

STUDY

# TRENDS IN ADDRESSING FEMICIDE IN THE OSCE REGION

OSCE Gender Issues Programme 2025

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
FOREWORD.....	5
PREFACE.....	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	8
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	11
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHAT IS FEMICIDE?.....	12
What the data show: global and regional estimates.....	14
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS TO ADDRESS FEMICIDE.....	16
OSCE commitments on violence against women.....	17
The UN system.....	18
The European human rights system.....	19
International jurisprudence on femicide.....	20
THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE.....	24
Overview: criminalization of femicide in the OSCE region.....	25
Promising practices in legislation in OSCE participating States.....	26
DATA COLLECTION ON FEMICIDE OR GENDER-RELATED KILLINGS OF WOMEN.....	31
International and regional initiatives to standardize data collection.....	32
Overview: administrative data collection in the OSCE region.....	35
Promising practices in OSCE participating States.....	38
REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING.....	40
Overview: femicide observatories and femicide watches in the OSCE region.....	42
Overview: domestic violence fatality reviews in the OSCE region.....	43
Promising practices in OSCE participating States.....	43
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	47

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACUNS</b>	Academic Council on the United Nations System
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CFOJA</b>	Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>EOF</b>	European Observatory on Femicide
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GREVIO</b>	Group of Independent Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>ICCS</b>	International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes
<b>IPH</b>	Intimate partner homicide
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>SRVAW</b>	UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNSD</b>	United Nations Statistical Commission
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>WAVE</b>	Women Against Violence Europe

# Foreword by Dr Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

According to UN Women every ten minutes a woman is killed by their intimate partner or a family member<sup>1</sup>. Despite significant global efforts to address gender-based violence, femicide continues to claim countless lives and affect communities across borders and cultures. It is one of the most devastating forms of violence against women and girls worldwide, and data show that no country is immune—and every woman is potentially at risk. Yet, femicide is preventable—and it must be prevented, through effective and holistic protection and prevention measures.

Ending femicide and fighting all forms violence against women and girls represent key priorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). As part of our ongoing commitment to promote human rights, equality and security across our participating States—and in line with the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality—the 57 OSCE participating States have pledged to eliminate all forms of violence against women<sup>2</sup>, making a number of legal, institutional and policy changes to prevent femicide and ensure effective protection measures for survivors.

Drawing on the participating States' experiences tackling violence against women and girls, this report provides a deeper understanding of the scale and impact of femicide across the OSCE region, reflecting on the challenges and progress

made, as well as highlighting some of the best practices in place to address this most severe form of gender-based violence. However, the report's findings also underscore the urgency of continued action to address persistent gaps, of strengthening legal protections, of enhancing the capacity of law enforcement, and of creating environments in which women and girls are safe from all forms of violence. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of collecting reliable data on femicide, in order to drive evidence-based policies and hold States accountable for their obligations to protect women's rights.

I hope that this report will not only inform policymakers and activists but also inspire a broader societal conversation about the fundamental rights of women to be safe in their own homes, streets and communities and the collective responsibility we all share in ending femicide. The fight against this heinous crime is not only a fight for justice for individual victims but also a fight for the dignity, equality and safety of women everywhere. The OSCE will continue to work in support of all efforts to end femicide and gender-based violence, and we believe that together, we can create a world where every woman and girl can live free from violence and fear.

*Lara Scarpitta*

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<sup>1</sup> One woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes by their intimate partner or family member | UN Women – Headquarters

<sup>2</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC 15/5, 7/14 and 4/18

# PREFACE

A 2016 symposium on **Combating femicide in the OSCE region**, organized by the Gender Issues Programme of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General<sup>3</sup> (OSCE GIP), identified several good practices across OSCE participating States. It also highlighted areas for future work in support of national governments to improve and systematize data collection, analysis and other actions on combating femicide, with a view to improving prevention and response mechanisms<sup>4</sup>.

Following the symposium, and ahead of the 3rd OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference in 2020, the OSCE prepared a study<sup>5</sup> that reviewed the state of play of data collection on femicide in its region, with the aim of providing recommendations to its participating States on establishing or improving national and subnational mechanisms to collect data and to prevent and combat femicide and other forms of violence against women. In 2023, the OSCE organized the high-level event **A silent war on women—ending femicides in the OSCE region**. Among the event's key recommendations was the development of an in-depth study on the response to femicide in OSCE participating States.

In recent years, the issue of femicide has gained greater prominence in the OSCE region, in part a reflection of the fact that during the global COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown measures were accompanied by spikes in violence against women, including with fatal outcomes, in many regions.<sup>6</sup> In the post-pandemic period, a number of countries have witnessed shocking and distressing cases of women being killed. These tragic deaths have resulted in a public outcry and focused the advocacy efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their demands for the reform of criminal justice systems to better prevent and prosecute this form of violence. As a result a number of participating States introduced important measures which have the potential to serve as best practises across the OSCE and beyond.

Moreover, significant and positive developments have taken place at the international, regional and national levels, in such areas as the standardization of data collection, analysis of femicide cases and introduction of legal definitions of femicide. The OSCE Gender Issues Programme commissioned the present study to update the research conducted in 2020 and add new perspectives to capture policy changes in the intervening years.



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<sup>3</sup> The OSCE Gender Issues Programme organized this event in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS); the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences (SRVAW); and the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network, an NGO.

<sup>4</sup> OSCE Gender Symposium: Combating Femicide, November 25, 2016, Vienna, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/280326>.

<sup>5</sup> This study was published as an internal resource in 2020.

<sup>6</sup> European Data Journalism Network, Femicide and Covid-19: An Epidemic of Violence against Women, 2023, [https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp\\_data\\_news/femicide-and-covid-19-an-epidemic-of-violence-against-women](https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/femicide-and-covid-19-an-epidemic-of-violence-against-women).

## Shocking cases and public outcry lead to policy changes across the OSCE

The following are recent examples of femicide cases in the OSCE region that have galvanized citizens and women's rights activists alike. These are not the only femicide cases to have occurred in the past few years but are a representative sample of those that have become catalysts for action at legislative and policy level.

→ **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA** [Nizama Hećimović]: in 2023 a man tortured and then murdered his ex-wife while live-streaming his acts on Instagram. The incident sparked public protests in the country and across South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Thousands of demonstrators marched in Bosnia and Herzegovina to demand increased punishment for the crimes of femicide and domestic violence and for greater investment into services to protect victims.<sup>7</sup>

→ **ITALY** [Giulia Cecchetti]: after a week-long search in 2023, the body of a missing female university student was found. It was established that her former boyfriend had stabbed her multiple times. Tens of thousands of people across the country took part in protests and other events to condemn violence against women and a misogynistic culture. Soon after, the Italian parliament unanimously approved a new law introducing several measures aimed at, inter alia, strengthening the protection of victims and monitoring of perpetrators.<sup>8</sup>

→ **KAZAKHSTAN** [Saltanat Nukenova]: in 2023, after a former minister was charged with torturing and murdering his wife, citizens and activists published an open letter to the president of Kazakhstan, an online petition was launched (ultimately gaining over 150,000 signatures) and a group of feminist organizations made statements demanding stricter punishment for domestic violence. The subsequent criminal trial also garnered a significant societal response in the form of online protests and denunciations of gender-based violence. In early 2024, criminal penalties for domestic violence were reinstated in Kazakhstan's law.<sup>9</sup>

→ **MOLDOVA** [Ana-Maria Guja]: the Women's Law Centre of Moldova, an NGO, opened a public petition in 2024 following the high-profile kidnapping and murder of a 19-year-old pregnant woman. The petition, calling for, inter alia, a legal definition of femicide, the investigation of all cases of femicide with due diligence and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, gained the support of over 1,500 individuals and 160 civil society organizations. Months later, the parliament adopted legislative amendments that, among other issues, introduced a definition of femicide.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> EURACTIV, "Thousands March in Bosnia After Man Streams Partner's Murder," August 15, 2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/non-discrimination/news/thousands-march-in-bosnia-after-man-streams-partners-murder>.

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian, "Anger Across Italy as Killing of Student Highlights Country's Femicide Rate", November 25, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/25/anger-across-italy-as-killing-of-student-highlights-countrys-femicide-rate>.

<sup>9</sup> Kursiv media, "Петицию против семейно-бытового насилия запустили в Казахстане. Ее подписали более 22 тыс. Человек [Petition against domestic violence launched in Kazakhstan. Signed by more than 22 thousand people]," November 14, 2023, <https://kz.kursiv.media/2023-11-14/zhrb-pet-nas>.

UN Women, "One Too Many – How a Femicide Case Sparked Activism and Change in Kazakhstan," November 22, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/interview/2024/11/one-too-many-how-a-femicide-case-sparked-activism-and-change-in-kazakhstan>.

<sup>10</sup> Women's Law Centre, "Public Appeal: We Demand that 'Femicide' is Recognised in the Legislation of the Republic of Moldova and All Cases of Murdered Women are Investigated Thoroughly," 2024, <https://cdf.md/en/noutati/public-call-we-demand-that-femicide-is-recognised-in-the-legislation-of-the-republic-of-moldova-and-all-cases-of-murdered-women-are-investigated-thoroughly>.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Femicide, the gender-related killing of women and girls, is a global phenomenon and represents the most extreme manifestation of violence against women. Femicides have increasingly come into focus in the OSCE region in recent years, due to an increase of high-profile cases that generated strong public reactions in response.

The OSCE participating States have agreed to several commitments that specifically mandate the Organization's structures to assist participating States with developing programmes aimed at preventing all forms of gender-based violence, as outlined in the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Furthermore, OSCE Ministerial Council decisions from 2005, 2014 and 2018 emphasize the importance of collecting and disseminating reliable, disaggregated data on violence against women, alongside efforts to criminalize gender-based violence.

This report aims to assess the response to femicide across the 57 OSCE participating States, focusing on three key areas: the criminal justice response, the collection of comparable data, and the reporting and analysis of femicide cases. The study examines the international legal framework and existing jurisprudence, as well as existing efforts in the participating States, outlining standards for responding to violence against women and femicide in particular. It recognizes increased awareness and activities to combat femicide in the OSCE region, with key findings pointing to promising practices in the participating States in three specific areas:

## **Criminal Justice Response:**

While a majority of States recognize femicide as aggravating circumstance in homicide cases (mostly in the context of intimate partner or family violence), the mapping indicated that six States have introduced a legal definition

of femicide in their domestic law since 2022. Several OSCE States have recently amended criminal codes to specifically address femicide, using various approaches, including defining femicide as a distinct offence or considering it an aggravating circumstance in cases of domestic violence or gender-based killings. In addition to defining femicide, some countries have incorporated enhanced penalties for gender-based violence, especially in intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and domestic violence contexts. Due to the relatively recent introduction, the success of implementation could not be assessed at the time of this report, but the changes provide an important legal basis for improving the prosecution of femicides.

## **Data Collection on Femicide:**

Regular data collection on femicide or gender-related killings of women is essential for effective policymaking, legislation and prevention strategies. The report notes two classification systems that have been developed on the international and regional level—the UNSD statistical framework and EIGE's indicators. These frameworks endorse a statistical definition of the gender-related killing of women and girls and classify femicides into categories based on the relationship between victim and perpetrator. They allow for the collection of data on femicide regardless of whether a State had specific legislation of femicide. Overall findings of the report across all OSCE participating States show that the existing data is fragmented, relies heavily on crime statistics and is mostly focused on the context of intimate partner or family violence. Promising practices include the compilation of contextual data in femicide cases, data collection on dispensation of justice as well as disaggregation of data by different indicators.



## Review, Analysis and Reporting:

The need for review and reporting on femicide has grown alongside the awareness of the importance of data collection. The report notes two primary types of review processes: femicide watch/observatories and domestic violence fatality reviews. While both processes focus on understanding and preventing gender-related killings, they differ in scope and methodology. Several OSCE participating States have established permanent femicide watches or specific observatories, often integrated into existing national institutions, while some maintain committees on homicides that also cover femicides. Involvement of independent monitoring mechanisms (e.g., NHRIs), multi-agency approaches and annual reporting on femicides can be considered promising practices in this context, as they have resulted in legislative changes and increased attention

to risk assessment procedures. Additionally, NGO initiatives independently play a significant role in the monitoring, collection and analysis of femicide data, thus contributing to the development of policies and public awareness.

While these findings prove that there has been progress on several levels in combating femicide in the OSCE region, it has been selective rather than comprehensive. To effectively prevent and combat violence against women and femicide, in particular in line with accepted international and regional (OSCE) standards, more targeted action is needed.

Based on the findings and trends identified in this study on combating and preventing femicide in line with accepted international and regional (OSCE) standards on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the following recommendations have been developed.

## Recommendations for the OSCE participating States and other stakeholders:

### 1. Strengthen the legislative base on femicide

- Based on the national/local context, decide on the best approach to integrate all forms of gender-related killings of women and girls in domestic law, including criminal codes.
- In line with the development of the legislation, initiate and support the development of guidance and specialized criminal procedures that further clarify implementation of relevant legal provisions. These can cover investigation (including evidence collection), prosecution, sentencing etc.
- Ensure effective implementation of developed legislation and consistency in prosecuting femicide across the region.
- Prioritize capacity building of professionals on all forms of violence against women, including on femicide.
- Adopt standardized multi-agency risk assessment and risk management systems that include measures to assess the risk of fatalities.
- Support court/case monitoring of femicide cases to assess implementation of the law.

### 2. Collect administrative data on femicide or gender-related killings of women and girls

- Review current systems for collection of comprehensive data on all forms of violence against women, or establish such systems. Adopt a statistical definition of femicide based on existing international and regional standards and include administrative data on femicide or gender-related killings of women as an integral part of national statistical data on violence against women. All indicators should be harmonized across institutions.

- Ensure data is publicly available for further research and analysis.
- Regularly conduct analysis and publicize official, anonymised administrative data and results of analysis of femicide cases with recommendations.

### 3. Establish prevention mechanisms

- Support the development of national and/or local prevention mechanisms that would look into coordination, data collection, prevention and case review.
- These bodies should be multidisciplinary, working on the prevention of femicide or gender-related killings of women, or entrust existing interdisciplinary bodies coordinating the response to cases of violence against women with the collection of femicide data and the analysis of cases of femicides, in order to determine short-comings and gaps in laws or their implementation, and recommend legislative and other measures to prevent femicides.

### 4. Analyse femicide cases

- Conduct analysis of such cases, using an international human rights framework and national laws, such as laws on domestic violence, criminal law, criminal procedure law and other relevant laws and regulations.
- Review case management and risk assessment by different public service sectors (police, prosecution, health, social services) and the coordination of preventive measures related to the services' respective capacity (including, but not limited to, interaction of victims and perpetrators with different services and institutions; number of calls/reports of violence made to the police; number of protection orders issued; number of breaches of protection orders; number of women placed in shelters or safe houses; availability of places in shelters and safe houses, etc.).
- Conduct regular court and case monitoring of all gender-based violence cases, including femicide.
- Establish homicide review mechanisms and include team members with expertise in gender-based violence against women and femicide.

## Specific recommendations for the OSCE:

- Support analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of laws on femicide in terms of investigation and prosecution of cases by participating States that define femicide in their law, and support other participating States in amending domestic law.
- Support participating States' in facilitating their cooperation to establish a common methodology for the OSCE region (in cooperation with UNODC, UN SRVAW and other organizations and entities working on the issue) for the collection of comparable and comprehensive administrative data on femicide.
- Support relevant stakeholders (academic institutions, NGOs, independent human rights institutions etc.) to develop a common methodology for analysis of femicide cases.
- Support participating States in developing and delivering capacity-building activities aimed at preventing femicides and processing femicide cases.
- Support relevant local bodies and mechanisms with capacity development for data collection and analysis.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Femicide is one of the gravest human rights violations and the most extreme form of violence against women. Such killings are related to women's perceived gender roles; women are killed because they are women. Femicide is distinct from other killings or homicides as it constitutes gender-based violence against women and requires a specific set of measures for its prevention and eradication.

The present study takes the form of a stocktaking exercise to determine the response to femicide throughout the OSCE region. The study begins with an overview of the international legal standards to combat violence against women and the development of the concept of femicide. The next three sections of the study correspond to areas in which state action is required:

- **the criminal justice response**
- **the collection of comparable administrative<sup>11</sup> data on femicide, and**
- **reporting on and analysing femicide cases.**

The topics of data collection and analysis are closely linked, but they are separated in this study to reflect the fact that in several participating States administrative data collection is carried

out by the criminal justice system, while analysis of cases is done by other state institutions, civil society organizations and the media. The importance of preventive measures in the context of femicide is not overlooked, but it is referenced in the context of the criminal justice response, assessing the risk of lethality in cases of violence against women and applying the results of analysis of past cases to prevent future femicides.

Each of three main sections of the study summarizes the relevant standards or recommended measures and provides an overview of trends among all OSCE participating States (as well as Kosovo<sup>12</sup>) in terms of how they are meeting these standards. Promising practices in OSCE participating States<sup>13</sup> in legislative reform, data collection, the establishment of national mechanisms, and other measures are highlighted. The study is not intended as an exhaustive nor in-depth review of the many practices across the OSCE region. Rather, the purpose is to gauge the lay of the land in the key areas noted above and capture a picture of recent developments. The study concludes with recommendations for future actions by the OSCE and its participating States.

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<sup>11</sup> Administrative data reflect what is recorded by an agency interacting with a victim or perpetrator of gender-based violence. It can provide detailed information on how police, judicial, health and social services respond to the prevention, protection and prosecution of gender-based violence. More information: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/administrative-data-sources>.

<sup>12</sup> Any reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, its institutions,

or population, is to be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

<sup>13</sup> Our understanding of the phenomenon of femicide and the kinds of measures needed to address it, owes a debt to the many years of advocacy in Latin America around gender-related killings. While acknowledging the many good practices that can be seen in Latin America, the present study is limited to the OSCE participating States.

# THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHAT IS FEMICIDE?

The phenomenon of gender-related killings of women and girls is hardly a new one, but the term ‘femicide’ was introduced into the human rights dialogue relatively recently. Since the beginning of the 19th century, femicide has been used as an alternative to the gender-neutral term ‘homicide’ that “overlooks the realities of inequality, oppression and systematic violence against women”.<sup>14</sup>

There is no single universal definition of femicide, but rather evolving discussions about how to describe the complexity of the problem. In her 2012 thematic report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences (UN SRVAW) noted that the differing frameworks, definitions and classifications used to conceptualize femicide were complicating data collection from different sources, and therefore information across countries or regions could not be compared.<sup>15</sup>

The Vienna Declaration on Femicide (2013)<sup>16</sup> introduced a description of femicide that captures the fact that it is an extreme form of violence against women that manifests itself in various ways. The declaration characterizes femicide as the killing of women and girls because of their gender and recognizes 11 distinct forms of femicide:

*This study uses the terms ‘femicide’ and ‘gender-related killing of women and girls’ as synonyms while acknowledging that additional qualifications, such as ‘intimate-partner and family-related femicides’ or ‘intimate-partner and family-related killing of women and girls’ may be required for data collection and analysis.*

- the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence;
- torture and misogynist slaying of women;
- killing of women and girls in the name of “honour”;
- targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict;
- dowry-related killing of women;
- killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity;
- killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender;
- female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide;
- genital mutilation related deaths;
- accusations of witchcraft; and
- other femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms.

<sup>14</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, by Rashida Manjoo, 2012, A/HRC/20/16, para. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., para. 105.

<sup>16</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, Statement Submitted by the Academic Council on the United Nations System, a Non-Governmental Organization in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council, Vienna Declaration on Femicide, 2013, E/CN.15/2013/NGO/1.

A request to the UN Secretary-General in 2013 to convene an intergovernmental expert group meeting to develop recommendations on more effectively preventing, investigating, prosecuting and punishing the “gender-related killing of women and girls”<sup>17</sup> was an important turning point because this phrase became synonymous with femicide in the global discourse. The SRVAW,<sup>18</sup> the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and equality bodies in various states, as well as the academic community, use femicide as a shorthand term for the gender-related killing of women and girls.<sup>19</sup> Numerous women’s human rights organizations use the word femicide to raise awareness and are calling on others to use the term as well<sup>20</sup>.

Femicides are generally classified by the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim or as gender-related killings occurring in the private sphere (committed by intimate partners or family members) and those in the public sphere (committed by known or unknown perpetrators). A large majority of femicides are committed by current or former intimate partners or other family members, based on the data that are available worldwide.<sup>21</sup> Thus, this study is premised on the fact that for women the home is the most likely place to be killed, by a known perpetrator. While the report covers all forms of femicide, it focuses on the two first categories (intimate partner femicide and family femicide).

Notwithstanding the lack of a single definition, the SRVAW has outlined **key features that distinguish femicide or the gender-related killing of women and girls from other forms of homicide of women and girls.**

These characteristics have been adopted by the UN Secretary-General in the context of recommendations on state actions. Thus, in developing measures to prevent and respond to femicide, these features should be considered:

- **Femicide is the intentional murder of women/girls because they are women/girls.**
- **It is one of the gravest violations of human rights and the most extreme manifestation of violence against women.**<sup>22</sup>
- **It is not an isolated incident that arises suddenly but very often is “the final event of an extended and ignored continuum of violence”.**<sup>23</sup>
- **It is rooted in gender-based discrimination, perceived gender roles and the unequal power relations between men and women.**
- **It is exacerbated by other forms of discrimination and general tolerance for violence against women.**
- **It is a form of violence that requires a specific set of measures for its prevention and eradication.**

*Which term is best? Definitions of femicide may vary, depending on the particular context. What is most important, however, is the consistent use of the term ‘femicide’ or the more descriptive term ‘gender-related killing of women and girls’ to draw attention to the gendered nature of the violence. While the two terms are generally used interchangeably, it is usually more appropriate to refer to ‘femicide’ when focusing on prevention efforts, while the term ‘gender-related killing of women and girls’ is more suited to data collection and statistical analysis.*

<sup>17</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013 on Taking Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls (68/191), para. 14.

<sup>18</sup> UN General Assembly, Report on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences A/71/398, 2016, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/297/08/PDF/N1629708.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>19</sup> Note that in some OSCE participating States, the preferred term is ‘feminicide’.

<sup>20</sup> Femicide Watch Platform on the Gender-Related Killings of Women

and Girls: <https://www.femicide-watch.org/what-is-femicide>.

<sup>21</sup> UNODC and UN Women, Femicides in 2023: Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicides, 2024, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/briefs/Femicide\\_Brief\\_2024.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/briefs/Femicide_Brief_2024.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> UN, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, 2016, <https://undocs.org/A/71/398>.

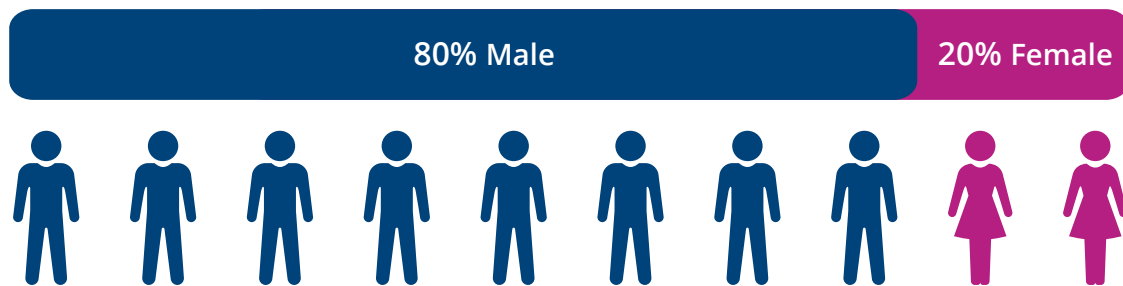
<sup>23</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2015, A/70/93, para. 2.

# What the data show: global and regional estimates

In 2023, almost 85,000 women and girls worldwide were killed intentionally. Of these, an estimated 60 per cent were killed by current or former intimate partners or other family members.<sup>24</sup> According to data derived from homicide statistics produced by national statistical systems in which the relationship between the victim and perpetrator and/or the motive are reported, this equalled approximately 51,100 women and girls.<sup>25</sup> These figures translate to an average of 140 women and girls losing their lives every day “at the hands of their partner or a close relative”<sup>26</sup> in 2023.

There is a significant disparity between the share of male and female victims of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner or another family member.<sup>27</sup> Although men are the principal victims of homicide globally, women continue to bear the heaviest burden of lethal victimization in the private sphere, as a result of gender stereotypes and inequality.

## Male and female share of homicide victims /2023



## Share of male and female homicide victims killed by intimate partners or other family members /2023



Source: UNODC and UN Women (2024). *Femicides in 2023: Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicides*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Femicides in 2023: Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicides*, 2024, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> While around 60 per cent of female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner or other family member, this is the case for less than 12 per cent of male victims of homicide. Ibid, p. 10.



There is no unified database of femicide cases that maps onto the OSCE region as a whole or even the European and Central Asian regions combined. In part, this situation reflects the availability of data. Data have been compiled to produce estimations of the problem of femicide in Europe, however. Monitoring by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicates that the rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population was 0.6 in Europe in 2023 (compared to a global rate of 1.3).<sup>28</sup> Europe has seen a steady decline in the femicide rate by intimate partners/family members by around 20 per cent since 2010<sup>29</sup>. Still, in regions with such positive changes, it is happening slowly—an indication that the risk factors for and causes of femicide are deeply-rooted in norms and practices that “do not change quickly”.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, this overall positive trend masks important differences by subregion. Namely, average declines in female intimate partner/family-related homicides in Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe contrast with limited improvement in Western Europe. In fact, from 2010–2023, the femicide rate slightly increased in the Western Europe subregion.<sup>31</sup>

Despite initiatives to improve data collection on femicides in the European Union (EU), incomplete statistics mean that the true scale

of the problem among the EU Member States is not known. Due to differing data collection systems and lack of disaggregated data (either the sex of the victim or the relationship between victim and perpetrator is not known), there are no comparable data for all 27 countries of the EU. In those EU Member States that reported comparable data on femicides in 2021 (only 17 countries) on average, almost two women were killed every day by an intimate partner or family member.<sup>32</sup> An investigation conducted by a network of 15 European media outlets (EDJ Net) cross-referenced data collected by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European statistical office Eurostat and national institutions (mainly police data); this exercise revealed significant inconsistencies. For example, EIGE reported that 4,221 femicides occurred in the EU (excluding six Member States) between 2012 and 2022, while according to Eurostat, 14,143 intentional homicides of women occurred in the EU-27 during the same period. EDJ Net monitoring in 19 countries recorded 6,754 femicides (approximately 60 per cent committed by a partner and the remaining by another family member).<sup>33</sup> The data variations highlight the likelihood that femicides are under-reported.

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<sup>28</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Femicides in 2023: Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicides*, 2024, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> EIGE, *Gender Equality Index in 2023: Towards a Green Transition in Transport and Energy*, 2023, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> European Data Journalism Network, *How Many Femicides? International Comparisons are Impossible*, April 22, 2024, [https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp\\_data\\_news/how-many-femicides-international-comparisons-are-impossible](https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/how-many-femicides-international-comparisons-are-impossible).

# INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS TO ADDRESS FEMICIDE

The premise that violence against women violates fundamental human rights is well-established under international human rights law, as are States' obligations to prevent, investigate, prosecute and provide redress for acts of violence against women, in lethal and non-lethal cases alike.

While there should be no doubt that standards on violence against women apply in cases of femicide, the international community has also recognized that the response to this most extreme form of violence has been scarce. In 2012, the SRVAW warned that globally the prevalence of gender-related killings, in various forms, had reached "alarming proportions", and yet impunity for these crimes was the norm. In

the last decade, advocacy for the recognition of femicide has increased, international bodies have clarified the characteristics of femicide and reiterated States' obligations in such areas as data collection, prosecution and prevention before violence against women becomes lethal. Both treaty-monitoring bodies and international courts have addressed the gender-related killing of women and girls, and their views and jurisprudence are an additional and compelling source of standards for how human rights obligations are to be implemented in practice. OSCE participating States through Ministerial Council decisions have committed themselves to actions to specifically address all forms of violence against women.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, by Rashida Manjoo, 2012, A/HRC/20/16/Add.4, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-16-Add4\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-16-Add4_en.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC 14/04, 15/05, 7/14, 4/18.



# OSCE commitments on violence against women

OSCE participating States have accepted obligations under international human rights law to pass, implement and monitor legislation to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. These laws and policies, as they relate to the prevention of violence against women, including femicide in particular, must be informed by relevant statistical data.

The OSCE participating States have agreed to several commitments that specifically refer to violence against women and related data collection that should inform prevention measures:

**a)** The **2004 Action Plan** for the Promotion of Gender Equality prioritizes the prevention of violence against women and calls on the OSCE structures to “assist participating States in developing programmes and activities aimed at the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence.”<sup>36</sup>

**b)** A 2005 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women recognizes that violence against women is a threat to human security. It calls participating States to criminalize gender-based violence, to increase the reporting

of cases of violence and step up efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate comparable data, supporting NGOs working to gather better information.<sup>37</sup>

**c)** A subsequent 2014 **Ministerial Council Decision** on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women calls on participating States to “[c]ollect, maintain and make public reliable, comparable, disaggregated, and comprehensive evidence based data and statistics regarding all forms of violence against women ... whilst ensuring compliance with their data protection laws, and include information on the number of cases reported to law enforcement bodies, the numbers investigated and prosecuted and the sentences imposed”.<sup>38</sup>

**d)** The most recent Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (2018) calls for “cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations to collect sex-disaggregated data and statistics on the occurrence of all forms of violence against women and girls in the OSCE area”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC.14/04 of December 7, 2004, para. 44(c).

<sup>37</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC/15/05 of December 6, 2005, para. 5.

<sup>38</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC/7/14 of December 5, 2014, para. 1.

<sup>39</sup> OSCE Decision MC/DEC/4/18 of December 7, 2018, para. 13.

# The UN system

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) was the first international instrument to define violence against women and establish a framework for State action. Violence against women is:<sup>40</sup>

*[a]ny act of **gender-based violence** that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

While the Declaration is not legally binding, it affirms a broad scope of violence against women, including acts that accompany or constitute femicide.

The **UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW), however, is the legal instrument that requires State parties to eliminate “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”, because such gender-based violence constitutes a form of discrimination.<sup>41</sup> While CEDAW does not explicitly mention femicide, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee) has issued general recommendations that make clear that violence against women violates human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life—the right that is violated in femicide cases.<sup>42</sup> General recommendation No. 35 (2017) endorses the term ‘gender-based violence against women’ to make explicit that such violence has both gendered causes and gendered impacts, while also emphasizing that this form of violence is

a social or structural problem that requires a comprehensive response.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, general recommendation No. 35 recognizes that a woman’s right to a life free from gender-based violence is indivisible and interdependent on the realization of her other human rights, including the rights to life, health, liberty and security of the person, equality and equal protection within the family.<sup>44</sup>

With the adoption of two **UN General Assembly resolutions** in 2013 and 2016 (both on taking action against gender-related killings of women and girls<sup>45</sup>), the issue of gender-related killings of women and girls was placed on the highest political agenda of the United Nations. These resolutions not only enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of femicide, but they provide important guidance for how international standards are to be applied to combat this form of killing. The resolutions, inter alia, urge States to collect, disaggregate, analyse and report data on gender-related killings of women and girls, strengthen their criminal justice response for preventing and responding to gender-related killings of women, ensure that appropriate punishments for perpetrators are in place and are proportionate to the gravity of the offences and improve international cooperation and the exchange of good practices. Strategies to prevent gender-related killings of women and girls should include early and continuous educational programmes, community mobilization and awareness-raising, in order to counter attitudes and social factors that foster, justify or tolerate any violence against women and girls.

<sup>40</sup> UN General Assembly, Resolution 48/104: Article 1, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, December 20, 1993, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>.

<sup>41</sup> CEDAW General recommendation No. 19 on Violence Against Women, 1992, para 6.

<sup>42</sup> CEDAW General recommendation No. 19, 1992 and CEDAW General recommendation No. 35, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> CEDAW General recommendation No. 35 on Gender-based Violence Against Women, updating general recommendation No.

19, 2017, para 9.

<sup>44</sup> General recommendation No. 35, para 15.

<sup>45</sup> UN General Assembly, Resolution A/RES/68/19: Taking Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2013, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime\\_Resolutions/2010-2019/2013/General\\_Assembly/A-RES-68-191.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2010-2019/2013/General_Assembly/A-RES-68-191.pdf). UN General Assembly, Resolution A/RES/70/176: Taking Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2015, <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/70/176>.

# The European human rights system

The 2014 **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** (also known as 'the Istanbul Convention') establishes comprehensive legal standards to ensure women's right to be free from violence. While the text of the Istanbul Convention has an expansive definition of the acts that constitute gender-based violence, it does not include the term 'femicide'. The drafters of the treaty, however, were mindful of earlier Council of Europe recommendations on the protection of women against violence that encompass acts of femicide.<sup>46</sup> For example, when the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women including Domestic Violence (2005–2008) devised a three-part recommendation for international action that eventually resulted in the drafting of the Istanbul Convention, they gave equal weight to the issue of femicide. The third part of their combined recommendation called for setting up "an observatory (femicide watch) to collect data on murders of women by their husbands, ex-husbands, intimate partners and relatives."<sup>47</sup> The task force urged Member States to undertake varied measures to prevent femicide "without delay", even before a European-wide convention on violence against women had entered into force.

The Istanbul Convention is based on a victim-centred approach and provides clear standards and practical guidance for the prevention of violence and the protection of victims. Notably, the Istanbul Convention requires States to undertake risk assessment and risk management, including the risk of lethality, which are critical tools for the prevention of femicide. States parties are also required to collect relevant disaggregated statistical data at regular intervals on all forms of violence covered by the Convention. Data collection should contribute to the study of the root causes and effects of violence against women, incidents and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement the Convention.<sup>48</sup>

In 2024, the European Parliament adopted the first EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.<sup>49</sup> While not explicitly addressing the phenomenon of femicide, the Directive emphasizes prevention and early intervention efforts and requires Member States to recognize certain aggravating circumstances in their criminal law (such as repeated acts of violence against women and violence that caused the death of a victim), all of which are critical measures for the prevention of and response to femicide.

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<sup>46</sup> Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Recommendation 1861 (2009) on Femicides and Recommendation 1881 (2009) on the urgent need to combat so-called 'honour crimes'.

<sup>47</sup> Council of Europe, Final Activity Report of the Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, Including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV), 2008, pages 18 and 81.

<sup>48</sup> Council of Europe, Convention on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011, Article 11.

<sup>49</sup> Directive (EU) 2024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on combating violence against women and domestic violence, 16 April 2024, available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0234-AM-298-298\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0234-AM-298-298_EN.pdf).

# International jurisprudence on femicide

Of the body of complaints concerning violence against women that have been brought to the CEDAW Committee (under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW) and before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), many, in fact, concern lethal violence. Put simply, these are the cases in which failures to protect women from violence have been the most egregious and had the most devastating consequences. Whereas the aims of litigation in domestic courts are to hold perpetrators accountable and provide relief to indirect victims (victims' family members), femicide cases are being used strategically at the international and regional levels to bring about larger systemic change in a particular country.

Within a larger group of communications alleging human rights violations in cases of lethal violence against women, international bodies have relatively recently begun to apply the term 'femicide'. This development reflects both the advocacy efforts on the part of lawyers who represent the interests of deceased victims, as well as an overall greater awareness of this phenomenon as a specific form of violence against women. The Group of Independent Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, has likewise begun to more consistently highlight problematic areas related to combatting gender-related killings of women in its reviews.

This section provides an overview of conclusions and judgements across OSCE participating States. It is not an exhaustive summary of all relevant case law but is intended to shed light on what can be considered the evolving jurisprudence on femicide emerging from the OSCE region.

## *The CEDAW Committee*

The CEDAW Committee's decisions on individual communications alleging violations of CEDAW in cases of domestic violence that ended in fatalities are an important part of the jurisprudence on states' responsibility for addressing violence against women, even if they are not termed 'femicide' cases.<sup>50</sup> In two cases brought to Committee in 2007, in which women were murdered by their husbands,<sup>51</sup> the CEDAW Committee focused on the fact that, despite the existence of comprehensive measures on domestic violence, the police and prosecutors failed to recognize indicators of the potential for extreme violence from the perpetrators' behaviours and the victims' own efforts to gain assistance. Finding that in each case, the authorities knew or should have known that the victim was in serious danger, the CEDAW Committee concluded that the State had failed to exercise due diligence in protecting the victims.

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<sup>50</sup> Note that a number of complaints on failures to investigate or prosecute femicides from Latin America are not included in this review.

<sup>51</sup> The Vienna Intervention Centre against Domestic Violence and the Association for Women's Access to Justice on behalf of Banu Akbak, Gülen Khan, and Melissa Özdemir v. Austria (2007) and Goekce v. Austria (2007).

The CEDAW Committee emphasized that both criminal and civil remedies are to be used when a perpetrator of domestic violence poses a dangerous threat to the victim and that in all actions to protect the victim from violence, consideration should be given to the victim's safety, without allowing the perpetrator's rights to "supersede women's human rights to life and to physical and mental integrity."<sup>52</sup>

More recently, the CEDAW Committee examined a case of honor-based violence<sup>53</sup> in which the complainant alleged that the authorities accepted a presumption that the victim had committed suicide and failed to recognize a crime of femicide. This is the first case originating from the OSCE region in which the CEDAW Committee has provided 13 general recommendations on combatting femicides and honor-based crimes, covering measures ranging from legislative reform to mandatory professional training, as well as monitoring of investigations and judicial procedures. For example, the committee articulates the need to assess the danger to the life of the victim, to strengthen early warning systems and to collect data and statistics "on femicides and induced or forced suicides of women" resulting from gender-based violence, and to analyse them to enhance protection for women.<sup>54</sup>

In the context of **reporting** on the implementation of the Convention, the CEDAW Committee is increasingly requesting that States parties include information on the number of prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of femicides, disaggregated by the age of the

victim, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the type of sentence imposed in their periodic reports. In some cases, the CEDAW Committee has asked for specific details, for example to explain how a State is addressing the correlation between firearms possession and femicide.<sup>55</sup> However, a brief review of the lists of issues and questions that the CEDAW Committee has most recently sent to States parties prior to the submission of their periodic reports was conducted for this study. The review suggests that the Committee does not consistently request femicide-related information of every reporting State from the OSCE region.

A review of the CEDAW Committee's concluding observations on periodic reports from OSCE participating States that were considered between 2020 and 2024,<sup>56</sup> found that the Committee has consistently been raising concerns about how States are addressing femicide. In recent sessions, the CEDAW Committee has recommended that several States introduce clear criminal provisions on femicide. Other common recommendations by the Committee concern improving data collection and femicide-specific research in contexts in which data are available strengthening observatory mechanisms and providing capacity-building for criminal justice authorities and judges on conducting risk assessments. The CEDAW Committee makes clear that addressing femicide is a priority under obligations to address gender-based violence against women and girls.

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<sup>52</sup> CEDAW, Views on Communication No. 5/2005, *Goekce v. Austria*, 2007, para. 12.3(b) and CEDAW, Views on Communication No. 6/2005, *The Vienna Intervention Centre against Domestic Violence and the Association for Women's Access to Justice on behalf of Banu Akbak, Gülen Khan, and Melissa Özdemir v. Austria*, 2007, para. 12.3(b).

<sup>53</sup> H.H., I.H. and Y.H. v. Georgia, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> CEDAW, Views on Communication No. 140/2019, H.H., I.H. and Y.H. v. Georgia, 2021, para. 9.

<sup>55</sup> For example, this request was directed at Italy. See CEDAW, List of Issues and Questions Prior to the Submission of the Eighth Periodic Report of Italy, 2021, CEDAW/C/ITA/QPR/8.

<sup>56</sup> Corresponding to the CEDAW Committee's 75th to 89th sessions in which States Parties' reports were considered.

## *The European Court of Human Rights*

The jurisprudence of the ECtHR on violence against women, especially lethal violence, relies on Article 2 (right to life) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights, while of course also reflecting the standards of the Istanbul Convention. Many of the cases that establish the parameters for States' responsibility to protect women from violence are cases of lethal domestic violence against women. One notable case from 2009 involves a history of violence against the applicant by her husband, including death threats, which culminated in a fatal armed attack that resulted in the death of her mother. This case marked the first ruling of the ECtHR that the failure of the authorities to adequately respond to violence against women is a form of discrimination under Article 14, and in its judgement the Court describes the State's positive obligations to effectively prevent and protect women from domestic violence. The Court notes that the "passivity" and "unresponsiveness" of the judicial system created "a climate conducive to domestic violence".<sup>57</sup>

Subsequent rulings by the ECtHR have expanded on States' positive obligations under

Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, requiring them not only to enact laws and procedures that address violence against women, but also to ensure that the relevant authorities respond effectively to real and immediate risks and take preventive measures to protect the lives of individuals under threat. The serious consideration that the ECtHR gives to the obligation to prevent lethality in situations of violence against women is evident in its recent approval of an urgent request for interim measures—an order reserved for exceptional circumstances and not previously granted in a domestic violence case. The particular case involves a man who was charged with the attempted murder of his ex-wife and her mother yet continued to threaten violence while in pre-trial detention. The court ordered a country to take measures to protect the life, health and personal integrity of the victim whose application is pending before the Court.<sup>58</sup>

When deciding its most recent case alleging a possible femicide,<sup>59</sup> the ECtHR has emphasized the obligation of authorities to conduct an effective investigation into the deaths of persons killed by private individuals, whenever there is a suspicion that the death might have been gender-motivated.

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<sup>57</sup> *Opuz v. Türkiye*, Application no. 33401/02, Judgement, June 9, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), "Court grants request to protect Azerbaijani domestic violence victim from sudden release of ex-husband," 2024, [https://ehrac.org.uk/en\\_gb/](https://ehrac.org.uk/en_gb/)

[court-grants-request-to-protect-azerbaijani-domestic-violence-victim-from-sudden-release-of-ex-husband/](#) and *R.B. and N.G. v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 33860/23 (communicated case).

<sup>59</sup> *Gaidukevich v. Georgia*, 2023.



## **The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**

As of 2025, GREVIO has issued baseline evaluation reports, part of the mandatory reporting process for parties to the Istanbul Convention, for 36 States. The questionnaire that States use as the basis for preparing their initial reports to GREVIO includes a section to describe any procedures to assess the lethality risk, how risk assessments are carried out and the application of protective measures<sup>60</sup>, but States are not precluded from providing additional information about femicides.

Looking across all baseline evaluations, GREVIO has expressed concern over an increase in gender-related killings of women in several of its reports. When GREVIO makes specific mention of femicide or the gender-related killings of women and girls, the issues that come to the fore most often concern data collection and homicide review mechanisms. Regarding weaknesses in data collection on femicides, GREVIO has noted the following issues:

- **homicide data are not disaggregated by sex of the victim or relationship between the victim and perpetrator;**<sup>61</sup>
- **public official data and data collected by civil society on gender-related killings are not harmonized; and**<sup>62</sup>
- **there remain challenges to producing crime statistics in which a gender motive is identified.**<sup>63</sup>

In the context of risk assessment and risk management, GREVIO has highlighted the importance of homicide review mechanisms as a means to analyse the effectiveness of risk assessment practices so they can then be strengthened.<sup>64</sup> GREVIO elaborates that a retrospective review system of cases of gender-based killings of women (or attempted killings) should be used to “assess whether gaps in the institutional and/or judicial response contributed to the fatal outcome, with the aim of preventing them in the future”, holding both the perpetrators and the multiple institutions that come into contact with the victims and perpetrators accountable, and analysing any gender-motives of the perpetrator.<sup>65</sup> Lastly, GREVIO has noted several positive developments in the establishment of observatories—or ‘Femicide Watches’—and specialized analysis.

The recommendations of GREVIO and the CEDAW Committee, and the well-developed jurisprudence on violence against women from the ECtHR, clearly articulate States’ obligations and the standards for preventing and responding to violence against women. But these are only the starting point for addressing femicide. The real work requires implementation of the Court’s judgements at the national level and proactive measures to address violence against women as a structural problem. As described in later sections of this study, many states have been slow to act, or efforts have been limited to singular interventions that fail to comprehensively address the complex factors that contribute to femicides.

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<sup>60</sup> GREVIO, Questionnaire on Legislative and Other Measures Giving Effect to the Provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), 2016, para. VI(B), referring to Article 51 of the Istanbul Convention.

<sup>61</sup> GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Reports: Bosnia and Herzegovina, paragraph 63; and Austria, para. 45.

<sup>62</sup> GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Reports: Belgium, para. 50; and Italy, para. 70.

<sup>63</sup> GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Report: Georgia, para. 72.

<sup>64</sup> GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Report: Belgium, para. 196(c); Croatia, para. 267; Italy, para. 233(d); Malta, para. 214(c); and Portugal, para. 206.

<sup>65</sup> GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Report: Greece, para. 278; Ireland, para. 271; and Liechtenstein, para. 242.

# THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

In a 2015 report to the UN General Assembly the UN Secretary-General highlighted the necessity of an effective criminal justice response to the gender-related killing of women that comprises both “adequate criminal legislation” and also professionals with “adequate capacity” to investigate and prosecute femicide.<sup>66</sup> Considering criminal legislation, the document does not proscribe how domestic law should address femicide but recommends three main directions: (i) providing for a specific offence of femicide; (ii) recognizing it as an “aggravating factor”; and/or (iii) removing discriminatory factors from criminal law (such as defences based on “passion”, “honor” or “provocation”) that would create impunity for perpetrators.<sup>67</sup> Countries that use the second approach include gender-related aggravating factors that can be objective circumstances (for

example, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator) or subjective elements (for instance, hatred, prejudice or ‘honor’).<sup>68</sup> The importance of encapsulating the specific phenomena of killings that target women and girls within a criminal offence “not only makes it possible to recognise the specific dynamics of those crimes, it also enables relevant authorities to increase their visibility and to collect adequate crime data.”<sup>69</sup>

Experts recommend that national interventions should rely on the body of international standards for the effective investigation and prosecution of violence against women and should also address femicide in line with more general “international standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice”.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2015, A/70/93, para. 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 41(c).

<sup>68</sup> Expert Group on Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls: Promising Practices, Challenges and Practical Recommendations, Background Paper Prepared by the Secretariat, 2014, UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/2, para. 16.

<sup>69</sup> European Union, The Legislative Frameworks for Victims of Gender-based Violence (including children) in the 27 Member States, 2022, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Outcome of the Meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Group on Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2015, E/CN.15/2015/16, para. 7.



# Overview: criminalization of femicide in the OSCE region

As of January 2025, mapping indicated that six OSCE participating States have specific definitions of femicide in their domestic law—Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, Moldova and North Macedonia—all of which have been introduced since 2022. Each State has approached the defining and criminalizing of femicide in a different way, as described in more detail in the section on promising practices below.

The large majority of States in the OSCE region do not define femicide as a particular crime, but most do, in practice, criminalize femicide as aggravating circumstances connected to a homicide, which trigger higher sanctions against the perpetrator. Of those that recognize the more serious nature of such crimes, the four most common categories of aggravating circumstances under domestic law apply when:

- (i) an offence was committed on the grounds of the victim’s gender [note that this category can also be characterized as hate crime legislation];**
- (ii) the victim is a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the perpetrator;**
- (iii) the perpetrator is a family member, a cohabitant or a person abusing their authority; and/or**
- (iv) the death resulted from or for the purpose of sexual violence against girls and women.**

Based on a review conducted for this study, most States that recognize aggravating circumstances in their respective criminal legislation allow for motives related to gender or

the close relationship or family ties (including a prior history of domestic violence) between the victim and perpetrator to be considered during investigation, prosecution and sentencing for the intentional killings of women and girls.

For example, since 2022 the Criminal Code of France includes an aggravating circumstance provision that applies to all crimes, including homicide, if the offence is committed on the ground of the victim’s “sex, sexual orientation or actual or supposed gender identity.” The Criminal Code of Georgia takes a similar, but more expansive, approach. As amended in 2022, aggravating factors under the Criminal Code include the commission of a crime on the basis of “sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity,” among other characteristics. Separate articles define premeditated murder on the ground of gender as an aggravated crime, and the incitement to suicide on the ground of gender. It is important to recognize potential gender motives in charges of incitement to suicide because, otherwise, a case that could be femicide may be masked. The Spanish Organic Act 1/2004 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence introduces a specific category under criminal law of serious assault that is subject to an increased penalty when the victim is the current or former spouse of the accused. A subsequent Supreme Court ruling in 2018 confirmed that the aggravating circumstance of ‘gender’ must be applied to crimes, such as homicide and murder, committed against a female victim because of her gender “with a clear intention of reinforcing males’ superiority”.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> EIGE, Measuring femicide in Spain, 2021, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/measuring-femicide-spain>.

When a new Criminal Code was adopted in Kosovo in 2019, its treatment of murder was amended so that a murder that is found to have been based on a gender motive is qualified as aggravated murder, triggering a harsher sentence for the perpetrator. The 2019 Criminal Code also defines domestic violence as a separate crime.<sup>72</sup>

Other approaches to improving the prosecution of femicides include the removal of the so-called 'honor' defence from criminal law. In harmonizing domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention, Romania adopted a package of amendments in 2018, including a provision to the law on preventing and combatting domestic violence that prohibits the justification of 'honor' from being applied to any acts of violence under the law.<sup>73</sup>

## Promising practices in legislation in OSCE participating States

Many of the recent legislative changes to address femicide have been made in response to particularly violent and shocking killings of women that have sparked public outcry and demands for change. Each participating State has taken a different approach to reforming domestic law to better address the crime of femicide. Three participating States amended their criminal law to define femicide<sup>74</sup>, two added

a definition of femicide to the national laws on violence against women<sup>75</sup> and one<sup>76</sup> adopted stand-alone femicide legislation. In the latter two instances, a new criminal offence is not created, but the laws facilitate the collection of data and increase punishment. Undoubtedly, defining femicide in the law has raised awareness of the problem as a first step. Key points about each legislative act are summarized below.

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<sup>72</sup> The AIRE Centre's study on femicide in Kosovo, *Legal Framework and Judicial Practice (2018–2022)*, 2024, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> GREVIO, Report by Romania Pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Baseline Report), 2020, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Malta, North Macedonia and Croatia

<sup>75</sup> Cyprus and Moldova

<sup>76</sup> Belgium

→ **CYPRUS:** In 2022, Law 115(1)/2021 on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Matters was amended with the addition of a section that defines an offence of femicide and expands the list of aggravating factors contained in the law (in Section 11).<sup>77</sup>

Section 10A. – (1) Any person who causes the death of a woman by an unlawful act or omission shall be guilty of the offence of femicide and shall be liable to life imprisonment: Provided that unlawful omission shall constitute culpable negligence in failing to perform a duty, even though there is no intention to cause death.

Section 10A. – (2) [...] the Court, when calculating and imposing the sentence for the offence of femicide, may take into account, as an aggravating factor, that the death occurred as a result of:

- (a) intimate partner violence;
- (b) torture or violence due to misogyny;
- (c) domestic violence;
- (d) violence on grounds of honor;
- (e) violence on grounds of religious belief;
- (f) violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity;
- (g) committing the offence of female genital mutilation;
- (h) the use of violence for the purpose of, or in connection with, sexual exploitation and/or trafficking in persons and/or drug trafficking and/or organized crime;
- (i) the use of force to achieve unlawful sexual intercourse; or
- (j) targeted violence against women in the context of armed conflict.

*[Unofficial translation and summary]*

→ **MALTA:** In 2022, a new article (211A) was added to the Criminal Code on femicide (defined as “the wilful homicide or the attempted wilful homicide of a person of the female gender”<sup>78</sup>). In sentencing a person convicted of such an offence, the court shall, in establishing the punishment, give due consideration to whether the homicide or attempted homicide:

- (a) was the result of violence committed by an intimate partner with whom the victim was or is still in a relationship or of whom the victim is the spouse or former spouse; or
- (b) resulted from violence by a member or members of the family; or
- (c) was committed for misogynist motives; or
- (d) was committed for reasons of honour of the perpetrator, or of family reputation, or for reasons related to religious or cult belief or practices; or
- (e) was committed due to motives based on the gender, or gender identity, or sex or sexual orientation of the victim; or
- (f) was committed as a result of sexual violence or of acts of a sexual nature; or
- (g) was committed due to the victim being involved in prostitution, or being subjected to sexual exploitation, or being the victim of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation;

... the court shall consider the existence of any of the said circumstances as a factor militating against leniency in punishment.

<sup>77</sup> Republic of Cyprus, The Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law, 2021, [https://www.olc.gov.cy/OLC/OLC.NSF/E05815D6C4BB3F3CC225887E003E0ADD/\\$file/The%20](https://www.olc.gov.cy/OLC/OLC.NSF/E05815D6C4BB3F3CC225887E003E0ADD/$file/The%20)

[Prevention%20and%20Combating%20of%20violence%20against%20women.pdf](https://www.olc.gov.cy/OLC/OLC.NSF/E05815D6C4BB3F3CC225887E003E0ADD/$file/The%20Prevention%20and%20Combating%20of%20violence%20against%20women.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Amendment was introduced by Act No. X of 2022, <https://legislation.mt/eli/act/2022/10/eng>.

→ **BELGIUM:** In 2023, Belgium enacted the Law on the prevention and fight against femicide, gender-based homicides and violence<sup>79</sup> that creates a general framework for preventing and combatting this particular crime. The law defines three forms of femicide: (i) intimate femicide (the intentional homicide of a woman because of her gender, committed by a partner or by a family member in the name of culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honor', or for other reasons; (ii) non-intimate femicide (the intentional homicide of a woman because of her gender committed by a third party, mainly in the context of sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings or sexual violence and as part of a continuum of violence linked to the unequal power relationship of the perpetrator over the victim; and (iii) indirect femicide (the unintentional homicide of a woman because of her gender when the death of a woman results from harmful practices or the suicide of a woman).

The law establishes a system for data collection and processing, studies and analysis of gender-based homicides through a special scientific committee, and training for magistrates and police. In addition, two important chapters of the law concern victims' rights and measures to avoid secondary victimization and risk assessment and management, both of which should improve early intervention and prevention.

*[Unofficial translation and summary]*

→ **NORTH MACEDONIA:** In 2023, a law on amending the country's Criminal Code, which mainly addresses harmonizing domestic law with the Istanbul Convention, was adopted. Among the provisions, the law changes the approach to femicide. Whereas before, the killing of a woman was charged as a murder with the existence of domestic violence considered an aggravating circumstance, the new law creates an offence by adding to Criminal Code Article 123(2) a section on "gender-based murder". The new section establishes at least ten years to life imprisonment for the intentional killing of a woman or girl "while committing gender-based violence."<sup>80</sup>

Several by-laws were also enacted for implementing the Law on Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, including a rulebook that proscribes a mechanism for conducting risk assessment of threats to life and repeated violence to the victim and the victim's family members, and risk management (aimed at social work centres and the police, the latter connected to the power to issue emergency barring orders).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Loi sur la prévention et la lutte contre les féminicides, les homicides fondés sur le genre et les violences [Law on the Prevention and Fight against Femicides, Gender-based Homicides and Violence], 2023, [https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/loi-du-13-juillet-2023\\_n2023044133.html](https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/loi-du-13-juillet-2023_n2023044133.html).

<sup>80</sup> South East European University (SEEU) Review, "Domestic

Violence Legislation Reforms in the Republic of North Macedonia", 2023, Vol. 18, Issue 1, p. 69.

<sup>81</sup> GREVIO, "Comments Submitted by North Macedonia on GREVIO's final report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2023.

→ **CROATIA:** In 2024, the Croatian parliament approved amendments to the Criminal Code that created a new offence of femicide and a definition of gender-based violence (Article 87.32). Article 111a on “aggravated murder of a female”<sup>82</sup> sets forth a punishment of a prison sentence of at least ten years for the “gender-based murder” of a woman or girl. When determining this criminal offence, the following shall be taken into account: that the offence was committed against a person in a relationship with the perpetrator; that the perpetrator had previously abused the victim; the victim was a vulnerable person or a person who is in a dependent or subordinate relationship with the perpetrator; the offence was committed in circumstances of sexual violence or because of a relationship that places women in an unequal position; or that there are other circumstances that indicate gender-based violence.

*[Unofficial translation and summary]*

→ **REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA:** In 2024, Law No. 45/2007 on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (later renamed the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) was modified and expanded. Among several amendments, a definition of femicide was introduced.

The law defines femicide as “an act of violence against women, including girls, or an act of domestic violence, resulting in the victim’s death due to deliberate murder, intentional serious bodily harm, or severe injury to health, or the victim’s suicide, caused by inducing or facilitating their death or as a result of domestic violence, committed on motives of gender-based prejudice” (Article 2).<sup>83</sup> Other revisions to the law include the establishment of new mechanisms for data collection, to be managed by the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Article 15).<sup>84</sup>

*[Unofficial translation and summary]*

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<sup>82</sup> Kazneni zakon [Criminal Code], revised text 2024, <https://informator.hr/zakoni/9832-kazneni-zakon>. WAVE, “Femicide as a Separate Criminal Offense: A Milestone in Croatia,” 2024, <https://wave-network.org/femicide-criminal-offense-croatia/>.

<sup>83</sup> Women’s Law Centre, Stop Violence Newsletter, July-September 2024. No. 38, p. 2, [https://cdf.md/en/aparitii\\_categories/newsletter](https://cdf.md/en/aparitii_categories/newsletter).

<sup>84</sup> Lege Nr. 45 din 01-03-2007 cu privire la prevenirea și combaterea violenței împotriva femeilor și a violenței în familie [Law No. 45 of 01-03-2007 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence], as amended in 2024, [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=144821&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=144821&lang=ro).

It is difficult to estimate how new legislation on femicide or the recognition of the killing of women and girls motivated by gender has impacted the rate of prosecution and, ultimately, reduced the level of violence. For one thing, femicide as a legal concept has only been introduced in several participating States in the past two years, and there has been no assessment of judicial practice concerning femicide cases. Additionally, there is limited analysis of judicial outcomes overall, but research conducted in SEE suggests that even when criminal law recognizes a gender motivation, cases are not consistently charged as aggravated homicides. For example, a review of 117 cases in Serbia that were tried between 2014 and 2022 and could be characterized as femicides, showed that less than half were charged as aggravated murder and as a result more than 70 per cent of them resulted in verdicts from five to 15 years.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Kosovo, femicide cases that were charged as aggravated murder most frequently considered aggravating circumstances related to the victims' familial relationship with the perpetrator or the perpetrators' previous convictions/acts of violence, and not a gender-based motivation.<sup>86</sup>

A separate consideration is how the laws are being implemented, as measured by whether the relevant institutions and staff have the capacity to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate femicide cases. There are many examples across the OSCE region of specialized

units, procedures and training courses for professionals in the criminal justice system that enhance expertise in the areas of violence against women and girls, and in domestic violence in particular. There appear to be far fewer such measures that aim at building capacity that focus on femicide or the gender-related killing of women and girls. One such resource, a judicial handbook to guide judges in qualifying femicide cases under criminal law, has been developed to assist in harmonizing judicial practices in the Western Balkans.<sup>87</sup> OSCE GIP also published Minimum standards and components of

*Capacity-building for professionals that focuses on femicide or the gender-related killing of women and girls is generally lacking.*

training curricula on combating violence against women and girls for police and judiciary,<sup>88</sup> which aim to enhance the effectiveness of Violence against Women and Girls training programmes. While not mentioning femicide per se, the document strongly advocates for the development of training that change attitudes and increase understanding of root causes of violence, raising awareness on forms of violence and raising capacity of professionals to develop Standard Operating Procedures—all the necessary elements to prevent femicides. Further assessment is needed to identify other similar initiatives among participating States.

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<sup>85</sup> European Data Journalism Network, Femicide in Serbia: Crime and Lesser Punishments, May 23, 2023, [https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp\\_data\\_news/femicide-in-serbia-crime-and-lesser-punishments](https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/femicide-in-serbia-crime-and-lesser-punishments).

<sup>86</sup> AIRE Centre, Analysis of Case-Law on Femicide and Attempted Femicide in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017–2021, 2022, p. 194 and the AIRE Centre's study on femicide in Kosovo: Legal Framework and Judicial Practice (2018–2022), 2024, p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> AIRE Centre and FemPlatz, Guidelines on Addressing Femicide Cases, 2023, published in: Albanian, Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian language (BCMS) and Macedonian, <https://gcjnetwork.org/resources-and-publications>.

<sup>88</sup> OSCE Secretariat, Proposed Minimum Standards and Components of Curricula for Police and Judicial Training to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Girls, 2024

# DATA COLLECTION ON FEMICIDE OR GENDER-RELATED KILLINGS OF WOMEN

Regular collection of data on violence against women, and its analysis, underpins evidence-based decision-making, whether on the enactment of legislation, creation of policies and strategies, or the implementation of effective measures around prevention, protection and prosecution.

As early as 1989, the CEDAW Committee observed that many States parties were not providing statistical information in their periodic reports that is needed to understand the real situation of women in each of the States parties to the Convention. The Committee has urged States to improve data collection and reporting on violence against women specifically, calling for the regular collection and analysis of statistical data on the incidence of each form of violence, causes and effects of violence and on the effectiveness of measures to prevent and respond to violence.<sup>89</sup> General recommendation No. 35 refers to femicide explicitly and recommends that States parties regularly collect and analyse data for the purpose of identifying failures in protection and in order to improve prevention measures.<sup>90</sup>

Later on, the UN Secretary-General has recalled the imperative for “detailed data” and “precise statistics” for defining “the spectrum of gender-related killing in its different manifestations, causes and consequences”.<sup>91</sup> States should, inter alia, improve the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, to clarify the factors associated with the gender-related killing of women; collect data in an integrated manner that considers the links between all forms of violence against women; analyse data from a gender-perspective; and publish official data regularly and transparently.<sup>92</sup>

Also notable, violence against women and girls is addressed in the Sustainable Development Agenda, under Goal 5, on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The SRVAW has recommended the development of specific indicators (in the targets 5.2 and 16.1 [on reducing all forms of violence and related death rates] of the Sustainable Development Goals) on gender-related killings of women/femicide rates, and on the number of shelters and protection orders.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> UN General Recommendation No. 12: Violence against Women, 1989, and UN General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against Women, 1992.

<sup>90</sup> UN General Recommendation No. 35: On Gender-based Violence against Women, updating UN General Recommendation No. 19, 2017, para. 34(b).

<sup>91</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on Action against Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls, 2015, A/70/93, para. 25.

<sup>92</sup> The Istanbul Convention (Article 11) also requires data collection, and that data be made available to the public and to GREVIO.

<sup>93</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, A/HRC/41/42, June 20, 2019, para. 96(b).



# International and regional initiatives to standardize data collection

The lack of a legally binding definition of femicide, at the international level and in the legislation of most countries, certainly complicates the process of data collection by individual States. However, the lack of specific legal terminology should not be a justification for postponing data collection and analysis on femicide, or gender-related killings of women and girls, until legislation is passed. Classification systems have been developed on international and regional levels to support criminal justice systems to produce statistics on femicide, notwithstanding whether femicide is defined in law or policy.

*While the lack of a legally binding definition of femicide creates complications, it should not be a justification for postponing data collection and analysis on femicide or gender-related killings of women and girls.*

In 2022, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSD) endorsed the **statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls**, jointly developed by UNODC and UN Women.<sup>94</sup> The framework provides a statistical definition of the gender-related killing of women and girls, identifies a system for classifying such killings, and lists the variables or characteristics that can be used to identify and count the various types of such killings among intentional homicides. The statistical framework has the dual purpose of establishing a global standardized approach to data collection and facilitating the collection of national data, regardless of whether a state has

specific legislation on femicide. The definition and typology used in the framework are fully aligned with the structure of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), and is therefore a tool to broaden the gender perspective for data that is already being collected by various criminal justice institutions.

In order to standardize an approach to collecting data and producing statistics on gender-related killings of women and girls, the statistical framework is divided into three “data blocks”: (i) women and girls killed by an intimate partner; (ii) women and girls killed by other family members; and (iii) women and girls killed by other perpetrators (known or unknown), according to the modus operandi or the specific context that indicates the killing was motivated by gender.<sup>95</sup> The framework defines a set of eight characteristics to identify the modus operandi and context of the crime that are considered indicative of a gender-related killing. Identifying the modus operandi in cases of intentional homicide is an important means for determining whether a specific bias against women or girls was present. For example, “excessive mistreatment” of the body<sup>96</sup> or “overkilling”<sup>97</sup> (using more force or inflicting more injuries than are required to kill a person) can be indications of gender bias. For the third data block, intentional homicides committed by non-partners/non-family members would be classified as femicides if they meet at least one of these eight characteristics.

<sup>94</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls* (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”), 2022, <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/statistical-framework-measuring-gender-related-killings-women-and-girls-also-referred>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> EIGE, *Femicide Indicators: Pilot Study of Data Availability and Feasibility Assessment*, 2022, p. 16.



UNSD's statistical framework endorses disaggregating variables for victims (for example, by age, marital status and economic activity status), perpetrators (for instance, the relationship with the victim, age and recidivism history) and the event. While such disaggregation is not considered strictly necessary to be able to identify a case as femicide, it is good practice to collect such data because they contribute to a comprehensive and detailed analysis of such killings.<sup>98</sup> While law enforcement is a primary source of data on gender-related killings of women, the statistical framework recommends that other national institutions, including public prosecutors, the judiciary, prison administration and public health institutions, also collect and produce data, in order to produce a comprehensive statistical picture of the issue.

In advocating for uniform data collection across the EU Member States on femicide, EIGE developed a definition of femicide for statistical

purposes that can be measured through administrative data and surveys—the “killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women.”<sup>99</sup> EIGE first proposed an indicator on femicide for the police and justice sectors that could be collected through police records<sup>100</sup> and later developed an expanded methodology and classification system to measure several types of femicide in the EU. The EIGE methodology acknowledges the complexity of developing statistical classifications to measure the various forms of femicide and therefore recommends grouping the different forms into mutually exclusive categories for which administrative data can be collected.<sup>101</sup> Between 2021–2022, EIGE further refined the classification system and proposed a set of indicators for measuring femicide in the EU that was tested in seven EU Member States.<sup>102</sup> The framework consists of 11 indicators and sub-indicators to measure three types of femicide:

## EIGE proposed indicators for measuring femicide in the EU

### Intentional killing of a woman by an intimate partner and/or family member

- Indicator 1.1.** Killing of a woman by an intimate partner
- Indicator 1.2a** Honour killing of a woman by a family member
- Indicator 1.2b** Dowry-related killing of a woman by a family member
- Indicator 1.2c** Other intentional killing of a woman by a family member

<sup>98</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls*, 2022, p. 15.

<sup>99</sup> EIGE, *Glossary of Definitions of Rape, Femicide and Intimate Partner Violence*, 2017, p. 28.

<sup>100</sup> The indicator is “women victims of intimate femicide [aged 18 and over] committed by a male intimate partner [aged 18 and over], as a share of the women victims of homicide (aged 18 and

over). EIGE, *Indicators on Intimate Partner Violence and Rape for the Police and Justice Sectors*, 2018, p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> EIGE, *Femicide: A Classification System*, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden. EIGE, *Femicide Indicators: Pilot Study of Data Availability and Feasibility Assessment*, 2022.

## Other types of intentional killing

<b>Indicator 2.1</b>	Killing of a woman by a non-family member involving sexualized violence
<b>Indicator 2.2</b>	Sex exploitation-related killing of a woman (with the exception of trafficking-related killing)
<b>Indicator 2.3</b>	Trafficking-related killing of a woman
<b>Indicator 2.4</b>	Killing of a woman in the context of a continuum of violence in particular settings
<b>Indicator 2.5</b>	Killing of a woman older than 65 by a non-family member

## Unintentional killing of a woman

<b>Indicator 3.1</b>	Unintentional death of a woman resulting from intimate partner violence
<b>Indicator 3.2</b>	Female genital mutilation (FGM)-related death

*From: EIGE (2022). Femicide indicators: pilot study of data availability and feasibility assessment, p. 6.*

As is the case for the statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls, the EIGE indicators each require collecting data on a specific set of variables to provide contextual information.

It should be noted that when conducting research for this study, it could not be determined why two data classification systems, one international and one regional, seem to have been developed in parallel. This could potentially lead to confusion among governments, criminal justice institutions and national statistical offices over the selection of indicators. Thus, an important consideration when developing national data collection systems is how to modify existing

indicators to adjust to the local level needs but also ensure reporting in line with international requirements.

When developing indicators to measure femicide, the criminal justice system is a starting point. It is also important to collect data from diverse sources, including on women's experiences of violence "in addition to administrative and criminal justice data, which do not capture the majority of unreported victimisation."<sup>103</sup> Additional sources of data can include surveys, administrative data from the healthcare and social services sectors and from civil society organizations.

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<sup>103</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Violence against Women: An EU Wide Survey, Main Results, 2014, p. 168, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf).

# Overview: administrative data collection in the OSCE region

What we know about the prevalence of violence against women in the OSCE region is informed by both targeted surveys and administrative data collected from public institutions, such as the police. This type of data collection can also indicate risk factors for femicide; for obvious reasons, all findings concerning the gravest instances of violence against women are based almost exclusively on administrative crime data. Furthermore, although many of the gender-related killings of women happen in the context of domestic violence, data on such killings are usually included in homicide data collections and are often not part of national reports on violence against women—a situation not only specific to the OSCE context. When data about the gravest form of violence against women are excluded in this way, there is also a risk that they will not be considered during legislative or policy development, such as when domestic violence laws or national action plans to combat violence against women and domestic violence are drafted or evaluated. If femicide data are missing or omitted from national data sets, the statistical picture of violence against women and domestic violence is incomplete.

UNODC has noted that while data collection and analysis on femicide have improved, national data collection systems must still be strengthened to provide a more comprehensive picture. Especially important are data that shed light on the magnitude, nature and

consequences of gender-related killings of women considered at high risk, such as women in public office, women human rights defenders and journalists, as well as women experiencing conflict and humanitarian crises.<sup>104</sup>

For this stock-taking exercise, it was not feasible to evaluate the data collection methods and availability of statistics in each OSCE participating State to assess the extent to which administrative data on femicides are being collected across the region. A review of submissions to UNODC, the UN SRVAW and Eurostat, as well as analysis conducted by EIGE, do provide a picture of what data exist. At present, data are fragmentary across the OSCE, with considerable variation regarding which forms of femicide are recorded in crime statistics. The most commonly available data concerns the gender-related killings of women and girls by either an intimate partner or a family member, corresponding to the first two “data blocks” from the UNSD statistical framework or the first type of femicide in the set of indicators proposed by EIGE. Despite the fact that visibility for the problem of femicide has increased in the region, efforts to improve national systems for record-keeping for such cases have been minimal and have not extended much beyond administrative data on some categories of homicides. Lack of coordination between institutions on data collection also obscures the true picture of femicide.

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<sup>104</sup> UNODC, *Gender-related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide): Global Estimates of Female Intimate Partner/Family related Homicides in 2022, 2023*, p. 18.

### **Data submitted to UNODC's United Crime Trends Survey**

UNODC compiles data from national authorities through its annual United Crime Trends Survey on gender-related killings of women and girls, on either or both of the first two “data blocks” from the statistical framework. Data can be accessed by count (number of incidents) or rate (per 100,000 population) and viewed by region and state.<sup>105</sup>

*Most of those OSCE participating States that provide data on gender-related killings of women and girls also produce statistics showing the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator.*

Of the participating States that provided national data on gender-related killings of women and girls, the large majority produce statistics that are further disaggregated by the relationship of the victim and perpetrator (intimate partners or family members). Not all States submitted data during the 2023 survey round, however. Ten States in the OSCE region produce such data only in the aggregate, meaning only for the total number of women and girls killed. While useful as an overview of the current state of data collection among participating States, the actual data are not comparable due to variation in indicators and methodologies.

### **Data submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences**

In 2015, the UN SRVAW issued her first request to states and other stakeholders to send information on the number of femicides or

gender-related killings of women for 2016–2018,<sup>106</sup> as well as good practices in the area of data collection.<sup>107</sup> Since that time, the SRVAW has issued further calls (in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021) for state-level information and data about femicides, specifically requesting administrative data for a three-year period covering: (i) the total number of homicides of women and men; (ii) the number of intimate partner femicides/homicides of women by their partners; (iii) the number of family-related femicides/homicides of women by a family member; and (iv) other femicides/gender-related homicides of women by an unrelated perpetrator.<sup>108</sup> The SRVAW has not issued further calls for femicide data since 2021.

From the submissions to the SRVAW, it is evident that in the OSCE region, many participating States collect data on intimate partner killings and family-related killings, based on the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and are willing to report such data. Of the 57 OSCE participating States, **32 have provided the SRVAW with information about femicide** as of 2025, some States having submitted reports for several years in a row.<sup>109</sup> Of those who report, around **one third provided the requested data or partial data on femicides**; others provided general criminal data on domestic violence or homicide cases. Some communicated a need to improve data collection as they were not able to report statistics on femicide at the time of reporting.

<sup>105</sup> Data are accessible at: <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-femicide>.

<sup>106</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “UN Rights Expert Calls on All States to Establish a ‘Femicide Watch,’” 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16796&LangID=E&DanaTimeoutCtx=1>.

<sup>107</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Call for Submissions on Femicide Watch, 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/Femicide/FemicideCall2017.pdf>.

<sup>108</sup> See questionnaires from 2017–2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/inputs-states-and-stakeholders-data-and-information-related-femicides> and from 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/femicide-watch-initiative-2021>.

<sup>109</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Inputs from States and Stakeholders on Data and Information Related to Femicides, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/inputs-states-and-stakeholders-data-and-information-related-femicides> and 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/femicide-watch-initiative-2021>.

## Availability of femicide data in the European Union

As part of its crime and criminal justice statistics, Eurostat requests data from EU Member States on “intentional homicide victims by victim-offender relationship and sex”, with disaggregation by relationship (intimate partner or family member) and sex of the victim.<sup>110</sup> Of the EU-27, plus the United Kingdom, data for this indicator are available for all but five Members (most recently recorded data are from 2022).

The most detailed assessment of the availability of administrative data on femicides compiled by criminal justice institutions (the police, prosecution services and courts) was conducted by EIGE in 2021 for the EU and the United Kingdom.<sup>111</sup> At the time, 27 Member States defined femicide as the killing of a partner/spouse, and 11 mapped at least some elements of the gender-based definition of the killing of women because they are women.<sup>112</sup> Virtually all EU Member States (26 countries) and the United Kingdom collect administrative data on femicide, referring to the intentional killing (disaggregated by sex of the victim). Fewer countries (20 EU Member States and the United Kingdom) collect data on the killing of an intimate partner or spouse, and only 12 Member States and the United Kingdom collect data on the gender-based killing of women. An even smaller number collect data on women's deaths resulting from intimate partner violence, as part of a continuum of violence or involving sexual violence, for example.<sup>113</sup>

While 21 EU Member States register the victim-perpetrator relationship, only a minority also register contextual information that could clarify the circumstances of the killing of women by their intimate partners (including, for example, the method of killing, location, killings of other family members and the presence of children). Most States register the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in broad categories, but in a few, more precise categories are used, such as ‘spouse’, ‘ex-spouse’, ‘currently dating’, ‘previously dating’ and others. Only 17 countries register information about recidivism and protection orders against the perpetrator, which is a critical gap that can complicate analysis of the factors that lead to cases of intimate partner violence becoming lethal. Another weak point in administrative data systems is the lack of cross-referencing of victim and perpetrator characteristics—carried out in only five EU Member States.<sup>114</sup> Cross-referencing of both victims’ and perpetrators’ characteristics, which could include their age, sex, level of education, occupation, health status, socio-economic profile and previous history of violence, among other factors, would allow for intersectional analysis and improve the evidence base for predicting future femicides.

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<sup>110</sup> European Union, “Intentional Homicide Victims by Victim-Offender Relationship and Sex”, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/crim\\_hom\\_vrel/default/table?lang=en&category=crim.crim\\_hom](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/crim_hom_vrel/default/table?lang=en&category=crim.crim_hom).

<sup>111</sup> EIGE, *Measuring Femicide in the EU and Internationally: An Assessment*, 2021.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

# Promising practices in OSCE participating States

This chapter aims to highlight some of the good practices across OSCE participating States. Due to the scope of exercise, it was difficult to assess all data collection practices, hence this chapter is not exhaustive.

One promising practice among the OSCE participating States in data collection on gender-related killings of women involves the routine compilation of qualitative data and information about the circumstances surrounding femicides, as is done in France, Italy and Slovakia, for example.

*Data collection by some OSCE participating States also routinely provides qualitative data and information about the circumstances surrounding femicides.*

Slovakia demonstrates several promising practices in data collection. The country's General Prosecutor's office collects data on the number of individuals charged with and prosecuted for femicide, while the Ministry of Justice collects data on the number of individuals convicted and sentenced for femicide (note, however, that 'femicide' is not defined in Slovak criminal legislation, but rather data refers to homicides of women committed by a current or former intimate partner). Slovakia's Statistical Office then produces femicide statistics based on the data from law enforcement, the General Prosecutor's office and judiciary.<sup>115</sup> Administrative data for cases of murder (femicide if the victim is female)

are disaggregated by the sex of the victim and the victim-perpetrator relationship, allowing for further specificity using the following categories: spouse, ex-spouse, cohabitee, ex-cohabitee, parent of a mutual child or familial relationship (for example, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, foster parent and other categories). In 2021, 15 femicide cases were recorded, seven of which involved an intimate partner.<sup>116</sup>

Finland uses a particularly comprehensive set of indicators to collect information about femicide victims. When compared against the set of indicators developed by EIGE, and the accompanying variables related to the victim, the perpetrator, their relationship, the circumstances of the killing and the modus operandi, Finland can provide data in a statistical format for almost all of the EIGE recommended variables, including on such issues as the intoxication status of the perpetrator, prior history of violence, recidivism and the occurrence of 'overkilling'.<sup>117</sup> This contextual information is needed for identifying predictors and developing prevention measures. Notably, Finnish legislation does not include a specific offence of femicide or intimate partner homicide, but the collection of good-quality data is possible due to having conducted a full mapping of the Criminal Code to the ICCS,<sup>118</sup> the work of the Finnish Homicide Monitor, the use of a standardized electronic data collection form, and mandating that all investigating police officers submit data.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> EIGE, *Measuring Femicide in the EU and Internationally: An Assessment*, 2021, p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, *Response of the Slovak Republic to a Request by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: Updated Information on Femicide, 2021*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/slovakia.pdf>.

<sup>117</sup> EIGE, *Femicide Indicators: Pilot Study of Data Availability and*

*Feasibility Assessment*, 2022, pp. 74–75.

<sup>118</sup> Mapping means determining for each offence category in the national crime statistics the category in the ICCS that most closely matches its description.

<sup>119</sup> EIGE, *Measuring Femicide in the EU and Internationally: An Assessment*, 2021, p. 34.

Also notable, in 2024, Mongolia launched a pilot study on the UNSD statistical framework to identify inconsistencies between national data collection methodologies and definitions on the gender-related killing of women and girls. Currently, Mongolia collects data on gender-related crimes, such as murder, resulting from domestic violence, as well as homicide data

disaggregated by sex of the victim/perpetrator. The study will support government agencies responsible for data collection to develop a more effective system, with the aim that the resulting data will contribute to better policymaking.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> UN Women, “UN Women and UNODC Launch a Pioneering Study on the Statistical Framework for Femicide in Mongolia”, April 8, 2021, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2024/04/a-pioneering-study-on-the-statistical-framework-for-femicide-in-mongolia>.



# REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Along with raised awareness on the need for data collection, and in parallel with the development of statistical frameworks, it became clear that there was also a need to look into the phenomenon of femicides, as well as to analyse and report on it. Generally, when looking into a review of femicides, two general processes were noted.

*The SRVAW also recommends several modalities for the standardization of the roles and functions of a femicide watch or observatory:*

- (i) data collection should be systematic and comparable;*
- (ii) data are analysed and made public;*
- (iii) case review is used to identify gaps in protection, services and legislation;*
- (iv) the observatory or watch issues recommendations for improvement based on observed trends to legislators, policymakers and the general public; and*
- (v) evidence-based legislation and policy reforms can be implemented.*

In 2015, the SRVAW launched the **Femicide Watch** initiative and called on all states to establish an analogous ‘femicide watch’ or ‘femicide observatory’ at the national level.<sup>121</sup> Namely, she urged states to collect data on the number of femicides or cases of gender-related killings of women, disaggregated by age and ethnicity of victims, as well as age and sex of the perpetrators, and to indicate the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim or victims. More importantly, a femicide watch is envisioned as an interdisciplinary panel of experts that not only collects data on femicides but also contributes to the prevention of gender-related killings

<sup>121</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “UN Rights Expert Calls All States to Establish a ‘Femicide Watch’”, 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2015/11/un-rights-expert-calls-all-states-establish-femicide-watch>.

<sup>122</sup> UN General Assembly, Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences (A/71/398), 2016, <https://undocs.org/A/71/398>.

<sup>123</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences by Reem Alsalem, “Revealing gender-

through case analysis.<sup>122</sup> The analysis should be conducted from a human rights perspective, be used to identify “shortcomings within national laws and policies”, and be carried out by bodies that are mandated to “recommend measures for prevention of similar cases, including on laws and their implementation”.<sup>123</sup>

There is no template for how such an observatory should function. The SRVAW proposes a flexible model that reflects the needs and realities of each state. Femicide watch panels should be interdisciplinary bodies that include, for example, legal professionals, ombudspersons and NGO representatives, and are advised to co-operate with a larger group of stakeholders that can include representatives of victims and relevant international organizations. It is important that femicide watches or observatories be integrated into existing mechanisms on the prevention of violence against women.

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based violence data the world round: The Special Rapporteur’s Femicide Watch Initiative in UN Agora Blog”, <https://www.kas.de/documents/273004/15459671/R.Alsalem.FINAL.pdf/4c3e9668-6a2b-2f1d-f2d6-bdb103bda8fe?>

<sup>124</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Report on Modalities for the Establishment of Femicide or Gender-related Killings Watch, 2016, A/71/398, para. 83.



Over the last decade, other types of review process—Domestic Homicide Reviews or Domestic Violence Fatality Reviews—have been established in several countries, usually following a particular policy decision around addressing domestic violence, or crime in general. They are used to examine the circumstances of a fatality linked to a domestic violence case. Such reviews are a multidisciplinary process, often created as “a reaction to high-profile cases of gender-related killing of women, which were preceded

by a number of failures in the response by services providers in the criminal justice system and other sectors”.<sup>125</sup>

Femicide observatories/watches and homicide reviews can take several forms, and there are examples of different approaches globally. The two practices, while sharing some common features and processes, are also distinct from each other, as summarized below:

#### **Femicide Watch or Femicide Observatory**

- Mainly, initiatives to collect and analyse data and information on femicides/gender-related killings of women and girls.
- The overall aim is to collect and analyse data to improve legislative and policy responses to violence against women.
- They tend to rely on criminal justice system data but are not limited to a review of cases for particular criminal offences.
- Their work generally includes research, data analysis, advocacy and raising awareness on the issue of femicide and violence against women.
- Some are multi-agency initiatives while others are single-agency projects led by a government institution or NGO.
- In many countries, NGOs have mobilized to establish femicide watches when official data have not been available.
- The information and data collected tends to be less comprehensive than in a fatality review, with a focus on criminal justice system agencies and characteristics of the victims and perpetrators, and their relationship.
- The reports are used to raise awareness, establish a baseline of statistical data, identify breakdowns and omissions in the system and gaps in legislation, and provide recommendations for prevention measures.

#### **Domestic Homicide Review or Domestic Violence Fatality Review**

- A multi-agency review process that is conducted following the death of a person as a result of domestic violence. They do not focus only on gender-related killings of women/girls.
- A systematic examination of the circumstances surrounding the death, to identify what lessons can be learned, in order to improve responses to domestic violence. The long-term objective is to prevent domestic violence-related homicides.
- Review committees include experts who represent multiple disciplines and provide their respective perspectives: law enforcement, child welfare, domestic violence services, and healthcare, for example.
- Most review committees are comprised of experts from public agencies, but many also involve NGOs and/or victims’ families and—to some degree—the community.
- Reviews are based on detailed information about a particular case, with a wide perspective on the involvement of all relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- Review committees also collect relevant administrative data, which may be made public in regular analytical reports.
- The findings and recommendations are intended to be used to improve policies and practices and how agencies from different sectors interact, as well as to inform legislation, training and education.

*Summarized from: Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2023). Background paper on Femicide Review Committees. E/CN.15/2023/CRP.6*

<sup>125</sup> Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Background Paper on Femicide Review Committees, 2023, E/CN.15/2023/CRP.6, p. 6.

# Overview: femicide observatories and femicide watches in the OSCE region

A growing number of OSCE participating States have established femicide watches or femicide observatories within the State structure (this can include them being part of NHRIs). In addition to these, there are several examples of such watches or observatories being created by academic institutions and NGOs. Another positive trend is that some national observatory mechanisms on violence against women are taking on a dedicated task to collect and analyse femicide data and cases.

*Femicide watches or observatories are becoming increasingly wide-spread in OSCE region.*

The approaches to establishing femicide watches and observatories among OSCE participating States are diverse, with examples of both permanent and ad hoc monitoring bodies. Some States have conducted long-term reviews of femicide cases over several decades (Austria, for example), while others fulfil this task as part of another review (for instance, the Swiss government's task force on domestic violence and COVID-19). Monitoring is conducted at a regional level by the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF) that unites focal points in 23 countries and is also an umbrella organization

for three NGO-operated country observatories (in Georgia, Greece and Malta).<sup>126</sup> Additionally, local governments have also supported the creation of observatories with monitoring and prevention roles (an example is the department of Seine-Saint-Denis, in France).<sup>127</sup>

A review of reports submitted to the SRVAW and analysis conducted by EIGE indicates that four OSCE participating States have set up a permanent body as a femicide watch—Albania, Canada, Croatia and Georgia. In Albania, Croatia and Georgia, this monitoring body is part of the NHRI. Seven other OSCE participating States maintain specific observatories on violence against women or on gender equality that conduct monitoring and analysis, and function much like a femicide watch. An additional five have a national observatory or committee on homicides that also covers femicides. Distinct from these types of observatories, all of which have connections to a national institution, there are women's NGOs in almost every participating State, which conduct monitoring and/or collect unofficial data on femicides (for example, from media monitoring if administrative data are not available).

<sup>126</sup> European Observatory on Femicide (EOF), [https://eof.cut.ac.cy/?page\\_id=19](https://eof.cut.ac.cy/?page_id=19).

<sup>127</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences Reem Alsalem, "Revealing Gender-based Violence Data the World Round: The Special Rapporteur's

Femicide Watch Initiative in UN Agora Blog", <https://www.kas.de/documents/273004/15459671/R.Alsalem.FINAL.pdf/4c3e9668-6a2b-2f1d-f2d6-bdb103bda8fe?>

# Overview: domestic violence fatality reviews in the OSCE region

Femicide review committees and domestic violence homicide or fatality reviews are most common in countries with common law traditions.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, several jurisdictions in the United States have conducted such reviews since the 1990s, as have Canadian provinces—beginning in the early 2000s—and the United Kingdom (England and Wales) in 2011, and Northern Ireland since 2020. Unfortunately, information about the use of such fatality reviews to improve the response to femicide has not been compiled by country. Even analysis

by EIGE that suggests several EU Member States have “domestic homicide reviews” in some form (Croatia, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Spain are mentioned) may not be accurate because it appears that these initiatives do not meet the description of such review processes proposed by UNODC.<sup>129</sup> In some States, the homicide review process does not have a multi-agency perspective while in others, the scope has been limited to a specific year or time period rather than being convened regularly.

## Promising practices in OSCE participating States

### *Femicide Watches and Femicide Observatories*

In some OSCE participating States, independent institutions such as NHRIs, ombudsmen or equality bodies have established femicide watches. This arrangement is advantageous because these institutions have mandates to promote and protect human rights. They also have the power to request data from different institutions and the authority to propose recommendations related to the improvement of laws and policies at the national level, as well as on prevention measures and the removal of systemic obstacles.

In 2017, Croatia’s Ombudsperson for Gender Equality established a ‘Femicide Watch’ monitoring body to conduct comprehensive

monitoring, data collection, analysis and reporting on the killings of women. This body is made up of representatives of several ministries, the High Misdemeanour Court, the Ministry of Justice, the Faculty of Law, and several NGOs. The Croatian Femicide Watch operates in cooperation with the police, which inform the Ombudsperson of every killing of a woman and provide a short analysis of each case. The monitoring body collects statistics, and monitors and analyses individual cases and situations that resulted in a femicide in order to identify “key omissions by the relevant authorities, as well as for the purpose of enhancing the legislative framework and practice, prevention of violence and protection of victims”.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Background Paper on Femicide Review Committees. E/CN.15/2023/CRP.6, 2023, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>130</sup> Croatian Authorities, Response to the Letter from the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/croatia.pdf>.

Additionally, the General Police Directorate began an analysis of all police proceedings in femicide cases beginning in 2016, using the same methodology as the Femicide Watch. The research is anticipated to be completed in 2025, but a statistical overview of the results covering 2016–2020 has already been published by the Ombudsperson<sup>131</sup>.

The Public Defender of Georgia established a femicide watch in 2016, followed by the creation of a consultative council in the following year, which includes NGOs working on violence against women and domestic violence, so as to facilitate the monitoring of femicide cases. The Public Defender's Office prepares annual reports on femicide and attempted femicide cases that evaluate the scope of such crimes and provide analysis of gaps and shortcomings at the investigation and trial stages. Positive results from the work of Georgia's Femicide Watch include legislative amendments to the Criminal Code of Georgia, adding intentional murder on the ground of gender as an aggravating circumstance (in 2018)<sup>132</sup>; and the elaboration and implementation of an instrument for risk assessment in cases of violence against women and domestic violence. In its most recent report, the Public Defender draws attention to several problematic areas, including investigators' failures to consider their cases from a gender perspective, prosecutors' inconsistent approaches to recognizing child witnesses as victims, and variation in how judges assess and respond to risk.<sup>133</sup>

Several academic institutions have established femicide watches, such as the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) mandated to bring national focus to the issue of femicide in Canada by documenting femicides as they occur and monitoring state, legal and social responses to these killings. According to the most recent CFOJA report, #Call It Femicide, 184 women and girls were killed violently in Canada in 2022, bringing the total to 850 between 2018–2022. On average, **one woman or girl is killed every two days**, and such killings by a male perpetrator increased by 27 per cent when comparing 2022 levels to those in 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>134</sup> When the relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator was recorded, 57 per cent of the victims had a current or former intimate relationship with the accused. The report underscores the fact that the majority of intimate partner femicides occurred in a private location (77 per cent). Of the cases in which a location was specified, most femicides occurred in the home the woman shared with the alleged perpetrator (20 per cent) or her own residence (20 per cent). These figures underscore home as "the most dangerous place for women".<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> The research is available on the website of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, <https://www.prs.hr/cms/post/1388>.

<sup>132</sup> Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia, Response to the Call for Femicide-related Data and Information, 2019, p. 2, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/Call/Georgia.pdf>.

<sup>133</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, Analysis of Cases of Femicide and Attempted Femicide in 2022, 2024, <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2024092720573014921.pdf>.

<sup>134</sup> Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, #CallItFemicide: Understanding Sex/Gender-related Killings of Women and Girls in Canada, 2018-2022, 2023, p. 8, <https://femicideincanada.ca/cfoja-research/cfoja-reports>.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

There are also examples among OSCE participating States of governments and NGOs undertaking parallel projects to review data and analyse cases of femicide in domestic violence circumstances. For example, in 2023, the Minister for Justice and Equality of Ireland published a major independent in-depth research study on what it termed “familicide and domestic homicide”, commissioned by the Department of Justice in 2019. The study methodology made use of interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including affected family members, and covers topics such as data collection, best practices in domestic homicide reviews, the support needs of family members and the role of media.<sup>136</sup> An interdepartmental group within the Irish Department of Justice will determine the actions to implement the study’s recommendations.<sup>137</sup> The Irish NGO Women’s Aid also launched an independent report, in November 2019, that revealed that women in Ireland are more likely to be killed in their own homes and at the hands of a man they know than in any other circumstances. Since Women’s Aid records began in 1996 up to 2009, 230 women died violently in Ireland, and 16 children died alongside their mothers.<sup>138</sup> Almost nine in ten women were killed by a man they knew (87 per cent). More than half of all women (56 per cent) were killed by a current or former boyfriend, husband or partner. Strangers make up 13 per cent of perpetrators of female homicide in Ireland.<sup>139</sup>

## Research, monitoring and analysis by women’s NGOs

In the OSCE region, there are many NGO initiatives to collect data about, document and analyse femicide cases, which are independent from or in place of a femicide watch or femicide observatory established by a governmental body or NHRI. Some examples of NGO initiatives include both country-level and regional comparative research and data collection.<sup>140</sup>

*NGOs are playing an important role in monitoring and analysis of femicide.*

Women’s NGOs in SEE have been instrumental in helping to bring a hidden issue to light—for the region as a whole<sup>141</sup> as well as for specific countries—through data collection and case analysis. Much of their analysis is based on monitoring media reports, but examples were found where NGOs have also followed up with public institutions to further clarify statistics on femicides. There are some notable examples of NGOs co-operating with the justice sector to analyse the legal framework that regulates femicides and the case law on such crimes. In Serbia, for example, a dedicated study<sup>142</sup> examined the causes, triggers and responses to cases of femicide, based on an analysis of court judgments from high courts.

<sup>136</sup> Department of Justice of Ireland, A Study on Familicide & Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews, 2022, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/259211/8390d71a-7a42-4b49-b508-21316d6e2b35.pdf#page=null>

<sup>137</sup> Department of Justice of Ireland, “Minister Harris Brings Study on Familicide and Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews to Government”, 2023, <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/05eab-minister-harris-brings-study-on-familicide-and-domestic-and-family-violence-death-reviews-to-government>.

<sup>138</sup> Women’s Aid, Femicide Watch 2019 Republic of Ireland, a Legacy of Loss for Women, Family and Community, 2019, p. 9, <https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/157593017348186301.pdf>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>140</sup> For example, through a partnership between academic institutions and women’s advocacy and specialist service-providing NGOs, comparative analysis of femicides cases and responses was conducted in five European countries (Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal and Spain), producing country reports and policy briefs. The research was conducted under the EU-funded

“FEM- UnitED to prevent femicide in Europe” project. See <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/launch-of-comparative-report-on-femicide-in-5-european-countries>.

<sup>141</sup> Women’s Network, Murders of Women in the Western Balkans Region, 2021, [https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2021-Femicide\\_BLKN\\_Report.pdf](https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2021-Femicide_BLKN_Report.pdf) and UN Women, Regional Report on Social and Institutional Responses to Femicide in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, 2023, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Regional-Report\\_Social-and-Institutional-Response-to-Femicide.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Regional-Report_Social-and-Institutional-Response-to-Femicide.pdf).

<sup>142</sup> Prof. dr Slobodanka Konstantinović Vilić, Prof. dr Nevena Petrušić, Kosana Beker, Društveni i institucionalni odgovor na femicid u Srbiji (I), Pančevo, 2019, [http://femplatz.org/library/publications/2019-11\\_Femicid\\_monografija\\_Prva\\_publikacija\\_E\\_primerak.pdf](http://femplatz.org/library/publications/2019-11_Femicid_monografija_Prva_publikacija_E_primerak.pdf); Prof. dr Nevena Petrušić, Doc. dr Natalija Žunić, Dr Vida Vilić, Društveni i institucionalni odgovor na femicid u Srbiji (II), Pančevo, 2019, [http://femplatz.org/library/publications/2019-11\\_Femicid\\_monografija\\_Druga\\_publikacija\\_E\\_primerak.pdf](http://femplatz.org/library/publications/2019-11_Femicid_monografija_Druga_publikacija_E_primerak.pdf).

The NGO FemPlatz has created an online interactive map of femicides cases<sup>143</sup> since 2020, using data collected through media monitoring. The purpose of the map is to track data on femicides while serving as a model for the development of local femicide watches.

In Central Asia, investigative journalists conducted the first comprehensive study of femicide cases in Kyrgyzstan in 2021. Their research analysed administrative data on such crimes between 2008–2020 and identified about 300 murders of women by men that could be qualified as femicides in the country.<sup>144</sup> In 75 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim; more than a third (39 per cent) of the killings were committed by an intimate partner. Most of the femicide cases showed signs of particular brutality and aggression. Based on this promising new research, UN Women launched a multi-country initiative to generate data on femicide in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2024. Data collection for each country, none of which define femicide in their

national legislation, will be guided by UNSD's statistical framework and compiled for several years.<sup>145</sup> Preliminary data for Uzbekistan, based on a dataset of 305 verified femicide cases with 334 victims over the last ten years, indicate that in 46 per cent of the cases the victims were killed by intimate partners, most often with kitchen knives in their homes.<sup>146</sup> The researchers also documented several particularly brutal cases that exhibited signs of 'overkill'.

In conclusion, the establishment of femicide watches and observatories has proven essential to ensure comprehensive reviews of femicide cases. The diverse approaches across countries highlight the adaptability of these mechanisms to national contexts, whether through governmental institutions, independent bodies or NGOs. By ensuring that femicide cases are analysed and the resulting findings integrated into policy and practice, those initiatives have the potential to significantly enhance prevention efforts and contribute to delivering justice.

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<sup>143</sup> Interactive map describing femicides committed since 2022 in Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, by the European Union, FemPlatz and UN Women, <https://femplatz.org/yX6uDYGXvSm8Jqremq.php>.

<sup>144</sup> Soros Kyrgyzstan, Фемицид. Кто и как убивает женщин в Кыргызстане? Краткие выводы [Femicide. Who kills Women in Kyrgyzstan and How? Brief conclusions], 2020, [Фемицид в Кыргызстане 2020.pdf](#).

<sup>145</sup> Country reports are expected to be published in 2025. See also,

Counting Femicide: Overview of research projects in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Snapshot-Femicide-research-in-Central-Asia\\_final.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Snapshot-Femicide-research-in-Central-Asia_final.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Niginakhon Saida and Svetlana Dzardanova, How Do Uzbek Men Kill Women? Impulsively, Brutally, and Often at Home in The Diplomat, December 2, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/how-do-uzbek-men-kill-women-impulsively-brutally-and-often-at-home>.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The OSCE Ministerial Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (MC. DEC/7/14) already provides a broad framework for improving the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women. It calls on the participating States to align national legislation with international standards and **criminalize** all forms of violence against women; to **investigate, prosecute and punish** the perpetrators of all forms of violence against women; and to collect, maintain and make public reliable, comparable, disaggregated and **comprehensive evidence-based data and statistics** regarding all forms of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, and include information on the number of cases reported to law enforcement bodies, the numbers investigated and prosecuted, and the sentences imposed.

Additionally, the UN General Assembly resolutions on taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls of 2013 and 2015, CEDAW general recommendation No. 35 and the UN SRVAW report on modalities for the establishment of femicide watch or observatories complement and provide more detailed guidance on measures to combat femicide.

The majority of OSCE participating States address femicide in criminal law as an aggravating circumstance connected to a homicide, most often if the offence was committed by a former or current spouse, intimate partner or other family member. Only five participating States define femicide in the law, however. Many participating States collect separate administrative data on femicide or gender-related killings of women, but data remain fragmented for the region and mainly reflect the intentional killing (homicide) of a woman by an intimate partner and/or family member, the most prevalent form of femicide. Some OSCE participating States have established national preventive mechanisms such as femicide watch bodies or observatories, or homicide review panels. As a rule, NHRIs are acting as femicide watches while in other participating States, NGOs are taking on this role. A much smaller number of States have systems for a regular review of homicides occurring in domestic violence cases.

Based on the findings and trends identified in this study on combating and preventing femicide in line with accepted international and regional (OSCE) standards on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the following recommendations have been developed.



## Recommendations for the OSCE participating States and other stakeholders:

### 1. Strengthen the legislative base on femicide

- Based on the national/local context, decide on the best approach to integrate all forms of gender-related killings of women and girls in domestic law, including criminal codes.
- In line with the development of the legislation, initiate and support the development of guidance and specialized criminal procedures that further clarify implementation of relevant legal provisions. These can cover investigation (including evidence collection), prosecution, sentencing etc.
- Ensure effective implementation of developed legislation and consistency in prosecuting femicide across the region.
- Prioritize capacity building of professionals on all forms of violence against women, including on femicide.
- Adopt standardized multi-agency risk assessment and risk management systems that include measures to assess the risk of fatalities.
- Support court/case monitoring of femicide cases to assess implementation of the law.

### 2. Collect administrative data on femicide or gender-related killings of women and girls

- Review current systems for collection of comprehensive data on all forms of violence against women, or establish such systems. Adopt a statistical definition of femicide based on existing international and regional standards and include administrative data on femicide or gender-related killings of women as an integral part of national statistical data on violence against women. All indicators should be harmonized across institutions.
- Ensure data is publicly available for further research and analysis.
- Regularly conduct analysis and publicize official, anonymised administrative data and results of analysis of femicide cases with recommendations.

### 3. Establish prevention mechanisms

- Support the development of national and/or local prevention mechanisms that would look into co-ordination, data collection, prevention and case review.
- These bodies should be multidisciplinary, working on the prevention of femicide or gender-related killings of women, or entrust existing interdisciplinary bodies co-ordinating the response to cases of violence against women with the collection of femicide data and the analysis of cases of femicides, in order to determine short-comings and gaps in laws or their implementation, and recommend legislative and other measures to prevent femicides.

#### 4. Analyse femicide cases

- Conduct analysis of such cases, using an international human rights framework and national laws, such as laws on domestic violence, criminal law, criminal procedure law and other relevant laws and regulations.
- Review case management and risk assessment by different public service sectors (police, prosecution, health, social services) and the co-ordination of preventive measures related to the services' respective capacity (including, but not limited to, interaction of victims and perpetrators with different services and institutions; number of calls/reports of violence made to the police; number of protection orders issued; number of breaches of protection orders; number of women placed in shelters or safe houses; availability of places in shelters and safe houses, etc.).
- Conduct regular court and case monitoring of all gender-based violence cases, including femicide.
- Establish homicide review mechanisms and include team members with expertise in gender-based violence against women and femicide.

#### Specific recommendations for the OSCE:

- Support analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of laws on femicide in terms of investigation and prosecution of cases by participating States that define femicide in their law, and support other participating States in amending domestic law.
- Support participating States' in facilitating their co-operation to establish a common methodology for the OSCE region (in co-operation with UNODC, UN SRVAW and other organizations and entities working on the issue) for the collection of comparable and comprehensive administrative data on femicide.
- Support relevant stakeholders (academic institutions, NGOs, independent human rights institutions etc.) to develop a common methodology for analysis of femicide cases.
- Support participating States in developing and delivering capacity-building activities aimed at preventing femicides and processing femicide cases.
- Support relevant local bodies and mechanisms with capacity development for data collection and analysis.



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