

Specialised training on domestic violence for Grand Duchy future members of police forces  
Luxembourg  
2004-2014

## Training the police to handle domestic violence

### Summary

In 2003 Luxembourg adopted a law on domestic violence, which includes provisions to evict perpetrators of domestic violence from the family home. The law also established a nine-strong Cooperation Committee of Professionals on Fighting Violence, which brings together the actors concerned, i.e. the ministries, law courts, police and NGOs working on domestic violence.

Then NGOs and the Grand Duchy's police force have developed a special training module which is delivered to all new police officers as part of their basic training, and has also been delivered to existing officers during in-service training. This is accompanied by tools for police officers to use, such as guidance on writing reports for submission to the public prosecutor and an information card for victims and perpetrators.

One provision of the law is that perpetrators of domestic violence can be evicted from their homes for an initial period of 14 days, which the victim can apply to extend. The training has enabled the law to be implemented very smoothly, and only 1% of cases are problematic.

An exchange programme with neighbouring German *Länder* allows the respective police forces to compare notes on the best ways of dealing with domestic violence.

### Cooperation Committee

Domestic violence is addressed in Luxembourg's National Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men. The plan follows a double approach, aiming both to mainstream the gender dimension in all government policies and to take affirmative action. The current plan covers the period from 2009 to 2014 and forms part of the government programme for this legislative period. The plan addresses the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.

At ministerial level, a specific structure, the *Comité de coopération entre les professionnels dans le domaine de la lutte contre la violence* (Cooperation Committee of Professionals on Fighting Violence) deals with domestic violence as defined by the law on domestic violence of 8 September 2003. As outlined in article III of this law, the committee is to centralise and study statistics. Also, it is to oversee the practical implementation of articles I and II of the law and to monitor any potential problems, as well as to supervise the implementation of articles 1017-1 to 1017-12 of the new code of civil procedure and article 3-1 of the code of criminal procedure. Furthermore, the committee is to make to the government any suggestions it deems helpful.



The nine committee members are nominated by the ministers of equal opportunities, justice and the interior, the judicial service, the police force and the Service d'Assistance aux Victimes de Violence Domestique (SAVVD) which is an NGO serving domestic violence victims. They are appointed by the equal opportunities minister for a renewable term of five years.

### **Mandatory training for all police officers**

In order to ensure that the law on domestic violence was implemented appropriately, a special training course was designed for all Luxembourg police officers. The course and tools to support the correct implementation of the law were developed by the victims' support organisations Profamilia, Femmes en Détresse and Fondation Maison de la Porte Ouverte. It has been included in the two-year basic training that all police officers receive on their recruitment. It consists of three parts:

1. psychological aspects of domestic violence (e.g. cycle of violence)
2. police interventions in the context of the law on eviction and how to work with domestic violence victims and perpetrators: the new mechanisms provided by the law
3. how to record incidents and interventions in notes and reports to the state prosecutor

The training was also offered to police officers already in post in 2003 when the law was adopted. Besides the training, specific tools to support the police have been designed, including checklists, intervention protocols, crime reports and an information card for victims and perpetrators of violence (available in 13 languages).

In 2004, 36 week-long training sessions were delivered to 20 to 30 participants at a time, so reaching approximately 1,000 police officers. Since then an additional 60 police staff have been trained each year. This specific training of police officers ensures that victims are protected, that police give all necessary information to all parties involved (victim and perpetrator) and that the public prosecutor can take an informed decision on the eviction of the perpetrator.

The law is a clear signal to victims and authors that Luxembourg authorities do not tolerate domestic violence and that it is the perpetrator of the violence who should leave his house and not the victims.

### **Smooth implementation of the law**

The training has proved to be an effective tool to implement the law on domestic violence. Police action in the field of domestic violence has steadily increased (except in 2010) as has the number of decisions to evict perpetrators (evictions are for an initial 14-day period which the victim can apply to extend). In 2011 there were 675 police actions and 331 decisions by the public prosecutor (49%) to evict. In 2013 there were 801 police interventions resulting in 357 evictions.

In 2011, only four interventions (1%) were reported by NGOs as having been problematic, which is very low in comparison with other types of police action. This shows that the training of the police force, and the cooperation between all actors in the Cooperation Committee, have had a great impact and have allowed a smooth and appropriate implementation of the law. Permanent dialogue between the police force and other actors entails constant adaptation and finding concrete answers in domestic violence cases.

The implementation of the 2003 law on domestic violence was evaluated in 2006 and is monitored regularly by the Cooperation Committee. This confirms that the training, within the whole range of measures adopted, works well and no major problems have been found in its implementation by the police. The training itself has not been evaluated. In the future a satisfaction questionnaire will be systematically distributed and collected at the end of each training course.

The law was amended in 2013 to add a component on support services for perpetrators. This will require an adaptation of police intervention and an update of the training for police officers. In the future, following the ex-post evaluation questionnaire to trainees, it will be possible to see if improvements to the training itself are needed.

### **Stakeholders learn from each other**

The initiative's success has relied on the training being part of the formal police curriculum. It is complemented by regular monitoring of police action by a specific committee established by law, which involves all the actors concerned. Specialists working with victims are involved in delivering the training.

Annual exchanges with police forces from neighbouring German *Länder* are organised to share good and bad operational experiences in dealing with domestic violence. The Luxembourg and German laws on the eviction of perpetrators share a lot of similarities, so these exchanges are valuable for police officers. However there are some barriers to transnational transfer because the content of the training depends on the detail of the law, and has to change if the law is amended. Even where laws are similar, intervention principles sometimes differ between countries.

The law has two main lessons to teach. Firstly, the creation by the law itself of a Cooperation Committee allows all actors involved in the fight against domestic violence to report regularly on their practices and the difficulties they encounter, thus allowing the development of good practices. Secondly, it is important that all partners know what the others are doing and can discuss and adapt their practices to ensure the smooth implementation of the law. This is constantly reflected in the basic training of police officers, which is delivered by trainers from the police and from NGOs working with victims of domestic violence.

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### **Further information:**

Government website on combating domestic violence:

<http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/societe/lutter-violence-domestique/index.html>

Cooperation Committee: <http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/acteurs/comites/cooperation-violence/index.html>

National Action Plan on the Equality of Women and Men 2009-2014:

<http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/publications/publications-ministere/2010/pan-egalite/plan-egalite2009-2014.pdf>

Law of 30 July 2013 amending the law of 8 September 2003 on domestic violence:

<http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2013/0150/a150.pdf#page=2>

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