

TEMPLATE POLICY PAGE

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| Category: | Domestic Violence |
| Country: | Finland |
| Year: | / |

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| Main policy page: | <p>A general aim is to lower the threshold of talking about violence and doing something to stop it everywhere in society. It also encourages individuals to learn and adopt safe practices that do not, however, put the blame on the victim. Programmes for reducing the risk of violent behaviour should be offered to perpetrators of violence. Programmes for the prevention of violent and sexual offending will also be given as integrated part of serving the sentence for a crime.</p> <p>Cooperation between different authorities will be improved in order better to recognize violence and to assist its victims, perpetrators and those who witness it. Particularly, the cooperation between the social services and the police as well as between the health services and the social authorities will be improved to secure prompt service and to provide a continuous chain of support.</p> <p>In the health services, better and more systematic methods will be developed for the identification of violence and the provision of adequate treatment and referrals to other support organisations. Particularly, work at casualty wards is important for the identification of and intervening with violence as a possible cause of injuries. The health services personnel will be trained to meet victims of violence and to make adequate referrals and recommendations for support measures that reduce the risk of re-victimization.</p> <p>Also the social services and the police are charged with improving their help to the victim of violence in order to reduce the risk of revictimization. This may include assistance to draw up a plan for services support and safety that help achieve these goals.</p> <p>The availability of free telephone hotlines for female victims of violence is to be secured, as is the availability of adequate shelters in all parts of the country. Perpetrators of violence are to be held responsible for their acts and referred to treatment.</p> <p>The safety of those protected by restraining orders is sought by experimenting with electronic monitoring and organizing safe environments for those meetings between the parties that are needed. Also experiments with direct alarms for women under the threat of violence are to be conducted.</p> <p>The special needs of immigrant women who are under the threat of violence are to be addressed e.g., by providing telephone hotlines in several languages, by organising interpreting in ways that allow the</p> |
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| | <p>women to safely speak about violence, and by making sure that immigrant women who report partner violence do not thereby risk their residence permits.</p> <p>Reduction of sexual violence is sought, among other things, by increasing the risk of apprehension and punishment of perpetrators of sexual assaults and by promoting education in safe and mutually respectful sex as well as promoting ways to decrease the risk of sexual assault in various situations.</p> <p>It is expected that violent deaths of women can be reduced relatively quicker than those of men for instance by taking more seriously all known threats of killing. This is so particularly in cases where the threatening person has a violent history and has a previous conviction of aggravated drunken driving.</p> <p>The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is running a four-year programme (2004-2007) for the prevention of intimate partner and domestic violence and to support the victims (see http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/publishing/documents/2393/index.htm).</p> <p>The programme has activities at the national, provincial and local levels. Better identification of victims of violence and their needs at the social and health services has been one of the main goals of the programme. Projects have looked, for instance, at the maternity and child health clinics, emergency wards, and the special problems of immigrant women threatened by violence. The State Provincial Offices are in charge of regional activities, and a regional development group has been set up in each of the five provinces</p> |
| <p>Relevant legislation:</p> | <p>In the most general terms, domestic violence is punishable as any violence, as stipulated in the criminal code. The most important articles in this regard are those on assault, homicide, rape and other sexual violence.</p> <p>Several law reforms since 1990 have affected the way domestic violence is treated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rape: The marital exemption in rape was abolished in 1994. <input type="checkbox"/> Prosecuting assault: Before a reform of the criminal law that became effective in 1995, the right to institute criminal proceedings in assault cases was different depending on whether the offence took place in private or public premises. For (non-aggravated) assaults in private premises charges could be brought only with the request of the victim, while for similar assaults in public premises the public prosecutor could bring charges irrespective of the victim's opinion. This was seen as making domestic assaults less effectively criminalized than violence in public places. After 1995, the public prosecutor can independently instigate proceedings in all assault cases irrespective of where they take place. (Only minor assaults against adults are an exception, charging for them requires the victim's request). <input type="checkbox"/> Prosecuting assault, continued: the 1995 reform included an extended possibility for the prosecutors to drop charges for assaults |

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| | <p>if the victim so wanted based on her or his free and considered will. This clause was abolished effective in 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Restraining order: A law on restraining order came into effect in 1999. □ Restraining order inside the family: From the beginning of 2005 the law can also be applied against a person sharing the same apartment with the person to be protected (so called inside-the-family restraining order). For a description in English, see http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/661B61F339C867ADC2256F700048D25E?opendocument. Breach of a restraining order is a crime. <p>Further legislation plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The government decision in 2006 on reduction of violence asks for an examination as to whether the criminal law could be revised so as to better identify and recognize the often repeated and humiliating nature of violence in intimate relations. |
| <p>Trends:</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Homicides</p> <p>According to the cause-of-death statistics from 1998 to 2005, annually an average of 20 persons, 16 women and 4 men, have been killed because of intentional violence by a current or ex-spouse or a common law spouse. There is considerable annual variation (from 14 to 30) and no clear trend can be claimed, although the annual number of women killed by their spouses has been at or below 15 since 2002 (after a high of 25 in 2001). About 5 persons annually have been killed by their parent or child. The total number of women killed by violence has decreased since the early and mid-1990s, when female violent mortality was at or above 2 per 100,000 of female population and has been just above 1 per 100,000 since 2003.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Victimization surveys</p> <p>According to the six sweeps of the National Victimization Survey conducted between 1980 and 2006 (see National Research Institute of Legal Policy (NRILP), Research Report 74, in Finnish), women's reports of domestic violence victimization have decreased somewhat during the survey's history. In 1980, 1.9 per cent of women reported victimization to domestic violence, while only 1.2 per cent did so in the 2006 survey. The rate of men reporting domestic violence in this survey has been much lower, fluctuating between 0.1 and 0.4 per cent and being 0.3 per cent in the 2006 sweep. There was also a downward trend from 1980 to 2003 in the number of women reporting a physical injury from domestic violence. In 1980, physical injury from domestic violence was sustained by 0.9 per cent of the women; in 2003, only 0.3 per cent reported this. However, in the 2006 sweep, this proportion was slightly higher, 0.5 per cent. Only 0.1 per cent of men reported physical injury by domestic violence in 2006.</p> <p>The two sweeps of a dedicated National Violence Against Women</p> |

survey, conducted in 1997 and 2005 (see NRILP Publication 225, <http://www.optula.om.fi/37962.htm>) have produced somewhat higher rates for women's violent victimization by their intimate partners than one would expect based on the National Victimization Survey. However, the trends are broadly similar. Between 1997 and 2005, a slight decrease was found in violence against women by their current partners. Regarding victimization at any time during the relationship, the rate decreased from 22 per cent in 1997 to 20 per cent in 2005, while the 12 month victimization rate went down from 8.6 to 7.9. These rates included all types of violence or threat. The proportion of those women reporting having been hit or kicked by their current partner during the previous 12 months went down from 1.8 to 0.8 per cent.

Victim support and shelters

According to the 2005 violence against women survey, somewhat more victims than in 1997 reported that they had sought assistance from an agency after the most serious incident of partner violence. The rate rose from 26 to 31 percent of those who had sometimes experienced partner violence. (NRILP Publication 225).

There are several organisations offering support and advice to victims of domestic violence in Finland. For instance, there is a general telephone help-line for victims of crime, Victim Support Finland (Rikosuhripäivystys). Furthermore, there is a helpline for victims of sexual assault, Tukinainen, and another for female victims of violence, Naisten Linja, National Women's Line in Finland. All of these receive financial support from the government or government-controlled agencies as do shelters for victims for violence. The shelters are organised in various ways, such as by municipalities or NGOs. The biggest shelter provider is The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters (see http://www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi/in_english/), a NGO that runs 14 shelters in various parts of Finland.

Contacts:

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