

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CROATIA

Dear all, my name is Anja Mihajlović, and I'm speaking today on behalf of the organization B.a.B.e. Be active. Be emancipated. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to inform you about the main problems concerning gender-based violence in Croatia. As always, we are grateful for your cooperation.

During the previous UPR Cycle, Croatia received and accepted 25 recommendations relating to the theme of gender-based violence. Many of them were about ensuring effective law enforcement for the prevention and punishment of domestic violence against women and reducing the gap between legislation and practice.

Domestic violence in Croatia persists to be a dominant form of gender-based violence. Statistics show that out of the total number of women who have been killed in Croatia during the past five years, in 50% of the cases perpetrators were their partners. Regarding the COVID-19 situation, the Croatian Ministry of the Interior recorded that domestic violence has increased by 50%.

Amendments of the Croatian Criminal Code, which entered into force in 2015, once again introduced the criminal offense of domestic violence. Two years later, the Croatian Parliament adopted a new law, the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence. This Act is a misdemeanor law, prison sentences are pronounced in only 10% of cases and protective measures in an even smaller number of cases. Also, the definition of relationship provided by this Act does not include people in intimate non-cohabiting relationships.

In June 2019 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the new Protocol on procedure in cases of domestic violence.

It is important to say that our legal framework could be improved, but the biggest problem in our country is the inconsistent application of the law in practice, the individual approach of individual judges, police officers, social workers and other professionals who are the contact point for the victims.

As a conclusion, our main recommendations are:

- to amend the Criminal Procedure Act by introducing additional right for the victims to an appeal against the court decision,
- to amend the Act on Protection from Domestic violence to include close partners in non-cohabiting relationships in the circle of people who are considered to be family members,
- to establish state-funded and state-mandated training for police officers, judges and social workers with the aim to create a unified procedure of conduct in all cases of domestic violence.

Thank you for your time and attention.