



# ISED A

## A Policy Brief for European Common Approaches to Fight Domestic Violence and Abuse

D5.2



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## Deliverable 5.2

# A Policy Brief for European Common Approaches to Fight Domestic Violence and Abuse



# I S E D A

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DEM	Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs	
DEC	Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.	
DATA	Data sets, microdata, etc.	
DMP	Deliverables related to ethics issues	
ETHICS	Deliverables related to security issues	
SECURITY	Software, technical diagram, algorithms, models, etc.	
OTHER	Software, technical diagram, etc.	

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## Executive Summary

The *Innovative Solutions to Eliminate Domestic Abuse* (ISEDA) project, implemented between 2022 and 2025, is a Horizon Europe project involving 15 partners from nine European countries. The project focused on researching, developing, piloting, and evaluating innovative approaches to improve the prevention, protection, and systemic responses to domestic violence and abuse (DVA). This policy brief presents the project's key findings and strategic recommendations, including country-specific insights, to support a coordinated European approach to tackling DVA.

### Key Solutions

- **Training Programme and Victim Interview Simulator for Police Officers.** The programme combines expert-driven training materials with an interactive, intuitive interview simulator that helps develop trust, assess DVA scenarios more effectively, and avoid re-victimization.
- **Informational Chatbot for Victim-Survivors.** Designed to bridge gaps in access to information and guidance.
- **Perpetrator Programmes.** A standardised *IMPACT Outcome Monitoring Toolkit* to support the evaluation of behavioural change and victim-survivor safety through perpetrator interventions.
- **Awareness Raising Campaigns.** Implemented to enhance public awareness and early prevention of DVA and gender-based violence (GBV) through multi-country campaigns.
- **Education Programmes.** Preventive education on DVA and GBV in cooperation with educational institutions and youth centres.

## Policy Recommendations

### Prevention

- Add education into primary and secondary school curricula to sensitize young people and educators to the problems related to DVA and GBV.
- Integrate mandatory courses of DVA in higher education and professional training across key sectors to confirm adequate expertise in services.
- Scale up inclusive, sustained awareness campaigns on different forms of DVA and GBV.
- Promote the integration of perpetrator programme interventions into broader justice, health, and social care systems to prevent repeat violence and ensure the security of victim-survivors.

### Protection

- Incorporate trauma-informed, victim-centred, interactive virtual tools into police training to improve the handling of DVA scenarios.
- Strengthen coordination between police, health and social care, and civil society organisations to close systemic gaps and ensure comprehensive information and protection for victim-survivors.

### Prosecution

- Provide specialised training for police and legal professionals on the dynamics and diversity of DVA cases to improve judicial outcomes.
- Ensure timely, victim-centred legal proceedings, including fast-track procedures and strong protection measures.
- Criminalise coercive control in countries where it is not yet recognised, and ensure legal recognition of psychological, economic, and digital forms of abuse to close critical legal gaps.

### Provision of Services

- Implement accessible 24/7 informative digital services such as chatbots, integrated with—but not replacing—human support systems.
- Enhance cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services to ensure more effective violence interventions and risk assessment.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations	Short description
DVA	Domestic violence and abuse
DV	Domestic violence
GBV	Gender-based violence

## 1. Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and gender-based violence (GBV) are serious social and health problems and a major human rights concern. It remains a pervasive and underreported issue across Europe. Despite national differences in legal frameworks and support systems, all participating countries in the ISEDA project report high rates of psychological, physical, sexual, and digital abuse. While approximately one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, only 13.9% of them reported it to the police (FRA, EIGE & Eurostat, 2024), highlighting the gap between prevalence and official statistics—and underscoring the urgent need to strengthen victim-survivor support and reporting mechanisms. Barriers to reporting include fragmented services, limited legal recognition of different forms of abuse, victim blaming, and insufficient training on violence-related issues among frontline professionals.

The impact of DVA is profound and multifaceted. It causes significant human suffering, insecurity, illness, and substantial societal costs (Holmes et al., 2018; Husso et al., 2021). The digitalisation of society and the development of communication technologies have changed and diversified not only the forms of violence, but also the consequences of violence and access to help. However, there are significant regional differences in access to services. While some regions have made notable progress through legislative reforms, digital tools, and intersectoral cooperation, significant systemic gaps remain. These include limited legal recognition of coercive control and economic abuse, underfunded and unevenly distributed support services, fragmented coordination between sectors, and insufficient early intervention and preventive education—particularly in rural and underserved areas (GREVIO, 2025).

This policy brief aligns with key EU strategies, including the European Commission’s Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021), and the Digital Decade policy programme (2022). It also supports the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (2011) and the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (2024). By linking innovative practices with these frameworks, the brief supports a coherent, rights-based European response to DVA and proposes concrete solutions for implementation across Europe.

## 2. Objectives

This policy brief is based on the ISEDA project, which aimed to strengthen systemic responses to DVA across Europe. Drawing on the results of ecosystem scoping, pilot testing, and evaluation activities in seven countries, the brief presents recommendations to support the development of common European approaches to prevention, protection, prosecution, and service provision.

### **The key objectives were:**

- Develop a multilingual 24/7 chatbot to provide victim-survivors with accessible and safe information and guidance about DVA and support services, police reporting, and the criminal justice system more generally.
- Create a hybrid, interactive police training model that includes a detailed training handbook, a Victim Interview Simulator, and a Train-the-Trainers manual to improve victim-centred responses.
- Develop and evaluate perpetrator programmes in three countries using a shared methodology to assess behaviour change and victim-survivor safety.
- Design awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes to promote healthy, non-violent relationships.

These objectives form the foundation for the policy recommendations presented in this brief. Due to an intrinsic link between DVA and GBV, the ISEDA project addressed the gender dimension during all stages of the project.

### 3. Methodology

This policy brief is based on data collected through the ISEDA project, implemented mainly across seven countries: Bulgaria, Catalonia (Spain), Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy, and Scotland. The methodology combined qualitative and applied research approaches, including:

- **Scoping studies** of national domestic violence ecosystems, including legal frameworks, services, and gaps.
- **Focus group/individual interviews** with women victim-survivors (n = 65), police officers (n = 64), and key stakeholders (n = 79).
- **Developing, piloting, and evaluating** ISEDA chatbot (3 countries), police training (3 countries), perpetrator programmes (3 countries, and engaging new implementers in 6 partner and 6 further countries), awareness raising campaigns (7 countries), education programmes (7 countries).
- **Cooperation and consultation** with a European community of practice to assess scalability and transferability (7 countries).

The findings reflect both shared challenges and context-specific insights, forming the basis for the policy recommendations presented in this brief.

### 4. Key Findings

This chapter presents key findings from the ISEDA project, based on both contextual research and solution-specific evaluations. Together, these findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in preventing and responding to DVA across Europe.

#### 4.1 DVA Responses Across Countries

Drawing on both ecosystem mapping and qualitative research conducted across ISEDA countries, this subsection highlights common barriers and enablers in DVA reporting and support. The analysis combines structural insights with stakeholder experiences to inform the development of innovative, context-sensitive solutions.

##### Prevention

- Awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes are widely recognised as essential, though their reach and effectiveness vary across contexts.
  - Awareness raising campaigns are increasing but often fragmented, short-term, and not inclusive.
  - There is a need for long-term, inclusive, and community-based education that challenges harmful gender norms and promotes a culture of zero tolerance for DVA.
- Perpetrator programmes show promise but remain underdeveloped across countries due to a lack of standardisation, limited coverage, and weak continuity after implementation.
  - There is a need for common evaluation methods and the use of technology to improve their accessibility.
  - Early intervention and behaviour-focused models are recommended, along with standardised evaluation methods.

## Detection

- Validated screening tools should be systematically integrated across services such as social and healthcare, education, early childhood education, youth services, police, law enforcement, and the legal system.
- Comprehensive training and inclusive digital tools support early recognition—without replacing human care in complex cases.
- Digital and AI-based tools and services like chatbots are seen as promising for discreet help-seeking and information access. Chatbots can help victim-survivors recognize signs of abuse and explore safe next steps, improving access to relevant services. However, their current limitations in assessing urgency or risk make them unsuitable for emergency use.
- Digital tools must be paired with human support and designed with robust ethical safeguards to ensure safety, especially in high-risk situations.

## Reporting

- Victim-survivors face both internal and external barriers to the reporting process, including fear, shame, lack of trust in authorities, and systemic re-victimization.
  - Supportive factors include personal resilience, support from family and professionals, and access to trauma-informed, specialized services—especially when coordinated across sectors.
- Intersectional vulnerabilities—including migration status, disability, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, and bisexual sexualities, and transgender, queer, and other diverse identities), and rural location—significantly affect access to justice and support.
- While specialized services for victim-survivors and their children are widely available, accessibility and public awareness remain key challenges.
- Multi-agency support services exist in all countries, but their availability, quality, and coordination vary significantly. Coordination between sectors is often fragmented, limiting the effectiveness of holistic support.

## Investigation

- Police response plays a critical role in the reporting process. Specialized, empathetic, and gender-sensitive units improve trust, while generalist officers may lack training or display bias.
- Police training on DVA is often inconsistent and insufficiently victim-centred. Training is often voluntary and uneven, with barriers such as a lack of incentives, time, and institutional recognition.
  - Inadequate training and unclear guidelines affect the quality of evidence collection and the legal protection of victim-survivors.
  - There is a need for mandatory, trauma-informed, and practical training that promotes respectful treatment and avoids any victim-blaming.
- Judicial systems often fail to protect victim-survivors adequately, due to lengthy procedures, inconsistent rulings, and a lack of specialized courts or trained personnel.
- National laws in participating countries vary in how they define and criminalise different forms of violence, and in the extent to which they ensure victim-survivor protection and access to justice.

These findings highlight the need for a coordinated, intersectional, inclusive, and trauma-informed approach to DVA response across Europe, including coordinated services, shared data systems, and consistent victim-centred practices.



## 4.2 Police Training and the Interactive Victim Interview Simulator

The ISEDA project introduces the *Victim Interview Simulator*, a digital training tool designed to enhance police officers' communication skills, empathy, and decision-making in DVA cases. This programme combines expert-driven training materials with an interactive, intuitive serious game-based simulator that helps develop trust, assess DVA scenarios more effectively, and avoid re-victimization. The simulation-based training tool mirrors real-life complexities and provides a safe, controlled environment for officers to practise engaging with diverse victim-survivor profiles.

The Victim Interview Simulator was piloted in Greece, Bulgaria, and Catalonia (Spain). Across participating countries, there was strong support for expanding the use of serious game-based and simulation tools in police training. In Bulgaria and Catalonia, trainers highlighted the simulator's realism and effectiveness in improving interviewing techniques and empathy. In Catalonia, there were also calls to make simulator training mandatory for Domestic Violence Units.

In addition, the project's *Train-the-Trainer* seminar demonstrated high participant satisfaction and measurable knowledge gains, highlighting its potential to improve police responses across Europe. Feedback from Train-the-Trainer seminars in Greece, Bulgaria, and Catalonia emphasized the value of the Interview Simulator, and it received the highest satisfaction scores (8.8/10 for engagement and 8.7/10 for job relevance). Participants described it as innovative, realistic, and useful for improving interviewing techniques and understanding victim-survivor behaviour.

### Key Insights Across Countries

- Integrate simulators into both basic and continuing police training.
- Ensure institutional support and technical infrastructure for implementation.
- Broaden simulator scenarios to reflect diverse victim-survivor profiles (e.g. LGBTQ+ relationships, child witnesses, elderly people, male victim-survivors, Roma victim-survivors, perpetrators).

### Recommendations to improve police responses to DVA

- Enhance capacity for early detection and recognition of underreported abuse forms, such as psychological and digital violence. Include forensic evidence collection in early response training to support successful prosecution.
- Integrate trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches to improve first-contact quality and trust.
- Address socio-cultural barriers and the emotional and psychological dynamics of DVA.
- Incorporate intercultural approaches, risk assessment, safety planning, and updated models such as the revised Duluth model.
- Involve external experts (e.g. forensic psychologists, legal professionals) and civil society organizations in training design to incorporate grounded insights into victim-survivors' needs and service gaps.
- Strengthen coordination between police and DVA support services to prevent systemic gaps.

### Topics Requiring Greater Emphasis

- Cultural sensitivity, especially regarding LGBTQ+ and minority groups.
- Confidentiality and ethical conduct in victim-survivor interactions.
- Support for disabled victim-survivors and male victim-survivors—areas where knowledge gains were limited.
- Psychological and trauma-informed communication.
- Risk assessment and safety planning as core competencies.
- Updated intervention models reflecting evolving patterns of abuse.

## Summary

Improving police responses to DVA across Europe requires more than legal alignment—it demands practical, trauma-informed, and inclusive training approaches. The ISEDA project's findings highlight the need for longer, hands-on training formats, stronger inter-agency coordination, and tools like simulators to build empathy and procedural competence. These insights provide a foundation for EU-level policy development aimed at harmonizing and strengthening frontline interventions.

### 4.3 Informative Chatbot

An informational chatbot has been developed by ISEDA partners to support victim-survivors to find information and guidance about DVA, support services in their area, police reporting, and the criminal justice system more generally. It guides users through pre-populated questions, and they can type in their own. The chatbot is intended as a convenient tool that can be accessed by victim-survivors 24/7. The chatbot was piloted in 3 countries in early 2025—Bulgaria, Catalonia (Spain), and Greece. Based on pilot and evaluation data, recommendations for implementation are summarised below. The potential for adoption in 'follower territories' (Cyprus, Finland, Italy, and Scotland) was also assessed. For detailed country-specific recommendations, see the Annexes.

Despite national differences, the pilot countries shared several key implementation lessons, which inform the following recommendations:

- In its current form, the ISEDA chatbot should be considered as an informational tool only. It should not be used as a tool to detect emergency situations, or for reporting to the police because it cannot assess urgency or initiate real-time interventions, making it unsuitable for emergency reporting.
- Link the chatbot to existing successful services within countries such as hotlines, helplines and apps. This should also enable, where possible, a link to human-led support.
- Enhance chatbot risk assessment. Chatbots should be equipped with keyword detection to assess the risk of violence. These systems should be able to recognize urgency, escalate high-risk cases to human responders, and prevent delays in emergency interventions.
- Comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in relation to the processing and storage of personal data input to the chatbot. Implement end-to-end encryption and anonymization to protect user privacy and adhere to data protection standards.
- Work collaboratively with DVA civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure that language, wording, tone and information provided by chatbots is appropriate, accurate and empathic. Victim-survivors who have experienced trauma and are looking for support are at risk of being re-traumatised by tools which are non-empathic. Collaboration enhances trust and ensures that experts within NGOs and CSOs have oversight of content, ensuring it is trauma-informed.
- Meet the needs of diverse groups of victim-survivors, including those with differing languages, levels of literacy, deaf / hard of hearing, victim-survivors who live rurally and those with limited digital skills.
- Intuitive, simplified interfaces, text-to-speech, and multilingual options can improve accessibility.

The ISEDA chatbot has the potential to be a useful tool for information finding. To ensure that victim-survivors can access relevant and accurate information, which is presented to them empathically and sensitively, all information should be checked by NGOs, CSOs, and the police authorities who work with victim-survivors in each country. To enable to a wider group of victim-survivors to access the chatbot, consideration should be given to diversity, for example, in relation to literacy levels and dialects. Additional features such as voice-to-text may support this. Strict compliance with GDPR should also be observed in order to protect victim-survivor data.

## 4.4 Perpetrator Programmes and the IMPACT Toolkit

### Executive summary

Perpetrator programmes play a vital role in preventing repeat violence and supporting victim-survivors' security, yet they are not consistently embedded in national responses to DVA. Evidence from the ISEDA project shows that with the right tools, training, and inter-agency coordination, these programmes can promote meaningful behavioural change and reduce harm.

#### To enhance the impact of perpetrator programmes, the EU should:

- Support the adoption of common quality standards for work with perpetrators.
- Encourage the use of evidence-based tools such as the IMPACT Toolkit.
- Promote the integration of perpetrator interventions into broader justice, health, and social care systems.

### Introduction

Perpetrator programmes are essential in preventing repeat violence and ensuring victim-survivors' safety by addressing the underlying beliefs and behaviours of those who abuse. These interventions support perpetrators in recognising the impact of their actions, taking responsibility, and learning to engage in non-violent, respectful relationships. When embedded in coordinated, victim-centred systems and delivered according to quality standards, perpetrator programmes contribute meaningfully to breaking cycles of DVA.

Within the ISEDA project, perpetrator programmes in Italy, Cyprus, and Bulgaria implemented the *IMPACT Outcome Monitoring Toolkit* to support the evaluation of behavioural change and programme effectiveness. The IMPACT Toolkit is an evidence-based set of questionnaires developed by the European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN) to assess the impact of domestic violence perpetrator programmes on perpetrators, their (ex-)partners, and any children involved. It provides a structured way to track behavioural change and its real-life effects over time, drawing on input from both those who use violence and those affected by it. Through data collected during implementation, an evaluation report was drafted for each country, identifying key strengths, challenges, and lessons learned in the delivery of perpetrator interventions to enhance prevention of further abuse.

### Country-Specific Policy Recommendations

#### *Italy—strengthening the role of perpetrator programmes (PPs) to prevent DVA in a coordinated response*

- Require all PP staff to receive specialised training on gender-based violence, including power and control dynamics, risk factors, and survivor safety.
- Expand the preventive role of PPs by actively involving them in school-based education and community awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms.
- Formalise institutional cooperation agreements between PPs, anti-violence centres, law enforcement, and social services to improve victim-survivor protection and case coordination.
- Implement structured monitoring and evaluation systems within PPs, including follow-up sessions and validated tools to assess behavioural change and risk of recidivism.
- Ensure equitable geographic access to PP services by establishing centres in underserved and rural areas, closing gaps in national coverage.

#### *Cyprus—expanding access and legal integration to prevent DVA*

- Integrate perpetrator programmes into the judicial system by mandating participation as part of sentencing or probation in relevant domestic violence cases.
- Reduce stigma and increase participation through public awareness campaigns that emphasise confidentiality, non-judgement, and the rehabilitative nature of these programmes.
- Adapt programmes to diverse needs by ensuring cultural and linguistic inclusivity and providing accessibility for individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Expand national access by offering remote participation options, outreach in rural areas, and partnerships with local community centres to reduce geographic barriers.
- Ensure long-term sustainability through stable public funding, professional development for staff, and collaboration with CSOs for broader system integration.

#### *Bulgaria—institutionalising evidence-based practice to prevent DVA*

- Integrate the *IMPACT Outcome Monitoring Toolkit* into all perpetrator programmes to track behavioural change over time, using feedback from both perpetrators and (ex-)partners.
- Embed comprehensive risk management protocols into programme operations, including survivor notifications, multi-agency reporting, and court coordination.
- Reduce programme drop-out rates by implementing motivational interviewing, follow-up sessions, and accountability measures for non-compliance.
- Advocate for a national standard specific to gender-based violence, recognising the need for targeted interventions within a currently gender-neutral legal framework.
- Make impact evaluation and victim-survivor safety monitoring a core requirement for all publicly supported perpetrator programmes, aligned with EU-level quality standards.

#### **Engagement of new implementers**

To ensure ongoing capacity building for perpetrator programmes, twelve organisations in partner and further countries were contacted to be trained in applying the Impact Toolkit. This resulted in ten organisations trained, and eight organisations implementing the Toolkit, thus broadening the ISEDA expertise across Europe.

#### **Key takeaways across Europe**

Perpetrator programmes are essential to breaking the cycle of DVA, yet they remain inconsistently integrated into national systems. The ISEDA project demonstrates that, with the right tools and coordination, these programmes can drive meaningful behavioural change.

The EU has a unique opportunity to lead by:

- Establishing shared quality standards.
- Promoting the use of validated tools like the IMPACT Toolkit.
- Embedding perpetrator interventions within justice, health, and social care systems across member states.

For detailed country-specific insights, see the Annexes.

## 4.5 Awareness Raising Campaigns and Education Programmes

ISED A developed, piloted, and evaluated awareness raising campaigns and education programmes to enhance public awareness and early prevention of DVA and GBV. The "*A Way Out of Violence*" education and awareness initiative was implemented in 7 European countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Finland, Italy, Scotland, and Catalonia (Spain). These collaborations have shown how the initiative can adapt, remain relevant, and deliver measurable impact across diverse educational and legal contexts. The modular format allowed for national adaptation, ensuring local relevance while maintaining European coherence. All countries confirmed that the campaigns and education programmes addressed fundamental aspects of GBV prevention, including DVA, online abuse, healthy relationships, and gender norms.

### Awareness Raising Campaigns

The awareness raising campaigns aimed to inform the public and key stakeholders about DVA, its various forms, and ways to prevent, detect, and respond to it.

- Highlights from the pilot campaigns across participating countries included strong student engagement, as well as notable results in individual contexts—such as over 30,000 digital interactions and expert-led videos viewed by thousands.
- Campaigns that utilised expert-led videos and dynamic social media content achieved the highest levels of engagement and message retention. In contrast, static visuals (e.g. posters, flyers) were perceived as less impactful, particularly among younger audiences.

### Partners recommend investing in

- audiovisual materials
- inclusive, multilingual resources.

### Education Programmes

Preventive education initiatives targeting students and teachers—developed in cooperation with educational institutions and youth centres—aimed to raise awareness among young people about domestic and gender-based violence, helping to counter it at an early stage. The programme demonstrated strong adaptability across diverse national settings. For example:

- Finland aligned the programme with national education priorities while highlighting the need for increased institutional support and resources.
- Cyprus leveraged the programme's flexible structure to address youth-specific challenges, particularly in digital and relational contexts.
- Italy successfully piloted early-age adaptations, integrating the programme into primary school settings with promising results.
- Bulgaria implemented the programme in a legal environment where GBV lacks formal recognition, showcasing the model's relevance even in restrictive policy contexts.

### To enhance relevance and impact, the following content areas are recommended for expansion:

- Digital Violence: Address AI-facilitated abuse (e.g., deepfakes), online consent, and cyberstalking.
- Economic Violence: Introduce economic coercion as a distinct and recognisable form of GBV.
- Intersectionality: Integrate content reflecting ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.
- Parental Engagement: Develop toolkits and consent education modules to support school-home collaboration.

- Empathy & Bystander Training: Include emotional literacy and bystander intervention tools, especially for younger audiences.

### Cross-Cutting Priorities

Three cross-cutting priorities emerged across national contexts, forming the foundation for long-term impact and scalability:

- Parental Engagement
- Early Intervention
- Sustainability

In relation to these priorities, partners highlighted the importance of expanding outreach to primary schools, promoting formal educational recognition, and developing scalable training models.

### Policy Implementation Roadmap

- Short-Term (2025–2026): Digitise materials, pilot primary school outreach, and increase inclusivity in campaigns.
- Mid-Term (2026–2028): Scale early-intervention model, institutionalize evaluation tools, and begin EU-level advocacy.
- Long-Term (2028+): Integrate into national curricula, secure funding, and build EU-wide learning networks.

The education programme presents a proven, adaptable model for preventing GBV through education across Europe. Its successful implementation in diverse national contexts demonstrates both its flexibility and effectiveness. By amplifying each partner's innovations and addressing cross-cutting priorities, the programme can become a gold standard for GBV prevention. Support from EU institutions and national ministries is essential to scale and sustain this impact.

## 5. Policy Recommendations for a Common European Approach

Drawing on the findings of the ISEDA project across seven European countries, the following recommendations aim to strengthen prevention, protection, prosecution, and service provision in response to DVA. These recommendations align with the EU's Gender Equality Strategy and the objectives of the Istanbul Convention, offering a roadmap for coordinated, evidence-based action. For detailed country-specific recommendations, see the Annexes.

### Prevention

- Strengthen perpetrator programmes to prevent repeat violence and support victim-survivors' safety. To enhance the impact of perpetrator programmes, the EU should:
  - support the adoption of common quality standards for work with perpetrators,
  - encourage the use of evidence-based tools such as the IMPACT Toolkit, and
  - promote the integration of perpetrator interventions into broader justice, health, and social care systems.

*Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention obliges states to establish and support perpetrator programmes aimed at changing violent behaviour and preventing reoffending, while ensuring victim-survivor safety and coordination with specialist support services.*

- Add education on DVA and healthy relationships into school curricula starting from primary level. Topics should include gender equality, respectful relationships, and technology-facilitated GBV.
- Develop long-term, inclusive awareness campaigns that challenge harmful gender norms and promote bystander intervention. Leverage digital platforms and prioritize audiovisual storytelling, including short-form videos and animations.
- Ensure cultural sensitivity and accessibility of prevention efforts for marginalised groups.

*Articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Istanbul Convention provide a legal basis for inclusive and accessible prevention through education, awareness raising, and the promotion of gender equality.*

- Integrate mandatory courses of DVA and GBV education in higher education and professional training across key sectors, covering diverse forms of violence, trauma-informed practices, and intersectional competence.

*Articles 14 and 15 of the Istanbul Convention provide a legal basis for mandatory education and professional training on DVA and GBV across sectors, including higher education.*

## Protection

- Incorporate trauma-informed, victim-centred interactive virtual tools into police training to improve the assessment and handling of DVA scenarios.
- Enhance capacity for early detection and recognition of underreported abuse forms, such as psychological and digital violence.
- Streamline justice system procedures and improve institutional responsiveness to reduce the administrative and emotional burden on victim-survivors, particularly women.
- Strengthen coordination between police, health and social care, and civil society organisations to close systemic gaps and ensure comprehensive protection for victim-survivors.

*Articles 15, 18, 49, 51 and 56 of the Istanbul Convention establish legal obligations for professional training, coordinated protection, risk assessment, and victim-centred justice system responses.*

## Prosecution

- Ensure early detection and documentation of violence by police and social and health care professionals.
- Ensure timely, victim-centred legal proceedings, including fast-track procedures and strong protection measures.

*Articles 49, 51 and 56 of the Istanbul Convention provide a legal basis for early detection, systematic risk assessment, and timely, victim-centred legal proceedings with strong protective safeguards.*

- Ensure legal recognition of psychological, economic, and digital forms of abuse to close critical legal gaps.
- Criminalise coercive control in countries where it is not yet recognised.

*The Istanbul Convention provides a legal basis for recognising and addressing psychological, economic, and digital forms of abuse. Article 3 defines these as forms of gender-based violence; Article 33 obliges states to criminalise serious psychological harm caused by coercion or threats; and Article 17 supports regulatory measures to address harmful content in digital environments.*

- Improve police responses to DVA by implementing longer, hands-on training formats, inter-agency coordination, and tools like interview simulators.



- Provide specialised, trauma-informed training for judges, prosecutors, and legal aid providers on the dynamics and diversity of DVA and GBV cases to improve judicial outcomes.

*Articles 15, 18 and 50 of the Istanbul Convention establish legal obligations for professional training, inter-agency coordination, and effective law enforcement responses to all forms of violence.*

## Provision of Services

- Ensure accessible 24/7 support services, including digital tools such as chatbots, integrated with—but not replacing—human support. Ensure that all information provided to victim-survivors is accurate, empathetic, and verified by NGOs, CSOs, and police authorities working directly with them in each country.
- Ensure inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory services for all victim-survivors, with particular attention to those facing intersectional vulnerabilities (e.g. migrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities). All frontline professionals should be trained to avoid re-traumatisation and promote dignity in every interaction.
- Ensure coordinated, trauma-informed, and multi-sectoral support systems that reduce barriers to reporting, ensure continuity of care, and address disparities in the availability and quality of services across Member States.
- Enhance cooperation between perpetrator programmes and victim support services to ensure more effective violence interventions and risk assessment.

*Articles 18–22 of the Istanbul Convention establish legal obligations for states to ensure the availability, accessibility, and quality of integrated support services, including specialist services, helplines, and coordinated multi-sectoral systems that are inclusive, trauma-informed, and non-discriminatory.*

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of the ISEDA project reaffirm the urgency of a coordinated, cross-sectoral European response that addresses both immediate protection needs and long-term prevention. Failure to act decisively risks perpetuating cycles of violence, deepening intersecting inequalities, suffering and costs, and placing further strain on public services. Innovative digital services and tools, together with shared quality standards, are key to a Europe-wide response to DVA. The ISEDA project findings demonstrate that technology-facilitated and digital solutions, supported by education, training, and coordinated multi-agency cooperation at both national and international levels, can strengthen service systems, enhance interventions, and ultimately effectively prevent violence.

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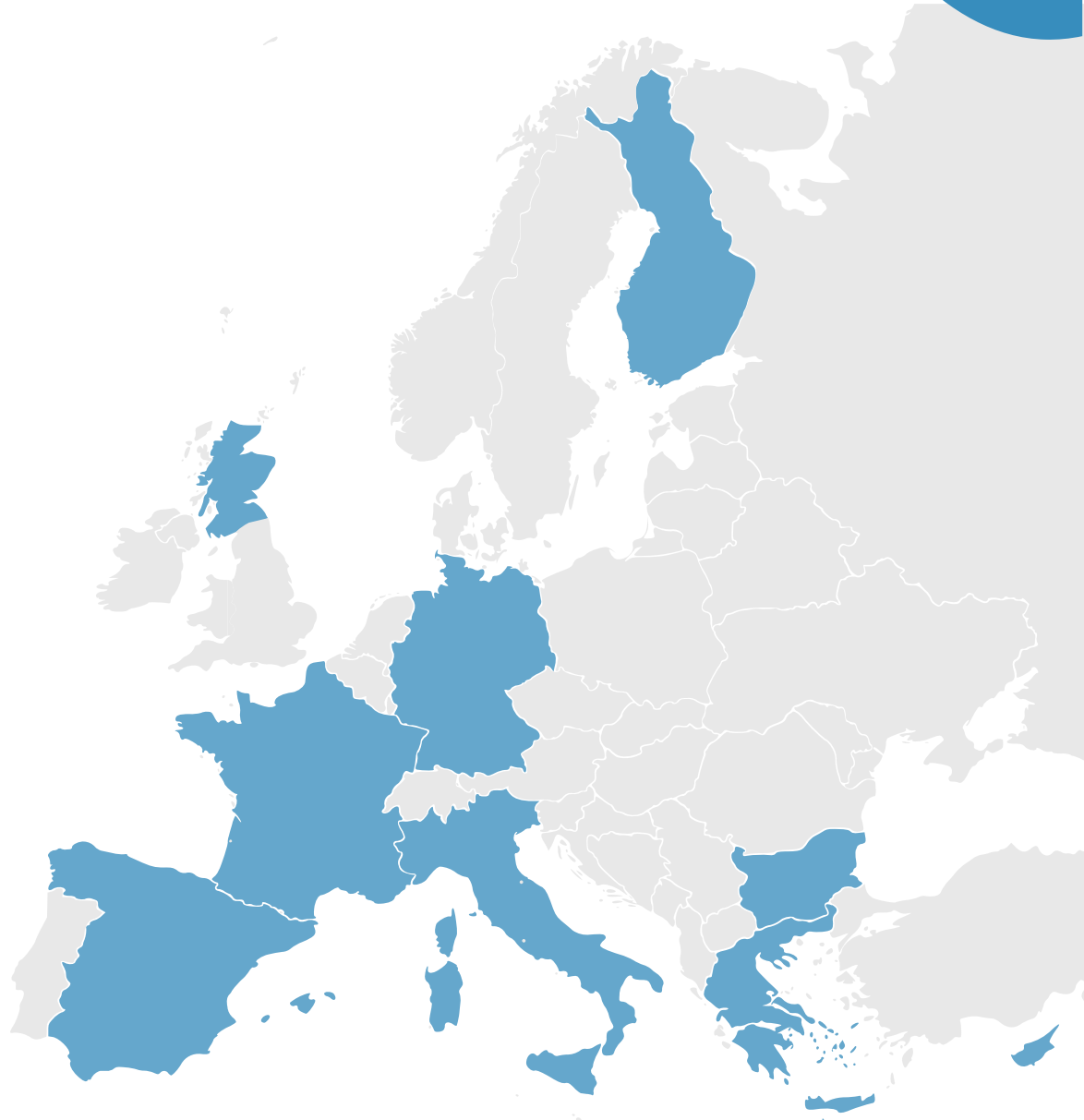
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ISED A

## Annexes: Country-Specific Recommendations



## Policy Recommendations – Bulgaria

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### Executive Summary

These recommendations are based on the legal and cultural contexts of Bulgaria. The recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to address domestic violence and abuse (DVA) by incorporating insights from focus groups, police training, chatbot data, awareness programmes, and evaluations of education and perpetrator programmes. In Bulgaria, domestic violence is legally recognized and addressed primarily through the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (PADVA), adopted in 2005 and amended several times since. However, gaps and inconsistencies remain in its definition, implementation, and enforcement. The law is gender-neutral, focuses primarily on violence between family members, and does not address gender-based violence (GBV) as a broader concept. The last amendments, in 2023, strengthened legal protections, but there is still a lack of gender perspective and enforcement remains weak. The following recommendations outline urgent legislative, policy, and structural reforms to ensure a comprehensive, survivor-centred, and coordinated national response.

### Policy Recommendations

#### Prevention of DVA

##### *Perpetrator Programmes*

- The Impact Toolkit is innovative for programmes in Bulgaria and is being tested for the first time. It has proven its effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate it into programmes for working with perpetrators through formalized standards.
- It is necessary to introduce a differentiated standard for working with perpetrators, specifically addressing cases of GBV.
- It is also necessary to develop and implement differentiated standards and programmes for measuring the impact of DVA between parents and children of various ages, including among other family members.
- There is a lack of financial and resource support for programmes working with perpetrators in Bulgaria.

##### *Awareness Raising and Education Programmes*

- Launch national public awareness campaigns on DVA and gender equality, incl. nationwide media campaigns.
- Integrate gender equality, healthy relationships, and non-violence education into school curricula from an early age.
- Engage men and boys in ending DVA/GBV.
- Launch national awareness campaigns to increase public understanding of DVA and the essential role of women's rights NGOs.

#### Detection and Identification of DVA

- Develop a multilingual chatbot supporting Bulgarian and Romani languages and develop voice interface, to ensure that it can be used by Bulgaria's diverse population.
- Ensure strict GDPR compliance with enhanced data security, ensuring victim-survivor data is securely stored and processed in line with the law.

- Integrate with the National Domestic Violence Hotline, ensuring smooth transition between automated and human support.

### **Reporting and Access to Services**

- Strong Institutional coordination mechanism and accountability
  - Better cooperation between law enforcement, judiciary, social services, healthcare providers, and NGOs to insure survivor protection.
  - Establish centralized case management system for GBV/DV cases, ensuring no reports are lost or delayed.
  - Set up interdisciplinary teams (police, social workers, NGOs, prosecutors) to handle high-risk cases.
  - Introduce mechanism that hold law enforcement accountable (penalties for police officers who fail to respond to GBV/DV calls or discourage victim-survivors from filing complaints, etc.)
  - Conduct regular audits of how law enforcement handles GBV/DV cases.
  - Establish a system of engagement with key stakeholders, law enforcement, judiciary, social services, NGOs, and survivors, to discuss practical challenges in the implementation of DV laws and policies.
- Stronger economic support for survivors
  - Establish state compensation fund for victim-survivors who lose income due to GBV/DV.
  - Develop mechanism for providing emergency financial aid for women who need to escape abusive homes.
- Statistical data and case studies
  - Establish a system for reviewing reported cases, prosecution rates, and protection measures to identify systemic barriers.
  - Conduct comparative analysis of best practices: good practices/effective models for prevention, reporting, and response.
- Social Services and NGOs
  - Establish at least one state-funded crisis centre with consistent funding for staff, facilities, and victim-survivor services in every region in Bulgaria (28 regions in Bulgaria).
  - Establish stable funding for NGOs service providers in cases of DVA/GBV.
  - Introduce state-funded mandatory psychological support for all DVA/GBV cases.
  - Introduce state-funded mandatory specialized programmes to control aggressive behaviour and a specialized recovery programmes after an act of violence.
  - Strengthen state–NGO cooperation and ensure legally protect women’s rights organizations from political harassment.

### **Investigation and Legal Response**

- Expand the definition of GBV in national law.
- Include coercive control, economic violence, cyberviolence, and violence against marginalized groups, incl. LGBTQ+.
- Ratify the Istanbul Convention and align with the EU Directive on combating violence against women and DVA.
- Improve access and effectiveness of protection orders.
  - Establish specialized fast-track court procedures for GBV/DVA cases, prioritizing urgent hearings.
  - Introduce statutory time-limits for case’s resolution (e.g., max 6 months for restraining orders, max 18 months for criminal trials).
  - Develop further specificity in the police methodological instructions for executing protection orders.

- Introduce criminal charges with mandatory immediate action by law enforcement in cases of violations of the restraining orders.
- Ensure state-funded legal aid for victim-survivors to apply for protection orders.

#### *Police Response and Law Enforcement Training*

- Introduce mandatory gender-sensitive training for law enforcement, judiciary, and social workers handling GBV cases.
- Introduce special trainings on raising sensitiveness and recognition of GBV/DVA as a serious crime, not as "family dispute".
- Introduce mandatory and regularly conducted training for law enforcement and judiciary to improve understanding and implementation of protection orders.
- Ensure the provision of at least one trained officer specialising in GBV/DVA cases at every police station.

## Policy Recommendations – Catalonia

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### Executive Summary

This policy brief outlines key recommendations to strengthen the response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Catalonia, Spain. Drawing on national and regional legal frameworks, police data, as well as qualitative evidence and pilot initiatives from the ISEDA project, this document highlights critical areas for improvement in prevention, detection, and victim-survivor support. Specifically, under the ISEDA project, qualitative data was gathered through interviews and focus groups with victim-survivors, police officers, and GBV professionals. Between 2022 and 2025, several pilot interventions were also implemented, including awareness raising campaigns, an educational programme, a training programme for police officers featuring the Victim Interview Simulator (a serious game-based tool), and an informational chatbot for victim-survivors. Key recommendations include:

- Develop standardized GBV curricula across all educational levels.
- Scale up AI-integrated support tools with multilingual, accessible interfaces and built-in emergency protocols.
- Invest in continuous, merit recognized GBV trainings for police officers, including field-based learning experiences.
- Create an integrated, secure data system for inter-agency collaboration.
- Foster awareness raising campaigns to be continuous, relatable, and inclusive, moving beyond symbolic dates and using real-life examples that challenge cultural norms and promote bystander intervention.

### Introduction

Nearly half of the women living in Catalonia have experienced at least one act of violence perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner (Department of the Interior and Public Safety, 2021). The Mossos d'Esquadra operate specialized victim-survivor support units and work in coordination with the Department of Equality and Feminism, the Department of Justice, and other social entities, including municipal social services, associations, and NGOs, to address all forms of violence against women.

Spain has progressively developed a robust legal framework to address GBV. A major milestone was the enactment of Organic Law 1/2004, establishing a comprehensive system for prevention, protection, and prosecution. Subsequent legislation—such as Organic Laws 1/2015, 8/2021, and 10/2022—expanded protections, addressed discrimination, and introduced an affirmative consent model. National efforts were further reinforced by the 2017 State Pact and its renewed version in 2025, which broadened institutional responses. In Catalonia, Law 5/2008 serves as a key regional measure, later expanded by Law 17/2020 to include trans women and non-binary individuals. Catalan legislation also includes Law 17/2015, promoting gender equality through cross-cutting anti-discrimination measures.

Across Spain, including Catalonia, a range of awareness raising campaigns, educational programmes and technological tools have been implemented to combat GBV. Educational institutions in Catalonia have embraced gender-sensitive curricula, but implementation remains inconsistent; thus, disparities exist in how schools adopt and prioritize gender-focused education, leading to varying degrees of awareness among students. Regarding awareness campaigns, they are designed to engage both the general public and specific target groups—such as victim-survivors or young people—using both traditional media and digital platforms, but often face resistance rooted in persistent gender stereotypes and scepticism towards feminist movements. Moreover, several technological tools to assist victims-

survivors of GBV—such as hotlines, mobile apps, and online communication platforms—have also been implemented to offer immediate support through mobile communication and geolocation technology, though none currently incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) for automated responses or case management.

## Policy Recommendations Based on ISEDA Piloted Solutions

### Prevention of DVA

- Promote awareness raising campaigns that target everyday situations and cultural norms sustaining GBV. Use practical, relatable examples—even if controversial—to foster public understanding and encourage individual action against harmful stereotypes.
- Integrate GBV education into all school curricula. Schools should incorporate structured lessons on GBV, healthy relationships, and consent from an early age. This should not be a one-time activity but a continuous educational effort throughout primary and secondary education. A standardized approach ensures that all students, regardless of their background, receive the necessary knowledge to prevent violence and foster equality.
- Promote bystander intervention to prevent GBV. Public awareness campaigns should encourage community members to recognize and safely intervene in situations of GBV. Training programmes and media campaigns should emphasize practical strategies for bystander intervention, helping individuals feel empowered to act and break the cycle of silence that often enables violence to continue.
- Support long-term, year-round awareness efforts beyond key dates. Awareness campaigns should not be limited to key dates like November 25th or March 8th. Instead, GBV prevention should be integrated into year-round initiatives through schools, workplaces, and media outlets. Long-term efforts help sustain social change, keeping the conversation alive beyond single-day commemorations.
- Strengthen awareness raising campaigns and education programmes promoting healthy relationships. Promoting gender equality, healthy relationships, and effective emotional management from a young age can help to prevent GBV before it starts.
- Incorporate victims-survivors' perspectives in campaign development. Campaigns should reflect the lived experiences of victims-survivors to create more relatable and impactful messages. This ensures that awareness efforts are not solely dictated by bureaucratic or academic perspectives but resonate with those affected.
- Educate the public on the cycle of GBV. Raising awareness about the phases of abusive relationships, relapse risks, and the emotional complexity of leaving abusive situations fosters empathy and reduces victim-blaming.

### Detection and Identification of DVA

- Upgrade technological resources at police stations to enable the effective collection and certification of evidence in cases of gender-based cyberviolence. Equip law enforcement with modern tools adapted to evolving digital forms of abuse.
- Enhance chatbot risk assessment. AI-driven chatbots should implement keyword detection to assess GBV risk levels. These systems should recognize urgency, escalate high-risk cases to human responders, and avoid delays in emergency intervention. Therefore, AI-driven chatbots should differentiate between information-seeking users and those in immediate danger, ensuring rapid response.
- Design AI to address diverse abuse cases. AI chatbots must recognize the complexity of GBV. It should not rely on one-size-fits-all solutions but instead incorporate a nuanced, intersectional approach to address varying types of violence and socio-legal circumstances. They should account for various forms of abuse, such as psychological, physical, digital, and economic violence, ensuring that responses are tailored to each case.

## Reporting and Access to Services

- Strengthen pre-report counselling at police stations by ensuring that officers provide clear, transparent information on the legal process following a GBV report. This includes timelines, procedural requirements, and potential outcomes, enabling victim-survivors to make informed decisions and increasing trust in law enforcement and the judicial system.
- Reduce the number of times survivors must recount their experiences by assigning victim-survivor statements to specialized Victim Support Units (GAV).
- Chatbots should offer initial assistance, directing victim-survivors to relevant legal, psychological, or emergency resources. However, AI must be integrated cautiously to ensure human professionals oversee high-risk cases and prevent misinterpretation of complex situations.
- Ensure chatbot transparency and informed consent. AI chatbots must clearly inform users they are interacting with an automated system. Transparency should extend to chatbot capabilities, limitations, data usage policies, and when human intervention is necessary. This transparency helps manage expectations, preventing misplaced trust in AI for complex or high-risk GBV situations.
- Adapt AI chatbots to diverse victim-survivor needs. AI chatbots must consider different literacy levels, digital skills, and cultural contexts when supporting victims-survivors. Simple, intuitive, clear interfaces and multilingual options can improve accessibility.

## Investigation and Legal Response

- Establish an integrated information-sharing system among public institutions involved in GBV response. This system should facilitate coordinated case management across police, healthcare, and social services, while ensuring data protection and incentivizing multi-agency collaboration.
- Offer specialized police training on identifying visible and invisible forms of DV, including economic, psychological, sexual, and cyber violence, to ensure comprehensive reporting and support.
- Increase GBV training hours for all police personnel, including front-line officers, shift coordinators, and management, to build institution-wide understanding and appropriate responses. Provide training on GBV cycle and its emotional impacts, especially withdrawal of reports, to reduce frustration and increase empathy in police responses.
- Acknowledge all internal and external GBV police training hours as merit-based qualifications, giving them equal value to other specializations in career advancement within the force.
- Use short digital modules and video briefings to deliver GBV police training regularly. This format improves accessibility, especially for rural officers, and supports work-life balance.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Tackling gender-based violence in Catalonia requires both sustained political will and cross-sector coordination. While legislative progress and pilot initiatives mark important steps, implementation gaps remain, particularly in education, detection technologies, and frontline response systems. Implementing these recommendations will help close critical gaps and build a more responsive, inclusive, and effective system to combat GBV in Catalonia.

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## Policy Recommendations – Cyprus

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### Executive Summary

This policy brief summarizes key recommendations to strengthen the response to domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in Cyprus. Drawing on recent national policy developments, APHVF statistics, and qualitative data collected through 2023–2024 focus groups with police authorities, victim-survivors, and civil society organizations, this document addresses gaps and suggests actionable reforms across prevention, detection, reporting, and investigation. Although Cyprus was a follower territory in the ISEDA project, stakeholder reflections point to the potential of piloted tools (e.g., chatbots, training programmes) to improve service provision. Core recommendations include:

- Mandate continuous, culturally sensitive DVA training for police officers, emphasizing person-centred communication, throughout across all stages (prevention, detection, reporting and investigation)
- Integrate early DVA education and awareness campaigns through schools, healthcare, and community channels.
- Promote victim-survivor accompaniment schemes to support survivors through services and procedures.
- Ensure culturally inclusive and accessible reporting mechanisms.
- Legally embed and expand perpetrator programmes across Cyprus, ensuring inter-agency coordination and rehabilitative focus.

### Introduction

In Cyprus, DVA cases reported to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF), have steadily increased over the past five years, with over 3,000 cases recorded in 2022 and over 1,500 in the first half of 2024. The government has taken steps to improve services and legal protections, including free legal aid for survivors, financial support measures, and the establishment of a National Coordinating Body to coordinate, monitor, and implement the Istanbul Convention. Despite these efforts, focus group data indicate persistent challenges, such as: survivors report judgmental and insufficient police responses, professionals lack training in cultural sensitivity and competence, and awareness of digital tools such as chatbots remains low. CSOs stress the need for better victim-survivor support coordination and more proactive, trauma-informed services.

As a follower territory in the ISEDA project, Cyprus did not implement pilot tools directly but assessed the relevance of solutions like chatbots and police training. Stakeholders acknowledged the chatbot's potential as an informative tool but cautioned against relying on it for emotionally nuanced support.

## Policy Recommendations Based on ISEDA Reflections and National Findings

### Prevention of DVA

- Implement education that focuses on gender equality, healthy relationships, consent and emotional literacy from primary school onward. Early exposure to respectful relationships and non-violent conflict resolution can counter patriarchal norms and reduce long-term DVA risk.
- Promote year-round public awareness campaigns through community-based programmes using schools, general practitioners, churches, parenting associations, and gyms as outreach points. Messages should reflect

local cultural contexts and intersectional needs. These initiatives can also foster bystander intervention by encouraging communities to recognize and safely respond to signs of abuse.

- Mandate participation in perpetrator programmes where appropriate, and legally require judges to include them as sentencing elements. Focus on rehabilitation, not just punishment.
- Launch culturally competent, stigma-reducing campaigns to promote the value of rehabilitation and reduce reluctance to join perpetrator programmes.

### **Detection and Identification of DVA**

- Integrate DVA routine screening protocols into healthcare, education, and social service settings. Equip professionals with validated tools and guidelines.
- Train frontline workers, especially police, doctors, and teachers, in recognizing psychological and less-visible forms of abuse. Emphasize person-centred communication and trauma-informed care.

#### *Chatbots*

- Promote the chatbot as an initial support tool to provide basic information and screen for potential risk. While it can assist victim-survivors in identifying next steps, it must not substitute human support in high-risk or complex cases.
- Adapt detection tools and digital interfaces to diverse linguistic, literacy, and cultural needs, ensuring inclusivity and usability.
- Need for empathic, personalised approach, developed in coordination with CSOs and police to ensure that victim-survivors are supported empathically and appropriately.
- Create awareness raising campaigns about the usefulness of supportive digital technology as there is currently limited awareness regarding the use of technological communication tools.

### **Reporting and Access to Services**

- Ensure reporting services are accessible and multilingual, with translation and culturally tailored support, particularly for migrant women and minority communities.
- Link reporting with integrated support services, including shelters, legal aid, and psychological assistance. Promote coordination between governmental and civil society actors.
- Introduce victim-survivor accompaniment programmes to guide survivors through all necessary services, helping reduce traumatisation and increase reporting.
- Introduce mandatory reporting obligations for frontline professionals (e.g., teachers, doctors, social workers), supported by training to recognize signs of abuse and respond appropriately.

### **Investigation and Legal Response**

- Create specialized DVA police units trained in trauma-informed interviewing, cultural sensitivity, and victim-survivor security planning.
- Develop interagency protocols to ensure timely, coordinated responses among police, social workers, shelters, and the legal system.
- Require courts to supervise participation in perpetrator programmes through clear protocols and promote coordination with service providers to monitor compliance.
- Strengthen evidence preservation protocols to ensure timely collection of physical and digital evidence, such as injuries, damaged property, photos, and document victim-survivor statements.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Cyprus has taken promising steps toward a more comprehensive response to domestic violence. However, implementation gaps remain in training, interagency collaboration, and awareness. The focus group findings underscore the need for holistic and culturally competent reforms.

Next steps include: launching pilot testing of chatbot solutions; revising national police training curricula; strengthening legal mandates for perpetrator programmes; and fostering inclusive, year-round public education campaigns.

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## Policy Recommendations – Finland

**Authors:** Hanna Mielismäki and Marita Husso.  
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### Executive Summary

This policy brief presents Finland’s key recommendations for preventing and responding to domestic violence and abuse (DVA), as part of the ISEDA project. Key priorities include:

- Reforming national curricula to embed education on the prevention and intervention of DVA and gender-based violence (GBV) in all relevant professions and public services.
- Strengthening perpetrator programmes and professional training to reduce recidivism.
- Expanding the use of MARAC and systematic risk assessment.
- Developing AI-based digital services to enable early and coordinated intervention and reduce regional inequalities.
- Updating legislation to criminalize technology-facilitated and digital forms of violence, and coercive control.
- Enhancing protection for victim-survivors throughout all stages of legal proceedings.

### Introduction

Despite the ratification of international conventions, legislative reforms, and campaigns over the past decades, the rates of DVA and GBV have remained high in Finland. DVA remains significantly underreported—only 10% of women report incidents to the police (Attila et al., 2023). The Finnish Criminal Code does not specifically criminalize DVA; instead, general provisions on violence apply. Psychological violence is not recognized as a distinct criminal offence and is typically treated as a misdemeanour, rarely prosecuted as assault. A key challenge in Finland is the lack of timely and effective interventions, which enables the continuation of violence. Structural gaps in education and professional training further hinder prevention and response efforts (Husso et al., 2021). Although public authorities are legally obligated to provide support services, specialized services are largely delivered by civil society organizations. As a result, many victim-survivors do not receive adequate support due to fragmented service systems and insufficient intervention practices.

## Policy Recommendations

### Prevention of DVA

#### *Education and Training*

- Reform national curricula to include DVA education in university degree programmes and professional development. Training should cover various forms of violence, trauma-informed approaches, and multicultural and intersectional competence.
- Mandate training for professionals across health and social care, education, youth services, law enforcement, and the legal sector, following examples such as Sweden.

These recommendations are based on Articles 14 and 15 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The GREVIO monitoring body has repeatedly highlighted the need for curriculum reform and systematic professional education in Finland.

### *Protecting Children from Exposure to Violence*

- Children must be protected from the harmful effects of witnessing violence. Early prevention, detection, and intervention are essential. Early childhood education, schools, healthcare, and social services play a key role but need better training to recognize and respond to the impact of violence on children.

This recommendation is grounded in the Istanbul Convention, particularly Article 26, which obliges states to protect and support children who witness violence. It is further supported by Articles 13–15, which require awareness raising, education, and professional training to prevent and respond to violence, and Article 12, which calls for comprehensive prevention measures across sectors. GREVIO has emphasized the need for early intervention and professional capacity in Finland. EU Directive 2024/1385 also highlights children’s rights and the obligation to provide targeted support to those affected by DVA.

### *Perpetrator Programmes – Support for Behavioural Change*

Efforts to prevent reoffending and reduce violence must include targeted support for perpetrators. This requires a multi-pronged approach:

- Train professionals to engage perpetrators and refer them to appropriate services.
- Develop tools and methods for treatment and rehabilitation that are evidence-based and trauma-informed.
- Fund national campaigns to help perpetrators recognize their behaviour and seek help.

Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention obliges states to establish and support perpetrator programmes aimed at preventing reoffending and promoting behavioural change, while ensuring victim-survivor safety and coordination with specialist support services.

### *Awareness Raising Campaigns and Education Programmes*

Long-term and inclusive awareness raising efforts are essential to prevent and reduce DVA, GBV, and other forms of violence. These efforts should:

- Shift societal attitudes through sustained public campaigns.
- Emphasize early intervention to prevent the normalization of violence.
- Ensure accessibility by using diverse communication channels and multiple languages.
- Address intersectionality by recognizing how violence intersects with culture, identity, and social position.

Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the Istanbul Convention provide a legal basis for inclusive and accessible prevention through education, awareness raising, and the promotion of gender equality. EU Directive 2024/1385 further reinforces the need to address intersectional discrimination and ensure inclusive, accessible prevention across all sectors.

### **Detection and Identification of DVA**

Early identification of DVA is essential for timely intervention and victim-survivor protection. Public services must be equipped with tools, knowledge, and structures to recognize risk and respond appropriately. The following actions are recommended:

- Make risk assessment a routine task in all basic public services, including social and health care.
- Activate MARAC in all regions and apply it proactively to prevent escalation to serious harm.
- Recognize the cyclical nature of violence.

These recommendations are grounded in Articles 15, 18, 49, 51, and 56 of the Istanbul Convention. Together, these provisions require states to ensure professional training, interagency coordination, systematic risk assessment, and

protective measures throughout the legal and support systems to prevent escalation and ensure the safety of victim-survivors.

### *Chatbots for Detection and Support*

Digital tools such as chatbots can play a valuable role in helping victim-survivors recognize abusive patterns and access support. However, their development and use must be guided by principles of safety, accessibility, and human-centred design. The following actions are recommended:

- Deploy chatbots to support victim-survivors in recognizing abuse and accessing local services.
- Prioritize safety in all digital tools, including protection from surveillance and online harassment.
- Educate developers on the dynamics of GBV and DVA to ensure safe, trauma-informed digital design.
- Enable chatbots to process diverse language use, as victim-survivors may lack the words to describe abuse.
- Chatbots should support—but not substitute—human assistance in complex DVA situations.

### **Reporting and Access to Services**

Effective intervention in DVA cases requires accessible and coordinated services. The following actions are recommended:

- Increase support for perpetrators by offering services that also address their potential trauma and history of violence.
- Expand low-threshold services, including anonymous support options, to ensure early access to help.
- Document violence systematically during appointments using structured codes or categories.
- Ensure systematic documentation and coordinated support through public services.
- Provide multiprofessional support for all parties, prioritizing the safety of victim-survivors and children.
- Ensure equal access to resources, training, and systems nationwide.
- Provide concrete support for everyday needs, such as financial aid, housing, and childcare.

Articles 18–22 of the Istanbul Convention require accessible, trauma-informed, and coordinated support services for all victim-survivors. In addition, Article 16 obliges parties to provide intervention and treatment programmes for perpetrators, ensuring victim-survivor safety and coordination with specialist support services.

### **Investigation and Legal Response**

#### *Legal Proceedings and Victim-Survivor Protection*

Legal systems must respond to DVA in a timely, trauma-informed, and coordinated manner. Victim-survivors need protection and support throughout the legal process, and the justice system must recognize the complexity of DVA. The following actions are recommended:

- Prioritize safety and streamline legal proceedings to support victim-survivors throughout the process.
- Ensure legal judgments reflect all forms of DVA and avoid fragmented rulings.
- Train legal professionals to understand how trauma affects victim-survivors' ability to testify.
- Provide guidance on evidence collection.
- Criminalize coercive control to reflect the psychological and non-physical dimensions of abuse.

Articles 15, 33, and 49–51 of the Istanbul Convention require that legal systems respond to DVA in a timely, coordinated, and victim-centred manner. Article 56 further ensures the protection of victim-survivors throughout legal

proceedings. In line with Article 33, parties are also required to criminalise serious forms of psychological abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviours that impair a person's psychological integrity.

#### *Police Training and the Victim Interview Simulator*

Law enforcement plays a critical role in the early detection and response to DVA. Police officers must be equipped with the skills and tools to recognize subtle signs of abuse, respond sensitively, and refer individuals to appropriate services. The following actions are recommended:

- Strengthen officer training in crime reporting and the systematic use of repeated alert data.
- Use serious game-based tools, such as the Victim Interview Simulator, in police training to simulate real-life interactions with victim-survivors and perpetrators.
- Train first responders to identify subtle signs of violence and respond in a trauma-informed, victim-centred manner.

Articles 15, 50 and 51 of the Istanbul Convention require that law enforcement professionals receive appropriate training to detect and respond to DVA in a timely, trauma-informed and victim-centred manner, including the use of coordinated data and risk assessment tools.

## Conclusion and next steps

Finland's policy recommendations highlight the urgent need for systemic change in how DVA is prevented, identified, and addressed. Three strategic areas should be focused on:

1. Development of 24/7 online services.
2. Prevention of digital abuse.
3. Development of legislation.

The next steps involve securing sustainable funding and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration at the national and regional levels.

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## Policy Recommendations – Greece

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### Introduction

In 2024, there was a 91% increase in reported domestic violence cases compared to 2023. Around 60 cases are reported daily across the country. **Rise in arrests:** Arrests related to domestic violence increased by 109% between 2023 and 2024. **Panic Button app usage:** Since March 2023, 1,028 activations were recorded by the police. Panic button activations increased by 221% in 2024. **New legal framework (2024-2025):** Greece introduced stricter laws on domestic violence and gender-based violence, including criminalizing cyberstalking and revenge porn, expanding protective measures and provisioning risk assessment tool. Addition of further professionals that have the obligation to report domestic violence cases.

### Prevention

Public awareness has improved but remains insufficient. Preventive education is fragmented and campaigns often exclude minority voices. Government-led efforts are limited.

Recommendations:

- Introduce mandatory DV education at all levels.
- Launch inclusive campaigns that challenge harmful gender norms and reach marginalized communities.

### *Perpetrator Programmes*

Operated by both governmental and NGO sectors, these programmes are court-referred (via penal mediation) and focus on behaviour correction in misdemeanor cases.

Recommendations:

- Enhance immediate victim-survivor support.
- Strengthen coordination via working groups and digital systems.

### *Awareness Raising and Education Programmes*

Efforts include school lectures, festival outreach, and the SAFE.YOUTH initiative targeting ages 12–18. Campaigns are conducted via platforms like the national police website.

### Detection

Call for inter-agency coordination and training for early abuse detection among professionals.

### *Chatbots*

Digital tool adoption is stronger among urban, younger population. Challenges persist for rural, older, and economically marginalized groups. Key user concerns include digital security and privacy. For success, the chatbot must be discreet, secure, and easy to use. Strict legal frameworks in Greece pose significant barriers to deploying chatbots for domestic violence. Confidentiality laws and GDPR compliance are major hurdles, particularly concerning data storage and user identification. Chatbots must avoid acting as official reporting tools and cannot store or transmit identifiable data to remain legally viable.



- Cultural stigma, patriarchal norms, institutional mistrust (especially among minorities), and digital barriers hinder chatbot adoption. Despite these obstacles, well-designed, anonymous digital tools—supported by public education—can help reach marginalized populations.
- Greece has foundational digital systems, including platforms used by police and NGOs. However, these lack AI or chatbot integration capabilities. Tools like the Panic Button and Safe Youth App demonstrate successful initiatives but require system upgrades and trained personnel to support new chatbot deployments effectively.
- Greece currently lacks a chatbot for abuse reporting but has tech interventions like:
  - Panic Button App: For discreet, silent police alerts.
  - Safe Youth App: Provides anonymous support and resources for youth.
  - Additionally, a comprehensive digital platform tracks DV data. A chatbot could complement these tools if it adds unique, non-redundant value.

Key concerns include:

- Lack of real-time emergency response.
- Risks of false reporting.
- Data sensitivity and legal compliance.
- Solutions include legal disclaimers, strict limitations on functionality, and human oversight.

#### **Recommendations for implementation:**

- No formal reporting functions.
- Use strong encryption and anonymization.
- Provide informational support only.
- Collaborate with NGOs and police.
- Ensure accessibility and discretion.
- Integrate with existing platforms.
- Train first responders and audit regularly.

A pilot (Feb 11–25, 2025) with 5 police officers assessed chatbot usability. Feedback stressed the importance of maintaining strict boundaries (support, not reporting), legal compliance, and human oversight in emergency workflows.

#### **Reporting**

Barriers include fear, shame, lack of knowledge, and inconsistent police response. Vulnerable groups face additional challenges, and reporting procedures are often re-traumatizing. Evidence collection guidance is lacking.

##### **Recommendations**

- Improve service coordination to prevent revictimization.
- Promote awareness through public campaigns in visible spaces.

#### **Investigation**

Gaps include poor documentation of non-visible abuse, delayed reporting challenges, and lack of trauma-sensitive handling in courts. Inadequate training among legal professionals often leads to revictimization.

##### **Recommendations**

- Expand forensic and trauma-informed training.
- Include psychosocial professionals in investigations.
- Improve victim-survivor support and streamline evidence collection.

### *Police Training*

Greece has 63 operational domestic violence-focused police offices, with 45 having launched in 2024. Since 2019, over 20,000 officers have received DV training.

#### **Final recommendations:**

- Make DV-GBV training mandatory across the justice system.
- Establish 24/7 one-stop crisis centres for victim-survivors.
- Launch sustained, inclusive public awareness campaigns.
- Fast-track DV-GBV court processes and protective measures.
- Expand perpetrator rehabilitation with a focus on accountability and reducing recidivism.

## Policy Recommendations – Italy

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### Executive Summary

This policy brief outlines key recommendations to enhance Italy's response to domestic violence (DV), drawing from ISEDA's 2023 focus group data, recent legislative developments, and national educational interventions. Despite progress such as the Codice Rosso and the proposed 2025 Femicide Bill, gaps persist in victim-survivor services, training for law enforcement and other professionals, education and awareness raising.

**In the light of this, key recommendations include:**

- Developing structured, ongoing training for professionals—including crucially police officers—interacting with DV cases, with an emphasis on trauma-informed, culturally sensitive practices and enhance multi-level and inter-agency collaboration.
- Increasing access to safe, confidential environments for DV reporting in community and police spaces, with attention to linguistic and cultural needs.
- Enhancing quality assurance and standardization of perpetrator programmes.
- Advocating swift adoption of legislative reforms that can enhance victim-survivor rights.

### Introduction

In Italy, gender-based violence is a widespread issue, affecting nearly one in three women aged 16 to 79. (ISTAT, 2015). The recurrence of abuse contributes to an estimated 14 million incidents annually (inGenere, 2015). According to 2023 data by the Italian State Police, each day on average 85 women in Italy fall victims to domestic abuse, sexual violence, or stalking, and in approximately 55 % of these cases the perpetrator is someone they live with (Polizia di Stato, 2023). Since 2023, Italy has significantly expanded its legislative and operational framework to address gender-based violence. A key milestone was the 2025 draft law formally introducing the crime of *femicide* into the Italian Penal Code, marking a critical step toward reinforcing legal protections for survivors of GBV (Italian Parliament, 2025). Although still pending parliamentary approval, the bill signals a strong institutional commitment. Simultaneously, the Ministry of the Interior allocated U.N.R.R.A. (United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) funds in 2024 to support anti-violence initiatives (Ministero dell'Interno, 2023). Under the 2024 Budget Law, €135 million was earmarked for the 2024–2026 period to support shelters, anti-violence centres, financial assistance through the Freedom Income, employment incentives for hiring survivors, and capacity-building for service providers (Il Sole 24 Ore, 2023). Furthermore, a 2025 decree from the Ministry of Justice formalized criteria for the accreditation of *Centri per Uomini Autori di Violenza* (CUAV - EN: Centres for Men who have Committed Violence), defining structural standards and procedures for perpetrator rehabilitation programmes (Ministero della Giustizia, 2025).

### Prevention of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)

- Integrate gender-based violence (GBV), consent, digital safety, and emotional intelligence education into school curricula, starting from primary level and adapting content for different age groups.
- Standardize and expand perpetrator programmes offered by CUAV (Centri per Uomini Autori di Violenza- EN: Centres for Men who have Committed Violence) across Italy, ensuring programmes focus on accountability, non-recidivism, and victim-survivor safety.
- Launch age-specific awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms, promote healthy relationships, and counteract toxic masculinities.
- Foster a whole-community approach by involving parents, educators, and peer leaders in prevention efforts.

Examples from pilot activities:

- The ISEDA pilot successfully introduced programmes in schools on cyberviolence, boundaries, and empathy, using interactive tools to engage students.
- Perpetrator programmes in selected regions demonstrated promising outcomes in improving perpetrator accountability and promoting behavioural change.

### **Detection and Identification of DVA**

- Provide mandatory, interdisciplinary training for police, educators, healthcare providers, and social workers on how to detect signs of DVA using trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approaches.
- Encourage schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings to adopt standardized tools for identifying early risk factors and behaviours indicative of abuse.
- Leverage technology, such as chatbots and serious game-based tools, to train professionals and raise awareness among the public, especially younger populations.
- Strengthen collaboration between law enforcement, CSOs, and anti-violence centres to produce an effective, relevant, trauma-informed chatbot.
- Linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity are paramount. For example, refugee and migrant women face heightened barriers to disclosure and trust; services must be linguistically and culturally adapted.

### **Reporting and Access to Services**

- Create trauma-informed, linguistically and culturally appropriate spaces for confidential reporting within police stations, schools, and healthcare centres.
- Expand chatbot technologies and constantly work on improving technological assets via structured evaluations so as to provide survivors with discreet, culturally-informed 24/7 access to information on their rights and support services.
- Ensure national helplines are accessible in multiple languages and connected to a unified referral system for legal, health, and psychosocial services.
- Tailor services to meet the needs of migrant women and those in rural or underserved areas.

### **Investigation and Legal Response**

- Institutionalize gender-sensitive, trauma-informed training for law enforcement and judiciary actors.
- Ensure standardized procedures in investigations to enable a survivor-friendly, confidential process.
- Accelerate the adoption and implementation of the 2025 Femicide Bill, reinforcing victim-survivor protection and perpetrator accountability.
- Create protocols for information sharing and coordination among police, CSOs, healthcare providers, and legal institutions.
- Introduce quality assurance mechanisms and post-programme follow-up for perpetrator programmes.

Examples from pilot activities:

- Focus groups emphasized the need for improved police protocols and training, particularly to increase sensitivity in first response.
- The IMPACT Toolkit was implemented in Italy to evaluate the impact of perpetrator programmes, showing promising results.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

### Summary of Key Points:

- A strong prevention strategy must include early education, public campaigns, and support for perpetrators to change behaviour.
- Effective detection depends on professional training and technology-based tools like chatbots and serious game-based training tools.
- Reporting mechanisms must be safe, inclusive, and technologically accessible, especially for vulnerable populations.
- The legal response requires both reform and institutional capacity building, including CUAV monitoring and multi-sector collaboration.

### Next Steps:

1. Scale up educational initiatives like ISEDA nationally, integrating them permanently into curricula and teacher training.
2. Formalize national accreditation for CUAV centres, ensuring equity in access and quality of services.
3. Develop and evaluate digital tools to support survivors and train professionals.
4. Support legislative advancements, particularly the Femicide Bill, and align all efforts under a coordinated national DVA strategy.
5. Secure long-term funding and political will to maintain multi-agency coordination and sustainable systemic change.

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## Policy Recommendations – Scotland

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### Executive Summary

This policy brief outlines recommendations to improve Scotland’s response to domestic violence and abuse (DVA). Data underpinning the recommendations was drawn from interviews with victim-survivors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), piloting and evaluation of an informational chatbot for victim-survivors and the Victim Interview Simulator (a serious game-based police training tool), Scotland’s first-hand experience of implementing a national awareness raising and education programme, input from a stakeholder Community of Practice and other EU countries’ experiences of utilising a perpetrator programme.

#### Key recommendations include:

- **Integrating preventative violence and abuse legislation into schools**, enhanced by partnership with Education Scotland
- Create **diverse awareness raising campaigns** and publicise in places where minoritised groups can access them
- Ensure that digital mechanisms (such as chatbots) **do not replace in-person, trauma informed support services**
- **Fund the development of the Victim Interview Simulator in Scotland**, focusing on enhancing police officers’ empathic responses to victim-survivors in a safe environment. Ensure the simulator is contextually relevant to Scotland.
- **Reduce “justice work”** for women navigating the criminal justice system, by streamlining processes and improving institutional responsiveness.

### Introduction

In 2022-2023, Police Scotland recorded 61,934 incidents of DVA. Of these incidents, 81% were women with a male-suspected perpetrator. Only 1 in 10 respondents had reported the most recent incident to the police (Domestic Abuse statistics recorded by police, 22-23). The Scottish Government devised a strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls, which established a national approach built on human rights principles and standards called Equally Safe (2025) acknowledging that violence against women and girls are gender-based and as such they are underpinned and facilitated by gender inequalities embedded in social structures, institutions and culture (see Lombard and Proctor 2024).

In Scotland, the statutory legislation *Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act* came into force in 2018. Key elements of the Act are:

- It includes abuse from a current or ex-partner
- It recognises domestic abuse as a course of conduct
- It recognises various types of abuse—physical, psychological, emotional, financial, coercive control
- The offence is aggravated if a child is harmed in any way—such as being used by the perpetrator during the abuse, witnessing or being present during abuse or being abused themselves.

In Scotland, emergency support for those experiencing DVA is provided by calling the police. Police Scotland have dedicated Domestic Abuse Investigation Units. All police in Scotland receive training on DVA, coercive control and trauma informed policing primarily delivered through the Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland) training developed alongside SafeLives. Organisations such as ASSIST (Advocacy, Support, Safety, Information, Services Together) provide

support and advocacy during victim-survivors' justice journeys from their first contact with the police until after their court hearing. Further specialist support comes from DVA services such as Scottish Women's Aid. Survivors do not need to have engaged with the criminal justice system to access this support.

## Policy Recommendations

The below recommendations are based on the four solutions created by the ISEDA project: the Victim Interview Simulator, a chatbot to inform victim-survivors, a perpetrator programme evaluation methodology, awareness raising campaigns, and education programmes. Recommendations are informed by interviews with victim-survivors and NGOs, pilot and evaluation data, first-hand experience of implementation of the solutions and/or Community of Practice stakeholder input.

### Prevention of DVA

- **Diversify awareness raising campaigns** to ensure accessibility for minoritised groups by ensuring:
  - Culturally diverse imagery
  - Translations into multiple languages
  - Distribution through media channels commonly accessed by diverse groups
- **Integrate preventive education on abuse and violence into school curricula**, starting from an early age, with emphasis on healthy relationships and digital safety.
- **Continue partnerships with Education Scotland** to:
  - Distribute communication materials (e.g., posters, toilet stickers)
  - Deliver in-school education sessions
  - Provide additional training to educators on request
- **Promote the short film on cyber violence developed by GCU** through schools, youth groups, and online platforms to raise awareness about digital abuse.
- **Collaborate with the Caledonian Programme (linking in with ISEDA perpetrator programmes)** to integrate insights and approaches from the current research, enhancing the programme's responsiveness to victim-survivors' needs and improving perpetrator accountability.
- **GCU to act as an intermediary between the Crown Prosecution Service and the Work with Perpetrators (WWP) network** to ensure consistency and mutual learning across systems tackling domestic abuse.

### Detection and Identification of DVA

- **Limit chatbot use to information-gathering and signposting only**, and ensure it is *not* used as a replacement for in-person or trauma-informed support services. Victim-survivors consistently report speaking to a human in-person as their preferred way of support.
- **Develop chatbot responses using sensitive, empathetic, and trauma-informed language**, ensuring alignment with best practices in victim-survivor communication.
- **Should use sensitive and use empathic wording; developed in conjunction with CSOs**, otherwise, victim-survivors who have experienced trauma and are looking for support are at risk of being re-traumatised by tools which are non-empathic. Victim-survivors support services play a vital role in shaping the language and content.
- **Responding to findings from the creators of the FollowItApp** (based in Scotland) in terms of time and costs in relation to updating the chatbot, and platform ownership.



## Reporting and Access to Services

- **Adopt a cautious, exploratory approach** to assess the viability of chatbots for **GDPR-compliant information recording**, which may help victim-survivors document incidents. This should be done through stakeholder consultation and ethical review.

## Investigation and Legal Responses

- **Evaluate the chatbot's future potential** in digital evidence-gathering in partnership with legal experts, digital rights groups, and victim-survivor advocates.
- **Ensure all police training incorporates trauma-informed and empathetic communication skills**, emphasising the importance of validating victim-survivor experiences.
- **Require police officers to provide regular updates to victim-survivors** on case progress to build and maintain trust in the justice process.
- **Fund the development of Scotland-specific digital training tools**, including the use of interview simulators and serious games featuring contextualised scenarios, to be integrated into initial and ongoing police education.
- **Focus on reducing the burden of “justice work”** that is currently placed on women navigating the criminal justice system, by streamlining processes and improving institutional responsiveness.
- **Avoid Scotland being used as a pilot site** for general UK-wide/ international approaches due to its existing comprehensive laws and policies; instead, refine and localise solutions that build on Scotland’s specific legislative framework.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

In Scotland, two strategic areas should be focused on:

1. **Education and prevention for young people**, especially around online abuse and cyberbullying.
2. **Improving women’s experiences with the criminal justice system**, particularly in relation to trauma-informed policing and evidence progression.

Overall, in Scotland, more work needs to be done in schools and with young people, and improving women’s experiences with the criminal justice system. There should be an encouragement of **ongoing collaboration** between Scottish academic researchers, government working groups and CSOs to ensure policies remain evidence-based and context-specific. Policies should also **support continuous evaluation and adaptation** of both training materials (the Victim Interview Simulator) and educational modules (for delivery in schools) to respond to emerging challenges and feedback from frontline services.

### Next steps

- Presentation of key findings and recommendations at the Cross Party Working Group for Violence Against Women and Girls at the Scottish Parliament
- Delivery of education materials for display in schools (posters and toilet stickers) in conjunction with Education Scotland linking back to online training materials for teachers

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