



STRATEGY PAPER

Activity A2 / VAW Economist Group

*Uncovering the invisible ways through which governments
finance violence against women*

BACKGROUND

Violence against women (VAW) is a problem that affects all societies, its implications are profound and complex, having an impact not just on individuals but also on the economy as a whole. This is because of the lost economic output, since persons affected by violence cannot develop their full potential, and are often left outside of the labour market because of the harm and trauma they have suffered. Furthermore, **VAW also puts an economic burden on the state because of the costs associated with the justice system, prisons, but primarily the health care system and social services.** Previous studies have shown that the prevalence of VAW is extremely high! For example, the total cost of violence against women in one year alone amounts to 2,5 billion EUR in France, 70 million EUR in Denmark and 3 billion EUR in the UK. Investing in prevention is the only way to reduce the prevalence of VAW and avert its manifestations in the first place. **Governments must acknowledge that VAW is harmful to the economy, while prevention not only improves the quality of life of individuals but also saves costs. Therefore, this idea of having such a campaign activity in 2017 was brought up by participants attending the WAVE Training Institute last December, in 2016.**

For this activity, we suggest to identify an economic expert in your country with whom you can work together. Please see below further explanations.

RATIONALE BEHIND THIS ACTIVITY

The survey measuring the prevalence of VAW, conducted by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency in 2014 states that 1 in 3 women in the EU has suffered sexual or physical violence at some point in their lives since the age of 15. Data published by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime indicates that in 2012 more than 43,000 women were killed by an intimate partner or family member worldwide – that being almost four times the number of people killed by terrorism worldwide that same year. All these manifestations of VAW have a negative impact on society and the economy. VAW and domestic violence continue to be one of the most pervasive human rights violations, both in Europe and beyond.

EXISTING STUDIES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Only a few studies that explore the cost of VAW have been carried out, and it is important to bear in mind that researches have used different methodologies, indicators (categories of violence) and data samples, hence it is difficult to compare results. Nevertheless, one common feature of all existing studies is that the numbers they present are underestimates, because they exclude cases of violence that go unreported and furthermore, it is extremely difficult to take into account all costs associated

with the phenomenon of VAW and domestic violence (DV). This also involves long-term effects on children, not only women. It is estimated that the annual cost to the EU-28 of gender-based violence against women amounted to EUR 228 billion in 2011, representing 1.8% of EU GDP.¹ This would amount to approximately 450 EUR per European citizen every year.² The Austrian Shadow Report to GREVIO recommended that at least 10% of the costs associated with VAW should go into prevention.

The precise measurement of the costs of violence against women is less important than the fact that it adds an argument to the list of moral, legal, sociological arguments for the prevention and eradication of violence against women.³ Putting aside moral considerations that render investment in prevention a necessary undertaking, such an investment brings substantial economic benefits, as it helps reduce the enormous costs brought about by the impact of VAW on society and individuals. An economic lens shows that violence against women has a negative impact on the economy as it leads to social exclusion and reduces economic output. Actions to prevent VAW and scale down its prevalence in society are beneficial to the economy by increasing output and productivity, and by reducing the costs associated with VAW.

*Do you know how much your government is spending on prevention work? Because, **investing in prevention saves lives and money...***

AVAILABLE FIGURES

- VAW has a negative impact as a consequence of victims/survivors taking time off from work because of their injuries, be it physical or psychological (Walby & Olive 2014).
- According to a study published by the European Institute for Gender Equality, the cost of lost economic output of gender based violence against women in the UK for the year 2012 was 3,666,919,341 EUR. The cost of lost economic output of intimate partner violence against women for the same period of time was 1,595,784,962 EUR (Walby & Olive 2014, p. 129).
- According to the European Added Value Assessment, “the annual cost to the EU of gender-based violence against women is estimated at EUR 228 billion in 2011 (1.8% of EU GDP), of which EUR 45 billion a year in public and state services and EUR 24 billion of lost economic output.”⁴
- A study carried out in France by M. Nectoux et. al. (2010) states that the total cost of intimate partner violence in France is estimated at 2,5 billion EUR a year. This number includes healthcare costs, social and justice services, production losses as a result of death, imprisonments, and absenteeism among other.
- A study from Denmark carried out by K. Helweg-Larsen et.al indicates that VAW costs the Danish society approximately 70 million EUR every year.
- E. Villagómez conducted a study exploring the costs of DV against women by partners and ex-partners in Andalucía. Results point out that the annual costs are at 2,356 million EUR.

¹ European Added Value Assessment: Combatting Violence against Women (2013): Council of Europe, p. 24

² Austrian Shadow Report to GREVIO (2016), p. 15, available at: http://files.wave-network.org/home/Austria_NGOGREVIOShadowReport_September2016.pdf

³ Ibid., p. 25

⁴ European Parliament. (2014). European Parliament resolution of 25 February 2014 with recommendations to the Commission on combating Violence against Women (2013/2004(INL)). Para R.

Need for action – we must persuade our governments to invest more in prevention and specialist support services for women and their children!

Why should other budgetary concerns or priorities take precedence over the fact that VAW continues to be a highly prevalent phenomenon in all societies, its impact on both society and the economy is huge. Because this crisis conflates various implications, it is difficult to calculate the amount of lost economic output, the financial burden placed on the health care system, criminal justice system, child welfare departments and other social services. Nevertheless, WE DO HAVE SOME STUDIES...AND RESULTS ARE STARTLINGLY WORRISOME!

EXAMPLE – AUSTRIA

Research in Austria estimated the costs of violence against women amounts to be about €78 Million per year. This seems to be a rather conservative estimate not including all costs. The European Added Value Assessment estimates the total cost of gender-based violence against women in the EU in 2011 to be about €228 billion (1.8% of EUGDP). This amounts to about €450 per European citizen each year, and about €3,700 billion in Austria, which is about 50 times more than the Austrian estimate.

The Austrian Shadow Report to GREVIO from 2016 estimated that if the Austrian government invested 25 EUR per citizen per year in prevention, it would amount to a total of approximately 210 million EUR.⁵

Following this rationale, governments across Europe would have to allocate the following amounts of funding (estimates) for prevention (WAVE has calculated it for you):

Country	Estimated prevention cost ⁶	Estimated cost of VAW ⁷
Spain	1,15 billion EUR	20,7 billion EUR
Germany	2 billion EUR	36,9 billion EUR
Italy	1,5 billion EUR	27 billion EUR
Romania	475 million EUR	8,5 billion EUR
Portugal	250 million EUR	4,5 billion EUR
Croatia	100 million EUR	1,8 billion EUR
Malta	10 million EUR	180 million EUR
Netherlands	400 million EUR	7,2 billion EUR
Cyprus	20 million EUR	360 million EUR
Slovenia	50 million EUR	900 million EUR
France	1,65 billion EUR	29,7 billion EUR
UK	1,625 billion EUR	29,25 billion EUR

⁵ Austrian Shadow Report to GREVIO (2016), p. 15

⁶ Approximation is based on calculating 25 EUR per citizen, every year. This applies to all other country estimates presented below.

⁷ Approximation is based on calculating 450 EUR per citizen, every year. This applies to all other country estimates presented below.



WHY DO WE SUGGEST TO GO IN CONTACT WITH AN ECONOMIC EXPERT IN YOUR COUNTRY?

WAVE suggests that every campaigner should identify a national expert in his or her country who has conducted some research in this area, and knows how much the state is losing every year by not allocating sufficient funds to prevent VAW. Such an expert may provide further figures on the costs of violence from a given country, particularly if he or she has already published a report on this topic. Collaboration with an economist would also bring more prominence and credibility to our campaign activity.

With the data provided by national experts (estimates on the costs of VAW, including lost economic output) and the amount of funding allocated by the government every year to prevent VAW, 1-page country profiles are to be elaborated. These can in turn be presented to local governments and used as lobbying papers by national women's organisations.

If women—who account for half the world's population—do not achieve their full economic potential, the global economy will suffer.
McKinsey Global Institute, 2015