

THREE

Data collection: challenges and opportunities

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Introduction

This chapter documents the main result of the work of Working Group 2 on data collection and reporting. The central aims of the group were: (1) to identify differences and similarities in data collection on femicide at national and international levels across Europe, and (2) to develop recommendations for European countries and organizations on how to improve their femicide data collection.

Comparison of country-specific data

The working group started with concrete comparisons of country-specific data on femicide and compared methodologies of data collection as well as femicide rates. Furthermore, comparisons on related topics, such as non-lethal forms of violence against women, the Gender Equality Index, homicide rates in general and the socioeconomic situation in European

countries, were conducted in order to find patterns and relevant correlations.

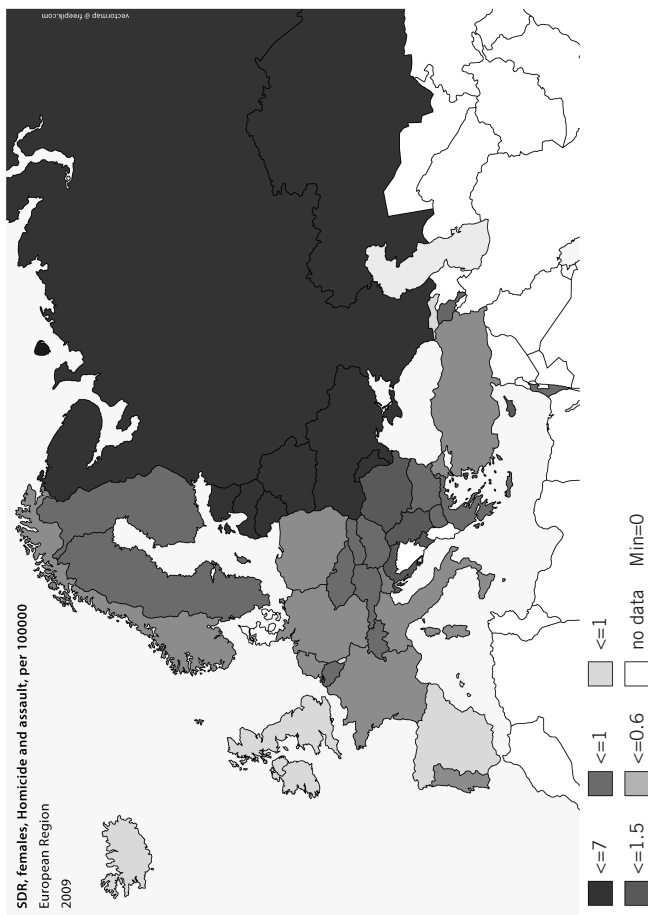
We found that data collection systems were typically based on national criminal statistics. They were usually not comparable between countries. Even though most states record the sex of the victim and/or offender in the homicide data, the definitions of homicide and the categories that are included in data collection, as well as the modes of data collection, are not identical. Moreover, not all states include the sex of victims *and* offenders for a specific case of homicide in the dataset. Furthermore, in many countries the data recorded fails to include the motives of the crimes as well as the relationships between victims and offenders (for example, whether the crime was committed against an intimate partner).

Comparison of country maps

Another interesting task of the working group was to compare country maps indicating the extent of femicide with country maps on other related topics. For example, it could not be confirmed that the extent of violence against women in general, the extent of homicides in general, the state of gender equality in the country and the duration of active policies on violence against women have a direct correlation with the extent of femicides.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that countries with high rates of violence against women reported in the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey are not per se countries with high femicide rates.

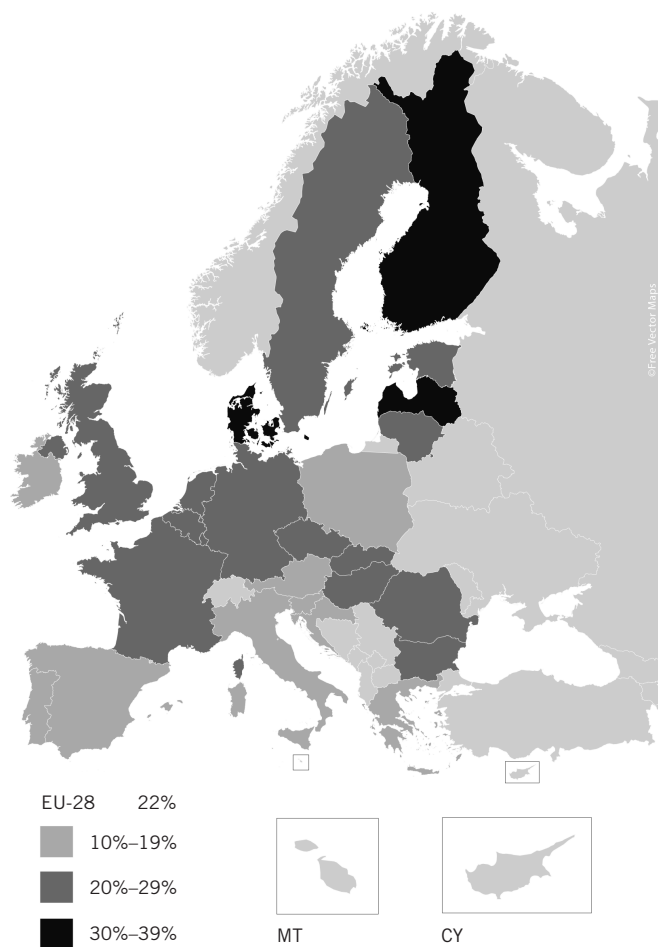
Figure 3.1: Femicide rates across Europe based on the WHO Mortality Database 2014



Source: Map based on the World Health Organization Mortality Database (WHO, 2014)

FEMICIDE ACROSS EUROPE

Figure 3.2: Physical intimate partner violence against women across Europe



Physical and/or sexual partner violence since the age of 15, EU-28 (%)

Source: FRA gender-based violence against women survey dataset, 2012

Furthermore, in countries with a high Gender Equality Index score (such as Sweden and Finland), femicide rates are not low (cf. Figures 3.1 and 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Gender Equality Index scores of European countries

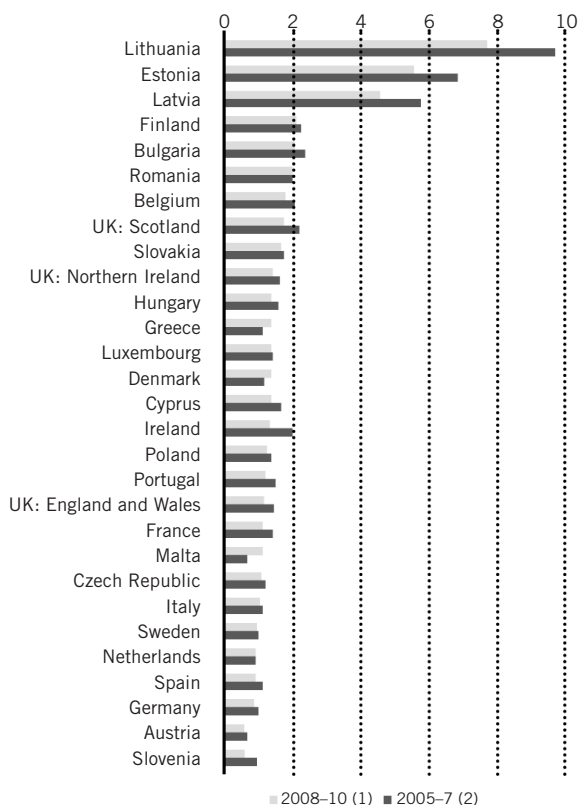


Source: Gender Equality Index, EIGE, 2017

FEMICIDE ACROSS EUROPE

Though some countries with high homicide rates (such as Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia) also show high femicide rates, we could not prove a clear relationship between femicide rates and general homicide rates (cf. Figures 3.1 and 3.4). National statistics show a decrease in homicides in European countries over the past decades, while the rates of femicides tend to stay stable.

Figure 3.4: Homicide rates per 100,000 population by country



(1) Netherlands, 2009-10

(2) Estonia and Latvia, 2006-7; Ireland, 2007 only

Source: Eurostat, 2013

Furthermore, a country's poverty rate is not clearly connected to the rate of femicides (cf. Figures 3.1 and 3.5).

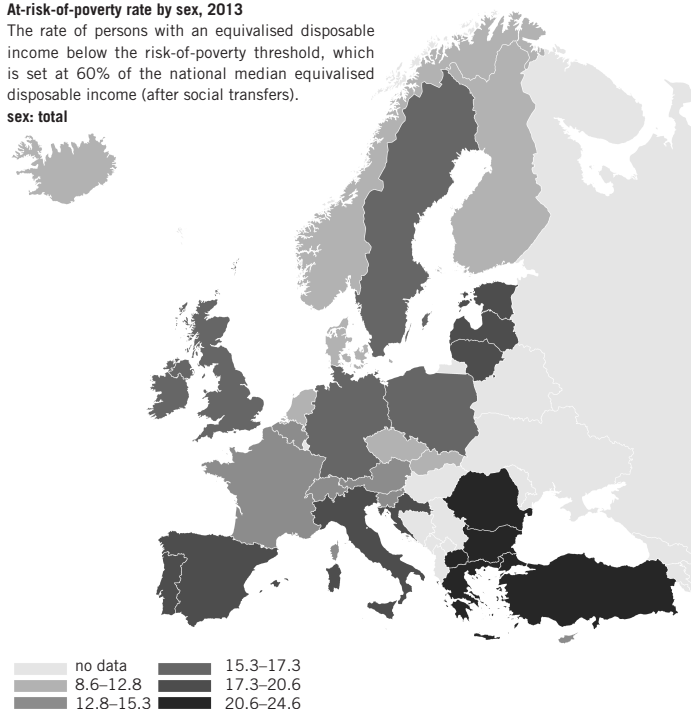
Corradi and Stöckl (2016) produced a map on the start of government action on violence against women, showing European states who started governmental action in this area in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Though this map does not provide information on the impact or continuity of state activities, it is remarkable that early state actions and long-lasting activities have not substantially contributed to lower femicide rates (cf. Figures 3.1 and 3.6).

Figure 3.5a: At-risk-of-poverty rate by sex, total, 2013

At-risk-of-poverty rate by sex, 2013

The rate of persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers).

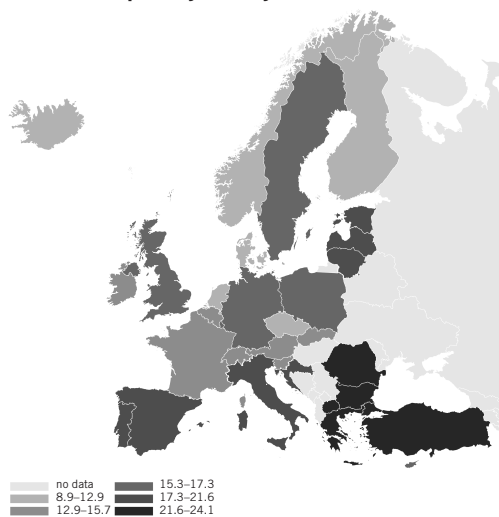
sex: total



Source: Eurostat, 2013

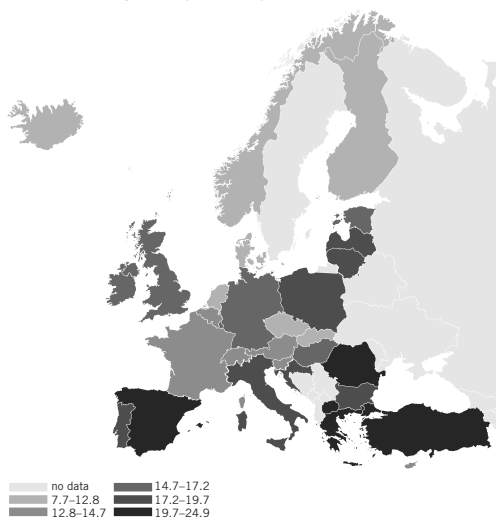
FEMICIDE ACROSS EUROPE

Figure 3.5b: At-risk-of-poverty rate by sex, females, 2013



Source: Eurostat, 2013

Figure 3.5c: At-risk-of-poverty rate by sex, males, 2013



Source: Eurostat, 2013

Figure 3.6: State action on violence against women

Source: Corradi and Stöckl, 2016

It was not possible to conduct secondary analysis with various data sets in the working group. Nevertheless, the comparison shows that connections between different factors and their influence on the extent of femicide seem to be more complex than anticipated and have to be investigated further on a European level.

Information on European databases and observatories

Within Working Group 2 of the COST Action IS1206 on ‘Femicide across Europe’, a further step was taken to collect

information on several European databases and observatories related to femicide. Collected information included descriptions of the organizations and good practice for femicide data collection. It was found that some countries already have databases on femicide: for example, Italy (Piacenti et al, 2013, Piacenti, 2015), the UK (Smith, 2016; Women's Aid/Nia, 2017), Spain (Feminicidio.net, 2016) and Serbia (Women against Violence Network, 2015). Furthermore, international bodies are intending or have already started collecting information that is focused primarily on or includes data on femicides, for example, Eurostat, the European Homicide Monitor (EHM), the European Women's Lobby, EIGE and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Femicide Watch (cf. Chapter 6 in this book).

Institutions that had developed or started to develop databases on femicide were invited for a common meeting by the COST Action in Brussels in 2015, and have since started to build a coalition for the future coordination of the work, with a view to establishing a European Observatory on Femicide (EOF).

Concept mapping study

Within the working group, a concept mapping study was conducted with the goal of assembling expert opinions on what strategies are needed and feasible in order to promote, develop and implement an integrated femicide data collection system across European countries (Vives-Cases et al, 2016). The study followed concept mapping methodology, and involved 28 members of the COST Action on femicide from 16 countries, who generated strategies of femicide prevention and then rated them according to relevance and feasibility. The result of the study was a conceptual map, which consisted of 69 strategies structured in 10 clusters, belonging to two main domains: 'political action' and 'technical steps'. Participants of the study identified promotion of media involvement as the most feasible

strategy. Strategies to raise public awareness and institutionalize national databases were considered the most relevant.

Identifying relevant data and indicators for prevention

In the last year of the COST Action, in 2016–17, the working group on data collection and the working group on prevention came together in order to determine what types of data and information are important and needed for the prevention of femicides. It became clear that the crime statistics alone on the prevalence of femicides in countries are not sufficient. Further information must be collected in order to understand the reasons and background behind femicides, and to identify possibilities to intervene and to prevent killings. Therefore, it also has to be determined whether victims and offenders were already known to several institutions, and if there was a possibility to intervene earlier and save the victim. Moreover, it is necessary to collect more comparative data (comparison across time and between countries/regions) in order to identify where political institutions and societies were successful in preventing femicides.

Femicide data collection in Europe today: challenges and critique

The study of femicide statistics from various European countries showed that data collection in Europe presents a high heterogeneity. Police and crime statistics still remain the most important official national source of data. In most of the countries where systematic criminological data collection on homicide exists, homicides or murders of women are included and can be disaggregated by gender, though the definitions of the acts differ because they are related to different criminal codes. In some countries female homicides by intimate partners can be identified, as well as information on the victim–perpetrator relationship, but in general these statistics do not allow further differentiation of other types of femicide in non-partner

relationships (cf. Eurostat, 2016 and Chapter 6 in this book); information on (gendered) motives of the cases of homicides is in general not available. In some countries the disaggregated data has not yet been made public or is inaccessible and has to be obtained by special request, usually through the police and justice systems or general crime statistic systems.

The data is structured in various ways that make comparisons across countries challenging. Central problems of data collection are related to differences in definitions, missing data and missing information on the background motives of the cases as well as the victim–perpetrator relationship.

In most countries femicide is not defined as a distinct type of crime. The understanding of femicide also differs from country to country; in some countries the term is not used or does not exist. Even if the definitions were harmonized, it would still be difficult to collect data on femicide because in the current data there is no information on the reasons or motives for the killing of women. Current types of data collection do not make it possible to answer the question of whether a woman was killed because she is a woman or not.

For several national and international bodies that collect data on femicide, the second most important source of information is the media. Here, more information can be gained on backgrounds, motives, victim–offender relationships and whether people were known to institutions prior to the murders. It seems to be practical to combine both data from crime statistics and information from the media to deepen the knowledge of the cases and gain information relevant for prevention. A very small number of countries can additionally use death statistics from the health sector, though the investigation showed that this data may not be compatible with the more accurate and aggregated data from crime statistics.

A further source of information on femicides could be support systems (shelters and counselling centres). However, it still has to be ascertained if and how their knowledge on cases could be

included in the development of elaborate databases at national and international levels.

Recommendations for data collection

Improved knowledge base on patterns/developments

It is very clear that Europe needs more accurate data and statistics on femicide in order to gain a better understanding of the issue of femicide as well as data and information that are necessary for prevention.¹ The aim is to collect meaningful data, and to evaluate and document it in a way that is useful for social policies and practice.

Though accurate data comparison will not be possible in the near future, it should at least be possible to compare:

- **Background/risk factors**

To answer the questions:

- What are the relevant influencing and risk factors (for example, gender inequalities and dependencies, economic situation/deprivation, prior domestic violence, availability of weapons, alcohol abuse and so on)?
- Are there similar/different risk factors in countries/regions?

- **Estimates of prevalence of femicide** (related to inhabitants/related to all homicides)

To answer the question:

- How prevalent is femicide?

¹ As Marceline Naudi, member of Working Group 2 and Malta's Management Committee member in COST Action IS1206, 'Femicide across Europe', said in a meeting with stakeholders in Brussels in November 2015: "We want counting to count for women!"

- **Development over time**

To answer the question:

- Is femicide decreasing/increasing/staying stable?
- And to further investigate reasons for different developments.

- **State reactions/law/convictions**

To answer the questions:

- How does the state react (over time)?
- How does this contribute to prevention or persistence of the problem?

Improved definition and data collection strategy

The working group suggests following a common strategy for data collection across Europe in order to successively overcome the problems of incomparability and different definitions.

First, all data on intentional homicides with female victims should be collected, as this is the central basis for cases of femicide. Then, further information on victims and perpetrators and their relationship should be collected. Intimate partner homicides against women should be documented and clearly defined as femicides due to their gendered character. The same should be done for the killing of women in the context of sexual violence and prostitution. For other forms/contexts, investigation of the cases in greater detail is necessary (including background, motives and possible reasons of the killings of women).

As it is often impossible to get detailed information on the (gendered) motives of the cases, it is important to collect further qualitative information and to conduct case studies or analyse cases for a fuller understanding of the contexts and causes of the problem.

Several national and international databases have already been established or are being planned. It is important to harmonize

their strategies in order to gain valid and comparable data and information. The European Observatory on Femicide that has been established in Malta could be the institution to collate and pool these strategies and to lead European countries to a common strategy for data collection on femicide.

Multiple sources for data collection

Central sources from which to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on femicide are:

- international data reports and data collection systems (for example, those of Eurostat and UNODC, the Geneva Convention on Small Arms, the Sophia Institute, the European Homicide Monitor and EIGE);
- published and unpublished national criminological data and sociological studies on femicide in each country;
- press information from the police and the media (the press information has to be seen as a relevant source to get further background information on the cases – certainly, the results have to be rechecked and verified by the police and the justice systems in order to obtain valid data).

Data and information on femicide has to be collected on all regional, national and international levels by several institutions (police, courts, support services and health systems). It is recommended that national databases are established to systematically collect, evaluate and publish national data on femicide, and to harmonize the definitions as well as the procedures of data collection as far as is possible. The national data will build the basis for regularly available European and international data on femicide to be collected within the European Observatory on Femicide. This data should at least allow disaggregation by sex of victims and perpetrators, the victim–perpetrator relationship (at a minimum: intimate

partner and non-partner femicide), prior history of domestic violence and previous institutional interventions. It should furthermore include detailed information on the definitions and the procedure of data collection. It is also important to train those in charge of data collection as well as journalists and practitioners reporting on the issue.

Possible and minimum indicators

Working Group 2 of the COST Action on femicide has defined minimum indicators and further relevant indicators that have to be collected, investigated and further developed by the international research community and other institutions responsible for or active in data collection.

Minimum indicators

- **Basic data on victims and perpetrators:**
 - This should include number of cases, victims, perpetrators, genders of both victims and perpetrators per case.
 - It is important to provide continuity of data collection and comparability in time (and between countries/regions) to monitor the (development of the) problem.

- **Context of the murder:**
 - Here the victim–perpetrator relationship (at least intimate partner homicides by current/former partners against women) should be identified.
 - If available, some basic information on the nature and motives of the cases should be provided.

Further indicators

- Further demographic information on victims and perpetrators (indications for possible risk factors)
- Information on prior domestic violence, protection orders and services used (whether the case was known to institutions/intervention and protection measures put in place/support provided)
- Convictions (response of the state system)

With this basic set of information, the most important data for understanding the issue of femicide and improving prevention would be available. Detailed descriptions of the cases would make it possible to check if and how intervention and prevention would have been possible.

International cooperation in data collection

For international collection of data on femicide, existing institutions should collaborate in a coalition in order to avoid doubling activities. Some actions and institutions, such as EIGE, the European Homicide Monitor, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), WAVE and the UNODC Femicide Watch, have already begun to collect data at the international level. They could and should include the experiences of already existing national data collection systems, for example, those in Italy, Spain, the UK and Germany. The European Observatory on Femicide (EOF) could be very successful within a coalition or cooperation of existing data collection systems and activities. It should furthermore be integrated into national/international data collection systems on violence against women, especially with regard to monitoring of the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO, EIGE, Eurostat).

Conclusions

The discussions in Working Group 2 of the COST Action have shown how to monitor the issue of femicide in the future and with what types of data and information. We have seen that it is reasonable to create scientifically based monitoring with a proper strategy together with all national and international partners. On the one hand, such a structure must promote the creation of comparable national databases. On the other hand, it must systematically involve existing international systems of data collection and their experience.

It became very clear during discussions that the collection of police data alone would not be sufficient for analysing the cases in the detail needed for prevention and intervention. Therefore, many countries have chosen the strategy of collecting information on all the cases known to the media and collating it with the criminological data and – insofar as is possible – data recorded by the health and support systems. This strategy makes it possible to obtain more background information on femicides, which is important for future prevention and early interventions.

In order to stabilize the collection of data and information at the European level, it is important to publicly finance work resources at the national level in order to create and continuously update national databases in a way that makes international comparison possible. Furthermore, a scientifically based monitoring body must coordinate data collection and supply it to joint databases. Only in this way will it be possible, in the long-term, to create a bigger pool of data that allows deeper analysis and prevention of the problem at the European level.

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FEMICIDE ACROSS EUROPE

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