



**FEM-UNITED**

united to prevent femicide in europe

**Country report on femicide research and data:  
CYPRUS**

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**Table of contents**

- The FEM-UNITED Project** ..... 4
- 1. Methodology and definition of Femicide..... 5
- 2. Introduction to Femicide in Cyprus ..... 8
- 3. The national legal and policy background in Cyprus ..... 9
  - 3.1 The legal framework on gender-based violence and femicide ..... 9
  - 3.2 Former and current policies to prevent gender-based violence and femicide ..... 11
  - 3.3 Official reporting on VAW and femicides and institutional protocols ..... 11
  - 3.4 Research on femicides ..... 13
  - 3.5 The support and intervention system ..... 14
  - 3.6 Multiprofessional networks on preventing gender-based violence and femicides.... 17
  - 3.7 Femicide and VAW in the media ..... 18
  - 3.8 Gender values and gender (in)equality ..... 18
  - 3.9 Impact of COVID- 19 on legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide ..... 20
- 4. The extent of femicide in Cyprus..... 21
- 5. Background information on the cases (quantitative)..... 24
- 6. Qualitative Analysis - In-depth case knowledge as an example for cases that can be informative for prevention..... 30
- 7. Conclusions ..... 36
- 8. Preliminary recommendations ..... 39
- 9. Bibliography ..... 41

## The FEM-UNITED Project

Femicide – the gender-motivated intentional killing of women – is not only the most extreme manifestation of gender-based violence against women but also the most violent manifestation of discrimination against them and of their inequality.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, and calls by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, data on femicide is not systematically collected in the EU and there is a lack of transnational tools for the study of femicide. It is a notably under-researched subject and a common definition of femicide does not exist. Furthermore, harmful attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes, as well as a lack of understanding of the gendered dynamics of intimate partner femicides (IPF), impede prevention measures, including early and effective intervention.

The FEM-UNITED project aims to improve responses to intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV) in order to reduce harm to women and children, and prevent femicides. The project aims for improved systems-wide responses to IPV by creating an evidence base for raised public awareness and fostering multi-disciplinary cooperation and capacity building, adopting a gender-specific victim-centred approach. In other words, FEM-UNITED is about creating evidence for collaborative policy change.

FEM-UNITED will reinforce and contribute to international efforts – such as the [European Observatory on Femicide](#) as well as the [Femicide Watch Platform](#) – by a) developing quantitative and qualitative tools dealing with transnational and applied femicide data that measure the prevalence of femicide and related risk factors, b) identifying gaps in system responses to IPV/DV across partner countries, and c) initiating change through systematic stakeholder engagement that will result in specific commitments for action for femicide prevention based on the project's findings and results.

The FEM-UNITED partnership spans five EU countries and includes the University of Malta; the Cyprus University of Technology; the Institute for Empirical Sociological Research at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg; the University of Zaragoza; and the University of Porto. The project team is also comprised of advocacy NGOs and women's specialist services including the Mediterranean Institute of Gender studies (Cyprus), the Women's Rights Foundation (Malta), and the UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (Portugal).

The FEM-UNITED team consists of advisory board members and country focal points of the [European Observatory of Femicide \(EOF\)](#), the first European-wide network established with the aim of monitoring cases of femicide and contributing to the prevention of femicide. The EOF has been systematically collecting data on femicide in Europe since 2020.

## 1. Methodology and definition of Femicide

### 1.1 Femicide definition

In national and international contexts, the term femicide is and was used to politicise that women and girls are killed by men on the basis of patriarchal beliefs, practices and power structures. Several definitions have been used, but all of them describe femicide similarly as the murder or killing of women because of their gender. The overall motive is to express the subordination of women and girls and to gain power and control over them.

The term Femicide was first used by Diana H. Russell in 1976 at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women. Later, the concept of *feminicidio* was developed by the Mexican anthropologist and feminist Marcela Lagarde and used in Latin America since the 1990s in regard to the rise in extreme violence against women and killings of women in Mexico, and the failure of state authorities to prosecute and punish perpetrators. In United Nations documents Femicide/Feminicide appear since the early 2010s and are described as gender related killings of women that can take many forms (e.g. intimate partner killings, honour killings, killings as a result of sexual orientation or gender identity). In Europe the term Femicide was conceptualized first by the Cost Action on Femicide since 2014, followed by the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) since 2017/18.<sup>1</sup>

The FEM-UNITED project that was developed within the European research context, uses the term “Femicide are intentional killings of women because they are women”. Femicides are seen against the background of gender-specific power and hierarchy relations and patterns of control. As killings of women are most often committed by male partners or ex-partners, the project focuses on intimate partner killings of women. Broader definitions include all killings of women or girls, or killings of women and girls by family members and in the context of sexual violence.

For the data collection of FEM-UNITED, first all cases of women who had been killed in the country are collected and then the killings by partners or ex-partners are analysed more in-depth. In the EOF, additionally to intimate partner femicides, further forms are investigated, like killings in the context of sexual violence, hate crimes against women and killings by other male family members.

### 1.2 Developing and measuring tools

Within the work of the COST Action on Femicide the existing data and information on femicide across Europe was selected and analysed.<sup>2</sup> The official national data of the police and courts is not comparable between countries due to different legal definitions and/or different statistical frameworks of counting the cases.<sup>3</sup> Thus, more comparable and more in-depth-information on the cases was collected through the EOF focal points to further explore the roots and backgrounds of femicide and to get important information for effective prevention across Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Weil S, Corradi C. & Naudi M. (eds.), 2018, *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*, p. 17ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; Schröttle, M & Meshkova, K, 2018, 'Data collection: Challenges and opportunities' in S Weil, C Corradi & M Naudi (eds), 2018, *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention*, pp.33-52.

A priority action of the EOF since 2019, was the development of two data collection tools - one for quantitative and one for qualitative data collection. This provided a common agreed variable selection and comparable data. These tools were piloted, with the support of the EOF's focal points, initially in seven European countries, and have been further developed since then. Currently, the EOF is using the tools in 23 EU countries and plans to expand it to all European countries. The final version of the data collection tool was tested and modified and is now used within the project FEM-UNITED, where five countries are preparing awareness raising campaigns and multi-professional training, also for the media, police, social workers and other stakeholders.

In the following, the method of the quantitative and qualitative tools is described.

#### **a) Quantitative data collection tools**

The tools for the quantitative data collection are based on an excel file for the input of the data collected, together with detailed instructions for the national researchers' work. In-depth information on all cases of women killed, aged 15 years and over, is inserted, as can be found through the media or police press release or other available sources. Later (in the second and third stages), the data is verified through additional information from the police and justice system. Thus, the data base is a work-in-progress.

The quantitative data collection tools of the EOF includes the following information:

##### **1. Basic Data**

(dates and time of killing, as well as the city or region of killing)

##### **2. Characteristics of victim(s)**

(age group, marital status, occupation, employment, minority ethnic background, country of origin and possible disabilities)

##### **3. Additional victims**

(number and relationship of additional victims killed during the femicide)

##### **4. Characteristics of perpetrator/s**

(number of perpetrators, age-group, gender, marital status, occupation, minority ethnic background, country of origin, mental health problems and prior perpetration of violent crimes)

##### **5. Victim-Perpetrator-Relationship**

(current/former intimate partner, marital status, other family member, other relationship specified)

##### **6. Situational Factors**

(area of femicide, crime scene, method of killing, witnesses, pregnancy of the victim, context of sexual violence/rape, suicide of the perpetrator after the murder, prior domestic violence or abuse by same perpetrator specified with description on forms/intensity of violence, context of elder/ill/suicidal victim, prior stalking, other situational factors, e.g. alcohol, revenge, jealousy or factors which are important to mention)

##### **7. Background information on cases**

(incident after/during separation and weeks after separation, perpetrator threatened to kill victim prior to femicide with threats specified, prior violence or threat known to the police,

protection orders, previous convictions of perpetrators for assaults/criminal codes, case known to the support system, case known to others, outcome of the trial, type of femicide and further comments).

The quantitative data collection tools functioned quite well in the countries that have tested and used them, though a lot of in-depth information is not available or only available after the trial and further investigations. In the next steps, the project will try to get more information on the cases through the support system, the trials and other sources with support of the state and multi-professional systems. As through the EOF data collection the number of cases to be analysed is growing from year to year, a higher cases basis will be available for further in-depth statistical analyses on background, motives and institutional reactions. For FEM-UNITED, data from 2019 and 2020 was collected in five countries.

### **b) Qualitative tools for the analyses of femicides**

Within the EOF and the FEM-UNITED project, further methods have been developed to gain qualitative information and data on the cases and the societal and political background factors of femicides within the European countries.

Therefore, the background situation on the countries was collected as per the following:

- Information on the multi-professional network on preventing gender-based violence and the social responses to women in the country
- Information on the legal framework on gender-based violence in the country
- Information on the prevention of gender-based violence
- Institutional protocols on identifying and/or reporting gender-based violence
- Information about gender values and data on gender (in)equality
- Social and cultural values around “the family” and around domestic and gender-based violence
- Published studies on the prevalence of domestic violence in the country
- Published studies on the media portrayals of femicide and gender-based violence
- Data on gender parity and differentials in politics/media/public figures in the country
- Impact of COVID-19 in legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide
- Other relevant background information.

Additionally, for a qualitative in-depth analysis, some case files have been studied in the countries to explore more about the environmental social, legal and policy backgrounds that contribute to the femicides. More in-depth information on single cases was analysed, regarding:

- Characterization of victim, perpetrator and their relationship
- Coercive control and victim’s strategies to deal with perpetrator
- Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities
- Family, formal and informal networks
- Social and economic status
- Official reports and risk assessment
- Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific cases.

The findings are presented in four levels: individual, immediate, institutional and societal levels, aiming to achieve an ecological understanding of femicide, and paving the way to make recommendations for its prevention relevant to these various levels.

#### Individual Level

At the Individual level the data was collected with regard to the victim, the perpetrator and their relationship, and main characteristics and risk factors were analysed (e.g. previous separation or divorce, previous history of domestic violence, coercive control, victim's strategies of survival).

#### Immediate Level

The Immediate level includes people (family and friends) and places (community, work, school) with which the victim and perpetrator have daily and close association. Here, it was analysed, whether the social relationships play an active or passive role regarding support to the victims. Furthermore, stereotypes and victim blaming discourses were tackled.

#### Institutional Level

At the Institutional level, information was collected according to what institutional responses (through police, the support system, youth protection officers and the judiciary systems) were available and how these responses and institutions were articulated in the specific case for reducing risks, ensuring the victims' safety and punishing the offender.

#### Societal Level

The Societal level contains those cultural, social and economic indicators that are perceptibly reflected in the specific cases. Here, different aspects of the patriarchal systems were analysed with regard to gender roles and gender equality, the social and economic situation of women, gender stereotypes and values. Furthermore, media reporting was included in the analyses as well.

## **2. Introduction to Femicide in Cyprus**

Intimate partner femicide (IPF) is prevalent in Cyprus. A recent study pointed out that, between 2010 and 2016, 28 femicides were reported in the Republic of Cyprus, committed by current or ex-partners (n=28).<sup>4</sup> Although Cyprus has developed procedures for inter-agency cooperation between the police, social welfare services and the healthcare services on cases relating to domestic violence,<sup>5</sup> there is a lack of a gender-perspective and of the connection between domestic violence/intimate partner violence and femicide by the authorities and front line professionals dealing with women victims at risk of femicide. This has led to gaps at the systems-level in victim protection, hindering the prevention of femicide. A prevalence study carried out in 2012 on domestic violence and intimate partner violence in Cyprus indicated that at least 28% of women in Cyprus have experienced some form of domestic violence including

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<sup>4</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou, E., & Zorba, A. (2019). Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 77, p. 102294). Pergamon.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102294>

<sup>5</sup> Advisory Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family, *Interdepartmental Procedures Manual on Handling cases of Violence in the Family* (2002); *Interdepartmental Procedures Manual on Handling cases of Domestic Violence in relation to Children* (2017). Available at:  
[http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/downloads/egxeiridio\\_diatmimatikon\\_diadikasion\\_paidia\\_2017.pdf](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/downloads/egxeiridio_diatmimatikon_diadikasion_paidia_2017.pdf).



economic violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and physical violence.<sup>6</sup> Further, levels of domestic violence (DV) have increased and intensified since March 2020, due to the restrictions imposed as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

Femicide is not a specific crime under the legislative framework in Cyprus. Comprehensive legislation on the prevention and combatting of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence was recently passed in Cyprus, which criminalises all forms of violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence, in line with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, which was ratified in 2017.<sup>8</sup> However, it does not include femicide as a specific offence. A legislative proposal for setting out a specific offence of femicide in the Criminal Code was initiated in the Cyprus Parliament; however, to date there have been no further developments regarding this.

In terms of national discourse on IPV, there is some increased use of the term *femicide* in the media, particularly when reporting on international news relating to women's rights and femicide (e.g. during International Women's Day). Nevertheless, the usage of the term is not consistent, nor does it reflect a gendered understanding of femicide, recognising the link between IPV/DV and femicide. In general, femicide is not recognised as the most extreme form of violence against women and a gross violation of women's human rights in Cyprus.

### 3. The national legal and policy background in Cyprus

#### 3.1 The legal framework on gender-based violence and femicide

As mentioned above, the legal framework in Cyprus does not contain a specific offence of femicide. However, with the recent passage of the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law 2021<sup>9</sup> (**VAW Law 2021**), the legal framework has been expanded and covers all forms of gender-based violence against women, in line with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, including economic violence and psychological violence.

In addition, cases of IPV and DV fall under the Violence in the Family Laws 2000 (as amended).<sup>10</sup> Under its provisions, cases of IPV and DV are treated as a public crime and can be investigated by the police *ex officio* based on information provided by third parties.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, marital rape is a specific offence under Article 5.

Women victims of domestic violence in Cyprus have legal access to protection measures including temporary protection orders restraining the perpetrator from contact with the victim, as well as restraining orders prohibiting perpetrators from entering or remaining in the marital home. In Cyprus, protection orders may be imposed under both criminal law and civil law.

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<sup>6</sup> Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence in the Family, 2012, "Extent, Frequency, Nature and Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women in Cyprus". Available at:

<http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-A=971&-V=research>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-A=9741&-V=covid19>

<sup>8</sup> Ο περί της Πρόληψης και της Καταπολέμησης της Βίας κατά των Γυναικών και της Ενδοοικογενειακής Βίας και περί Συναφών Θεμάτων Νόμος του 2021 Ν. 115(Ι)/2021 [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2021\\_1\\_115.pdf](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2021_1_115.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ο περί της Πρόληψης και της Καταπολέμησης της Βίας κατά των Γυναικών και της Ενδοοικογενειακής Βίας και περί Συναφών Θεμάτων Νόμος του 2021 Ν. 115(Ι)/2021 [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2021\\_1\\_115.pdf](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2021_1_115.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) laws of 2000 until 2015 [119(I)/2000, 212(I)/2004 and 172(I)/2015 Available at: <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-V=legislationgr&FCATEGORY=1004005&-dlegislationgrfull.html&-Sr&VSECTION=10040&VCATEGORY=1004005&VCATEGORY=0000>

<sup>11</sup> ANT1, 23.02.2021, «Βροχή» οι καταγγελίες για ενδοοικογενειακή βία – Αναλυτικά για κάθε Επαρχία»: <https://www.ant1.com.cy/news/astunomika/article/412424/vrohi-oi-kataggelies-gia-endooikogeneiaki-via-analutika-gia-kathe-eparhia-video/>.

Under criminal law, protection orders are regulated by:

(i) Specific laws on violence in the family, namely by the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Laws 2000 and 2004 (as amended);

(ii) Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law 2021.

Under civil law, protection orders are regulated by family law, specifically by the Parents' and Children's Relations Law 1990 (as amended).

The protection measures under criminal law can be adopted either before judicial proceedings (provisional protection order) or afterwards, and the duration of these measures is variable. In addition, protection orders can be adopted independently from other legal proceedings.

There is no data available to ascertain the number and type of protection orders issued for victims of violence/abuse in Cyprus. It is therefore not possible to assess their prevalence or effectiveness in protecting victims. Furthermore, it is not possible to assess which factors legal authorities generally take into account when deciding on the duration and the conditions of a protection order.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, there is no information as to whether protection orders are actively monitored or whether it is generally left up to the victim to report violations. It is also not possible to ascertain which activities monitoring authorities undertake to check compliance with protection orders, as data is not available.<sup>13</sup>

One of the biggest challenges in combating violence against women in Cyprus has been the reference to 'family violence.' Historically, laws and policies have prohibited family violence without specifically referring to violence against women. This gender neutrality does not recognise women as the primary victims of such violence, although over 70% of victims of 'family violence' are female, and this form of violence is clearly gendered. Since governmental and non-governmental services work within the framework of 'family violence', a critical gender perspective is lost. Although, a gender dimension has been instated in the provisions of the VAW Law 2021, how the law will be interpreted and implemented by the criminal justice system and front-line professionals remains to be seen.

Other relevant legislative provisions governing the prevention and combatting of gender-based violence in Cyprus are the following:

- the Criminal Code was amended in 2003 to include female genital mutilation as a criminal offence under Article 233A (1), punishable with up to 5 years imprisonment;
- the Criminal Code includes forced marriage as a misdemeanour (a criminal offence which is less serious) under Article 150;
- with regard to sexual violence and rape, the Criminal Code includes rape as an offence; the offence was amended in 2020 to comply with the provisions of Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention; indecent assault against a woman is also criminalised;
- other crimes foreseen in the Criminal Code include incest, kidnapping of a woman, kidnapping of woman under the age of 16, corruption of girl under the age of 13, corruption

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<sup>12</sup> Pavlou, S., Shakos, A. (2020), The application of the EC Directive 2011/99/EU and the European Protection Order: Cyprus, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. Available at: [https://www.artemis-europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ARTEMIS-Research-Report\\_Cyprus.pdf](https://www.artemis-europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ARTEMIS-Research-Report_Cyprus.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

of a girl under the age 16, corruption of a woman with mental and/or psychological disability, promoting corruption of a woman through threats, deceit or the administration of drugs, illegal detention of a woman, exploitation of women in prostitution, living from the profits of prostitution (pimping), among others;

- with respect to sexual violence against girls, the legislation in force is the Preventing and Combating the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law 2014;
- stalking has recently been criminalised under the Protection from Harassment and Stalking Law 2021 (114(I)/2021);
- sexism and online sexism have also been criminalised under the Combatting of Sexism and Online Sexism Law 2020 (209(I)/2020).

### 3.2 Former and current policies to prevent gender-based violence and femicide

As regards policies to prevent gender-based violence in Cyprus, there have been two National Action Plans for the Prevention of Violence in the Family: (i) between 2010-2013, and (ii) between 2017-2019.<sup>14</sup>

Currently there is no National Action Plan in place for the Prevention of Violence in the Family, nor is there a national action plan on the prevention of gender-based violence/violence against women in general. However, the current National Action Plan for Equality between Men and Women 2019-2023 includes “Combating Gender-Based Violence / Full compliance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention” as a key priority.<sup>15</sup> However, National Action Plans do not make reference to or foresee actions to combat violence against migrant women, women with disabilities, single mothers, and other disadvantaged groups.

Overall, National Action Plans are not accompanied by specific objectives, qualitative and quantitative indicators, allocation of sufficient funding, and there is no evidence of any follow-up or evaluation. Generally, National Action Plans lack the political will and resources needed for their implementation and largely remain aspirations.

There are no policies in place specifically on preventing femicide, nor is there any mention of femicide in existing and former National Action Plans for the Prevention of Violence in the Family or for Equality between Men and Women.

It is worth noting that the recently passed VAW Law 2021 includes a provision for a coordination body that will develop a national strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

### 3.3 Official reporting on VAW and femicides and institutional protocols

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<sup>14</sup> Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family:  
[http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgi-bin/hweb?-V=actionplan&\\_FSECTION=10140&-dactionplan.html&-Sr&\\_VSECTION=0000&\\_VCATEGORY=0000&\\_VCATEGORY=0000](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgi-bin/hweb?-V=actionplan&_FSECTION=10140&-dactionplan.html&-Sr&_VSECTION=0000&_VCATEGORY=0000&_VCATEGORY=0000).

<sup>15</sup> Office of Commissioner for Gender Equality:  
<http://www.institutionforgenderequality.gov.cy/equality/equality.nsf/All/0276C88652C8317AC225850500403411?OpenDocument>.

Whilst there is no specific data collection on femicide in Cyprus, some variables relevant to the identification of femicide are collected by the Police, although the data is not available to the public. Data collected by the Police include the characteristics of the victim and of the perpetrator, and contextual variables.

Similarly, there is no official register of judicial data that would permit monitoring cases of gender-based violence against women throughout the criminal justice process. With respect to domestic violence, the Law Services of the Republic of Cyprus issued a circular in 1998 which introduced mandatory reporting of all child abuse and domestic violence cases to the Attorney General's Office.<sup>16</sup> Due to mandatory reporting all involved agencies must report every case within seven days to the Attorney General's Office. The content of each report depends on the role and responsibilities of each referral agency. Within the Attorney General's Office, a group of 15 lawyers was set up to examine domestic violence referrals from all services. Although several services make use of mandatory reporting, they report gaps in the policy, poor planning on behalf of the Law Services and lack of coordination and communication between all the services involved.<sup>17</sup>

The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, an advisory body established by the Council of Ministers of Cyprus in 1996 to monitor the situation and incidence of family violence in Cyprus, as well as the implementation of the Violence in the Family Law 2000 (as amended), prepared guidelines on the reporting and handling of violence in the family cases in 2002, and in 2017, with specific reference to children.<sup>18</sup> These guidelines are addressed to public prosecutors, the social services, the police, the health services, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and to NGOs.

With respect to law enforcement agencies, specialised teams for the investigation of cases of violence in the family (*Ειδικό Κλιμάκιο Διερεύνησης Υποθέσεων Βίας στην Οικογένεια*) have recently been set up in the Criminal Investigations Department of the Police in each district (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and Famagusta). The Limassol and Nicosia specialised teams have been in operation since the end of 2020 (September and November 2020 respectively) and in the other districts, since February 2021. The specialised teams work closely with the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO), within the framework of the Woman's House (see below).<sup>19</sup>

Since 2018, there is a protocol in place for risk assessment in cases of IPV, including in cases of ex-spouses and ex-partners, which is implemented by the Police as mandated by law.<sup>20</sup> The protocol refers to Articles 20 and 21 of Law 51(I)/2016 on individual assessment of victims, as well as Law 14(III)/2017 ratifying the Istanbul Convention. Objectives of the risk assessment protocol include to prevent revictimization, escalation of violence, and lethal violence.

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<sup>16</sup> Law Services of the Republic of Cyprus, 1998, Circular on Mandatory Reporting. Available at: <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20131105/1383637995-24986.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Panayiotopoulos, C. (2011). Mandatory reporting of domestic violence cases in Cyprus; barriers to the effectiveness of mandatory reporting and issues for future practice. *European Journal of Social Work*, 14(3), 379-402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2010.490936>

<sup>18</sup> Advisory Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family, *Interdepartmental Procedures Manual on Handling cases of Violence in the Family (2002)*; *Interdepartmental Procedures Manual on Handling cases of Domestic Violence in relation to Children (2017)*. Available at: [http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/downloads/egxeiridio\\_diatmimatikon\\_diadikasion\\_paidia\\_2017.pdf](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/downloads/egxeiridio_diatmimatikon_diadikasion_paidia_2017.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgi-bin/hweb?-V=womanshouse&\\_FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr&\\_VSECTION=10200&\\_VCATEGORY=0000&\\_VCATEGORY=0000](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgi-bin/hweb?-V=womanshouse&_FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr&_VSECTION=10200&_VCATEGORY=0000&_VCATEGORY=0000)

<sup>20</sup> Cyprus Police, (2018), Protocol for risk assessment in cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Available at (in Greek only): <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20180227/1519724395-27633.pdf>.

The protocol may only be applied by members of the police that have been specially trained in its use and application. The Police Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office, responsible for the monitoring of cases of domestic violence, is responsible for ensuring that police officers are trained to implement the protocol. The protocol is based on the international risk assessment tools DASH, SARA and B-SAFER, adapted to the Cyprus context; the protocol is situation based and risks that are taken into consideration include factors associated with the perpetrator, as well as with the victim.<sup>21</sup>

According to the protocol, the police, having conducted the risk assessment, must immediately contact the social welfare services by telephone, informing them of the level of risk, whether children are involved, whether the victim will need alternative accommodation, whether protection orders will be applied for and whether the physical presence of a social worker is required under the circumstances. In cases where the risk assessed is high, the police must carry out a multi-agency meeting with the social welfare services and/or the health services, and where necessary any other agency or service, for the coordination of the joint handling of such cases.<sup>22</sup>

However, no evaluation of the risk assessment protocol has been carried out to date and there is “no information available regarding its implementation and its effectiveness in managing risk and reducing intimate partner violence against women”.<sup>23</sup>

No other public services carry out risk assessments for domestic violence or intimate partner violence. However, in cases of domestic violence where child victims or child witnesses are involved, the social welfare services carry out an informal risk assessment based on professional judgement and experience; no specific tools for risk assessment are used and social workers have not undergone any specialised training.<sup>24</sup> SPAVO carries out a risk assessment with respect to victims who use their services, and the Woman’s House carries out risk assessment within the framework of multi-agency cooperation (see below).

In Cyprus, there is no mechanism in place for conducting homicide reviews, despite the rising number of killings of women in the last two decades.

### 3.4 Research on femicide in Cyprus

There have been two key studies on femicide and IPF in Cyprus.

(i) A Qualitative Study of Intimate Partner Femicide and Orphans in Cyprus, 2017:

The paper first contextualizes femicide in the broader context of domestic violence, and homicide in the Republic of Cyprus. It then goes on to report a qualitative study of eighteen intimate partner femicide (IPF) orphans during the period 2001-2014. Findings concerning IPF, offender, and victim characteristics but also pertaining to a broad range of themes that emerged in the face-to-face interviews with the orphans are also reported and discussed. In support of theoretical notions of power and control and gender inequality, the study reported

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<sup>21</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE, (2019), “Risk assessment and management of intimate partner violence in the EU”, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, pp.56-57. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/risk-assessment-risk-management>.

<sup>22</sup> Cyprus Police, (2018), Protocol for risk assessment in cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), pp. 23&26. Available at (in Greek only): <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20180227/1519724395-27633.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE, (2019), “Risk assessment and management of intimate partner violence in the EU”, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 57. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/risk-assessment-risk-management>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



also documents of a prior history of serious conflict, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse of the IPF victim by a jealous, possessive, controlling, and oppressive violent male partner or ex-partner. Evidence is provided of the tragic inability of the authorities to heed numerous warning signs and threats-to-kill by the offender and to avert such murders. Finally, attention turns to the policy and research implications of the findings with emphasis on lethal domestic violence prevention and better support of the orphans involved.<sup>25</sup>

(ii) Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study, 2019:

The aim of this article was to discuss a pilot study on femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus. A quantitative methodology was used to gather data from the police between 2010 and 2016 for the Greek-Cypriot community on women and girls who have been killed and where the perpetrator charged, alleged or convicted is a man. Also, qualitative methodology was used, gathering media reports for both communities between 2010 and 2017. According to the research findings, twenty-eight cases of femicide were identified in the Greek Cypriot community, and twelve cases in the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>26</sup> Most of the victims were killed by their husbands or boyfriends, often at their home. It seems that the masculine viewpoint was dominant in the media representations of these cases. The article concludes that femicide prevention is in its early stages in Cyprus. It seems that a preventative and interventional strategy is needed to reduce the number of women killed by men.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.5 The victim support and intervention system

State services for the support and protection of victims of domestic violence are inadequate in responding to the victim's needs. Professional staff lack specialized training and experience, and interagency cooperation is weak. This is mainly due to the lack of systematic training and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as the high mobility rate among front line service providers. This is particularly true of the Social Welfare Services who are primarily responsible for all aspects of victim support and assistance.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the above, there have been encouraging developments over the last two years, mainly in response to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

In 2020, specialised teams for the investigation of cases of violence in the family (*Ειδικό Κλιμάκιο Διερεύνησης Υποθέσεων Βίας στην Οικογένεια*) were set up in the Criminal Investigations Department of the Police in each district. The specialised team in Nicosia works in close collaboration with the Woman's House (see below).<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the Domestic

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<sup>25</sup> Kapardis, A., Costanza Baldry, A. and Konstantinou, M., 2017, "A Qualitative Study of Intimate Partner Femicide and Orphans in Cyprus", *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 13(3):80-100. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/34479718/A\\_Qualitative\\_Study\\_of\\_Intimate\\_Partner\\_Femicide\\_and\\_Orphans\\_in\\_Cyprus](https://www.academia.edu/34479718/A_Qualitative_Study_of_Intimate_Partner_Femicide_and_Orphans_in_Cyprus)

<sup>26</sup> The total population of Cyprus was estimated at 940,100 at the end of 2015 according to the "Demographic Report 2015" released by the Statistical Service of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot community was 701,000 people or 74.5%, the Turkish Cypriot community was 91.800 people or 9.8%.

<sup>27</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou, E. and Zorba, A., 2019, Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 77. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539519302444>.

<sup>28</sup> Cyprus Women's Lobby (2018), CEDAW Shadow Report, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/CYP/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_CYP\\_31500\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/CYP/INT_CEDAW_NGO_CYP_31500_E.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-V=womanshouse&\\_FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr&\\_VSECTION=10200&\\_VCATEGORY=0000&\\_VCATEGORY=0000](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-V=womanshouse&_FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr&_VSECTION=10200&_VCATEGORY=0000&_VCATEGORY=0000).

Violence and Child Abuse Office of the Police are responsible for monitoring cases of domestic violence/violence in the family.

In addition, the Woman's House (*Σπίτι της Γυναίκας*) was established in 2020 and has been in operation since 1 December 2020. It is a multi-agency and multi-professional crisis centre for victims of VAW and their children. It is based on the Family Justice Centre model and operates as a "one-stop-shop" providing integrated services for victims and their children. The provision of services is not conditional on the victim having to press charges against the perpetrator. The multi-professional network of services in the Woman's House includes services provided by social workers, psychologists, healthcare professionals, legal professionals and the police. In addition, a Child Advocate has been included in the Woman's House, who provides specialised support to children victims of DV and aims to ensure that all procedures are child-friendly, safe and in line with the rights of the child.<sup>30</sup> The NGO SPAVO runs the Woman's House within the framework of the Minor State Aid Plan for Social Welfare Services, based on Commission Regulation 360/2012 on the provision of Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) (known as *De Minimis*).<sup>31</sup> According to reports, the Woman's House handled 106 cases of violence against women up to March 2021.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of support and intervention services provided by the third sector, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that operates to provide support, information, as well as awareness raising and training on domestic violence issues. SPAVO provides all services free of charge including a call centre and national helpline, the operation of shelters for women and children, and the provision of counselling services by specially trained psychologists and social workers.<sup>33</sup> There are three women's shelters for victims of domestic violence in Cyprus run by SPAVO; both are accessible 24/7 free of charge, and are located in Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, there are a number of national helplines providing support. The National Helpline for Violence in the Family (1440) was established in 1990 and is run by SPAVO. The Helpline 1440 is staffed by psychologists and social workers and is available 24/7, 365 days a year and is free of charge. It provides multi-lingual counselling support in English and Greek for domestic violence issues concerning the victim or other people, information on other services related to domestic violence issues and information about the legal rights and choices for the victim.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the general victim's helpline, the Citizens' Line (1460), operates 24/7 and is free of charge; it is run by the Cyprus Police.<sup>36</sup>

With respect to gender-based violence against women belonging to disadvantaged groups<sup>37</sup>, there are gaps in the support and intervention system. The recently established Woman's

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<sup>30</sup> Advisory Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family, 2019. Available at (in Greek only): <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20200506/1588765852-03622.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/6D758FF5E541A873C2257921002F19C3?OpenDocument>

<sup>32</sup> Philenews, 8/3/2021: <https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/1141555/simantiko-erg-epitelei-to-spitit-is-gnaikas>.

<sup>33</sup> Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO): <https://domviolence.org.cy/en/>.

<sup>34</sup> [www.domviolence.org.cy/en/](http://www.domviolence.org.cy/en/)

<sup>35</sup> SPAVO: <https://domviolence.org.cy/en/1440-2/>.

<sup>36</sup> Cyprus Police: <https://www.police.gov.cy/>

<sup>37</sup> Groups of persons that experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence than the general population, including, but not limited to, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, isolated elderly people and children. Beijing Platform for Action (2013), Agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls (E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11), United Nations, New

House provides integrated specialised services to women and girls that are victims of VAW without discrimination on any grounds, including migrant status or residence status. However, migrant women often do not have access to services or lack adequate specialised support due to cultural, economic and other barriers.

Limited research or data exist on violence against women of a migrant background in Cyprus. Findings in Kouta et al. (2021), revealed that domestic workers experience sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.<sup>38</sup> The lack of support by the relevant services and the State increases the risk of sexual violence and places barriers to access to protection and justice. As mentioned earlier, despite the significant migrant population in Cyprus, migrant women are not addressed in the National Action Plans, rendering them invisible on a policy level. There is no evidence to suggest that services for victims of violence are culturally sensitive or able to assist women with special needs or who are facing multiple discrimination.

In relation to preventing gender-based violence in reception centres, the Refugee Law 2000 (6(I)/2000)<sup>39</sup> provides that the competent authorities shall take into consideration gender and age-specific concerns and the situation of disadvantaged groups and that appropriate measures shall be taken in order to prevent assault and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and harassment.<sup>40</sup> Up until today, there are no specific guidelines or procedures in effect to guarantee the efficient implementation of these provisions.

The Refugee Law 2000 (6(I)/2000)<sup>41</sup> sets out an identification mechanism for vulnerable persons arriving to Cyprus as asylum seekers. Specifically, it provides that an individual assessment shall be carried out to determine whether a specific person has special reception needs and/or requires special procedural guarantees, and the nature of those needs. These individualised assessments should be performed within a reasonable time period during the early stages of applying for asylum, and the requirement to address special reception needs and/or special procedural guarantees applies at any time such needs are identified or ascertained. However, in the absence of specific legislative or procedural guidelines, the identification and assessment of special reception and procedural needs take place fragmentally, while the assessment tools and approaches to be used are neither defined nor standardised.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the right to choose the gender of the asylum examiner and the interpreter, the Refugee Law 2000<sup>43</sup> provides that they can be of the same gender as the applicant, but only if they make such a request. However, due to the absence of information and legal advice or

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York, para. 34 (available at

[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57\\_Agreed\\_Conclusions\\_\(CSW\\_report\\_excerpt\).pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_Agreed_Conclusions_(CSW_report_excerpt).pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Kouta C., Pithara C., Apostolidou Z., Zobnina A., Christodoulou J., Papadakaki M., Chliaoutakis J. (2021). A qualitative study of female migrant domestic workers' experiences of and responses to work-based sexual violence in Cyprus. *Sexes 2* (3): 315-330. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/sexes2030025>.

<sup>39</sup> Ο περί Προσφύγων Νόμος του 2000 (6(I)/2000): [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2000\\_1\\_6/full.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2000_1_6/full.html)

<sup>40</sup> Article 9IΔ(7) Refugee Law

<sup>41</sup> GLIMER Cyprus Policy Brief: Addressing the gendered dynamics of asylum seeker and refugee integration provision in Cyprus <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WP6-Policy-Brief-Cyprus.pdf> and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), AIDA Country Report: Cyprus 2019 update [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY_2020update.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), AIDA Country Report: Cyprus 2019 update [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY_2020update.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Article 13A(9)(b) and 13A(9)(b) of the Refugee Law



representation, most applicants do not have knowledge of this right in order to make such a request.<sup>44</sup>

In terms of protecting women with disabilities, there are no specific legal or policy measures on preventing and combatting violence against women with disabilities. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in their concluding remarks (2017), expressed concern regarding the inadequacy of the legal framework to prevent and combat violence against persons with disabilities, particularly women, as well as the lack of specific and accessible mechanisms for reporting such violence.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.6 Multiprofessional networks on preventing gender-based violence and femicides

The lack of effective multi-agency cooperation and coordination is a major obstacle to the effective implementation laws and policies on violence against women and domestic violence. This is related to the lack of implementation mechanisms that leads to a fragmented approach with different bodies, mechanisms, and policies in place with little recognition of the links between them.

The Advisory Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family was established by a Council of Ministers Decree in 1996 in accordance with Article 16 of the Family Violence Law 47(I)/1994 that was replaced by Law 119(I)/2000. The Committee consists of persons appointed in their personal capacity by the Council of Ministers and having knowledge and experience of the subject. According to the law, the members come from the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Ministry of Health, the Cyprus Police, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Social Welfare Services, the Law Services, and relevant organizations of the private sector. The Committee monitors the implementation of the relevant law on family violence and raises awareness among professionals and the public more generally. The Committee has been very active and has played a vital role in raising awareness, carrying out research, strengthening interdepartmental cooperation, monitoring implementation of the relevant law and evaluating existing services, providing training to relevant professionals, and in developing the National Action Plans on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family.

Recognizing the need for more coordinated and specialized responses to violence against women in Cyprus, the Committee proposed the establishment of the Woman's House in 2016. The proposal was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2019, and the Committee was charged with coordinating all efforts to establish the Women's House, in cooperation with the relevant services.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), AIDA Country Report: Cyprus 2019 update [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-CY_2020update.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, Concluding Remarks, pp. 6-7, paras. 39-40: [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf/dsipd8a\\_gr/dsipd8a\\_gr?OpenDocument](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf/dsipd8a_gr/dsipd8a_gr?OpenDocument)

<sup>46</sup> Advisory Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family: <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-A=1&-V=profile>.

### 3.7 Femicide and VAW in the media

According to a study of media portrayals<sup>47</sup> of femicides committed in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus during the period 2010-2016,<sup>48</sup> the media frequently adopts and projects a masculine perspective and the viewpoint of the perpetrator. It was found that in cases where the perpetrator used a gun to commit the femicide, the media attention was focused on gun control and the debate was limited to gun violence, the influence of the army and limiting access to firearms. Similarly, the media frequently focus on the mental health of the male perpetrator, in cases where there is evidence of mental illness, as having led to the femicide(s).

Media reporting lacks an understanding of the gender dimensions of femicide and the link with violence against women and domestic violence. This link is often overlooked by focusing on the masculine perspective. For example, by emphasising male violence and the viewpoint of the perpetrator – e.g. his anger at the victim's wish to divorce him - the media implicitly sends a threatening message to women that appear to challenge the traditional gender roles dictated by society, and that male violence is accepted. Further, media coverage of femicide(s) in Cyprus is also characterised by the use of sexist language which attributes blame to the victim, normalising the violence committed by men against women.

There has been increased attention to femicide following the serial femicides discovered in 2019<sup>49</sup> and more frequent use of the term, particularly when reporting on international news.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.8 Gender values and gender (in)equality

There has been slight but insufficient progress on gender (in)equality in Cyprus and sexist stereotypes related to gender persist in social, economic and political life. As recognized by the international legal framework, violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality<sup>51</sup> and is an abuse of the power imbalance between women and men. It is a means of social control that maintains unequal power relations between women and men and reinforces women's subordinate status in society.<sup>52</sup> Violence against women is used to enforce gender roles and norms, assumes that women are inferior to men, and that men have the right to control women. Thus, gender equality indicators are inextricably linked to the prevalence of, and response to, violence against women.

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<sup>47</sup> The analysis of the articles was based on the main newspapers of the two communities for the period between 2010 and 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou, E. and Zorba, A., 2019, Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A pilot study, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 77. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539519302444>.

<sup>49</sup> Dialogos, "Ανέτρεψαν τις οδηγίες: Κούπα άπανη οι αστυνομικοί για τις γυναικοκτονίες", 15.06.2021; Cyprus Times, "Αύξηση περιστατικών βίας και 40 γυναικοκτονίες τα τελευταία 20 χρόνια. Προς ψήφιση ν/σ για καταπολέμηση της βίας", 29.03.2021; Politis, "Γυναικοκτονία Αθηναίου: Ομολόγησε τη δολοφονία της γυναίκας ο 32χρονος. Τι είπε στους ανακριτές", 13.04.2021; Alphanews, "Η Ανδρούλα, η 39η γυναίκα που δολοφονήθηκε στην Κύπρο από το 2000", 13.02.2021.

<sup>50</sup> For example, during coverage of International Women's Day: Signalive News, "Διαδηλώσεις στην Κωνσταντινούπολη για τη βία σε βάρος των γυναικών", 08.03.2021; ANT1.com.cy, "Μεξικό: 19 τραυματισμοί σε επεισόδια κατά την κινητοποίηση για την Ημέρα της Γυναίκας", 09.03.2021; increased media attention is also a result of NGO action and activist pressure.

<sup>51</sup> In the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the UN General Assembly recognized that violence against women<sup>1</sup> is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. (A/61/122/Add.1) 2006 Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/publications/English%20Study.pdf>

According to data from EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2020, Cyprus ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in the EU on the Gender Equality Index with 56.9 out of 100 points - 11 points lower than the EU's average score. Cyprus has made the least progress in the domains of work, knowledge and money. Gender inequalities are very noticeable in the domain of power, where Cyprus also performs the worst in comparison with other Member States.<sup>53</sup>

Women in Cyprus are still largely excluded from decision-making and leadership positions in the public and economic spheres. The recent parliamentary elections (May 2021) have resulted in just 8 women being elected out of a total of 56 representatives. Since independence in 1960, the participation of women in centres of power and decision-making bodies has ranged from 0%-20%.<sup>54</sup> The recent parliamentary elections also resulted in political gains for the far-right party, which is related to a wider backlash against women's rights in Europe.<sup>55</sup>

In relation to employment, women's employment rate (ages 20-64) is at 70.1% compared to 81.7% for men.<sup>56</sup> Cyprus also has one of the highest rates of gender segregation in employment in the EU, and 14.2% of employed women worked part time – nearly twice that (7.4%) for men. The gender pay gap stands at 10.2% and Cyprus is among the countries with the largest pension gap in Europe, as women aged 65+ receive, on average, 38.5% lower pensions.<sup>57</sup>

The institution of the family is probably the most important foundation in Cypriot society, providing emotional and economic support, as well as caregiving services. Women disproportionately bear the responsibility of taking care of children and other dependants. As a result, policies for the reconciliation of work and family life, such as childcare provision and flexible work arrangements, are lacking in Cyprus.<sup>58</sup>

In terms of education, parents and teachers are more likely to expect boys over girls to pursue career paths in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. Girls are expected to follow career paths that focus on caregiving and are people oriented. Gender stereotypes seem to impact choices in education with boys often pursuing degrees in technology, engineering and construction, while girls often choose careers in education, health and social sciences.<sup>59</sup>

Sex education is included in the curriculum for health education as a thematic area framed "Family Planning – Sexual and Reproductive Health". Sex education has been mandatory since September 2011 when it was incorporated in the health education curriculum, however, there is no monitoring and evaluation system in place. Moreover, sexuality education should be gender sensitive, with educational material integrating an understanding of the importance

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<sup>53</sup> EIGE, (2020) Gender Equality Index 2020, Cyprus. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/CY>.

<sup>54</sup> MIGS Fact Sheet on Women and Power 2021.

<sup>55</sup> European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), 2018, "Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights". Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)604955\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL_STU(2018)604955_EN.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Eurostat, 2020: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10735440/3-21042020-AP-EN.pdf/fc7e4ab2-85ef-c48a-ee8d-ef334d5c2b8c>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Pavlou S., 2015, The Gender Gap in Women's Leadership in Cyprus. Available at: <http://www.akti.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Womens-Leadership-and-Participation-in-Decision-making.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Angeli, M., 2018, "GenderEd: Combatting gender stereotypes in education", Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. Available at: <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Combating-gender-stereotypes-in-education-EN.pdf>.

of gender equality; however, in practice there are still substantial gaps regarding this at all levels of education.<sup>60</sup>

Given the prevalence of sexist gender stereotypes and the lack of comprehensive sex education, it seems likely that there is a high tolerance for gender-based violence among adolescents and that this is directly linked to negative gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women.<sup>61</sup> Despite the importance of creating a strategic approach to adolescents and young adults on the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of gender equality, this dimension has largely been ignored by those involved in policy formulation and implementation in relation to education.

Moreover, front line professionals (Police, Social Welfare Services, and Health Services) may have stereotypical attitudes towards victims of DV and gender-based violence, thus often leading to secondary victimization/re-victimisation. Training to front-line professionals on gender is offered by NGOs, but not systematically on a regular basis. Regarding the legal system, women are often faced with court delays, as well as sexist stereotypical attitudes by prosecutors and the judiciary. A high number of reported domestic violence cases never reach the court and are either suspended or dropped.<sup>62</sup>

These attitudes are compounded in relation to women victims in disadvantaged groups. For instance, migrant and refugee women are at a heightened risk of VAW, however cases of violence against them are often unreported or, where reports are made, the authorities often disregard them.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.9 Impact of COVID-19 on legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide

As a result of the health measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, reported domestic violence has increased in Cyprus. During the first lockdown imposed in March 2020, calls to the National Helpline for Violence in the Family (1440) increased by up to 30% between 9 March – 17 March.<sup>64</sup> According to information released by SPAVO, during March 2020 alone, out of 2,075 calls received, only 921 were able to be received and addressed whilst the remaining 1,154 were left unanswered.<sup>65</sup> Overall, the number of calls received by the national helpline for victims of DV during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had increased by approximately 47%.<sup>66</sup>

No data is available on the incidence of femicides/IPF and whether this has increased during the pandemic. In relation to domestic violence, between the middle of March until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of

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<sup>60</sup> Cyprus Women's Lobby, 2018, Convention for the elimination of discrimination against women 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/CYP/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_CYP\\_31500\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/CYP/INT_CEDAW_NGO_CYP_31500_E.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Angeli, M. (2020). [Gender dynamics in the reception & integration of displaced migrants](#), Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies.

<sup>64</sup> Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, 19.03.2020: <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgibin/hweb?-A=9741&-V=covid19>.

<sup>65</sup> Pilavaki A., (2020) Gender consequences of pandemic, Hypatia, p. 29. Available at: <https://www.hypatia.org.cy/assets/files/1-Covid19.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

April 2020, incidents of domestic violence increased by 58% during the imposition of the first lockdown.<sup>67</sup>

In terms of measures taken with respect to the increase in IPV/DV as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Labour provided SPAVO with emergency funding within the framework of the State Aid Programme for the expansion of its services. Also, with the assistance of the Ministry of Labour, SPAVO secured additional accommodation for victims and their children in order to ensure that there were available shelter spaces to meet demand.

Other than the above, there have been no specific measures taken by the government or State institutions/agencies on femicide/IPF as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **4. The extent of femicide in Cyprus**

### **4.1 Data sources and methods of data collection**

#### **4.1.1 Data Sources on the extent of femicide**

In Cyprus, the police collect data for the total number of murders/homicides and attempted murders that are committed each year in official police statistics. Given that femicide is not a separate offence, it is not recorded separately but as homicide or attempted homicide. Specific information on femicide is recorded in police case files and is available only by request to the authorities. In relation to domestic violence, official police statistics include data for the total number of domestic violence cases disaggregated by type of violence, sex of victims and perpetrators, and age.<sup>68</sup> The methodology used for the Cyprus data collection and analysis was based on the EOF Quantitative and Qualitative data tools, as described in Section 1 (Definition and *Methodology*) above.

#### **4.1.2 Experiences with the use of the EOF data collection tool**

The EOF data collection tools were structured very clearly and the accumulated data could be processed very well. In addition, the guidelines were very useful for the researcher to complete. Both quantitative and qualitative tools include very important and useful aspects of each femicide case in detail and this was helpful to conduct a thorough analysis for femicide in general, and to create better recommendations for the development of more efficient preventive measures and tools.

The dimension that was most difficult to fill in was the background information, as the media-sourced information was complicated, often not clear and was found from different sources such as newspapers, social media etc. Specifically, some dimensions that were difficult to fill in were: Characteristics of the Victim – ‘employment’ and ‘disability’; Characteristics of the Perpetrator – ‘employment’, ‘mental health’, and ‘prior domestic violence by same perpetrator’, due to lack of a publicly available administrative data. Despite these challenges, gathering this data remains important and should remain in the EOF data collection tools. In later data collection actions, information from the support systems and other professionals could also be systematically included in order to improve the case knowledge.

### **4.2 Extent of femicide and further information on cases**

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<sup>67</sup> UNFICYP, 06.05.2020: <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/domestic-violence-and-covid-19>.

<sup>68</sup> Available at:

[https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical\\_en/dmlstatistical\\_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3](https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical_en/dmlstatistical_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3).

#### 4.2.1 Extent of femicide on the basis of official statistics

An evaluation of the official criminal statistics concerning femicides in previous years (2010-2016) and of the last two years (2019-2020) was carried out.

As mentioned above, between the years 2010 and 2016 there were 28 cases of femicide in total and among those, 21 cases (75%) were categorized as intimate partner violence.<sup>69</sup>

The total number of femicide cases recorded between the years 2019 and 2020 were 11: 7 cases (+ 2 children) in 2019 and 4 cases in 2020. From the total of 11 femicide cases in the years 2019 and 2020, all of them except one (1) were categorised as intimate partner femicides.

#### 4.2.2 Information on the extent of femicide from studies or NGOs

Homicides of women and girls are not classified as "femicides" in the Cyprus justice and police reporting systems. They are only recorded as murders. Femicide/domestic homicide reviews with in-depth background information on the cases are not carried out in Cyprus.

Nevertheless, some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as MIGS, SPAVO, as well as national researchers from the Cyprus University of Technology that are participating members of the EOF, systematically collect case-based information on femicides based on secondary sources. These organizations collect data from media reports. The Cyprus University of Technology is one of the coordinators of EOF, thus uses the data collection tools created by EOF. Data is collected from media and cross checked from the official data of the Police.

The first scientific-based data and case collection including all femicide cases annually, was implemented by national researchers of the EOF in 2018 (initially headed by Marceline Naudi, since 2020 by Christiana Kouta and Monika Schröttle). The reviews of the EOF include all killings of women. In-depth information on the cases is collected in a way that makes international comparison also possible.

#### 4.2.3 Extent of femicide on the basis of the EOF data collection

The Cyprus data collection tool within this project indicates **11 cases of women killed in 2019 and 2020**:

- 7 women (+2 children) were killed in 2019
- 4 women were killed in 2020.

The **annual population-based rate** of femicide in 2019 was 0,78% and for 2020 0,45% cases per 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kouta, C., Kofou. E., Zorba, A., (2019). Femicide in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish - Cypriot communities in Cyprus: A Pilot Study. Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 77, 102294, ISSN 0277-5395, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102294>.

<sup>70</sup> The population of the Government controlled areas of Cyprus is estimated at 888.000 at the end of 2019. Cyprus Statistical Service (2020), DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS 2019, p. 4. Available at: [https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/6C25304C1E70C304C2257833003432B3/\\$file/Demographic\\_Statistics\\_Results-2019-EN-301120.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/6C25304C1E70C304C2257833003432B3/$file/Demographic_Statistics_Results-2019-EN-301120.pdf?OpenElement)

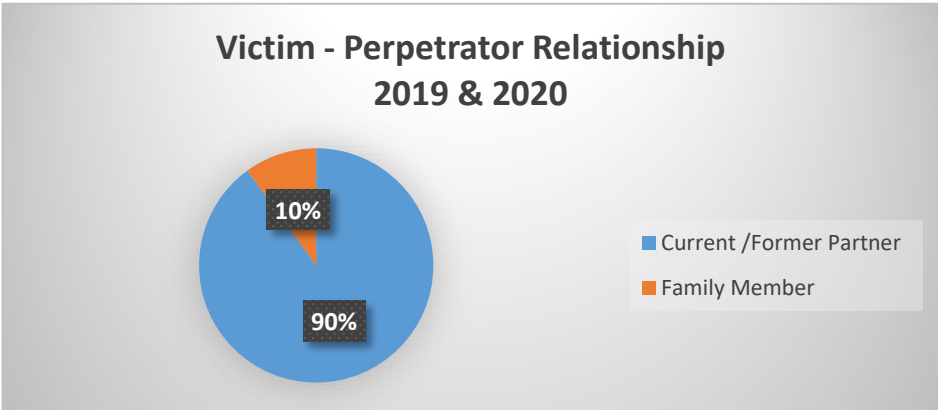


| Year women killed          | All women killed (age 16+) n= | Rate per 100.000 inhabitants | Women killed by family member | Women killed by partners |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2019                       | 7                             | 0,78%                        | -                             | 7                        |
| 2020                       | 4                             | 0,45%                        | 1<br>(victim's brother)       | 3                        |
| <b>Total 2019 and 2020</b> | 11                            | 1,23%                        | 1                             | 10                       |

**4.2.4 Victim-perpetrator relationship and types of killings**

As can be seen in Graph 1 below, in more than three quarters of the cases women had been killed in the context of intimate partner femicide (n=10, 90%). More specifically, in 10 out of 11 femicides cases (90%) women were killed by current or former intimate partners (7 cases in 2019 and 3 cases in 2020).<sup>71,72</sup>

**Graph 1: Victim – Perpetrator Relationship 2019 and 2020**

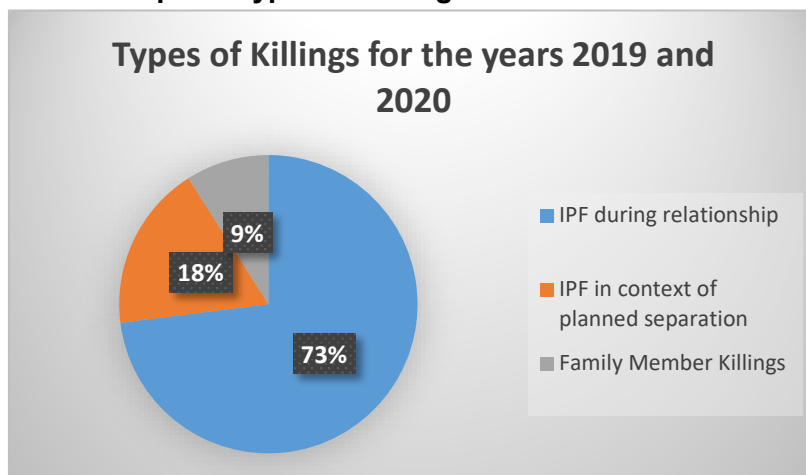


As shown in Graph 2 below, eight (n=8, 73%) of the killings took place in the context of an intimate partner relationship (by current partner), and two (n=2, 18%) in the context of a planned separation (by former partner). In one case (9%) the woman was killed by a male family member (the perpetrator was the brother of the victim). All femicides recorded in 2019 and 2020 were carried out by a male perpetrator. Two out of 11 were in the context of a planned separation. However, it was not known whether the woman wanted to separate.

<sup>71</sup> The official police statistics for 2019 and 2020 align with our data collected through the media. Cyprus Police website: [https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical\\_en/dmlstatistical\\_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3](https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlstatistical_en/dmlstatistical_en?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=1.3)

<sup>72</sup> The case basis is too low for valid statistical analyses

**Graph 2: Types of Killings for 2019 and 2020**



**Table 1: Types of Femicides**

| Types of Femicides                   | Number    | Percentage        |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| IPF during relationship              | 8         | 73%               |
| IPF in context of planned separation | 2         | 18% <sup>73</sup> |
| Family Member Killings               | 1         | 9%                |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>11</b> | <b>100%</b>       |

## 5. Background information on the cases (quantitative)

### 5.1 Background information on the victims

In addition to the 11 women killed in 2019 and 2020, there were two additional victims. Specifically, in two of the femicide cases of 2019, two additional female victims were killed, who were the children of the femicide victims.

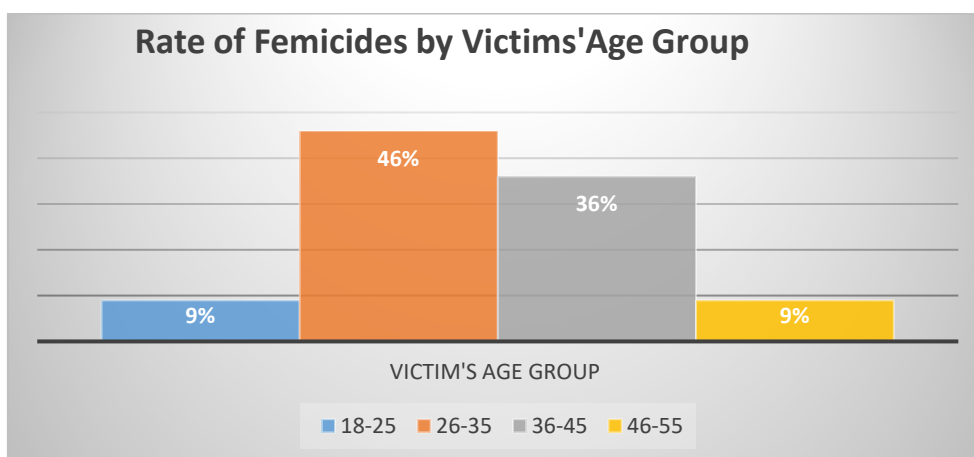
### 5.2 Age of women killed

As can be seen in Graph 3 and Table 2 below, five victims (n= 5, 46%) were 26-35 years old, four (n=4, 36%) were 36-45 years old, 1 (9%) was 18-25 years old and 1 (9%) was 46-55 years old. There is no statistical significance between the age groups and the relationship between the victims, since almost all of the cases of femicides were IPF, with the exception of one case perpetrated by a male family member.

<sup>73</sup> It is not known if women had planned to separate and told this to their partner.



**Graph 3: Rate of Femicides by Victims' Age group**



**Table 2: Rate of Femicides by Victims' Age group**

| Age group    | N= | %    |
|--------------|----|------|
| 18-25        | 1  | 9%   |
| 26-35        | 5  | 46%  |
| 36-45        | 4  | 36%  |
| 46-55        | 1  | 9%   |
| <b>Total</b> | 11 | 100% |

### 5.3 Further characteristics of the victims

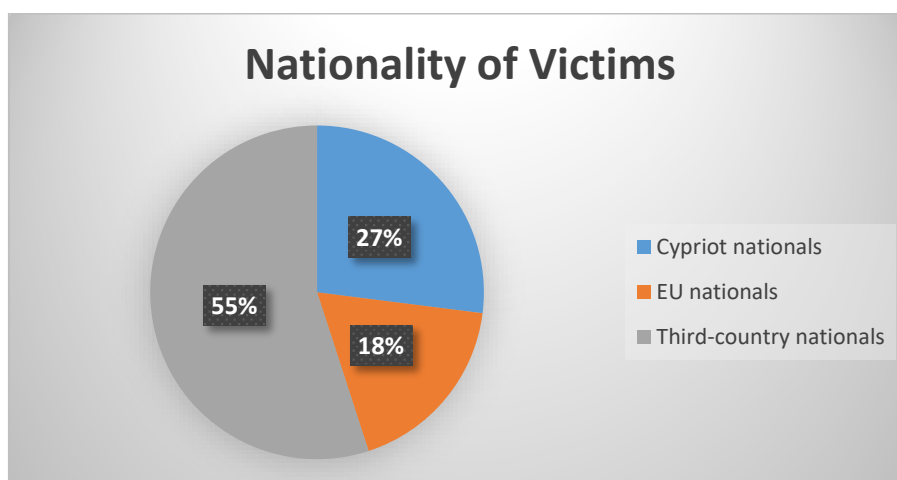
Most of the victims were of a migrant background, whilst in 4 out of 11 cases the victims were domestic workers and third country nationals (see Graph 4). Based on the data, it seems that there is a greater risk for women of a migrant background since n=8 (73%) (n=6 thirty country national and n=2 EU nationals) of the victims were recorded as migrants and only n=3 (27%) of the victims were Cypriot nationals. Those with a migrant background were from the Philippines (3), Romania (2), Syria (1), Nepal (1), and Vietnam (1). Regarding the employment status of the victims, four (n=4, 36%) of the victims were domestic workers of a migrant background, while five (n=5, 46%) of the victims' employment was unknown and two (n=2, 18%) were reported as "other" (one businesswoman, one working in a supermarket). Further data characteristics of the victims were not available.

It is noted that 12% of the population in Cyprus are EU nationals, 7% are third country nationals and 81% are Cypriots<sup>74</sup>. Further, according to the Civil Registry and Migration Department, 74,309 residence permits for third-country nationals were issued between May 2018 to May 2019. Many of the candidates (20,543) applied to work in domestic employment.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/cyprus>

<sup>75</sup> <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/more-than-20000-residence-permits-for-domestic-workers-issued-last-year/>

**Graph 4: Nationality of victims**



**Table 3: Nationality of Victims**

| Victim's Nationality      | N=        | %           |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Cypriot nationals         | 3         | 27%         |
| EU nationals              | 2         | 18%         |
| Third – country nationals | 6         | 55%         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>11</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## 5.4 Characteristics of the perpetrators

### 5.4.1 Number of perpetrators

For each case only one perpetrator was identified. In total, 7 different perpetrators were identified out of 11 cases in both years 2019 and 2020 (3 different perpetrators in 2019 and 4 different perpetrators in 2020). Specifically, in the 2019 cases, 5 out of 7 femicide cases were perpetrated by one serial killer who killed 5 women and 2 children (the children of those women) in the years before 2019, however the cases were investigated in 2019. Those women and children had gone missing between the years 2016 and 2018 and their bodies were discovered in 2019. It must be noted that the perpetrator was a partner of these women at the time of the killing. Out of the 7 perpetrators of femicide, 6 had committed IPF.

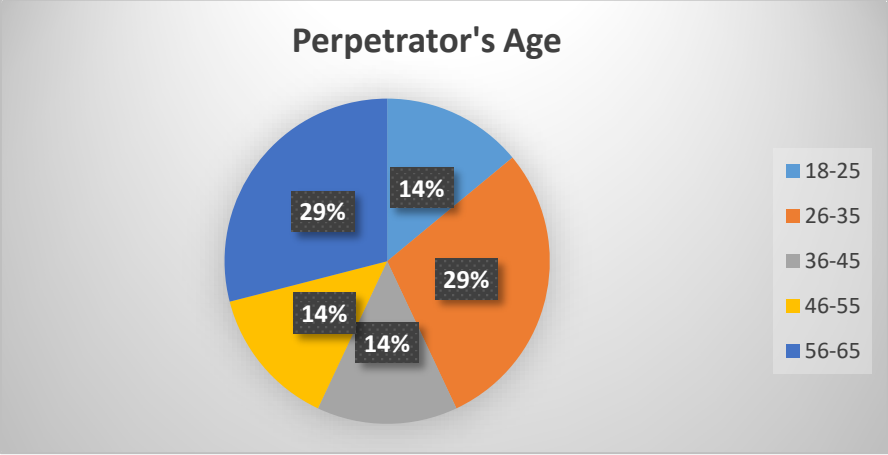
### 5.4.2 Gender of the perpetrators

The killing of women is clearly gendered in relation to both victims and perpetrators. All of the perpetrators were male in all cases for both years.

**5.4.3 Age of the perpetrators**

As described in Table 4 and Graph 5 below, two (n=2, 29%) of the perpetrators were 26-35 years old, two (n= 2, 29%) were 56-65 years old, one (14%) was 18-25 (14%), one (14%) was 36-45 and one (14%) was 46-55 years old.

**Graph 5: Perpetrator’s Age**



**Table 4: Perpetrator’s Age**

| Perpetrator's Age | N= | %    |
|-------------------|----|------|
| 18-25             | 1  | 14%  |
| 26-35             | 2  | 29%  |
| 36-45             | 1  | 14%  |
| 46-55             | 1  | 14%  |
| 56-65             | 2  | 29%  |
| Total             | 7  | 100% |

#### 5.4.4 Other characteristics of the perpetrators

| Marital Status | N= | %     |
|----------------|----|-------|
| Divorced       | 2  | 28.5% |
| Married        | 1  | 14.5% |
| Not Married    | 2  | 28.5% |
| Unknown        | 2  | 28.5% |
| Total          | 7  | 100%  |

**Table 5: Marital Status of the Perpetrators**

| Nationality             | N= | %   |
|-------------------------|----|-----|
| Cypriot nationals       | 5  | 72% |
| EU nationals            | 1  | 14% |
| Third-country nationals | 1  | 14% |
| Total                   | 7  | 100 |

**Table 6: Nationality of Perpetrators**

As seen in Table 5 above, two perpetrators were divorced, one was married, two were single, and in two other cases the marital status of the perpetrator was unknown. Most perpetrators were Cypriot nationals (n= 5, 72%), one (n=1, 14%) was an EU national and one (n=1, 14%) was a third-country national (Table 6).

#### 5.4.5 Further background information on cases of intimate partner femicides

| Further background information on cases of IPF    | IPFs Femicides N=10 | Femicides % |
|---|---------------------|-------------|
| In the context of separation (as far as is known) | 3                   | (30%)       |
| Area / location of femicides                      | 10                  | 100%        |
| • Urban   |                     |             |
| • Perpetrator's home                              | 4                   | (40%)       |
| • Victim's home (Garden/street)                   | 2                   | (20%)       |
| • Mutual home                                     | 1                   | (10%)       |
| • Other (other house, elsewhere outdoors)         | 3                   | (30%)       |
| Method of killing                                 |                     |             |
| • Strangulation                                   | 5                   | (50%)       |
| • Sharp instrument (knife/axe)                    | 2                   | (20%)       |
| • Fire arm  | 1                   | (10%)       |
| • Other (unknown)                                 | 2                   | (20%)       |
| Witnesses   | 2                   | (20%)       |
| • Friends of the victim                           | 1                   | (10%)       |
| • Children of the victim                          | 1                   | (10%)       |

|  |   |       |
|--|---|-------|
| Prior domestic violence reported to the police/authorities | 1 | (10%) |
| Additional Victims (Children)                              | 2 | (20%) |
| Prior Stalking (unknown)                                   | - | -     |
| Prior threats to kill the woman                            | 2 | (20%) |
| Other situational factors                                  | - | -     |

**Table 7: Further background information on cases of IPF**

In 3 out of 10 cases of IPF (30%), the victim and perpetrator were separated or in the process of separation, as far as is known from the data. All of the IPF cases were committed in the urban area (n=10). In 4 (40%) cases, the femicides were committed at the perpetrator's home, in two (n=2, 20%) at the victim's home and in one (n= 1, 10%) at a mutual home. In half of the cases (n=5, 50%), the perpetrator used strangulation to kill the victim. In 2 out of 10 cases there were witnesses; in one case, a friend of the victim witnessed the femicide and in the other case, the three children of the victim. In n= 2 out of 10 IPF cases, there were additional victims who were the children (both girls) of the women killed. Finally, in 2 out of 10 cases, the perpetrator had threatened to kill the victim prior to the femicide.

## 5.5 Institutional knowledge in advance of the killings and institutional reactions

### 5.5.1 Prior case knowledge

In the majority of the cases, institutions had not been involved prior to the femicides. Out of 11 cases, only one case of IPF was known to the authorities (the police and the social welfare services) before the femicide took place, and in this one case a protection order had been issued; it was also known to the victim support system. Additionally, only 2 out of 10 cases were known to others (family members, neighbours, friends).

## 5.6 Trial and results of the trial

As shown in Table 8 below, two thirds of cases went to trial and the perpetrator was found guilty of murder. In two cases, the perpetrator committed suicide following the femicide, and in the remaining 2 cases, there is no information on the result of the trial. In one case, a family member committed femicide and was found guilty by the court.

**Table 8: Results of the Trials**

| Results of the Trials | All Cases | IPF       | Femicide by Family Members As Perpetrators |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| No Trial (suicide)    | n=2 (18%) | n=2 (20%) | 0%   |

|                  |           |           |            |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Guilty of murder | (n=7) 64% | (n=6) 60% | 100% (n=1) |
| Unknown          | (n=2) 18% | (n=2) 20% | 0 %        |
| <b>Total</b>     | 100%      | 100%      | 100%       |

## 5.7 Summary of quantitative analysis

Eleven (11) femicide cases were reported in 2019 and 2020. In addition, two female children of the women killed were affected (killed). Ten out of eleven (10/11) were categorised as intimate partner femicides, two of them in the context of a planned separation. However, it was not known for all cases whether the woman wanted to separate. Most women killed were in the age group of 26-45 years old. It seems that there is a greater risk for women with a migrant background, since almost two quarters of the victims were documented as EU nationals or third country nationals; while most of the perpetrators were Cypriot nationals (71%).

Out of the 11 cases of femicides in 2019-2020, 7 male perpetrators have been identified. In the majority of the cases, institutions and relevant authorities (police, social welfare services) had not been involved prior to the femicides, as far as data reveal. Two thirds of the cases went to trial and the perpetrators were found guilty of murder.

## 6. Qualitative Analysis - In-depth case knowledge as an example for cases that can be informative for prevention

### 6.1 Case one

#### 6.1.1 Characterization of victim, perpetrator and their relationship

In the first case, the victim was a 26-year-old woman from Cyprus with secondary school education; no information about her employment is available. She was Greek-Cypriot and was in a relationship with the male perpetrator. The victim was mother to a 6-year-old girl from a previous relationship.

The perpetrator was a 35-year-old Greek Cypriot male. No information about his educational background and employment status is available. His father reported that his son had been having mental health issues in the previous few months.

The victim and perpetrator were separated at the time of the murder/femicide. It was reported that she wanted to separate and the perpetrator threatened to commit suicide if she were to leave him.

#### 6.1.2 Coercive control and victim's strategies to deal with perpetrator

The perpetrator used a range of violent tactics against the victim, such as physical and verbal abuse, threats, and written threats to kill her. According to the information collected, he threatened that he would commit suicide if the victim were to abandon him. On the day the killing took place, the perpetrator contacted the victim and told her that he was planning to commit suicide. The victim went to find him to prevent him from doing any harm to himself. When they met, they quarrelled, the perpetrator shot her twice, and then killed himself.

### 6.1.3 Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities

There is no data about the woman's previous help seeking. There is no information about any previous reports to the authorities. The police did not report any history of criminal behaviour of the perpetrator.

### 6.1.4 Family, formal and informal networks

There is no information about the victim's and perpetrator's family and work history. There is no information if any workplace intervention had taken place because of his violent behaviour towards the victim.

It was reported that the father of the victim and the victim were aware that he wanted to commit suicide.

### 6.1.5 Social and economic status

The victim was living with her daughter in her own house in a small town. There is no available information about the perpetrator's profession and living conditions after the separation with the victim.

### 6.1.6 Official reports and risk assessment

There is no information about any previous reports to the authorities or if the victim was seeking help from professionals of public services or NGOs. There are no reports of the victim's accounts, nor any information available if any professional or relevant stakeholder had conducted a risk assessment.

An issue not sufficiently reported on, was the fact that the perpetrator was in possession of a firearm despite reports that he had threatened to harm himself as well as others, and he was experiencing mental health issues.

### 6.1.7 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific case

Societal gender-based stereotypes exist regarding the role of men and women in the family and in society. Women's position is undervalued and there is a culture of victim blaming. Cyprus is still a family-oriented country and as a result, women often find it difficult to leave the family even when there is domestic violence. If they manage to do so, then they have to face the patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that are prevalent not only within society but within the victim support and criminal justice systems.

The victim and perpetrator were born in Cyprus and both were Greek-Orthodox. There is no available information on the social and cultural values around the family held by the victim and/or the perpetrator, and/or by their families. However, in this particular case, the victim wanted to leave the relationship; however, the perpetrator did not want to accept and/or respect her will and opinion. As a result, he had been threatening the victim that if they were to separate, he was going to harm himself /commit suicide.

## 6.2 Case two

### 6.2.1 Characterization of victim, perpetrator and their relationship

In the second case, the victim was a 31-year-old refugee woman from Idlib, Syria. She had a primary school education and was a homemaker. Her religion was reported as Muslim. According to reports, she was forced to marry her husband when she was 13 years old and

began to have children from the age of 14. In 2017, she came to Cyprus with her five children on a boat from Lebanon with other Syrian asylum seekers to reunite with her husband, who was already in Cyprus.

The perpetrator is a 42-year-old man, also a refugee from Syria. There is no information about his educational background or employment. According to reports, there was a history of violence toward his spouse.

The victim and perpetrator were married for 18 years, but at the time of the killing, they were separated. The family was under the supervision of the Social Welfare Services. When they got married, the victim was 13 years old and the perpetrator 25 years old. As soon as they got married, she became pregnant. They had seven children and lived together in Syria until 2017 where the mother managed to flee Idlib in Syria, to come to Cyprus with five of her children. After multiple attempts, she arrived in Cyprus and reunited with her husband. The older children of the family (16 and 17 years old) remained in Syria with other family members.

The perpetrator and the victim had separated and, according to reports, the perpetrator was physically abusive and had threatened to kill her several times. There were multiple reports to the police for incidents of physical abuse in the family. One week before the femicide took place, the perpetrator had been barred from the family residence by a restraining order issued against him, and he was ordered by the court to report to the local police station twice a week.

### **6.2.2 Coercive control and victim's strategies to deal with perpetrator**

According to the victim's testimonies and reports to the police, the perpetrator had been abusing her physically and verbally for many years since they were living in Syria. After she reported him to the police and the court issued a restraining order against him, she received written death threats from him. In addition, one week before the femicide, the perpetrator went to her house and stole various objects from the property.

It was reported that the victim had sought help from friends and relatives. Her relatives mentioned that several times they had tried to talk to the perpetrator to stop behaving violently toward his wife. In addition, immediately prior to the femicide the victim had asked a relative to stay with her because she was afraid. Unfortunately, the femicide took place before the arrival of her relative. The victim's friend had also been trying to help her and had advised her to report him to the police and seek help from the authorities, which in the end she found the courage to do.

### **6.2.3 Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities**

The victim had been identified as a potential victim of domestic violence by the UNHCR upon her arrival to Cyprus, while she was staying at the Emergency Reception Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Several NGOs provided counselling and support to the victim. She was under the custody of the Social Welfare Services and an assigned social worker visited her every week. The victim and her children were receiving help and psychological support from the school teachers, the head teacher, the school psychologist and the social worker. Also, during the period immediately prior to the femicide, the family was offered to be hosted at the shelter for victims of violence run by SPAVO. The victim refused, as she was concerned about the ability to live there with her five children and was seeking assistance to relocate to another apartment appropriate for her children and away from the perpetrator.



The victim had made several reports to the police against the perpetrator for domestic violence. She had repeatedly reported the abuse to the police and with the assistance of an NGO lawyer, she had submitted her last complaint after having received written death threats. Her husband was imprisoned for 48 hours and then was released. One week before the femicide, the victim had made a complaint to the police against the perpetrator for stealing various objects from her property. At the same time, the perpetrator had been barred from the family residence after a court restraining order was issued against him and was obliged by the court to report to the police station twice a week.

#### **6.2.4 Family, formal and informal networks**

The victim and the perpetrator were both Syrian refugees of Muslim religion. The victim had experienced forced marriage at the age of 13. The victim's education was limited to primary education. There is no information on the perpetrator's educational background.

Relatives of the victim living in Cyprus were aware of the history of violence toward her. One week before the femicide, the victim had asked a relative to stay with her in her home but the crime took place before she was able to do so.

Friends of the victim and the perpetrator were aware of the domestic violence and the difficulties the family was going through. According to reports, they had tried several times to talk to the perpetrator, to advise him to stop this behaviour. They said that they knew that the perpetrator was violent, and that he was not behaving appropriately to his wife and family.

The victim had one very close friend with whom she shared what she was going through, also a woman from Syria who had herself been a victim of domestic violence. Her friend offered her food, clothes and toys for the children. She accompanied her friend to her children's school to help her communicate with the teachers, as the victim had no knowledge of Greek or English. Her friend had encouraged her to seek help. Following the femicide, neighbours reported that the perpetrator was a 'harsh man'.

The family has been under the supervision of the Social Welfare Services. The family was also receiving psychological support from the school. Specifically, the teacher, head teacher and the school psychologist provided psychological support to the children and any other support they needed (food, clothes, toys). In addition, they had had regular meetings with the victim and had tried several times to arrange a meeting also with the perpetrator, unsuccessfully. A friend of the victim reported that the children were experiencing psychological difficulties, particularly the youngest.

#### **6.2.5 Social and economic status**

The victim had never worked and was a homemaker. There is no information about the perpetrator's employment status or history. The victim was living with her children in a rented house in an urban centre. There is no information about the perpetrator's living situation after the separation nor about his profession.

#### **6.2.6 Official reports and risk assessment**

The victim had requested assistance from the police and from the social welfare services several times. One week before the femicide, the perpetrator had been barred from the family residence after a court restraining order was issued against him and he was obliged by the court to report to the police station twice a week. There is no information available as to whether the police or the social welfare services had carried out a risk assessment.

### 6.2.7 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific case

There is no available information about the social and cultural values in the family. As mentioned above, the perpetrator and victim were born and raised in Syria, and were of Muslim religion. Furthermore, the victim was also a victim of child marriage, indicating increased vulnerability to violence and abuse. Their migrant status as refugees in Cyprus may also indicate increased vulnerability, given that there are language and cultural barriers to access to services and support, as well as racist and discriminatory attitudes among public authorities and society.<sup>76</sup>

## 6.3 Similarities and specificities of the cases

### 6.3.1 Characterization of victim, perpetrator and their relationship

Despite the fact that the two cases present very different characteristics in relation to nationality, religion, and migrant status there are important similarities in both cases. The victims of the femicide cases analysed were both of a relatively young age, 26 and 31 respectively. Both had a relatively low educational status, with one victim with secondary school education and the other a primary school education. Both victims had also had children at a very young age.

Both perpetrators were significantly older than their victims, 35 and 42 years respectively. There is no information available about their educational background or employment status.

In both cases, there was a history of violence by the perpetrator against the victim, including physical, psychological and verbal abuse. Furthermore, in both cases the perpetrator had threatened to kill the victim prior to the femicides.

Another important characteristic of both cases is that the femicide followed a separation.

In the 2019 case, the perpetrator had threatened to commit suicide if she left him and did actually do so immediately after committing the femicide. The parents of the perpetrator and father of the victim had knowledge of the perpetrator's threats to commit suicide, and the perpetrator had a firearm in his possession.

In the 2019 case, the victim and perpetrator were living in a small town/non-urban setting, while in the 2020 case, the victim and perpetrator lived in an urban centre.

### 6.3.2 Previous help seeking and reports to the authorities

While in both cases, it is reported that the perpetrators had a history of abuse toward the victim, only in the 2020 case were official reports made to the police. This case was also known to the school of the victim's children. It is also noteworthy that the family was being monitored by the Social Welfare Services. The victim had also sought assistance from friends and family.

It is also important to consider that in the 2020 case, the victim had been identified as vulnerable by the UNHCR upon her arrival to Cyprus, while she was staying at the Emergency Reception Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

### 6.3.3 Family, formal and informal networks

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<sup>76</sup> Angeli, M. (2020), Gender Dynamics across Reception and Integration in Cyprus, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WP6-Report-Cyprus.pdf>

For the 2019 case, there is no information about the victim's and perpetrator's family or employment status/history.

While it is known that the victim of the 2020 case was a homemaker and had never worked, there is no information about the perpetrator's employment status/history. As described above, friends and relatives of the victim were aware of the domestic violence, and played an important role in supporting and assisting the victim.

#### **6.3.4 Social and economic status**

There is limited information on the social and economic status of the victim and perpetrator for both cases. In the 2020 case, the victim was a Syrian refugee and her migrant status as refugee indicates increased vulnerability, given that there are language and cultural barriers to access to services and support. Importantly, her vulnerability was flagged by the UNHCR upon assessment at the emergency reception centre. She is likely to have been dependent on public benefits due to her refugee and employment status, as well as having five dependants. The family was being monitored and supported by the Social Welfare Services.

#### **6.3.5 Official reports and risk assessment**

For the 2019 case, there is no available information about any previous reports to the authorities or if the victim had sought assistance from public services or NGOs. Thus, in contrast to the 2020 case, the police and social services had no knowledge of the case and were not involved at any point prior to the femicide. An issue that is not sufficiently addressed in media coverage, was that the perpetrator had a weapon in his possession, despite reports that he had threatened to harm others as well as himself.

In the 2020 case, the victim had requested help from the police and from the social services on several occasions. The perpetrator had a restraining order issued against him and was mandated to report to the police station twice a week. No other measures were taken to ensure that the protection order would be complied with. It is not known if the police, as the responsible authority, had conducted a risk assessment.

#### **6.3.6 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific cases**

The 2020 case involved a refugee woman who had recently come to Cyprus with five children. Despite being flagged as vulnerable to domestic violence by UNHCR upon arrival to Cyprus, and the involvement of the various authorities, including the police, it was not sufficient to prevent the escalation of violence and femicide. Migrant women often do not have access to services or lack adequate specialised support due to cultural, economic and other barriers. In an environment where cultural difference is stigmatised and patriarchal regimes still affect the everyday life of women and men, migrant women are silenced for fear of being further marginalized. This is exacerbated by the fact that general and specialist victims support services are not sufficiently available to meet the needs and provide better support to all groups of women. There is a deep gap in experience and expertise among front-line professionals, and interagency cooperation and coordination is weak.

Both cases also indicate that separation is a risk factor for the escalation of intimate partner violence, and lethality. This is supported by studies that show high rates of ongoing fear and abuse associated with post-separation.<sup>77</sup>

## 7. Conclusions

### 7.1 Legislative and policy framework

- Forms of IPV and DV are criminalized under the Violence in the Family Laws 2000 (as amended) and, very recently, under the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law 2021. Cyprus ratified the Council of Europe Convention to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2017.
- Until very recently, IPV/DV was framed in both law and policy as “family violence” and not as violence against women, recognising IPV/DV as a form of gender-based violence disproportionately affecting women. This gender neutrality does not recognise women as the primary victims of such violence, although over 70% of victims of “family violence” are female and over 75% of perpetrators are male, demonstrating the clear gendered dimensions of family violence.
- Cyprus does not have a legal definition of femicide. However, the perpetrator may be liable for murder, manslaughter or killing due to provocation. In both law and policy there is a failure to recognise the link between IPV/DV and femicide. While there has been increased public discourse on femicide in recent years, in general, femicide has yet to be recognized as a policy issue in its own right.
- In relation to protection measures for victims of IPV/DV, although the legal framework foresees the issuance of protection orders in favour of victims of IPV/DV, there is no data available to ascertain the number and type of protection orders issued in Cyprus. It is therefore not possible to assess their prevalence or effectiveness in protecting victims or in preventing further violence, including femicide. Furthermore, it is not possible to assess which factors legal authorities generally take into account when deciding on the duration and the conditions of a protection order.
- There are no specific policies in place on preventing femicide. Cyprus has adopted National Action Plans for the combatting and prevention of family violence and for the promotion of equality between women and men. However, these are not accompanied by specific objectives, qualitative and quantitative indicators, allocation of sufficient funding, and there is no evidence of any follow-up or evaluation. Generally, National Action Plans lack the political will and resources needed for their implementation and largely remain aspirations.
- Despite the significant migrant population in Cyprus, and a high incidence of violence against women and femicide among this group, migrant and ethnic minority women are not specifically addressed in National Action Plans, rendering them invisible on a policy level.

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<sup>77</sup> Spencer, C. M., & Stith, S. M. (2020). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(3), 527–540. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018781101>.

## 7.2 Data collection

- Public authorities do not collect comprehensive data collection on all forms of violence against women disaggregated by sex and age of victim and perpetrator, type of violence, relationship between victim and perpetrator. Available data only include incidences of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, reported to the police.
- The lack of systematic collection and comprehensive analysis of data on violence against women is problematic, as it impedes an in-depth understanding of the root causes but also the extent of these issues in Cyprus. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data and research impedes informed analysis and policy-making that would create much needed services and mechanisms to support and protect victims.
- In terms of data collection on femicide, the Police collect some variables relevant to the identification of femicide; however, the data is not available to the public. Data collected by the Police include characteristics of the victim, of the perpetrator and contextual variables.
- Limited research or data exists on violence against women of ethnic minority or migrant background in Cyprus, despite the EOF data collection.

## 7.3 Protocols for management of IPV/DV cases

- There are protocols in place for the management of IPV/DV cases, including specialised teams for the investigation of cases of violence in the family in the Criminal Investigations Department of the Police in each district, and inter-departmental guidelines on the reporting and handling of violence in the family addressed to public prosecutors, the Social Welfare Services, the Police, the Health Services, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and NGOs.
- In terms of risk assessment, there is a protocol in place for risk assessment in cases of IPV, including in cases of ex-spouses and ex-partners, which has been implemented by the Police since 2018. Objectives of the risk assessment protocol include to prevent revictimization, the escalation of violence and lethal violence. However, no evaluation of the risk assessment protocol has been carried out to date and it is therefore not possible to ascertain the use and effectiveness of the protocol in reducing and preventing IPV, and by extension femicide. Other frontline professionals (e.g. Social Welfare Services, Health Services) do not use risk assessment tools to evaluate risk and to inform responses to violence against women.

## 7.4 Support and intervention system for IPV/DV

- State services for the support and protection of victims of domestic violence are inadequate in responding to the victim's needs. There is a deep gap in experience, professional and specialized staff, and interagency cooperation is weak. The establishment of the Woman's House is a positive development in this regard, but it is still in its pilot phase, and has yet to be rolled out across Cyprus.
- The lack of effective multi-agency cooperation and coordination is a major obstacle to the implementation of laws and policies on violence against women and domestic violence in order to effectively respond to violence against women and prevent femicide. This is related to the lack of effective coordinating body that leads to a

fragmented approach with different bodies, mechanisms, and policies in place with little recognition of the links between them.

- The quantitative data collected and analysed in this report, clearly demonstrates that women of migrant background are at increased risk of femicide. A positive development in practise is the recently established Woman's House that provides integrated specialised services to women and girls who are victims of violence against women. It provides services without discrimination on any grounds, including migrant status or residence status. However, migrant women often do not have access to services or lack adequate specialised support due to cultural, economic and other barriers.
- Regarding the legal system and access to justice, women are often faced with court delays, as well as sexist stereotypical attitudes by prosecutors and the judiciary. A high number of reported domestic violence cases never reach the court and are either suspended or dropped. There is no documentation why these cases are dropped or suspended. There is clearly a 'justice gap' in Cyprus in relation to successfully prosecuting domestic violence against women.
- Front line professionals working in the Police, Social Welfare Services, and Health Services may have stereotypical attitudes towards victims of DV and gender-based violence, often leading to secondary victimization/re-victimisation. Some efforts have been made to train front line professionals on violence against women. However, front line professionals (Police, Social Welfare Services, and Health Services) often lack the ability (human resources, lack of direction from senior government officials) to offer adequate support and protection. Overall, there is limited expertise in relation to violence against women among front-line professionals. This is a direct outcome of the lack of specialised training provided. Training is offered by NGOs, but not systematically due to lack of funding. Training on violence affecting specific groups of women is also lacking, particularly in relation to migrant women and women with disabilities.

## 7.5 Extent of femicide

- Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected, femicide is indeed prevalent in Cyprus. During the years 2019-2020, the total number of femicide cases recorded were 11; all of these cases, except one, were IPV/DV related femicides.
- Based on the quantitative data collected, the key characteristics of femicide in Cyprus are: (i) the majority of femicides were perpetrated in the context of IPV/DV; (ii) all of the perpetrators were male; (iii) the majority of victims were non-Cypriot nationals with a migrant background or status; (iv) the majority of perpetrators were Cypriot nationals; (v) the majority of femicide cases went to trial, where the perpetrator was convicted of murder.
- Based on the qualitative analysis, the following common points between the 2 cases of femicide could be identified: (i) in both cases, there was a history of IPV/DV; (ii) both cases occurred in the context of separation between the victim and the perpetrator; and, (iii) in both cases the perpetrator threatened to kill the victim prior to the femicides.
- Key differences between the 2 cases of femicide in the qualitative analysis include: (i) the involvement of the police, social welfare services and other services of the support



system prior to the femicides; (ii) the nationality and migrant/refugee status of the victims; (iii) the nationality and migrant/refugee status of the perpetrators; (iv) the perpetrators' access to firearms; (v) the help-seeking behaviour of the victims; and (vi) the suicide of the perpetrator.

- The qualitative analysis highlights that: (i) the issuance of a protection order against the perpetrator in one of the cases was not sufficient to prevent the femicide; (ii) although the refugee status of one of the victims led to the very early involvement of the social welfare services and the police, potential language and cultural barriers, as well as the victim's heightened vulnerability due to her refugee status, were not adequately addressed; (iii) in one of the cases, the perpetrator reportedly had mental health issues and had threatened to commit suicide before carrying out the femicide; (iv) the media portrayal identified the perpetrator's threat to kill himself as mental illness only, and not as a strategy of coercive control by the perpetrator over the victim.

## 7.6 Femicide in the media

- Media reporting on femicide lacks an understanding of the gender dimensions of femicide and the link with violence against women and domestic violence. This link is often overlooked by focusing on the masculine perspective. Further, media coverage of femicide(s) in Cyprus is also characterised by the use of sexist language which attributes blame to the victim, normalising the violence committed by men against women.

## 8. Recommendations

- The inclusion of the crime of femicide as a specific offence: A legal definition of femicide must be developed and included in the legal framework as a separate offence in order to ensure that the gender dimension of homicide data is made visible and relevant for prosecution and sentencing.
- Robust data on violence against women and femicide: The collection of reliable, regularly updated administrative and statistical data on victims and perpetrators of all forms of violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age and victim-perpetrator relationship, should be mandatory. A common tool for statistical data collection in order to reflect the specific circumstances relating to the killings of women should be adopted by all relevant stakeholder.
- Mandatory and systematic specialised training for front-line professionals: Training for the front-line professionals dealing with victims and perpetrators of all acts of violence against women – and specifically on the prevention of IPV/DV related femicide – should be mandatory and systematic.
- Standardized approach to risk assessment for the prevention of femicide: A standardised approach to risk assessment must be adopted that would promote a shared understanding of risk across the system, and a common language to communicate risk. Risk assessment protocols which are both gender sensitive and culturally competent should be used by all front-line professionals, and risk factors associated with coercive and controlling behaviour should be incorporated in such protocols. Specialized training for front-line professionals on the use of risk assessment tools is also essential.
- More effective use and monitoring of protection measures: The use of protection orders should be increased and their effectiveness improved by ensuring that monitoring

mechanisms are developed and put in place to ensure that protection orders are effective in ensuring the safety and protection of women. Breaches of protection orders are appropriately sanctioned in order to have a deterrent effect.

- More effective multi-agency cooperation and coordination: Multi-agency and multidisciplinary co-operation involving all relevant stakeholders, including women's organizations and NGOs, should be strengthened and supported, including within the context of the Woman's House that operates as a "one-stop-shop" crisis intervention centre for victims of violence against women.
- Protecting migrant women from gender-based violence: Barriers to access to comprehensive protection and support to all women and girls should be removed, particularly women who are in situations of disadvantage and facing multiple discrimination, including women of migrant background. The Cyprus government's reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention in relation to autonomous residence permits for migrant women experiencing violence should be lifted.
- Recognizing children as victims in their own right: Girl children must to be recognized as victims of femicide in their own right. The issue of children living with intimate partner violence is recognised and effectively addressed.
- Adequate and sustainable funding for specialised services provided by NGOs: Victim support services are assigned to specialised NGOs should be provided with appropriate financial resources in order to meet demand.
- Awareness raising among the public and the media: More attention should be given to primary prevention of violence against women by recognising the role of the educational system, as well as the media as transmitters of traditional and cultural and social norms that are conducive to violence against women. Sensitizing of media professionals through awareness raising and training are essential to strengthen skills in gender-sensitive, complete reporting on femicides.



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<https://domviolence.org.cy/en/>; [https://domviolence.org.cy/en/xoroi\\_filoxenias](https://domviolence.org.cy/en/xoroi_filoxenias).

Cyprus Police: <https://www.police.gov.cy/>.

European Website on Integration (2019). *Governance of Migrant Integration in Cyprus*. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/cyprus>

Social Welfare Services:

<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/6D758FF5E541A873C2257921002F19C3?OpenDocument>.

Woman's House:

<http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/cgi-bin/hweb?-V=womanshouse&FSECTION=10200&-dwomanshouse.html&-Sr&VSECTION=10200&VCATEGORY=0000&VCATEGORY=0000>.