



STOP **VIOLENCE**

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
TO COMBAT ALL FORMS
OF GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE | 2015-2019**



**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
FORCED MARRIAGES
HONOUR-BASED VIOLENCE
SEXUAL VIOLENCE
PROSTITUTION**

Gender-based violence remains an important problem in our society.

For many years now, Belgium has dedicated its resources to combating gender-based violence because it considers the issue an essential element in the equality between women and men.

Belgian context

The battle against gender-based violence constitutes a transversal issue and calls for an integrated approach. Since 2001, Belgium has pursued its policy to combat gender-based violence by means of a national action plan (NAP). This plan is coordinated by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.

The NAP strives for a coherent and coordinated approach and relies on the close cooperation between the federal government, the communities and the regions to convert this plan into 235 new measures to combat gender-based violence.

The NAP | 2015-2019

The plan, under the coordinating leadership of Madam Elke Sleurs, State Secretary for Equal Opportunities, is completely in line with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter called 'Istanbul Convention'). The NAP 2015-2019 constitutes an integral and integrated approach to gender-based violence, coordinating between the means and methods of police and justice system on the one hand, and assistance services on the other hand.

Target group

The various forms of gender-based violence affect a disproportionate number of women, but of course the NAP also concerns male victims of gender-based violence.

Through the full support and implementation of this plan, Belgium aims to provide real answers to the difficulties that victims, offenders, witnesses and professionals come up against.

Priorities

1. Pursue an integrated policy to combat gender-based violence and gather quantitative and qualitative data about all forms of violence.

Pursue a general and coordinated policy through efficient cooperation between all partners.

Collect data and conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the prevalence, the causes and the consequences of violence.

- Eg. > Start new prevalence studies on the experiences of physical, psychological and sexual violence, based on the methodology of the European Fundamental Rights Agency's research about violence against women.
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Organise efficient cooperation with non-governmental organisations and civil society to elaborate, implement and monitor the adopted measures and strategies.

2. Prevent violence.

Launch awareness campaigns for the general public or specific target groups to encourage victims to file a report and to improve violence prevention.

- Eg. > Organise awareness campaigns about the battle against sexism and stereotyping as a way of preventing gender-based violence.
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Launch educational campaigns about the equality between women and men from a very young age and during all stages of education.

Provide training for professionals who may come into contact with victims or perpetrators of gender-based violence.

- Eg. > Provide professional stakeholders with risk assessment tools and reporting codes related to gender-based violence.
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Establish prevention programmes for intervention and treatment of offenders.

- Eg. > Compile an inventory of the available programmes (judicial (including prisons) and non-judicial) and crisis centres for offenders.
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Invite participation of the private sector, the public sector and the media, in particular by elaborating guidelines and self-regulating standards.

- Eg. > Include the battle against sexism in the media in the recommendations for advanced media training (mission of the high council for media training).
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Priorities

3. Protecting and supporting victims.

Inform the victims in an appropriate and accessible way.

- Eg. > Encourage victims of sexual violence to report the facts with the police as quickly as possible.
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Provide general support services to facilitate victim recovery.

- Eg. > Exchange information about existing projects and evaluate and launch new pilot projects focusing on Family Justice Centres, where victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence have access to a range of essential police, justice and care services.
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Provide specialist support services and appropriate shelters in sufficient numbers.

- Eg. > Make the existing support services more accessible to immigrants and other vulnerable groups that are victims of gender-based violence, while perpetuating and reinforcing those services.
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Expand the accessibility of the existing primary telephone assistance.

- Eg. > Expand the existing primary telephone assistance services and/or make them more accessible and available around the clock.
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Support the victims of sexual violence.

- Eg. > Conduct a feasibility study on the start-up of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in Belgium. Based on the results of this feasibility study, elaborate a SARC pilot project, involving expert staff who have been trained in the matter of sexual violence and are available 24/7. These centres will provide victims of sexual violence with immediate medical and psychological care. At the same time, their staff will have the qualifications to conduct forensic investigations into injuries and their causes.
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Protect and support child witnesses to gender-based violence.

- Eg. > Raise awareness among social organisations, schools and professionals who come into contact with children to promote the timely recognition of symptoms and appropriate referral of child witnesses to domestic violence.
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Encourage professionals to report acts of violence.

4. Investigate, continue and accept protective measures.

Advocate a prompt and appropriate reaction by law enforcement.

Implement a system of risk assessment and risk management in cases of gender-based violence.

- Eg. > Investigate optimum procedures and tools to monitor sexual offenders when they are released conditionally, for instance by implementing a risk assessment tool for recidivism.
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Evaluate and improve emergency barring, restraining or protecting orders.

Protect the rights and interests of victims.

5. Take into account the gender dimension in asylum and migration policy.

- > Guarantee quality social care and medical assistance for vulnerable asylum seekers, as well as meticulous monitoring of the asylum procedure.
 - > Draw up directives for domestic violence and sexual violence (including sexual abuse by relief workers) to buttress the deontological code.
 - > Introduce and finance counseling measures to prevent sexual violence during the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, in particular in emergency shelters.
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6. Combat violence on an international level.

- > Belgium will continue to promote development programmes and international measures that prevent, reduce and penalise gender-based violence, with a special focus on the physical integrity of refugee women and girls.
 - > Belgium will continue to support initiatives by international, Belgian and local NGOs devoted to the protection of women and the battle against sexual violence, for instance through integrating medical and psycho-social care, providing socio-economic reintegration of the victims and offering adequate protection and accommodation.
 - > Belgium will also support initiatives that contribute to the elaboration and implementation in third countries of a national legislation punishing sexual violence and encouraging women and girls to file a complaint when they become the victim of sexual violence.
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More information on the NAP 2015-2019
can be found on the website
of the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men

<http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/en>
