

Review of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relations (2011-2015)

# **FINAL REPORT**

of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relations (2011-2015)

(Serbia, October 2017-February 2018)

Maja Mamula, Independent Consultant

Zagreb, Croatia 11th April 2018



United Nations  
**SERBIA**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CC</b>	Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil society organizations
<b>CPC</b>	The Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Serbia
<b>DV</b>	Domestic violence
<b>FL</b>	Family Law
<b>GBV</b>	Gender based violence
<b>Istanbul Convention</b>	The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women
<b>LPDV</b>	Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence
<b>MLEVSA</b>	The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
<b>NS</b>	The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relations
<b>NSD</b>	New strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV
<b>SV</b>	Sexual violence
<b>VAW</b>	Violence against Women
<b>VIPR</b>	Violence in Intimate Partner Relations
<b>WSV</b>	Women survivors of violence



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

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The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relations (NS), as a first national strategic document, was adopted at a session of the Serbian Government on the 1st of April 2011 and refers to the period from 2011 to 2015. NS is aligned with international standards and the national normative framework that regulates violence against women. Although being developed and adopted before the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention), it supports implementation of the provisions prescribed by the Convention.

Development of the NS is an expression of the Government of Serbia determination to, by adhering to international standards and documents on basic human rights protection, promote the protection of women from violence in the family and in intimate partner relationships, by providing support to all stakeholders in prevention and elimination of these forms of violence. Activities pertaining to Strategy development were coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MLEVSA) as part of the *Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence* project. NS promotes gender equality and prohibits all forms of violence against women in the family (DV) and in intimate partner relations (VIPR), a form of violence women are most affected by. The main areas and goals of NS are defined in accordance with the international recommendations and situation analysis in Serbia and developed through the following four balanced areas: 1. Prevention; 2. Normative framework; 3. Multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building of authorities and specialized services; and 4. Protection and support system for victims.

Each public policy or strategic document passes through several phases in its development, from the development of the process based on identified needs and conducted analyses, through the implementation of the predesigned activities aimed at achieving the set goals, to the last phase of the evaluation of undertaken steps and results. This last phase, the evaluation of undertaken steps and results, is very often skipped. Hence, no feedback is assessed neither on the extent to which invested efforts yielded effects, the key problematic areas in the development and implementation of public policy, nor about the next steps needed to reach the desired goal.

**The main purpose** of this review is to assess sustainability and challenges in the implementation of the NS. Through determining the effect of the NS itself, or the extent to which the set general and specific objectives were achieved, the baseline will be clearer in terms of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. The purpose of the review is also to identify examples of good practices that have emerged from the application of the NS, the challenges that have arisen in practice during its implementation as well as to provide recommendations for the development of the new strategic document.

The adoption of the NS as a document represented a very **significant change** in prevention and combating VAW, DV and VIPR. The NS is primarily an important normative act, a key strategic document for combating VAW, in which VAW was identified for the first time as an issue relevant to the state. The NS resulted in development of the *General Protocol of Conduct and Cooperation of Institutions, Bodies and Organizations in Situations of Violence against Women within the Family and in Intimate Partner Relationships* (General Protocol), followed



by development and adoption of series of Special Protocols. Also, the NS resulted in development of multi-sectoral cooperation of all relevant actors.

A significant change is evident in the area of raising awareness about the problem of VAW, as well as through a noticeable increase in the number of reported cases of DV and VIPR. All of these forms of violence have become significantly more visible due to the greater media coverage of cases, but also due to the campaigns that have been carried out in order to sensitize and raise awareness about the problem.

Another important improvement is the development of the stronger connection between the institutions and the women's CSOs, mainly through recognition of the CSOs' work and the efforts they have made to bring this topic in the focus of public discussion as well as their continuous work on combating VAW.

The NS also resulted in launch of training for professionals in work on VAW, DV and VIPR, as well as changes to the normative framework.

NS had a significant effect on these changes, primarily on a formal level. The significance would have been greater if there had been the main pre-conditions to put it in practice. Although the document was adopted, there was no sufficient political will for its implementation. **The challenges that were encountered in practice during the implementation of the NS** are related to the lack of the coordination and mechanisms for monitoring the implementation, the Strategy was not accompanied with the Action Plan and there was no meaningful budget provided by the Government to support the implementation of the Strategy which represents one of the most important challenges for moving forward in eliminating VAW.

**Key recommendations** for the development of the new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV (NSD) have been obtained through the interviews with the key informants who participated in this review. A total of 147 proposals are summarized and outlined in 40 measures and categorized into general concrete recommendations and measures for development of the new strategic framework.

The main general recommendation is that the development of the NSD needs to define a system of coordination and monitoring of the implementation. Furthermore, in order to ensure the quality implementation of the NSD it is necessary to develop the Action Plan in parallel. It is crucial to accurately determine the main responsible body for the NSD and the institution responsible for its adoption. It is also necessary to establish an interagency coordination body to manage the NSD implementation process, identify the institution responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NSD, define indicators for monitoring, frequency of reporting on the strategy, and the repercussions for noncompliance with the NS. In order to determine how it develops over time, a mandatory evaluation of the implementation of the NS needs to be introduced. It is also crucial to foresee the financial resources for implementing the measures and activities of the NSD and the AP aimed at combating VAW, DV and VIPR, and include them in the state budget and budgets of local government units.



Resulting from the analysis of what needs to be done to combat VAW, DV and VIPR, and having in mind the support and assistance to WSV, numerous measures were proposed, that are categorized into 5 groups: 1. Services for victims and work of women's CSOs; 2. Multi-sectoral cooperation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of a new national document for combating VAW; 3. Prevention; 4. Normative framework; and 5. Training for professionals.

## 2. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

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The collection of data for the review of the NS was carried out through a variety of techniques, including a review of relevant literature and sources of information, semi-structured interviews (in person and over the phone) and a questionnaire for CSOs, as well as workshops and discussions with the reference group. The analysis was built on the information obtained from various stakeholders, secondary data analysis and documentation review.

1. **Desk study** of relevant sources of information. (Annex a) (Zagreb, October 2017)
2. **Secondary data analysis** including collecting and reviewing data and literature on gender-based violence in Serbia, review of the relevant national and international policies and frameworks, as well as an assessment of political, economic and social context at the national level, where the NS was implemented. (Annex a) (Zagreb, November 2017)
3. **Development of the semi-structured interviews questions and questionnaires for CSOs** (Zagreb, October and November 2017)
4. **Presentation of the inception report** to the reference group (16 persons) organized in order to discuss their perceptions of activities undertaken, their role in the NS implementation, their influence on the NS results and information on the context. (Belgrade, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017)
5. **Organization of the interviews** with key informants (Annex b):
  - a) Interviews in person were organized with 5 persons (Belgrade, December 04<sup>th</sup>-06<sup>th</sup> 2017)
  - b) Telephone interviews were conducted by skype with 3 persons (Zagreb, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017- January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018)
6. **Distribution and collection of 10 questionnaires** for civil society organizations from *The Women against Violence Network* (Annex c) (Zagreb, November 30<sup>th</sup> – December 29<sup>th</sup> 2017)
7. **Report preparation** - systematic analysis of gathered information, documents and literature with the purpose of getting an accurate picture of development, adoption and implementation of the NS was conducted based on collected and integrated inputs from reviewed data and literature, discussion with the reference group, information from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires from CSOs (January 8<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2018).

Limitations of the review process are related to informants who were not willing to participate, validation of collected data and the representativeness of collected data.

In this review a certain number of informants were not willing to take part, due to their obligations or without giving clear information about causes of refusal (systematic or not). The review has been conducted two years after expiration of the NS and change of institutional setting and the context occurred in the meantime.

Special attention was given to confidentiality of the participants who were included in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, however a part of limitations always applies to the level of openness of informants and their readiness to be completely honest.



Content analysis of documents, reports and available information, as one of the methodological approaches, carries its limitation in terms of ability to check the accuracy of all available data.

Despite limitations, methods used for this review were appraised as appropriate, economical and efficient in a given time and resource constraints.

All of these restrictions were mitigated by the strong emphasis on confidentiality and security of informants and information, as well as by rigorous verification of the information resources and materials that were used.

### 3. CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

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The institutional framework with a specific mandate for achieving gender equality, combating VAW and implementing NS consists of a set of institutions. MLEVSA is in charge of legislative and strategic framework. The Coordination Body for Gender Equality, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, addresses all gender equality issues and coordinates the work of state administration in relation to gender equality in Serbia. The Parliamentary Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality discusses draft laws and other regulations in terms of gender equality and monitors the implementation of laws and regulations relating to gender equality<sup>1</sup>.

The Republic of Serbia has ratified the *United Nation Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2003)* and *The Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women (the Istanbul Convention) (2013)*. Both of these international documents, incorporated in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia, impose a commitment on the state to undertake measures to prevent any form of discrimination against women, prevent VAW and protect women from violence. Some of those measures focus on dissemination of information on the situation faced by women and on violence against women, as well as on appropriate training of professionals in this context<sup>2</sup>.

In the period 2011-2015, when the NS operated, apart from the fact that in general and professional public the awareness level on VAW was increasing, certain shortcomings regarding social, economic, political, geographic and demographic factors were noted. A number of them immediately suit for identifying points of interest when a new document will be designed, therefore the context will be described in such a shape.

The period of implementation included the change of the Serbian Government in 2012. The Gender Equality Directorate which operated under the auspices of the MLEVSA and was a reference body for the Development and Implementation of the Strategy – was rescinded. The Coordination Body for Gender Equality was introduced in October 2014 within the same Ministry but the fact that no other focal point with the same mandate was introduced crucially directed the process of strategy implementation. At the same time, no Action Plan was passed i.e. no state funds were allocated to push forward this process.

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<sup>1</sup> Dokmanovic, M. (2016). Gender Analysis for Serbia - Final report. IBF International Consulting.

<sup>2</sup> Stevanović, G. (Deputy Protector of Citizens) (2016). Special report of the Protector of citizens on training for acquisition and improvement of knowledge and competencies in the prevention and suppression of domestic and intimate partner violence and protection of women from such violence. Belgrade: Protector of Citizens.



In that period, despite certain framework achievements, gender equality mechanisms faced many challenges, mostly concerning their roles and mandates that have not been clearly defined by the law; they lack sustainable budgetary support and skilled human resources. As a consequence, their influence on public policies is weak at all levels. There is also a lack of vertical and horizontal coordination of gender equality mechanisms that is necessary for the efficient implementation of gender equality policies and the process has been additionally weakened by abolishing the Gender Equality Directorate in 2012<sup>3</sup>.

Instead of launching the national campaign as a tool for presenting and promoting the benefits of the NS, due to such insufficient efforts, the NS remained to a large extent out of practical use and just a framework where no social actors were appointed to co-ordinate the action deriving from this framework. Certain authority was transferred to the level of local municipalities but without clear line of operation or reporting mechanisms. A big part of work was carried out by women's SCOs. Within their regular activities (started in 1990), women's CSOs were also faced with specific contextual obstacles, such as the war in the region and poverty of women in Serbia, which created additional burdens and negatively impacted their work.

NS was to some extent implemented through the UNDP project *Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence* and the Joint Project *Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia*, executed by the UN Agencies in Serbia: UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF. The project contributed to the implementation of the first, third and fourth strategic area.

Based on the fieldwork, various women's CSOs monitoring reports witness underestimated reporting of VAW, a small number of domestic perpetrators imprisoned and/or with unsatisfactory sentences, emergency protection order (is) not issued promptly and/or adequately – basically, the female survivor was not trusted. „The protection of women against all forms of violence needs to be strengthened and mechanisms for coordinating and sharing of data between all relevant actors in the system enhanced”<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, the implementation of the NS was influenced by: 1. Internalized beliefs and attitudes, including prejudices of professional public 2. Previous culture of multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral co-operation and 3. Previous culture of communication among agencies, both GOs and CSOs. There is an increase of critical number of sensitive professionals in all spheres belonging to the support system to female survivors. Some of them succeeded in networking on a local level and built up positive practices that suited as a model to others. Yet, because of its longest experience in the field, women's CSOs needed to be treated as equal social actors.

There was a general atmosphere of working on VAW because of international obligations and/or putting up the support system in use when femicide cases had occurred. The analysis of majority of VAW cases<sup>5</sup> not rarely show the presence of the institutional, structural violence, which affects WSV in the form of re-traumatization. There was a huge need to raise

<sup>3</sup> Dokmanovic, M. (2016). Gender Analysis for Serbia - Final report. IBF International Consulting.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission; Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2015 Report.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis that could be find in a numerous different documents, such as:

<http://www.vds.rs/Realizovanalstrazivanja.htm>; <http://www.vds.rs/ElektronskePublikacije.htm>;  
<https://www.womenngo.org.rs/prakticne-politike/cedaw-izvestavanje>



awareness in the country on the necessity to continue to learn from the regional and international community in a more direct way.

It is to remind that Serbia keeps being isolated in terms of importing know-how on VAW issue, in connection with the intervention and in the prevention area. This makes room for repetition of patriarchal patterns that strengthen misogyny and disrespect for diversity issues. Consequently, there is a reduced chance to fight increasing attacks coming from clerical and ultra-right wing and directed both against introducing progressive practices in the field of GBV and SV as well as women human rights defenders active in CSOs in this field who remain vulnerable and unprotected by the State.

GBV has not been fully introduced in educational system, which affects prevention, as well as education of future professionals. This issue should be prioritize in coming time. The fact that there is no lesson and/or written material on these issues from the level of kindergarten to primary and secondary school makes an alarm and a priority in coming time. The SV issue and the prevention work were issues that remained untackled and should be recognized as a serious task for the future.

Media takes over the role of main educators presenting very rarely ethical reporting that is in accordance with the best interest of the survivor.

#### 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

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Development of the NS is an expression of the Government of Serbia determination to, by adhering to international standards and documents on basic human rights protection, promote the protection of women from violence in the family and in intimate partner relationships, by providing support to all stakeholders in prevention and elimination of these forms of violence. The NS was adopted at a session of the Serbian Government on the 1st of April, 2011<sup>6</sup> and covers the period from 2011 to 2015. The NS was relevant for the entire territory of the Republic of Serbia. The document is aligned with the international standards, particularly with the Istanbul Convention (ratified in 2013 and entered into force on August 1, 2014).

Activities on the NS development were coordinated by the MLEVSA as part of the *Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence project*<sup>7</sup>. Consultations were held with representatives of CSOs, judiciary and public administration authorities, as well as with experts engaged within the project. Representatives of the Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina also participated in the NS development.

The NS promotes gender equality and prohibits all forms of VAW in the family DV and VIPR, as a form of violence women are most affected by. *The subject of the NS is primarily, although not exclusively, violence against women in the family.* This determination is justified in the fact that domestic violence is the most common form of VAW, while, on the other hand, it is also true that women are most commonly the victims of DV. Violence in the family means “all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or

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<sup>6</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 027/2011 of April 20th, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Project Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence was implemented from 2009 to 2011 within Gender Equality Directorate of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, with expert and technical support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project was financially supported by the Government of the Kingdom of Norway.



domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim” as determined in Article 3 of *Istanbul Convention*<sup>8</sup>.

The NS is the baseline and guideline document of primary importance in developing a comprehensive and high-quality system for prevention and elimination of VAW and protection of the victims of violence.

The main areas and goals of the NS are defined in accordance with the international recommendations and situation analysis in Serbia, and developed through the following four balanced areas:

### 1) Prevention

Outcome: Establish a system of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Objectives: 1) Society that publicly condemns violence as a crime established, by promoting non-violent behavior, gender equality and combating discrimination; 2) Improve institutional response immediately after the committed violence with the focus on the needs of the individuals against whom violence has been committed; and 3) Prevention of repeated violence.

Key activities: aimed at raising awareness of VAW issues, training for employees in competent bodies and services, empowering women and working with the perpetrators of violence.

### 2) Normative framework

Outcome: Improve normative framework for protection of women from violence.

Objective: 1) Consolidate and improve legislation.

Key activities: aimed at improving the legislative framework through consolidation of relevant provisions of the criminal and family legislature.

### 3) Multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building of authorities and specialized services

Outcome: Improve multi-sectoral cooperation and raise capacities of authorities and services.

Objectives: 1) Establish mechanisms of coordination for protection of the victims of violence and include CSOs in coordination mechanisms; 2) Consider and propose the introduction of a unique software system to record cases of VAW; and 3) Introduce training programmes on VAW in the family and in intimate partner relationships in professional training plans and programmes for direct service providers to victims of violence.

Key activities: aimed at the establishment of mechanisms for coordinating protection for victims of violence (adopting relevant protocols and establishment of multi-sectoral cooperation), establishment of a database for the management of unique records of cases of violence against women and establishment of continuing professional training in the area of VAW in the family and in intimate partner relationships in all relevant systems.

### 4) Protection and support system for the victims

Outcome: Improve the system of protection and support for victims of violence.

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<sup>8</sup> Article 3 of *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>



Objectives: 1) Improve measures of protection for victims of domestic violence; and 2) Improve measures of support for women victims of DV.

Key activities: aimed at establishing cooperation and coordination of provided services, establishing an inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to work, and advancing measures and support services for women survivors of violence (WSV) in the family.

**The primary beneficiary group** are women in general, but the NS places special focus on the groups of women exposed or at risk of being exposed to multiple discrimination, as well as vulnerable groups of women (e.g. women with disabilities, Roma women, mothers of children with disabilities, developmental disabilities or chronic diseases, rural women, elderly women, refugee and internally displaced women and other). The NS also considers the issue of children affected by DV.

**The secondary beneficiary group** includes relevant authorities and services, such as social welfare centers, police, prosecutors, judges, healthcare workers, women CSOs specialist service providers, media, decision makers, children and youth in educational institutions, local self-governments and local gender equality councils, perpetrators of violence.

The NS determines implementers of activities and partners on the national and local levels and inter-institutional cooperation (content and forms of cooperation), as well as stakeholders' responsibilities in the NS implementation.

Implementers and partners for the implementation of activities as well as the deadlines for their implementation were defined for each of these four strategic areas:

### 1. Prevention

Implementers: The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Information and Information Society, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development.

Partners: National Employment Service, Judicial Academy, media, journalist associations, local authorities, CSOs.

Deadline: ongoing.

### 2. Normative framework

Implementers: The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science.

Deadline: end 2012.

### 3. Multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building of authorities and specialized services

Implementers: The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice.

Partners: Local self-government units, civil society organizations.

Deadline: end 2015.



#### 4. Protection and support system for victims

Implementers: The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice.

Partners: Local self-government authorities, civil society organizations.

Deadline: end 2015.

There were no funds specifically allocated in the state budget and foreseen for the implementation of the NS.

#### 5. REVIEW OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

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This review assesses sustainability and challenges in the implementation of the NS. It is focused on what worked and why, challenges in the implementation, illustrated examples of good practice, and provides strategic lessons to inform stakeholders and decision-makers and guide the working group to develop the new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV.

Overall objective of this review was to contribute to decreasing VAW in Serbia.

The specific objectives of the review were:

1. **To determine the efficacy of the NS implementation (achieved objectives and outcomes).**
2. **To assess the degree of the NS's impact on combating VAW in Serbia.**
3. **To identify examples of good practices in combating violence against women in Serbia.**
4. **To identify challenges encountered in practice during the implementation of the NS.**
5. **To provide recommendations that will be taken into account in preparing the new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from gender-based violence.**

The key areas for the review include:

- The extent to which outcomes and objectives continue to be relevant to the needs of women and girls;
- The degree to which the NS activities have been successfully implemented and desired outcomes and objectives achieved;
- What factors contributed to achieving or not achieving objectives;
- Assessment of the role of stakeholders in NS implementation;
- The level of stakeholders' satisfaction with NS implementation and results;
- What should be taken into account in delivering a new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV.



Provided answers represent collected and integrated inputs from reviewed data and literature, discussion with the reference group, information from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires from CSOs.

## 6. MAIN FINDINGS - DEGREE OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY'S IMPACT ON COMBATING VAW IN SERBIA

### *The importance and recognition of the GBV/VAW in Serbia*

Significant progress have been made in regards to the recognition of the VAW, especially in the context of awareness raising. Consequently, VAW is recognized as an important problem in Serbia. Still, it remains insufficiently and inadequately understood regarding its causes and consequences among the general population.

The facts confirming that the problem has been increasingly recognized pertain to the number of DV reports that have been increasing from year to year. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the number of reported adult perpetrators of domestic violence was 3550 in 2011, 3782 in 2013, 5040 in 2015, and 7244 in 2016. The increase from 2011 to 2016 amounts to 104%. Women are more empowered and more likely to report, especially since the adoption of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* in 2017. The greater recognition of the problem can be attributed to various activities (e.g. campaigns such as 16 days of activism, video ads by women's CSOs, TV shows) as well as increased media visibility of the subject.

Parallel to this, there is still no real deep understanding of the problem and gender perspective. Important cultural reasons were noted: misogyny in society and patriarchal context. Structures continue to resist addressing this problem, and some representatives of institutions show deep misunderstanding of the VAW phenomenon: women are not believed and are thought to be manipulating, processing cases takes a long time, women are lacking timely and accurate information, and court proceedings are too slow. All of this is evident based on the attitudes towards the perpetrators and the small number of processed cases. It is as if the society does not have the essential will for the full implementation, without retreat and hesitation. It creates the impression that the problem is not being addressed through serious and systemic solutions by the state. It is recognized in principle, but lacks an adequate approach, as if there was no real political will and as if the work is being done under pressure, and only "cosmetic" changes, not real or essential ones, are actually being made.

Women's CSOs are extremely important in identifying the problem and working on the combating of VAW. They gave a significant contribution, but their influence on systematic and structural resolution of the problem of VAW is limited, due to lack of resources (lack of funds, influence on government, human capacities).

*„It is still necessary to actively work on identifying this problem. This is also indicated by statistics - the number of killed women has not decreased“.*

*(Representative of an institution)*

The adoption of the NS as a document represented a significant change. The NS is primarily an important normative act, a key strategy document for combating VAW, in which VAW was identified



for the first time as an issue relevant to the state. It is a result of an umbrella strategy for gender equality, which also included the theme of VAW, but to a very limited degree (exclusively DV).

The development of the NS is a key moment in which the state officially assumed responsibility, defined the area of its responsibility, identified the scope of the topic, appointed relevant actors, and opened up a space for dialogue between institutions and CSOs. It has initiated connection and complementarity of all the actors in the system through a multidisciplinary approach.

The problem is that it was implemented only partially as well as inadequately. It is quite interesting that, according to the opinions of participants from different sectors, there is the impression that the sole purpose of the NS was to remind the state of what it had promised and taken responsibility for, and what it did not do. Due to insufficient implementation, it has often been used only as a document for advocacy and lobbying.

***The most significant positive changes that have happened in terms of combating VAW and providing the help and support to women victims in Serbia until today***

Over the past 20 years, significant progress has been made in the area of combating VAW in Serbia. The reference group who participated in the evaluation identifies the following significant changes as the most significant: 1) prevention and raising the visibility of the problem; 2) improvement of the normative framework; 3) development and strengthening of multi-sectoral cooperation; 4) the development of WSV services (shelters, SOS phones, counselling centres; 5) professional training of professionals from all systems, with the most visible changes pertaining to the police (Table 1).

<p>1. <b>Prevention, raising the visibility of the problem (18)</b></p>	<p>Raising the level of awareness about VAW as a societal problem, change in awareness about WSV in order to increase reporting.</p> <p>Raising the visibility. Increased media coverage of the problem. Active involvement of lead women politicians in raising awareness.</p> <p>Initiating campaigns. Change in discourse, VAW not considered to be a private problem anymore.</p> <p>Introduction of prevention programs into the education system.</p> <p>The first research in this field, carried out most often by CSOs, independent experts or international organizations (e.g. Incest Trauma Center, Victimology Society of Serbia, UNDP).</p>
<p>2. <b>Normative framework (18)</b></p>	<p>Improving the normative framework. Improving legislation. Changes to the <i>Criminal Code</i> (new criminal offenses introduced - stalking and sexual harassment). Stricter criminal policy.</p> <p>Adoption of the <i>Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence</i> (significant change, the issue of individual responsibility of persons from institutions, preventive measures, protection measures).</p> <p>Ratification of Istanbul Convention.</p>



	<p>The law prescribes the cooperation of state bodies and institutions, whereby professionals have become obliged to partake in multi-sectoral cooperation.</p> <p>The obligation to evaluate the risk of violence by all systems and to act on the basis of risk assessment.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> <b>Multi-sectoral cooperation</b> <b>(17)</b></p>	<p>Serious systemic improvement. The interconnectedness of institutions and CSOs is clearly defined. The adoption of the General Protocol and special protocols for the prevention of DV and the obligation of all local self-governments to adopt protocols on the prevention of domestic violence at the local level. Horizontal and vertical networking took place. Significant coordination of institutions is noted, as well as recognition of the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation.</p> <p>Establishing better cooperation between CSOs and institutions, greater involvement of women's CSOs, despite numerous obstacles and misunderstandings. Significant contribution of the UN agencies in strengthening such cooperation.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> <b>Services for victims and work of women's CSOs</b> <b>(14)</b></p>	<p>Opening of important services by women's CSOs for women victims/survivors of the DV and VIPR (safe houses, SOS helplines, counselling centres), an increase in the number of services and relatively satisfactory regional coverage, despite exceptionally difficult working conditions.</p> <p>The role of women's CSOs: addressing this societal problem publicly, pressuring the state into doing its job, ensuring the visibility of the problem, providing services, mobilizing their local communities. Their role and importance are increasingly recognized.</p> <p>Networking of women's organizations - development and excellent functioning of the Women's Network against Violence.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> <b>Specialized training for professionals</b> <b>(10)</b></p>	<p>Introduction of specialized training for professionals. Numerous educations on VAW, DV and VIPR organized, as well as on multi-sectoral cooperation and the conduct of competent services. Raising and strengthening capacities of organizations / institutions working with victims. Competences are improved, they need to be standardized in order to avoid disproportion in the level of training and expertise of professionals from different local communities.</p> <p>Very positive work of the Academy of Criminalistics and Police Studies and the Judicial Academy (Republic of Serbia). Increase in professional awareness in certain services, especially the police. Educated police officers according to the program of the Judicial Academy and Police Academy<sup>9</sup>.</p>

<sup>9</sup> In the period from 2010 to the end of 2014, the total of 56 seminars, with 1,082 participants were held on topic of DV and institutional protection. Specialized training on the implementation of the Special Protocol on Conduct of Police Officers in Cases of DV and IPVR against Women was conducted in 2013 for 1,300 police officers. (Stevanović, 2016)



	<p>Women's CSOs organized and conducted excellent education. UN supported a significant number of trainings throughout Serbia.</p> <p>Introducing programs for the work with perpetrators of violence as a measure intended to reduce the risk of repetition of violence and ensuring safety of victims.</p>
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### *The progress made through the implementation of the Strategy for combating VAW in Serbia*

In spite of the fact that a significant number of changes had been initiated and developed before the adoption of the NS (part of Table 1), the NS made significant contributions, primarily on a formal level. It formally introduced the recognition of the problem of VAW and GBV into the 'state language'. Although the strategy was developed and adopted before the Istanbul Convention became effective, it prescribed measures that support implementation of the Convention. The NS also introduced some new concepts of VAW (e.g. the notion of economic violence), and provided possibility for changing policies.

The fact that certain actors (representatives of state bodies and institutions) finally recognized their role and obligations was of crucial importance. Until the adoption of the NS, VAW was a topic mainly dealt with by women's CSOs, not by the state. The NS introduced ideas about the importance and necessity of multi-sectoral cooperation and networking.

This resulted in the development of Protocols (general and specific), adopted by the government. It encouraged and initiated the organization and implementation of education on multi-sectoral cooperation and coordination of the conduct of competent services (local cooperation agreements, training of experts, formation of multi-sectoral teams, definition of roles and cooperation), as well as work with victims. It has contributed to cooperation between institutions, bodies and CSOs both at the state and local levels (e.g. CSOs are procedurally involved in teams).

Also, the contribution is visible in the normative framework, related to changes in some key laws. The most significant shift is the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*, which was developed in 2016 and adopted in 2017, but according to the opinion of a large number of participants involved, its creation was influenced by the NS.

It also encouraged public actions and events with the aim of raising awareness about the problem of VAW, DV and VIPR. Examples are the campaigns that are held every year for marking *16 days of activism against VAW*. Besides women's CSOs who are main organizer, institutions also take a part. Campaigns includes different activities for different target groups, with common base ideas and messages<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, it has served to a certain extent as an incentive to establish connections with women's CSOs and recognize the importance of their long-term work, while for CSOs it served as a key document they could use when emphasizing that the state is not undertaking required actions, along with other relevant international mechanisms (Istanbul Convention, GREVIO, CEDAW).

Furthermore, the NS is the first document of national significance that recognized programs of work with perpetrators of violence as an important segment in combating DV and VIPR, as well as protection of victims.

Some respondents considered that the NS has significantly contributed to all of the five categories, in particular in the field of prevention and multi-sectoral cooperation (Protocols).

<sup>10</sup> <http://femix.info/femix-news/p/318/>



The NS set the basics, and systematized what needs to be done. It charted problems and set strategic goals. Accordingly, it has become a backbone for many actions.

However, as the NS was not accompanied with a developed Action Plan, its role was important mostly at the normative level. It did not lead to profound changes in practice, and not all professionals understood their responsibilities and obligations. Some of the participants stated that it was important only in the part of visibility and that it did not have a real impact on the change of practice, because there was a noticeable influence of some other factors, such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

## The efficacy of the Strategy implementation

The aim of this chapter was to assess the extent to which the outcomes were achieved and the degree to which NS activities were successfully implemented. However, there were two fundamental problems with the development of a quality assessment. The first issue was related to the fact that no assessments had been conducted, neither prior to the implementation of the NS to determine a baseline nor after its implementation in order to determine what has been achieved. Another key assessment problem related to the fact that the NS was not followed by the AP, so there were no specific indicators to establish criteria for a consistent and quality assessment. For these reasons, the assessment was based on the set of main areas and goals of the NS, as well as on the collected data pertaining to activities and results for each of these areas.

The main areas and goals of the NS are defined in accordance with the international recommendations and situation analysis in Serbia, and developed through the following four balanced areas: 1. Prevention, 2. Normative framework, 3. Multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building of authorities and specialized services, and 4. Protection and support system for victims.

### Area 1: Prevention

*Outcome: Establish a system of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention*

*Objectives: 1. Society that publicly condemns violence as crime was established, by promoting non-violent behavior, gender equality and combating discrimination; 2. Improve institutional response immediately after the committed violence with the focus on the needs of the individuals against whom violence has been committed; 3. Prevention of repeated violence.*

According to the available data, and based on responses from the participants (through interviews and questionnaires), a number of steps was undertaken in the area of prevention, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, but more significant attention and work are still required in this area.

Significant progress was made at the level of **primary prevention**, and it was pointed out that thanks to the NS, the problem of VAW, DV and VIPR received significantly higher visibility, violence began to be increasingly addressed, and opportunities for discussions on new solutions opened up. The increased visibility of the problem was reflected in the increase in the number of public campaigns implemented by CSOs, but also by the national and provincial gender equality bodies, and by other entities.



In addition, media played an important role for ensuring visibility. Unfortunately, the problem of the number of women murdered by their partners significantly contributed to the visibility of the problem since more media reported on the cases.

A training program for journalists and a code for media reporting had been developed, which has contributed to some media to start to report on VAW, DV and VIPR in a more responsible manner and with less sensationalistic approach. Also, it is evident that certain specialization among journalists occurred and that journalists who are sensitive to the subject are beginning to emerge.

There was a visible positive shift in quality of media reporting of VAW cases, especially regarding TV reporting. According to Mršević (2015), almost all TV reports on specific cases of violence against women in 2014 were fair and accurate, and whenever TV shows reported about femicide, it was done in a highly informative manner, sticking to the facts, and not trying to "animate" the audience by presenting "juicy" details about private and family life, regardless whether reports were done on victims, perpetrators or murderers. The author believes that reporting on VAW on TV stations was fair, which cannot be said about tabloids.<sup>11</sup>

Compared to previous years, the second analysis of the media reporting on GBV in Serbia (2015- 2016)<sup>12</sup> indicated the emergence of a series of very positive breakthroughs – for example, there was an increased reporting of the prosecution of perpetrators, their trials, and the sentences passed, which is considered to have an important general preventive effect. The phenomenon of continuous and highly professional reporting on violence against women, including interviews, panel discussions, public lectures and paper presentations, that were mostly published by the weekly *Vreme*, but also in *NIN*, *Danas* and *Politika*, as well as in some local media, notably *Pančevac* and *Grad Krusevac*, should also be highlighted as a positive development.

Some progress is also visible in the work with children and youth within educational institutions. While majority of the programs were related to other forms of violence, such as peer violence and digital violence, and good example of adding the gender dimension later in the course of action was UNICEF's program "School without Violence" where its mentors were trained by the Incest Trauma Center and trainings were organized by the *Violence Prevention Unit* of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. In the academic year 2014/2015, the Ministry organized training on the content of the General and Special Protocols for the Protection of Women against Violence for pedagogical assistants.

The example of the prevention program that was accredited and supported by the Ministry, in accordance with NS, is the program 'Healthy choices for kids' of the Incest Trauma Center-Belgrade that was continuously implemented throughout Serbia, and includes prevention work for all forms of violence, with an emphasis on SV. More than 7000 children participated in the program. This prevention program on the topic of the SV for pre-school institutions, elementary and secondary schools was integrated in Educational Packs for learning on SV within the national (pre-)school curriculum. Educational Packs were designed by the Ministry and Incest Trauma Center-Belgrade, supported and promoted by the Ministry. Prior to official approval and implementation, their piloting showed excellent results. Educational Packs

<sup>11</sup> Mršević, Z. (2015). Media in Serbia 2014 about GBV: In between stereotypes and entertainment. Beograd: United Nations Development Program.

<sup>12</sup> Mršević, Z. (2017). Media in Serbia about GBV in 2015 and 2016: What to do against violence – the role of the media. Beograd: Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls in Serbia II.



involve content that was included in (pre-)school education and 10 regular subjects in elementary and secondary schools with a total of 72 teaching units. Although the Ministry directly worked on the content, they were abruptly withdrawn.

In addition to this program, there were other initiatives for prevention programs for schools, but they were sporadic, and no systematic shift was made pertaining to the introduction of prevention programs into schools.

Campaigning should be emphasized at the level of primary prevention, along with the participation of professionals and politicians in prevention and awareness.

The launch of seminars for representatives of competent institutions was highlighted in the area of **secondary prevention**. One of the examples pertained to the education of professionals from the education system carried out by the Incest Trauma Center through 3 forms of education for professionals from all levels of education systems (kindergartens, primary and secondary schools): 1. Education on VAW, DV and SV; 2. education about SV prevention; and 3. Training for Trainers on SV issues. These trainings have also been organized continuously (2010-2017) and have been completed by more than 4,000 participants from the education system.

The beginning of the work with perpetrators was stressed at the level of **tertiary prevention**. The Training program for professionals for the treatment of perpetrators of violence in intimate partner relations was accredited in 2012, supported by UNDP implemented project *Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence*. A total of 99 experts completed the program, of which almost 90% are from social welfare centres, and the rest are from the police, CSOs, prison system and education system. However, the program has not been recognized by the state and its implementation depends on the project funding.

An identified problem related to the prevention was that the current level of prevention activities is insufficient for achieving better results (work with children). At the level of primary prevention, there was no systematic shift in the educational system. Prevention activities for children and young people are insufficient and are affected by inadequate training of professionals in the education system. Some topics in the area of prevention (e.g. psychological and economic violence) are completely ignored. Even with regard to the media, which was highlighted as a positive example, the participants stressed that there is still a lot to be accomplished in this area. An additional sensitization of journalists is necessary in order to reduce the sensationalist approach, which does not send the message about the problem and prevention of violence, and sometimes it even interferes with the investigation.

At the level of inclusion and strengthening of the role of the local community, no actions were taken towards financing services and greater involvement in preventive activities. Hence, the absence of preventive programs in the local community was emphasized as well as the need for planning continuous prevention activities.

Research on relevant issues listed in NS has not yet been carried out. Some of the participants pointed that the change in public awareness is still insufficient. Victims of violence still mostly receive a message, which they themselves believe sometimes, that they deserve the abuse. Consequently, it is necessary to create awareness among women that they do not have to endure violence and that there is a way out.

Also, further development of the work with perpetrators is necessary, especially its systematization and the introduction of the program into the prison system.

## Area 2: Normative framework

*Outcome: Improve normative framework for protection of women from violence.*



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### *Objective: Consolidate and improve legislation*

Positive changes in the normative framework, for which it was difficult to assess the level of influence of the NS, when compared to many other social events, consist of:

- a) A new *Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence* was initiated by the Ministry of Justice and although enacted in 2017, is considered by a significant part of the participants to be influenced by the NS. This Law introduces the responsibility of institutions, which represents a change in the paradigm. The focus of this Law is placed on the prosecution, which is also a fundamental change. Another key point is the obligation of cooperation between the prosecutor's office, the police and the centers for social work, which has not always been the case. The preventive role of the Law is also highlighted, namely, when the perpetrator had not yet committed any violence but there is a reasonable doubt (protective measures, preventive measures).
- b) Amendments to the *Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia*, the introduction of new criminal offenses (Stalking and Sexual Harassment), stricter penal policy.
- c) Changes to the *Family Law* (amendments and definition of DV)

It is assessed that the normative framework is generally not weak, but what is lacking is its systematic implementation. The implementation of the laws in practice is still not satisfactory, the possibilities provided by laws are not being used (for example, The Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Serbia allows for a video testimony to be used, limiting the number of children's testimonies as witnesses, but it is not applied).

### **Area 3: Multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building of authorities and specialized services**

*Outcome: Improve multi-sectoral cooperation and raise capacities of authorities and services*

*Objectives: 1. Establish mechanisms of coordination for protection of the victims of violence and include CSOs in coordination mechanisms; 2. Consider and propose the introduction of a unique software system to record cases of violence against women; 3. Introduce training programmes on violence against women in the family and in intimate partner relationships in professional training plans and programmes for direct service providers to victims of violence.*

The most significant changes were done in this area, with high quality implementation realized to a large extent. Coordination mechanisms have been established through adoption of the *General Protocol of Conduct and Cooperation of Institutions, Bodies and Organizations in Situations of Violence against Women within the Family and in Intimate Partner Relationship* (2011) which promotes victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

It was followed by development and adoption of series of Special Protocols: the Ministry of Health adopted the *Special Protocol of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia on Protection and Treatment of Women Victims of Violence* (2010); the Ministry of Interior adopted the *Special Protocol on Conduct of Police Officers in Cases of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence against Women* (2013); the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs adopted the *Special Protocol for Action of Social Welfare Centers/Guardianship Authorities in Cases of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence against Women* (2013) and the Ministry of Justice adopted the *Special Protocol for Judicial Bodies in Cases of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence against Women* (2014).



This is the most significant advancement, due to strengthening of multi-sectoral cooperation and shifting responsibilities from the central level to local government units.

Specialized trainings for institutions were developed and organized as key places for education of persons from institutions. The result of these trainings is a higher level of knowledge and acquired skills for the work on problems of VAW, DV and VIPR, higher sensitivity in work with victims, and also decreased resistance to multi-sectoral cooperation, especially with women's CSOs. The largest number of training courses were organized in the systems of social protection and internal affairs.

Still the employees at public authorities (all authorities, organizations, institutions and departments in charge of prevention and elimination of violence and protection of women from violence,) are not provided with sufficient training on the protection of women from DV and VIPR or on the content and implementation of the General Protocol and the Special Protocols on the Protection of Women from Violence. Data on trainings is not regularly updated, and the existing data does not include all years of NS implementation, nor is it consistent for each ministry (e.g. usually it does not include the number of training sessions, number of participants, training topics, evaluation of training, etc.). A mere 14% of health care professionals attended such training, the exact number of judicial office holders who attended such training is unknown, while health mediators and pedagogical assistants received no training on the protection of women from violence<sup>13</sup>. Also, not enough effort had been put into verification of the quality of accredited programs, and there are only several such programs, often only carried out by CSOs. Since there is no clear system nor plan, it was obvious that these trainings often do not cover all the necessary topics as some content gets repeated, while other information is missing. Participants believed that training should be primarily designed in a way to use concrete examples, rather than focus on the interpretations of laws, and that it is necessary to ensure significant involvement of the judicial system. They also emphasized that it is important for the training to involve topics of SV against women and children. No public authority has provided information on the „accumulation of training”, which should indicate, in the first place, the actual number of professionals who have been trained within each system. Finally, evaluations of these educations were not carried out, so their real effects on the work of persons from institutions were not assessed, and the evaluation of the work of those who completed the education is also absent.

Some of the specific objectives were not realized in the process of implementation. An example is the work on the introduction of a unique database on the victims of violence. The software for tracking the reported cases of domestic violence was developed and tested in Vojvodina, but due to the lack of normative framework, it never became applicable. Besides this, there has been no significant shift in this area. Although discussions took place about what database should include, how the records would be kept and by whom, as well as about issues of accessibility, and the possible software solutions, this activity was not realized since these discussions were dominated by mutual disagreements and different views. The police remain the only institution that systematically manages data through its base.

Significant problems related to the lack of implementation of the set goals pertain to the health system even though the first Specialized Protocol was developed by this sector in 2010. According to some participants, neither did the health system recognize their own role nor did the other stakeholders

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<sup>13</sup> Stevanović, G. (Deputy Protector of Citizens) (2016). Special report of the Protector of citizens on training for acquisition and improvement of knowledge and competencies in the prevention and suppression of domestic and intimate partner violence and protection of women from such violence. Belgrade: Protector of Citizens.



consider them to be an important actor. Also, the greatest lack of education is noticeable in this area. According to the Women Health Promotion Center, 85% of medical doctors do lack education on DV<sup>14</sup>.

Insufficient involvement of CSOs is still noticeable in the implementation of the NS. Protocols have affected a positive shift, but it is necessary to establish uniformity of conduct in different systems. What further complicates the work is a very frequent change of people in certain workplaces, who undergo certain training, but then get transferred to other jobs.

#### Area 4: Protection and support system for victims

*Outcome of this area was to improve the system of protection and support for the victims of violence.*

*Objectives were: 1. Improve measures of protection for victims of domestic violence; 2. Improve measures of support for women victims of domestic violence*

According to the available data and based on responses from the participants it seems that the least progress had been made in this area of the strategy. While the development of services for victims of violence is in progress, as well as the introduction of the obligation to evaluate the risk of violence by all systems and respond according to the risk-based assessment, most of these measures have not been implemented. The Rulebook on the conditions and standards for provision of SOS helpline service for WSV was adopted in November 2015 (Official Gazette 93/2015).

The existing specialized services for women victims/survivors of violence in Serbia are mostly organized by women's CSOs. A significant part of the NS measures was aimed at recognizing the role and importance of their work, as well as the expansion of existing services, including the establishment of the National SOS telephone line, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. However, the participants believed that the implementation of these measures had been stopped. They stated that some progress was made in the area of protection, which still needed improvement. Providing safe houses and SOS phones is only a minor part of the support, as the protection of victims is a far more complex task. Long-term support for trauma recovery is needed, as well as the introduction of measures for economic empowerment of women, which have not been addressed yet.

#### Conclusion:

**In the area of prevention**, there was noticeable progress on all three levels, but significant additional efforts are needed, especially at the level of primary prevention through the improvement of preventive work with children and youth, as well as with the media representatives. It is necessary to strengthen the role of the local government in securing funds for services for victims of violence. It is important to continue working actively on raising women's awareness about the problem of VAW, DV and VIPR, and economic empowerment of women.

Shifts were made **in the area of the normative framework**, but it cannot be ascertained to what extent they were influenced by the implementation of the NS. Some improvements to the existing laws have been noted and the importance of adopting *the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence* was emphasized. The importance of the work on the systematic application of existing laws and legal possibilities in practice was equally stressed.

The best results have been accomplished **in the area of multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building**, through defining and strengthening multi-sectoral cooperation and developing general and specific protocols. Educations for professionals have been launched, which are key for improving the work with VAW. There is an insufficient number of specialized training courses for the implementation of the General and Special Protocols and training courses about violence against women, its causes

<sup>14</sup> Otasevic, S. (2016). Report of Women Health Promotion Center. Belgrade.



and dynamics, and measures to be taken. The number of caseworkers who participated in training events is low and disproportionate to the incidence of violence which these officers encounter in their work<sup>15</sup>. Database management has not been started and it is obvious that this aspect will be challenging to resolve. Also, it is important to establish a body that would coordinate accreditation and implementation of education, in order to minimize repetition of the content, cover all relevant topics, and evaluate the quality of education carried out as well as the work of those who completed the education.

The smallest shifts are noticeable in **the area of the Protection and support system for victims**. It is necessary to significantly increase activities in this area, both for ensuring effective and systematic support from the entire system for WSV as well as for supporting the work of existing services that are most often run by women's CSOs.

### *The influence of the NS on final beneficiaries*

The general opinion was that the impact of the NS on final beneficiaries, women who survived violence, or its immediate effect, is difficult to measure in such a short time, since, as with other strategic documents, the results are measurable after a longer period of time. One of the main impacts of the NS on women relates precisely to prevention, that is, the fact that the problem of VAW has become much more visible, that women are more aware and that violence is reported to a significantly greater extent. Also, strengthening multi-sectoral cooperation, developing general and specialized protocols, as well as specialized trainings, certainly had a significant impact on how institutions work with VAW. The legal framework is also important, and it is considered that its significance will be clearly visible once the *Law on Protection against Domestic Violence* becomes fully implemented.

It is quite apparent that the NS was not implemented equally for all groups of women, and it was suggested that the new strategy should be extended to groups of women that face multiple discrimination, and that the implementation should be more comprehensive.

The main criticism related to this area is the absence of an Action Plan for the NS and the fact that its implementation did not include allocation of funds in the state budget. Hence, many actions were implemented only thanks to the funding from international donors and UN agencies.

Due to the lack of the Action Plan, continual co-ordination, mandated reporting or certain form of monitoring and evaluation, the insight in level of stakeholders' satisfaction with NS implementation and results was not possible to reach. Since the starting indicators were unknown, they couldn't be followed up. Additionally, the fluctuation of staff in sectors that are responsible for VAW made significant influence, too.

### *Specific role of CSOs in NS implementation and influence of the NS on work of CSOs*

According to the participants' opinions and the available data, numerous elements stemming from the work of women's CSOs served as a basis and inspiration for the development of the NS. Representatives of CSOs participated in the working group, presented comments and

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<sup>15</sup> Stevanović, G. (Deputy Protector of Citizens) (2016). Special report of the Protector of citizens on training for acquisition and improvement of knowledge and competencies in the prevention and suppression of domestic and intimate partner violence and protection of women from such violence. Belgrade: Protector of Citizens.



suggestions related to the text of the NS in different phases, but majority of input was removed from the final version.

Women's CSOs implemented the NS through their systematic work, and through projects they implemented, supported mainly by international donors. In addition to these projects, a small number of organizations received basic, very limited resources each year to carry out activities covering some area of the NS, but these resources were far from adequate.

Although women's CSOs systematically work to implement a significant number of the NS measures (from prevention, through proposing legal solutions, organizing and conducting specialized education for professionals, providing basic services and assistance and support for WSV), it is important to emphasize that the state rarely has an understanding for their work, and it does not finance them, despite the fact that they perform many jobs for which the state itself has assumed responsibility. In some areas, small women's CSOs with extremely limited resources were the ones that organized multi-sectoral teams and managed to access them, but there is still no understanding nor financial support for their work from the local government.

*'The specific and most important role of CSOs is empowering women victims of family violence, as well as providing education to professionals, because the greatest knowledge of the phenomenon of violence is held by some of these organizations.'*

*(Representative of an institution)*

According to the available data and based on responses from the participants, the role of women's CSOs was indispensable for all the changes that have been initiated: from bringing the issue to the public, through pressures, lobbying and participation in legislative changes (drafting of laws and normative acts), to providing services for WSV. These organizations have been working with women for many years, launching initiatives to improve the capacity of institutions, coordinating work, and accompanying victims to institutions, and creating public opinion. The first public campaigns and the first research were initiated by these organizations. They have been systematically identifying problems in practice. They influenced the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. They influenced the increasing visibility of VAW problems, changes in awareness of general population, including in Roma settlements. Their work and importance are evident due to the growing number of reports of DV and VIPR. They were always a step ahead of institutions, and institutions still do not sufficiently recognize the role and importance of CSOs.

However, according to the participants, especially those from the CSOs, their organizations and institutions still do not share the same values, especially in regard to the attitude towards VAW, WSV and the focus on the victims. International organizations have supported the work of expert local women's CSOs that conduct the work on the ground and have motivation and perseverance. Women from public life have learned a lot from these organizations and have become more willing to cooperate.

There was a difference in the participants' views regarding the impact of the NS on the work of women's CSOs since its adoption until today. A significant part of respondents considered that the NS had positive influence on some aspects of the work of women's CSOs, while almost the equal number of respondents considered that it did not have any significant positive impact.



Participants who thought that the NS had a positive impact on the work of women's CSOs stated that women's CSOs participated for the first time in the drafting of a relevant strategic document at the state level, that they gained some significance and that their role and work were recognized. They also believed that the impact of the NS was that these organizations have, to a certain extent, opened dialogue with the institutions, and that a systematic formal framework for the involvement of CSOs has been developed, which provided them with the basis for lobbying, referencing the document, and emphasizing the state's accountability. It was noted that they were significantly involved in practice, and that the state sector better understood their significance and role, which improved their cooperation. However, similar to responses to other questions, it is evident that this did not mean that everything had been solved, neither that positive changes had been equally present in all local communities.

However, even participants who believed that there had been a positive impact of the NS stated that the strategy included a measure beneficial for the work of CSOs, which was to be financed by local governments, but this has never been achieved.

*'The state finally got engaged and made systemic steps. It opened cooperation with women's CSOs and established a dialogue. The expertise of women's CSOs was recognized, but unfortunately the process seemed to have stopped halfway. Although the role and importance of CSOs with services for WAV was recognized, the next step was to ensure the financing of their work, but that never happened.'*

*(Independent expert)*

*'The development of cooperation between women's CSOs that provide services (SOS phone lines) and the social protection system had been started. Minimum standards for conduct have been defined and established. The process was initiated for SOS phone lines to receive finances for their work, to be systematically financed and have secured funds for work, but this step was never reached.'*

*(Representative of the international organization)*

The other part of the respondents believed that no visible progress had been made in developing cooperation and in improving the position and work of CSOs relating to the impact of the NS. They stated that these organizations worked on this problem long before the adoption of the NS. They considered that the NS served to some extent as a support as it provided certain frameworks and guidelines, but that it was inadequate because the entire NS implementation was questionable, especially once it was transferred to the local level.

### Examples of good practices in combating VAW in Serbia

One of the key tasks of this review was to identify the examples of good practice by the participants in the evaluation. It was surprising that only few concrete examples have been presented. For some of the examples that were mentioned, remarks were made that they were excellent several years ago, but that today they are no longer implemented and that it is unclear what is being done. The examples of good practice that were mentioned referred mostly to changes that occurred within the institutions.



The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is often mentioned as an example of good practice. It is considered that the public policy to combat VAW, the *Strategy for the Protection of Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender Based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina* (2008-2012), which preceded the NS had a direct impact on its development. It was also highlighted that it was ahead of other actions related to the combating VAW, domestic violence and violence in partner relations placing an emphasis on sexual violence as one of the forms of VAW with most taboos, through a new project that established rape crisis centers in 7 cities in Vojvodina.

Raising awareness of the general public about VAW was listed as one of the basic examples of good practice that followed the adoption of the NS, while the problem of the number of women murdered by their partners significantly contributed to the visibility of the problem.

When identifying good practice examples, one of the most common responses was raised public awareness about the importance of the multi-sectoral cooperation. Connecting professionals from all systems was, according to the participants, the most important foundation for all the steps to follow in advancing work and combating VAW and DV. Some positive examples were provided by the formation of the teams of dedicated professionals in individual cities (city municipalities) across Serbia, who established multi-sectoral cooperation through the application of adopted protocols such as in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Sombor, Pirot, Zemun, Grocka, Čačak, Vranje. There was significant interest shown in these areas for these issues as well as for initiating additional education by the professionals themselves (e.g. health workers from the Institute for Mental Health in Belgrade) or by representatives of local governments (e.g. Vrbas). The advantage of encouraging multi-sectoral cooperation is that almost everywhere in the territory of Serbia there are motivated individuals who are sensitive to the issues and educated to work on VAW and DV.

Furthermore, the role of women's CSOs was highlighted within the context of connecting relevant actors, as their work emphasizes the importance of the existence of a specific focal point for women's rights at the local level, through the implementation of the NS measures in their regular project and program work as well as the organization and implementation of high quality specialized training (e.g. training conducted by the Autonomous Women's Center).

The role and importance of some "new" actors, which have become actively involved in this issue, such as the Judicial Academy and the Academy of Criminalistics and Police Studies, was also stressed. The work of the Judicial Academy was particularly visible in the organization and implementation of accredited specialized training and in conducting research (e.g. exploring how many judgments resulted in a verdict during a period of 3 years). The Academy of Criminalistics and Police Studies has been active in the implementation of specialized police training, and it was highlighted by both representatives of institutions and CSOs as the institution that has invested the most efforts in advancing its work and has witnessed the greatest positive shift in conduct. According to the participants, the police was most open to adopt proposals for improvement of their work, and they actively participated in numerous trainings.

Another example of good practice that was identified referred to the fact that some local governments, when drafting an action plan for gender equality and planning activities, relied on the NS and thus gave it full legitimacy in their communities. Participants believed that poorly developed gender equality bodies used the NS as a support and arguments for planning activities related to combating VAW.



One of the most prominent examples was the launch of the well-developed program for working with the perpetrators of violence, but based on the responses, a small number of perpetrators have completed this program and its implementation is still uncertain.

Training for journalists on reporting on VAW was also identified as a positive example as well as study visits where professionals could directly learn about examples of good practice from the EU (e.g. study visit to Austria and learning about their model of responding to VAW, DV and VIPR, with the purpose of adopting a new *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*).

### *Contribution of the political, economic and social context to the examples of good practices at the community level*

It was hard to identify the impact of specific factors affecting the context itself, such as political, economic and social factors.

It was noted that raising the level of education and understanding by some professionals and mutual cooperation between state bodies, institutions and CSOs was crucial for successful prevention of DV, as it ensures an adequate response to the violence that had occurred and sends the clear message to the victims that they are not alone, but also to the perpetrators that clear sanctions exist and that violence is not tolerated. Within this category, examples of three major projects<sup>16</sup> were mentioned, which were carried out before and during the implementation of the NS and financially supported by the UN agencies and international donors, which provided funds and basic conditions to achieve these changes.

The role and importance of personal motivation and sensitivity to the topic, suggesting that individuals interested in the subject are achieving political and real changes was also highlighted. The personal or private engagement was identified as one of the key factors, along with the will and perseverance of an individual, and the importance of people who have such passion being in the right positions. However, due to the high turnover, this advantage does not necessarily yield the stability of the formation of a critical group of those who remain to work in this area. The importance of such individuals was expressed through several accounts, according to which when such persons leave their positions, everything that has been done ceases to function and further development is hindered.

*'A capable person who is willing to personally engage can do a lot for the whole community!'*

*(Representative of an institution)*

Other less frequently listed key factors referred to the work and role of independent bodies (e.g. Citizen Protector) as well as of women's CSOs that affect changes, because they publicly

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<sup>16</sup> Project Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence

(<http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/europe/serbia/2009/combating-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-project-in-collaboration-with-undp-2009-2011>)

Joint Project Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia

([http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/projects\\_and\\_initiatives/integrated-response-to-violence-against-women-in-serbia.html](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/projects_and_initiatives/integrated-response-to-violence-against-women-in-serbia.html))

Joint Project Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls in Serbia - Phase II

([http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/projects\\_and\\_initiatives/violence-against-women.html](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/projects_and_initiatives/violence-against-women.html))



address important issues, have a certain power in the community, and systematically point out problems and possible solutions.

The ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the role and importance of the pre-accession funds, prompting the state to initiate certain activities, were listed as factors that had indirect positive impact.

The need for additional training and awareness raising of professionals for working on these issues as a basis for transferring good practice to their communities, as well as the importance of sanctioning professionals for non-compliance with positive regulations was also addressed.

### ***Sustainability of the implemented measures and challenges in the implementation of the Strategy***

The issue of financial sustainability is viewed to be the key issue for the sustainability of the NS. It is not the only, but it is a key factor for maintaining the changes that have been made so far, as well as the main prerequisite for further work. If the long-term change is to be achieved, strategic budgeting is required by the state, i.e. the budget in which resources for implementing measures would be planned. Only such state budgeting ensures long-term sustainability.

*'It is crucial that the state is involved in funding the Strategy, because the projects are not eternal and resources are limited. If the state does not take responsibility, nothing can be achieved.'*

*(CSO representative)*

It was reported that until now most of the NS measures have been implemented thanks to the support of international donors (various EU funds, embassies), including the UN agencies. Until two years ago, the state structure was not ready to support any project without external donors, but the climate is slowly changing.

Furthermore, the participants believed that the next key step for ensuring sustainability was the selection of persons who coordinate and monitor the implementation of the NS, i.e. participate in the development of further necessary objectives and measures to combat VAW, DV and VIPR.

The next important element of sustainability are legislative measures, which should provide comprehensive approach to the problem and define the obligations of all involved bodies, institutions and CSOs.

Participants also believed that continuous education of professionals who work on these issues increases the possibility of sustainability of already implemented measures and introduction of new necessary measures to combat VAW.

### ***Reasons for achieving or not achieving the results***

Readiness of the state to establish a dialogue and open the door for cooperation with women's CSOs was perceived as the positive aspect of the process of development, adoption and implementation of the NS. The expertise of women's CSOs was finally recognized, which was manifested through the



involvement of women's CSOs in the process of development of the NS, participation in the working group, and the utilization of experience from direct work. Of particular importance was the inclusion of CSOs dealing with categories of women who face multiple discrimination (e.g. women with disabilities, Roma women). Cooperation with the relevant stakeholders was established during the NS development process, which led to a better understanding among professionals and to insistence on multi-sectoral cooperation.

There were also independent external factors that contributed to the implementation of the NS, such as ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

*'The enthusiasm greatly impacted the entire process. It appeared during the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and everything seemed possible.'*

*(CSO representative)*

In regards to the problematic aspects of the process of development, adoption and implementation of the NS, participants stressed that more time should have been devoted to developing the NS as well as the AP that should have immediately followed. In addition, they stated that a long period of time passed since the end of the process and the final version of the NS until its final adoption, which in some ways disregarded the whole invested work (almost two years) as well as the fact that a lot of concrete measures were removed from the adopted version.

One of the main reasons that contributed to results not being achieved is that no AP was developed. There were no clearly defined indicators for the assessment of the implementation of measures, reporting deadlines or responsibility of the measure implementers. The whole process should have been more transparent and more comprehensive, with clear responsibilities in terms of the implementers. The state was not adequately involved in ensuring the conditions for the implementation of the NS (e.g. a clearly defined normative framework, standards, funding).

The adopted NS covered all of the important areas, but the problem was detected on the level of implementation. A large part of the measures remained just on paper, and a significant part of the NS was not implemented. At the same time, some of the participants noted that successes were presented in the public which did not occur or were not as successful as it had been presented.

The main problem with implementation was tied to the lack of resources. When it comes to multi-sectoral cooperation, there is no exact data on the level of progress since there was no quantitative nor qualitative data collection system on types of cooperation. Hardly anything was done in regard to the women from groups that face multiple discrimination. Transferring implementation to the level of the local government was well developed, but the implementation showed that local governments often lack budget resources for gender equality or they do not spend them according to the allocations. There was no transparency in reporting, especially at the local community levels. CSOs experiences point to a different type of conduct of the relevant actors, with smaller towns and rural areas being particularly affected (e.g. the police and the prosecution show a great lack of understanding and will for victim protection, the social work centers demonstrate insufficient sensibility for VAW and VIPR).



## Factors influencing the implementation and the sustainability of the implemented measures of the Strategy

**Political factors** were identified as the most important ones, because political will and decisions are crucial, and without them there is no real possibility to effect any changes. On the one hand, there was a sufficient level of political will to initiate the NS process, but on the other hand, everything was "watered down" during its implementation. Political changes that took place during the NS implementation period have led to changes in strategic goals. The implementation process has been stopped since the change of government in 2012 as there was obviously a considerable lack of political will to work on its continuation.

*'Given that the "previous" government adopted the NS, there was no will or means to continue. It all depended on foreign donors.'*

*(Representative of the institution)*

Participants believed that everything could have been better and more effective had the state's involvement been greater, especially in terms of engagement and continuity in the work of the institutions that assumed responsibilities. This was also the answer to the question of **coordination** of activities, which was inadequate for ensuring implementation.

Second most important factors that were listed were **economic factors**. As respondents stated, one of the conditions for the adoption of the NS was that the document would not require additional funds from the state budget. This was considered to be one of the key problems in implementation of the NS. Without secured funds, everything depended on the donor's policies, the willingness of CSOs to actively seek means for implementing measures, as well as the readiness for intense unpaid personal engagement of professionals from different systems.

**Social factors** that presented an obstacle for the implementation of the NS related to the problems specific to the society in transition, insufficient recognition of the importance of the problems of VAW, DV and VIPR, the patriarchal context, the significant influence of the church that emphasized the patriarchal family structure and mostly responds to VAW with silence, low level of awareness among women, lack of preventive and educational programs in the education system that would lead to long term changes as well as disagreements on the level of women's movement, which weakens their potential and efforts.

In regard to the **influence of the institutions**, the importance of their willingness to cooperate with CSOs has been positively evaluated, but the resistance to the implementation of the NS is still noticeable as well as the lack of understanding of the root causes of VAW. Another aspect of the work of the institutions is the fact that they are constantly "in transition", and every change of political authority instigates changes of professionals in institutions, which disrupts the continuity of work.

In cases where the personal will and interest are expressed, **professionals from institutions** are recognized as key actors for cooperation and joint work. The practice has shown that individuals can lead to major changes when significantly engaged. At the same time, due to insufficient education and misunderstanding of the problem of VAW, people from institutions can also be an obstacle for establishing cooperation and working together to combat VAW.

Regarding the role of **the community**, remarks were made about the negative impact of local politicians' unwillingness to include VAW, DV and VIPR, lack of awareness as well as resistance



to cooperation with women's CSOs that provide services for VAW in their local communities. One of the key NS measures, which is the support of local government services, has not been implemented.

### **Monitoring of the progress and support to the implementation of the Strategy implementation**

The main problem in the process of implementation of the NS, which has been emphasized by all participants and which can be discerned from various documents, is the lack of coordination and mechanisms for monitoring the implementation's success. As the participants mentioned, there was no interagency body, which would appoint two people from each ministry to be in charge of performance monitoring, to manage the implementation process. There was no coordination, each system was working independently. The NS was developed by the Gender Equality Directorate, which was closed during the NS implementation. This certainly had a confusing and negative effect on its implementation.

*'It was not clear at all who was taking over, who took responsibility for it, who was reporting about it. This was supposed to be done by the Directorate for Gender Equality.'*

*(Representative of the international organization)*

Another key issue was that the Action Plan and Monitoring Framework with clearly set implementation performance indicators were not developed and consequently, there was no reporting on the implementation and results achieved. Several participants believed that the topic received attention only because of the involvement of the UN agencies.

It is precisely this level of the NS implementation that has proved to be crucial for guiding the next steps in development of the new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PREPARING THE NEW STRATEGIC DOCUMENT ON PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM GBV**

Recommendations for the development of the new strategic document on prevention and protection of women from GBV (NSD) have been obtained through a number of questions posed to the participants, based on the various documents.

Recommendations are categorized into 2 basic groups:

**a) A series of general proposals and measures related to the NSD development,**

**b) A series of concrete measures and proposals, categorized into 5 groups:**

1. Services for victims and work of women's CSOs
2. Multi-sectoral cooperation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of a new national document for combating VAW
3. Prevention
4. Normative framework



## 5. Training of professionals

### a) GENERAL PROPOSALS AND MEASURES:

1. The main responsible body for the NSD and the institution responsible for its adoption should be determined. As an interagency coordination body, its mandate should be to manage the NSD implementation process, identify the institution responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NSD, define indicators for monitoring, frequency of reporting on the strategy, and the repercussions for noncompliance with the NS.
2. The New strategic document needs to define a system of coordination and monitoring of the implementation.
3. The Action Plan is necessary to be developed immediately in order to ensure the quality implementation of the NSD.
4. Responsibilities within the ministries should be established in a manner that clearly defines which persons (by name and surname) would participate in the implementation within the scope of their ministries, clearly define who they report to and how often (e.g. every 3-6 months).
5. The mandatory evaluation of the implementation of the NS needs to be introduced in order to determine how it develops over time.
6. Provision of foreseen financial resources for implementing the measures and activities of the NSD as well as the AP aimed at combating VAW, DV and VIPR should be in place, and include them in the state budget and budgets of local government units.

### b) CONCRETE MEASURES AND PROPOSALS:

#### Services for Victims and work of women CSOs

7. Regional mapping of territorial coverage of support services for WSV should be carried out.
8. Opening and/or supporting existing and easily accessible services for WSV, such as: National SOS help-line (in accordance with principles of female feminist groups from 1990 and in accordance with the Istanbul Convention), shelters, local SOS help-lines, counseling centers. Necessity of rape crisis centers being opened.
9. WSV support services, including psychological empowerment of WSV, free legal aid, medical and social support should be further developed.
10. Quality assurance system of specialized service providers should be introduced, continually developed and monitored. In this process, it is necessary to improve understanding of the importance and role of women's CSOs in providing basic WSV services.
11. Ensuring financial support from the state and local budgets for continuous work of women's CSOs who run WSV services, for preventive work in community and for encouraging female activism in those areas where necessary activities for combating VAW don't exist. In doing so, it is necessary to maintain their work autonomy.
12. Provide long-term assistance and support to WSV, which is wider than sheltering in a shelter. Complementing the work of the services with economic empowerment programs and with ensuring the support for finding employment and living accommodation should take place.



13. Ensure accessibility of services for women that are exposed to multiple discrimination and that have survived violence, with special emphasis on women with disabilities, LGBTIQ women/persons and Roma women. Creating support mechanisms in accordance with their specific needs.

### **Multi-sectoral cooperation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of implementation of new national document for combating VAW**

14. Improving coordination and multi-sectoral cooperation through multi-sectoral education. Strengthening cooperation and raising awareness about importance of cooperation and exchange of experiences on specific issues and in finding common solutions.

15. Creating new models of coordination (e.g. multi-sectoral response to violence against lesbians).

16. Improving the transparency of the work of institutions. Development of work monitoring and efficient correction mechanism in the system that works on solving specific cases (especially in smaller environments).

17. The introduction of professional and personal criminal responsibility of professionals that work in institutions for omission and misconduct.

18. Strengthening of effective cooperation between CSOs and institutions. Including CSOs in multi-sectoral teams. Maintaining regular consultations. Include CSOs in all of relevant working bodies and committees for the development of public policies and improvement of legal solutions.

19. Define, by an additional legal act, that multi-sectoral cooperation is mandatory and necessary and that each local self-government is obliged to establish a team for multi-sectoral cooperation. All Protocols should be binding in nature. Strengthening the role of gender equality mechanisms at the self-government level.

20. The records on cases of VAW, DV and IPR, and internal rules on documenting and reporting on these cases should be improved. Development and establishment of a unique database for VAW and DV cases. Administrative records of each case, development of a unique registry of reported cases. To make mandatory that all relevant data about VAW from all institutions is published.

21. Mechanism for monitoring of public policy for combating VAW supervising should be implemented, as a body composed of women CSOs, independent experts, independent institutions and researchers with a purpose of conducting an independent monitoring in accordance with the clearly defined criteria and indicators.

22. Internal mechanism of monitoring and supervision for assessment of individual needs of victims, risk assessment and plan development, as a system that would enable professional support and supervision in work on this field – should be all in place.



## Prevention

23. Systematic prevention in kindergartens and schools (identification, reporting mechanisms) should be implemented continually. This includes GBV, VAW and Diversities thematic in the education system as well as education of youth about violence and nurturing non-violent relationships.

24. Making changes in awareness and reducing tolerance to violence in a society by informing and sensitizing the public about the causes and consequences of VAW (GBV, DV and SV). Raising awareness of the problem (e.g. promoting the problem through sporting events).

25. The way that media is reporting about VAW (GBV, DV, and SV) should be changed. The systematic work on changing media approach to this subject - from sensationalist to educational and awareness raising.

26. Media work should be controlled by bodies that are in charge of it. Ensure monitoring of media reporting (design objections and rewards approach).

27. The local self-government should be involved and encouraged to perform more prevention activities and on regular basis. Obligate them to make prevention plans that include participation of all relevant actors.

28. Standardization and assurance of basic preconditions for carrying out programs for working with perpetrators of violence should be in place. Existing models of working with perpetrators should be consolidated and new ones should be introduced (e.g. prison system).

29. The public should be introduced with VAW problem in groups that are exposed to multiple discrimination. The strategy should include minority group members (e.g. prevention of violence in same-sex relationships, suppression of juvenile and contractual marriages practices).

30. A regular annual rewarding of professionals for their special contribution to preventive response as an example of good practice in dealing with victims (judges, prosecutor, social welfare employee, and police officer) should be encouraged.

## Normative framework

31. Disadvantages in the normative framework should be mapped.

32. All laws that protect victims of VAW, DV and VIPR (e.g. a family member is differently defined in the *Criminal Code*, *Family Law* and *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*) should be harmonized.

33. Penal policy (e.g. more severe penalties, more effective enforcement of penalties, and more efficient judiciary) should be enhanced.

34. The obligation of urgency should be respected in all proceedings for the protection of domestic and intimate partner violence in order to improve the efficiency of the execution of court decisions.

35. Existing laws should be improved and amended. For example:

a) *In Criminal code:*



- Implement *Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime*;
  - Use rights that victims already have, but are not used in practice (testimony via video link, banning that children have to testify several times, etc.)
  - Reduce the number of testimonies and the necessity that victim is present in court proceedings, in the part that evidence is being presented to the court. Implement the possibility that forensic interview is considered as sufficient evidence, without victim being re-questioned in front of the court, the defendant and his lawyer (when everything is done properly, when everyone does their job and when other evidence is established, victim is not necessary).
- b) Changes of *Criminal Code* for Criminal Offences against Sexual Freedom
- c) Abolish suspended sentence for domestic violence.

36. Existing laws which are related to the prevention of VAW, DV and VIPR should be applied consistently.

37. The speed and efficiency of the judicial system should be improved. Send a message to the society that fast and effective sanctions will follow after specific behavior.

38. The special Family Court should be established which would deal with this problem from all aspects.

### Training for professionals

39. Regular organizing of the training programs on VAW, DV and VIPR for all direct service providers to victims of violence (about the contents of, and obligations arising from, the General and Special Protocols) should take place in order for them to be able to work on the problem and to be familiar with all the changes (e.g. necessity of conducting a specialized training for the implementation of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*).

40. Education for professionals should include education on the sexual violence problematic.

### *What will be the role of the new strategic document in implementing/executing these steps?*

The first step of the NSD is to produce assessment of everything that has been achieved so far. The NSD should define and elaborate on all these areas, and then implement them through the Action Plan. It is important that the NSD is set up with clearly defined goals and measures, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating planned activities. Specific measures should be included that focus on combating VAW.

A new working group that will develop a new national document should set up a multi-sectoral committee, including numerous experts from CSOs and independent experts. People with knowledge and experience in direct work are needed to effectively combat VAW. The broad consultative process is of utmost importance.



***With the new strategic document, will it be necessary to expand the list of relevant Stakeholders in order to enforce the implementation of measures?***

The new strategy should broaden the scope of implementers of the measures. First and foremost, it is necessary to clearly define which body would be responsible for developing the NSD, for coordinating and implementing activities, as well as for monitoring the implementation of the envisaged measures.

Furthermore, it is crucial to actively include CSOs, ministries and bodies that have been involved in the NS as well as all other ministries that have not been included yet, but are also essential for a comprehensive approach to solving problems of VAW, DV and VIPR (e.g. Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture), as well as local government units.

*'The Ministry of Agriculture should also be involved, as statistics show that women in the villages are particularly disempowered and exposed to serious family violence, whether from a partner or spouse's primary family, as they often live in larger families consisting of three generations. Ministry should be involved in the area of prevention - raising awareness, through campaigns and forums.'*

*(Representative of the institution)*



## Annex a - LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

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- Babović, M., Ginić, K. and Vuković, O. (2010). *Mapping Domestic Violence against Women in Central Serbia*. Belgrade – SeConS.
- Document of the Joint Project Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia;
- Dokmanovic, M. (2016). *Gender Analysis for Serbia - Final Report*. IBF International Consulting.
- European Commission; Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2015 Report
- Evaluation of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia – Final Report;
- Evaluation of the project Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia;
- Ignjatović, T. (2011). *Violence against Women in Intimate Relations: Model of Coordinated Community Response*. Belgrade - Autonomous Women’s Centre.
- Mršević, Z. (2015). *Media in Serbia 2014 about GBV: In between stereotypes and entertainment*. Beograd: United Nations Development Program.
- Mršević, Z. (2017). *Media in Serbia about GBV in 2015 and 2016: What to do against violence – the role of the media*. Beograd: Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls in Serbia II.
- National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020);
- National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Relations 2011-2015;
- Otašević, S. (2016). *Report of Women Health Promotion Center*. Belgrade.
- Program for the Protection of Women from Domestic and Intimate Partner and other Forms of Gender Based Violence in Vojvodina (2015-2020);
- Project document Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Women – finale report;
- Special report of the Protector of citizens on the implementation of the general and special protocols on protection of women against violence (2014);
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2012). *Bulletin: Adult perpetrators of criminal offences, 2011*. Belgrade.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2014). *Bulletin: Adult perpetrators of criminal offences, 2013*. Belgrade.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2016). *Bulletin: Adult perpetrators of criminal offences, 2015*. Belgrade.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2017). *Statistical Release: Adult perpetrators of criminal offences, 2016*. Beograd.
- Stevanović, G. (Deputy Protector of Citizens) (2016). *Special report of the Protector of citizens on training for acquisition and improvement of knowledge and competencies in the prevention and suppression of domestic and intimate partner violence and protection of women from such violence*. Belgrade: Protector of Citizens.



- Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender Based Violence in Vojvodina 2008-2012.

## Annex b – List of persons who have participated in SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

No.	Name of institution/organization	Name and surname	Date
1	Independent expert and consultant	Biljana Branković	December 4 2017
2	Center for Women's Health Promotion	Stanislava Otašević	December 5 2017
3	Former Head of Directorate for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	Natalija Mićunović	December 6 2017
4	Autonomous Women ' s Centre	Tanja Ignjatović	December 6 2017.
5	The Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Interior, Department for the Prevention and Suppression of Domestic Violence	Jelena Tomković	December 6 2017
6	Protector of citizens, Deputy Protector of Citizens for Children's Rights and Gender Equality	Gordana Stevanović	December 11 2017
7	Former gender advisor for project "Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence", former project coordinator for UN Joint Project "Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls"	Vesna Jarić	December 22 2017
8	Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Justice, deputy of public prosecutor	Gorjana Mirčić Čaluković	January 11 2018



## Annex c – List of Women CSOs who participated in questionnaire

No.	Name of organization	Date
1	NGO Women's Alternative	November 30 2017
2	Association of Citizens "Romani cikna" Kruševac	December 4 2017
3	Oasis of safety Kragujevac	December 18 2017
4	Out of Circle – VOJVODINA organization for supporting women with disabilities	December 19 2017
5	Victimology Society of Serbia	December 19 2017
6	Organization for Lesbian Human Rights LABRIS	December 21 2017
7	National Network for the Treatment of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence OPNA	December 21 2017
8	BIBIJA – Roma Women's Centre	December 22 2017
9	Counseling against Domestic Violence	December 23 2017
10	Women's Center Uzice	December 29 2017

