

European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Annex I – new version 2013

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the RoP (Par.2 §3).

General information

1. Please specify your country.

Sweden

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project? (**Only one ECPA entry per country plus a maximum of two additional projects may be submitted**)

Swedish ECPA entry

3. What is the title of the project?

Relationship Violence Centre, RVC

4. Who is leading the project? Contact details.

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5. What was the start date of the project? Is the project still running?

The RVC was implemented as a project between 2007 and 2011. Was made permanent in 2011 and is still ongoing.

6. Please give a short general description of the project. (**Abstract max. 150 words**)

A large proportion of those who report domestic violence to the police either do not want to, or are afraid or don't have the strength to participate in the police investigation, which makes the work of the police and the prosecutor more difficult. This leads to a large proportion of such police investigations being discontinued without prosecutions due to a lack of evidence. The Relationship Violence Centre

(RVC) was initiated in order to 1) provide support to the victims of domestic violence at the critical time subsequent to the registering of the police report so that they have the will and the strength required to participate in the police investigation 2) to facilitate the collaboration between the police, prosecutors and the social services in cases of domestic violence and 3) to ensure that more reported cases of domestic violence also result in prosecutions. The RVC is comprised of two trained social workers who, within 48 hours of a police report on domestic violence, contact the victim and provide support in the form of five counselling sessions. The RVC shares the premises of the police and works in close collaboration with the police, prosecutors and the social services. In the critical phase following the incident being reported, the RVC serves as a link between the agencies involved and provides contacts to protective accommodation, the subsequent police investigation, possible healthcare needs etc. The support provided by the RVC is intended to motivate the victim to participate in the police investigation and ensure that the victim receives the information she/he needs about the legal process. External evaluations show that 42 percent of the cases in which the RVC has been involved have resulted in prosecutions, compared to 24 percent of the cases where the RVC has not been involved.

I. **The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.**

7. How does the project contribute to the prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? (**Max. 150 words**)

Studies show that domestic violence is subject to a very large dark figure, i.e. that few of the offences committed are reported to the police. For a woman who is assaulted by a male partner, filing a police report, and the subsequent legal process, may constitute an almost insurmountable obstacle. The presence of the RVC means that the victims are contacted within 48 hours of a police report by someone who will listen about their situation. The RVC provides women with emotional support in a critical situation, helps explain the legal process and if necessary provides contacts with the social services, protective accommodation and the police. This support is intended to help women in a difficult situation to follow the process from police report through prosecution and a possible trial. Studies show that this type of support increases reporting propensities among women exposed to violence and also results in more prosecutions.

8. How is the project related to the ECPA-theme selected by the organising Member State? (**Max. 150 words**)

The theme for this year is Prevention in Domestic Violence. The RVC is a collaboration between the police, social services and the prosecution authority and has the objective of providing adequate support to every woman who reports

domestic violence. The RVC also has the objective of improving police investigations of domestic violence and the number of reported incidents that result in prosecution. The project is thus highly relevant to the theme of this year's ECPA.

9. How is the project contributing to raising citizens' awareness of crime prevention? (**Max. 150 words**)

Violence against women was for a long time given a low priority within the police. By means of activities such as the RVC the police can provide a better service to women (and men) in relation to incidents of domestic violence. The increased focus of the police on prioritising domestic violence sends a signal to the public that the police are looking to increase the number of incidents of domestic violence that are reported and that they are taking the problem of intra-family violence seriously.

II. The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.

10. What was the reason for setting up the project? What problem(s) did it aim to tackle? How, when and by whom were these problems defined? (**Max. 150 words**)

In the Västerort police district in Stockholm, an average of 175 reports are filed annually relating to incidents of violence within the family (primarily against women who are living, or have lived, in an intimate relationship with the male perpetrator). Between 2002 and 2006 the number of filed reports increased from approximately 75 per year to over 150. One problem was that very few of the investigations led to prosecution and conviction. The majority were discontinued due to insufficient evidence. The RVC was started in 2007 in order to strengthen the role of the police, prosecutors and social services and to improve the support provided to women so that they would be able to follow the case through the legal system. It was also the police, the prosecution authority and the social services who together identified the problem and took the initiative to initiate the RVC.

11. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

The project has three main objectives.

Objective 1. The RVC should provide support to victims who report domestic violence.

Objective 2. The RVC should facilitate and improve the collaboration between public sector agencies, primarily the police, the social services and the prosecution

authority.

Objective 3. More police reports on domestic violence should result in prosecution.

(The extent to which these objectives have been achieved is described in Question 15).

12. How was the project implemented? How were these objectives translated into actions? What was the action plan of the project? (**Max. 300 words**)

The RVC was originally initiated because the social services, police and prosecutors saw that many of those exposed to domestic violence did not participate in the police investigation after the offence had been reported. A study visit was made to Canada to look at the Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP), which has successfully met the needs of this target group. The model was adapted to Swedish conditions and has developed into the RVC. The RVC was initiated in 2007 and has established links to a university, which has continually followed-up the project's goals over a period of five years. Evaluations have been published in 2008, 2009–2010 and 2012. The evaluations show that the project has developed in line with its original, specified goals.

The RVC was implemented in the form of a project for the first four years. During the initial years of the project there were three parallel collaboration groups at different organisational levels: a steering group, comprising senior managers at the level of heads of department at the social services, and police district chiefs, a working group comprising unit managers at the social services and corresponding managers at the other partner organisations, and an implementation group. When the project became integrated into the organisations' routine activities in 2011, the working group remained. Social services heads of department and police chiefs regularly meet the RVC section manager. An evaluation conducted following the first year of the RVC project (Ekström and Berg, 2008) showed that collaboration between the organisations had improved continuously over the year.

13. Was the context analysed **before** the project was implemented? How, and by whom? Which data were used? (**Max. 150 words**)

Yes, see question 10. Police statistics on reported offences and statistics on the work of the social services and the prosecution office have been employed.

14. Has the project been evaluated? Internally and/or externally? Process and/or impact evaluation? How, when and by whom? Which data and techniques were used? (**Max. 300 words**)

Yes. The project has been evaluated, externally. A total of four evaluations have

been conducted, which together provide a thorough analysis of the work of the RVC and its objectives. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed. The women exposed to violence, police officers, prosecutors and social services staff have been asked to what extent they perceive the RVC to have been of assistance. Data have been collected using pre-printed questionnaires, statistics focused on the work of the organisations involved, and in-depth interviews. The fourth evaluation employed multivariate statistical analyses to examine whether, and to what extent, different factors in the RVC work may have contributed to more reported offences resulting in prosecution.

15. What were the results? Was the project implemented as originally intended?

To what extent were the intended objectives of the project achieved? Please refer back to the objectives mentioned in question 11. What works/has worked for whom in what circumstances? Were there any unexpected side-effects? **(Max. 300 words)**

The external evaluations together show that the project objectives have been achieved to a very substantial extent.

Objective 1. The RVC will provide support for individuals who report domestic violence. The evaluations show that 83 percent of the women asked felt that the RVC had given them the support they needed to participate in the legal process. The immediate counselling support provided in the crisis situation was the main element that was most appreciated.

Objective 2. The RVC will facilitate and improve inter-agency collaboration.

Police, social services staff and prosecutors have completed questionnaires on the RVC. A very substantial majority agreed that the RVC relieves them of work pressures (43 percent completely agreed, 29 percent partly agreed). On a scale of 1–6 regarding how satisfied they were with the RVC, where 1 was defined as very dissatisfied and 6 as very satisfied, 82 percent of the group of police, prosecutors and social services staff chose 5 or 6. The police are the professional group that are most satisfied with the RVC collaboration, stating that the RVC enables them to conduct better investigative interviews and police investigations. Prior to the RVC, the police felt that much of their contact with the women who had been assaulted was focused on practical issues and providing psychosocial support and that only a small part could be focused on the criminal investigation. The collective assessment of the “collaboration objective” shows that the RVC fulfils an important function and facilitates collaboration between the agencies involved.

Objective 3. More reported offences should result in prosecution. The evaluation shows that in those domestic violence cases where the RVC is involved, more reported cases of gross violation of a woman’s integrity (which includes

violence, harassment and threats against the victim) resulted in prosecution than in cases where the RVC has not been involved. In order to confirm this, the evaluation studied the 183 cases of reported gross violation of a woman's integrity registered at the Västerort police district. 53 cases, i.e. just under 30 percent, resulted in prosecution. The remaining 130 cases were discontinued based on the motivation that the offence could not be proved (several factors may be involved, such as the victim not wanting to participate, lack of witnesses, injuries not documented etc.). The examination of the 53 cases that resulted in prosecution shows that prosecutions have occurred in 40 percent of the cases that have included RVC support and in 24 percent of the cases where the victim has not received RVC support. A multivariate analysis showed that the two most important variables for increasing the probability of prosecution were that external witnesses had been interviewed and that there were documented injuries. The analysis also shows that support from the RVC also increases the probability of a prosecution.

16. Are there any reports or documents available on the project and/or the evaluation of the project? Please, provide references to the most relevant ones. (**Max. 5 references**)

1. Evaluation 2012

<http://kunskapsbanken.nck.uu.se/nckkb/nck/publik/fil/visa/392/Nr%2077%20Relationsv%C3%A5ldscentrum%20ur%20ett%20brottsutredande%20perspektiv.pdf...>

2. Evaluation 2010

<http://esh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:416176/FULLTEXT01.pdf...>

3. Evaluation 2009

<http://esh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:533627/FULLTEXT01.pdf...>

4. Evaluation 2008

<http://esh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:533632/FULLTEXT01.pdf...>

III. The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.

17. Why is the project innovative, original or creative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

The police, social services and the prosecution authority are required to collaborate when domestic violence is discovered or reported to the police. These agencies have different missions, however, and no one has been able to both provide psychosocial

support to the women in a crisis situation and at the same time prepare them for the legal process and the coming police interviews. The RVC provides this bridge between the police/prosecutors and the social services. The RVC relieves the pressure on both organisations so that the police can concentrate on conducting a high-quality investigation of the offence, while the social services can concentrate on providing lasting psychosocial treatment and resolving the possible housing needs of the victim.

IV. The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.

18. How and to what degree were relevant stakeholders involved (directly or indirectly) in the project? **(Max. 150 words)**

The RVC is primarily a collaboration between the police, the prosecution authority and the social services (Stockholm city). The social services administration is the responsible authority for the project. Between 2007 and 2010 there was a senior steering group comprising senior managers from the different organisations. The police, for example were represented by a district police chief. Under this steering group there was a working group comprising unit managers from the three agencies. Then there is an implementational level, where police officers, social services staff and prosecutors collaborate on a day-to-day basis in relation to the victims of domestic violence. When the RVC was made permanent in 2011, the steering group was disbanded, leaving the working group and the implementational level. Within the working group, heads of division for the social services meet regularly with police chiefs and the RVC section manager. The day-to-day work of the RVC is conducted by trained social workers together with the police on police premises. It is also the police who pay for the cost of the premises.

19. Which other (local, national, international) partners were involved in the planning, development and/or implementation of the project? Who were they and what were their roles? **(Max. 150 words)**

The RVC was initiated in project form in 2007 with the support of funding provided by the County Administrative Board in Stockholm. The RVC is primarily a collaboration between the Västerort police district, the prosecution authority and the social services administration. There is also a collaboration with the prison and probation service and Stockholm County Council (healthcare). Prior to 2011, when the work was still conducted in the form of a project, there was also a reference group which included representatives from local women's shelters and victim support centres, the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Migration Board,

the Church of Sweden, Svenska bostäder (a municipal housing company with a large number of homes in the area), the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights and the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence against Women.

V. The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.

20. How and by whom is the project funded? **(Max. 150 words)**

The Stockholm County Administrative Board, the police, the social services administration, the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

21. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material, infrastructure and human resources? **(Max. 150 words)**

The Stockholm County Administrative Board provided funding at the start of the project. The police fund the premises used by the two trained social workers who work at the RVC. The social services administration (Stockholm City) pay the RVC staff salaries (two full-time posts).

22. Has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out? If so, how, and by whom? What were the findings? Please provide supporting information. **(Max. 150 words)**

No external evaluation of the RVC has been conducted in the form of a cost-benefit analysis. There are however calculations showing that every violent crime involves substantial costs to society (healthcare, loss of income etc.) which means that the money spent on the work of the RVC is probably money well spent from a social economic perspective.

23. Please describe the context of the project in as much detail as possible: basic theory or principles which form the basis of the project, geographical area, legal context, timescale. **(Max. 300 words)**

In their conversations with victims of domestic violence, RVC staff employ the ORS (Outcome Rating Scale) and SRS (Session Rating Scale). The method is evidence based and is used both as a working method and a steering instrument in order to evaluate the counselling provided. The method is solution-focused and involves the victims themselves feeling that they are participants in their own process of change. MI (Motivational Interviewing) is also a method that is employed by RVC staff where appropriate. One of the points of departure for the RVC is found in the principles and views of academic and therapist Allan Wade about making people's resistance to violence visible. The RVC handbook states: "Victims of violence are often described

as passive and weak. This use of language often contributes to the victims feeling passive, which produces feelings of guilt for not have resisted or protested. Finding this resistance is a source of strength and signals the strength of the victims in the midst of their victimisation.” What is central in the meeting with victims of violence is talking about resistance, while talking about ideas and feelings is secondary. If the victim meets with a negative response from public sector agencies there is a substantial risk that the individual will not participate in the subsequent legal process.

The RVC work is conducted by two full-time, specially trained social workers, who are based on police premises and work in close collaboration with police and prosecutors. Within 48 hours of an offence report on domestic violence, the RVC establishes contact with the victim. The support provided by the RVC is labelled short-term support and consists in five counselling sessions/meetings. The work of the RVC is a quality-improving measure which ensures that all those who report domestic violence in the Västerort police district are offered a support contact in accordance with the Swedish Social Services Act.

The RVC does not exercise state authority, however, and only serves a supportive function. Policing activities such as investigative interviews etc. are still conducted by the police and the social services make decisions on the provision of financial support, placement needs, protective accommodation and child welfare investigations.

24. Please, write a **one page** description of the project:

A very small proportion of domestic violence is reported to the police. The incidents that are reported far too rarely result in prosecution and conviction. Many police investigations are discontinued because the offences cannot be proved (which may depend on a range of factors – victims withdrawing the complaint, no documentation of injuries, difficulties interviewing witnesses). In order to provide support to the victims, improve the effectiveness of the collaboration between police, social services staff and prosecutors who work on these cases, and in order to encourage a higher rate of reporting to the police, the Relationship Violence Centre, RVC, was initiated.

The RVC provides advice and support to persons aged 18 and over who have been subjected to partner violence or honour-related violence and who have reported an incident to the police. The work is a collaboration between the police, the prosecution authority and the City of Stockholm. Two full-time social workers with special competence in working with violence contact all victims of domestic violence within 48 hours of a police report being registered. The RVC offers the victims different types of support in the form of immediate psychosocial assistance, information about the legal process and the coming contacts with the police, assistance finding protective accommodation if necessary, help with healthcare and the documentation of injuries, and help with investigative interviews and court visits etc. The counselling work is intended have a quality-improving effect and has the goal of creating an understanding of the special logic that informs the work of police, prosecutors and

the courts, where specific details relating to a certain incident are essential. In order to facilitate day-to-day collaborations, the RVC staff work on the same premises as the police. The RVC functions as a unifying link and channel for contacts and information between the collaborating agencies (first and foremost police and social services) and between the victim and these agencies. This has previously been lacking. The RVC has developed methods appropriate for the unique situation faced in the context of the legal process by individuals who have been exposed to systematic and recurrent domestic violence.

The work of the RVC has been ongoing since 2007. It has been repeatedly evaluated, with four external evaluations which together provide a thorough analysis of the work of the RVC and of whether it has achieved its objectives. The evaluations show that the RVC fills an important function in the justice system. The work of the RVC has also led to an increase in the number of reported incidents of domestic violence that result in prosecution. Of the domestic violence cases in which the RVC has been involved, 42 percent resulted in prosecutions, compared with 24 percent of the cases in which the RVC was not involved.

The evaluations show that a large proportion of the victims of domestic violence perceive the support provided by the RVC to have been very good, with the RVC having helped them to avoid withdrawing their complaints and to follow the legal process through to its conclusion. The evaluations also show that the RVC has led to improvements in the collaboration between the police, social services staff and prosecutors who work with domestic violence. The police in particular feel that the RVC has meant that they are able to focus more strongly on investigating the crimes. Prior to the initiation of the RVC, much of the police's work and of their contacts with the victims of domestic violence became focused on providing psychosocial support and dealing with practical issues, leaving little time for the work of the police investigation itself.