also comprises data about violence disaggregated by age, sex, type of violence, but without an additional statistical and sociological analysis.

According to civil sector data, in 90% of cases, violence occurs in the place that should be the safest for women - their home. In 80% of the cases, the woman was abused by her ex or current partner, in 6% of the cases, the abuser is the father and in 5% of cases, it is the son. A third of abusers have threatened their victims with murder.¹⁶

The lack of available, systematized, and quality data on femicide represents one of the key challenges in understanding femicide and therefore developing meaningful strategies for the prevention and creation of evidence-based policies and legislation.

JUDICIAL RESEARCH ON FEMICIDE (2015-2019)

The judicial research implemented under the project includes in-depth analysis of the court cases in which the victim of murder or attempted murder was a woman. In the observed period (January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2019), there were 10 such court cases concluded in the High Court in Podgorica and the High Court in Bijelo Polje. Six of them are considered a femicide - the murder or attempted murder of a woman by a male perpetrator. In all cases of femicide and attempted femicide, the perpetrator and the victim were in marital, emotional, or family relationship (husband/ex-husband, intimate partner, son, nephew).

Data on perpetrators in court casefiles

Although data on perpetrators are more detailed in the court casefiles in comparison to data on victims, it is however not possible to make generalizations about *the profile of a perpetrator*. For example, four perpetrators for whom there is information about their age were 40 to 59 years old. Out of the six perpetrators, five graduated

16 Women's Safe House Podgorica/Interview on TV 7.

from secondary school, and one had primary school education. Three of them were employed, two retired, and one unemployed.

Most of the perpetrators had no prior criminal punishments. However, one was previously punished for committing the criminal offense of endangerment with a dangerous weapon, while one perpetrator was previously criminally and misdemeanour punished more than 10 times for various criminal offenses, including acts against the life and acts with an element of violence.

The perpetrators generally did not admit to committing the crime. In one case, the court found the perpetrator incompetent at the time of committing femicide and he confessed the criminal act. In two cases, the perpetrators emphasized the responsibility of the victims, but not their own responsibility and guilt.

Some similarities are found in all analysed court cases, however:

- 1) data on the family and personal anamnesis of the perpetrators are mostly missing in the court records because such facts were not investigated by the courts. This could include the perpetrator's primary family status - family integrity, family relationships, upbringing, behaviour of the perpetrator in relation to his parents, and history of domestic violence in the primary family.
- 2) we do not know whether the perpetrators had alcohol or drug addictions in the period before committing femicide, because these facts are not in the casefiles.
- 3) the perpetrators showed substantial level of brutality in committing the crimes against women, while they remained cold-blooded, behaved normally, or fled the scene after the murder. They used physical force (hitting, suffocation, strangulation), various tools (hammer, metal ladle, shoehorn), strangulation using a rope, cold weapons (knife), as well as firearms (gun, rifle, bomb, and explosive device).

Recommendation: Strengthen the capacities of the criminal justice system for effective detection, prosecution, and punishment of the perpetrators of femicide and attempted femicide through the implementation of mandatory basic and advanced trainings, which are fully gender sensitive.

Data on victims of femicide in court casefiles

In the researched cases, there were seven victims of femicide/attempted femicides in six cases. **The court casefiles contain very little or no information about the victims.** In most cases, there are no information about the age of the victim, her education, place of birth, number of children, employment, or other important information. According to the available data, half of the victims were elderly age (three victims were older than 65), two victims were aged 40-65, and one was aged 18-30.

The relationship between perpetrators and victims before the femicide was generally very difficult and problematic. In one case, the victim had been stalked and harassed for years by the perpetrator before he killed her, and in two cases the victims suffered prolonged domestic violence before the femicide. In these cases, the victims suffered from various forms of physical, psychological, and economic violence, which were known to both the family and their closest circle, but no one had reported it. Among the victims, there are only few who reported the violence and they had not received effective protection, which would have prevented further violence and (attempted) murder.

Court proceedings

When assessing the type and severity of the criminal sanction, the court had not assessed the mitigating and aggravating circumstances in an adequate manner. They are listed very generally and poorly. As mitigating circumstances, the court considered:

- the fact that the perpetrator had not had previous convictions,
- personal circumstances, namely, the fact that during the court proceedings while he was incarcerated, the perpetrator had “a stroke that led to a psycho-organic syndrome,”
- that he committed the act in a state of significantly reduced mental competence.

As aggravating circumstances, the judgments listed:

- blood relation between the perpetrator and his victim,
- the fact that the victim was the only one who had taken care of the perpetrator and financially assisted him,
- that the victim was an elderly person, namely she was 78 years old at the time of the crime,
- perpetrator’s earlier convictions, among other things, for crimes against life and bodies, as well as for criminal acts with elements of violence.

In some cases, the perpetrator committed violence against the victim by exercising his power and control or in the presence of children, but the court had not considered these as aggravating circumstances.

Take appropriate measures to improve the approach in processing cases of femicide and attempted femicide with the aim of their detailed and complex analysis from a gender perspective.

This includes determining the perpetrator's misogynistic attitudes, gender-based motive, power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator, examining the perpetrator's criminal past and history of previous violence against the victim, collecting data on their relationship before the critical point, and considering all other circumstances that ensure the determination of the gender dimensions of the committed or attempted criminal act.

At the main trials, numerous proofs related to the criminal offense and the criminal responsibility of the perpetrator were collected and presented to the court. However, **the court generally did not engage in detailed examination and analysis of the previous relationship between perpetrator and the victim, the violence he had previously committed against the victim, nor the court considered the clearly expressed gender dimensions of the committed crime.**

Almost 70% of surveyed professionals believe that punishing a perpetrator for violence with longer prison sentences is the best way to prevent femicide.

Punishments ruled by the courts are not always adequate, especially when we consider the gravity of the crime, the gender-based motives of the crime, and the circumstances under which they were executed. **When the punishments are too lenient, they do not achieve either special or general prevention.** For example, in the case of committing the criminal offense of aggravated murder committed from other base motives (prison sentence set to minimum ten years and long-term prison sentence of 30 to 40 years), the court did not elaborate in detail the gender aspects of the perpetrator's relation with the victim, nor the fact that the victim had been experiencing harassment, stalking, physical and psychological violence by perpetrator who expressed hate and domination. The court did not see the manner of the execution as an aggravating circumstance, above all the fact that the perpetrator not only planned the act, but also did it in an insidious way, abusing trust and innocence of victim. Therefore, it sentenced the perpetrator to 19 years of prison although it had the possibility to sentence him to 30 to 40 years of prison.

In another analysed case of attempted murder, in which the state prosecutor and the perpetrator concluded a plea agreement, the court accepted it and ruled the punishment of a prison sentence of two years and 10 months. According to the provision in the Criminal code,¹⁷ the perpetrator could have been punished from five

17 Article 143 in connection with Art. 20 of the Criminal Code

to 15 years of prison or milder sentence. Such a lenient punishment, as one of the elements of plea agreement, on which the state prosecutor and the injured party agreed, does not correspond to the purpose of imposing criminal sanctions, and for that reason the court could have rejected such a plea deal.

Recommendation: Improve the position of injured parties in criminal proceedings and ensure that the property claim of injured parties is decided within the framework of criminal proceedings, to avoid new proceedings and their additional traumatization.

In all cases of femicide, the court in the criminal proceedings did not decide on property claims of the injured parties, but it instructed them to exercise this right in the civil procedure. It is unknown whether and how many victims exercised their right to compensation in civil proceedings, bearing in mind that it is an expensive, long-term, and exhausting procedure. It can be assumed that some of the victims did not even understand until the end what kind of procedure it is, or they did not understand that the procedure for compensation is not led ex officio, but that they need to file a separate lawsuit procedure.

CAPACITIES OF RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS TO RESPOND TO FEMICIDE

The main objective of the capacity assessment of institutions relevant for the protection and prevention of gender-based violence is to assess the readiness of stakeholders and service providers to provide response and case management and to assess the effectiveness of prevention systems.

General recommendation: Establish a complete and effective system of prevention and protection of women from all forms of gender-based violence, which ensures:

- timely and effective protection of women who had experienced violence, including women at risk of multiple and intersection discrimination,
- recognition, and adequate risk assessment of femicide,
- high-quality general and specialized support services, which are easily accessible to all women and meet their needs.

The overview of the capacities of the institutions to respond to the prevention and review of femicide cases was conducted through two questionnaires to collect data on the views of professionals employed in services and the managers of the institutions. Data were requested from the police, centres for social work, prosecution offices, courts, and health care institutions. The questionnaires were sent to 76 institutions, and a total of 34 responses were received, indicating lack of the institutions' interest

in participating in the research. Of the total number of employees who participated in the research, 35.3% were men and 64.7% were women.

Because of the low response rate of the institutions, these findings should be observed with caution and as an illustration of the capacities of institutions to respond to femicide.

Attitudes to gender-based violence against women

The survey responses show a significant level of gender-based stereotypes among the professionals responsible for dealing with cases of domestic violence, violence against women, and femicide. Professionals generally condemn violence against women, recognize it as a very serious form of crime, and they are aware that it occurs in all social strata. Over 65% of professionals believe that women survivors of violence do not receive adequate social support to exit the violence and recover.

However, further analysis shows that professionals do not fully recognize the causes, mechanisms, and manifestations of violence against women. For example, 10% of respondents stated that alcoholism is one of the main causes of violence, which is particularly expressed among the police officers. These replies indicate that justification is often found for the violence and that there is a tendency to forget that violence is a chosen behaviour and that addiction diseases can exacerbate the intensity and frequency of violence. Contrary to the standards of the wellbeing of a victim, international standards, and the national legislation, professionals often mediate between the victims and perpetrators of violence. Every fourth professional believes that the “cure” for violence is the provision of psychological and counselling assistance to the family, namely keeping the family together. The majority of such responses were received by the police (60%) and misdemeanour court staff (40%). The ones who are actually conducting psychological counselling assistance, namely the professionals in the centres for social work disagree with such a statement (80%).

Recommendation: Improve the understanding and knowledge of professionals and managers of the competent institutions by implementing quality gender-responsive trainings with the objective of alleviating gender-based stereotypes and institutional sexism.

Every third professional think that “men are more violent by nature.” Around 20% of the respondents working in most institutions agree with this statement, while such a view is predominantly present in the police (80%). There is also a significant gender difference – 70% of the male and fewer than 40% of the female respondents agreed with the statement or were indecisive.

Attitudes to legislative and policy provisions

Surveyed professionals generally have a critical attitude towards the Montenegro legal framework for the protection of women from violence. Half of them, especially

in centres for social work, agree that the current legal regulations do not sufficiently protect women from violence. One third of respondents assesses that in certain cases there are legal gaps and confusion about the responsibility and authority between institutions in proceedings. In addition, every fourth professional believes that protective measures (restraining order and removal of perpetrator from the house) are not effective in practice and can sometimes be “a trigger” for femicide.

There is a relatively large number of managers of relevant institutions (45%) who believe that the prevention of femicide should be focused on working with the perpetrators of violence, assessing that perpetrators primarily need psychiatric or psychological counselling. This implies that the causes of femicide are related to the mental health of the perpetrators, although neither theory nor practice confirms this. A bit smaller percentage (40%) believes that support to survivors of violence is the key method to prevent femicide.

Adequate prosecution and punishment of perpetrators is very important from the perspective of effective prevention and protection of women from violence, and this includes a thorough investigation and collection of appropriate evidence. One of the key problems recognized in the practice is the rejection of reports or dropping the charges when a woman survivor of violence does not want to testify. However, this wrong practice of the state prosecutor’s office is approved by 45% of respondents, and 13% of them assess in that case the perpetrator should not be prosecuted.

Multi-sectoral Cooperation and Capacities to respond to VAW

Recommendation: Strengthen the capacities of the body responsible for coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women.

There are different challenges listed by the professionals in the assessment of institutional capacities to respond to femicide, and one prominent and recurring challenge is the insufficient human resources in each institution. For example, the lowest number of employees specifically dedicated to working on the prevention and protection of VAW is found in the police and courts (from none to three employees), health care institutions (on average three employees), centres for social work (two to seven) and prosecution offices (three to seven).

Overall, 26% of professionals think that cooperation and coordination between institutions is not good, while 17% are indecisive. The analysis shows that all actors were equally dissatisfied with cooperation and, interestingly, that men were more satisfied with it than women (80% v. 40%).

When it comes to professional knowledge and skills to respond to violence against women and femicide, health care professionals are assessed as the least trained. More precisely, every second professional believes that health care workers are inadequately trained about causes and consequences of violence against women,

while every fourth or fifth professional believe that prosecutors, judges, police officers, social workers are not well trained and skilled.

Professionals in [institution] are well trained and knowledgeable about the causes and consequences of violence against women	
Institution	% of respondents agreeing with the statement
Prosecution offices	50%
Courts	45%
Police	48%
Centres for social work	47%
Health care	7%

It is interesting, however, that the great majority of managers (92%) of the same institutions assessed the level of training and expertise in prevention of VAW of the employees with the highest grades. There is a significant difference in the opinions of the managers and professionals about the training and skills to understand and respond to violence against women.

In addition, although 48% of surveyed professionals assessed that the police officers are well trained to understand causes and consequences of violence against women, 24% of them estimate that there is no satisfactory risk assessment of committing or repeating violence by the police.

Recommendation: Improve multi-sectoral cooperation of competent institutions (police, state prosecutor's office, court, centre for social work, health institutions) in the field of prevention and fight against all forms of gender-based violence against women, based on an integrated approach and understanding.

Every third professional is not satisfied with the cooperation between institutions, mostly because they think that responsibilities and authorities of each institution are not well determined and separated.

It is worth mentioning that 64% of professionals believe that the involvement of women's rights organizations working on prevention of VAW is important, but one third of them thinks that procedures of women's organizations involvement are not well regulated, which sometimes brings confusion in practice.

Many femicides could have been prevented if the relevant institutions reacted to prior situations of violence in an efficient and effective way.	18% of professionals agree
	68% of managers of institutions relevant for VAW prevention agree

Managers of the key institutions believe that the institutions could respond to femicide in a more efficient and effective way, but there are several challenges in the practice. Key challenges recognized are the workload of employees with other jobs (60%), lack of cooperation and poor communication among the institutions, complicated procedures (20%), and unsatisfactory legal regulations (20%).

Institution	Main bottlenecks for adequate prevention of femicide recognized by each institution
Centre for social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ modest material support provided by the state to victims of violence; ▪ lack of adequate housing for victims/shelters; ▪ inadequate cooperation with other institutions; ▪ not enough employees dealing specifically with VAW; ▪ very limited influence on institutions about the need for stricter punishments for perpetrator and issuing of protection measures
Health care centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ there is no specific office to work with victims and perpetrators of violence
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ not enough trainings for police officers ▪ Lack of specific line of work for the prevention of violence against women ▪ not enough employees working specifically on prevention of VAW ▪ police officers are overburdened with work ▪ responsibility: police reacts only when the violence is reported
Prosecution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of venues and offices ▪ there is no urgency in proceedings and reacting to VAW ▪ insufficient services for survivors of violence (shelters, counselling for perpetrators)
Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inadequate coordination between all institutions ▪ not enough technical capacities and premises

Although the expressed views on femicide should be taken with the grain of salt because desirable responses can be expected, it is encouraging that the high percentage of professionals believe that every case of domestic violence should be an occasion for assessing the risk of femicide. Also, for the majority of respondents is unacceptable that responsibility for femicide be attributed to the behaviour of the victim. The majority of respondents support the idea that the state should compensate the victims in the case the relevant institutions did not provide adequate protection. For most of them, long prison sentences for domestic violence are the best way to prevent femicide.

