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UK Home Office, she produced *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey* (with J. Allen, Office 2004), and for the Women and Equality Unit: *The Cost of Domestic Violence* (2004). Her most recent book is: *The Future of Feminism* (Polity 2011). A recent report is: *Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls*. Awarded an OBE for services to equal opportunities and diversity in 2008.

More information:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/profiles/34/>

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has recently produced a report entitled 'Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the EU Member States: Violence Against Women/Victim Support' for which you were also a part of the research team. The report states that definitions of forms of violence and data collection methodologies differ widely between violence counted in prevalence surveys, crime statistics and other sources of administrative data. The data therefore cannot be compared within one country or internationally. What can be done to improve the quality of the data?

Data on the extent of violence against women is important for knowing the scale of the problem and for assessing whether policies are working. There are two main ways of collecting information about the extent of gender-based violence against women (as well as other forms of violence): **data collected during the routine administration of public services**, such as the policing of violence; and **surveys of the general population** that ask a representative sample of people about their experience of such violence.

Statistics derived from administrative sources are useful in monitoring the performance of services, but they are known to significantly **underestimate the extent of violence**,

since most of this violence is not reported to the authorities. For this reason, **most experts recommend surveys of the population to generate more accurate estimates** which are robust in reporting on changes over time and differences between countries. There are examples of such surveys in some countries, but they are not comparable. There is as yet no completed survey that provides comparisons between countries of the different forms of violence, let alone comparisons of changes over time in different countries. However, there is a survey in this field – an important development from the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency – though with limitations on the information being gathered, and a second one is proposed by the European Commission. Ideally a survey would be carried out in all the EU Member States that generates identical data on key indicators (harmonised by Eurostat) of different forms of gender-based violence against women and which is repeated on a regular basis so as to produce data on changes over time. This will require policy coordination at the EU level.

Another relevant finding of EIGE's report is that support services for victims of intimate partner violence are not sufficient. Some of the main challenges are: low level of service provision in certain countries or lack of specialised services for women survivors of violence. What other challenges were identified as part of the research in the area of public support to women survivors of intimate partner violence?

The development of specialised services to victims of intimate partner violence has played an important role in reducing the amount of violence against women as well as providing support in times of acute need. While defining these services in a way that allows for comparisons across the EU remains a challenge, they include at minimum: refuges/shelters, phone lines, advocacy, counselling and legal aid. The exchange of information about these important innovations across the EU has been supported by the Daphne initiative of the EU. **But despite the known effectiveness of such services, their provision remains very uneven across Europe.**

Within mainline services, such as police, prosecutors, health care, housing, employment and income support, there have been important developments including specialised expert units, but again these are very uneven. There is a challenge to expand such pockets of excellence into all countries and to maintain the quality of the service provision as they are spread. It is important to continue to develop the expertise that underlies the ongoing innovation of new services and the effective delivery of quality services. This expertise

includes understanding of the systemic nature of gender inequality in the interconnections between apparently different problems.

The Report notes the importance of providing gender specific services for women victims of intimate partner violence and the significant role women's NGOs have played in developing such expert services. The Council of Europe has identified the minimum standards for these services. It is important to identify and **to benchmark the standards of quality in the provision of these services** so that, as they spread more widely across the EU, they do so effectively. The EU could have a useful role in promoting the development of quality standards by existing experts.

The report also highlights that lack of sustainable funding is one of the obstacles to support victims appropriately. How crucial is state funding to combat and prevent violence?

Most people want violence against women to stop. But the means to implement this widely held goal have not yet been provided. The budgets to implement desired policy goals have not yet been put in place. **Effective policies**, revised in the light of data and research, and implemented by well-resourced institutions, both specialist and mainstream, **are crucial to the prevention of violence and the provision of assistance to victims**. Such institutions require funding from the state to pay the people who are working to end violence against women. But in many places the resources are not yet in place. And there are fears that the financial crisis can lead to funding for these services becoming less rather than more available.

Gender budgeting has raised awareness of the significance of the gender dimension of finance in the implementation




of policy aims. The Report rightly recommends that the information about the extent of state funding for services to prevent domestic violence and assist victims be put clearly into the public domain through the **development of a simple summary indicator of the extent of state funding of such services**. Making this information public would make it available for democratic scrutiny and debate. It could be an important contribution to the democratic process and help the process of implementing the policies the public wants.

You have done extensive research on the cost of violence. What were your main research findings? What additional information do they bring to the findings presented in EIGE's report?

My research estimated that domestic violence cost Britain £23 billion (a project for the UK Women and Equality Unit in the Department of Trade and Industry). These costs included the use of public services (criminal justice system, civil legal system, health care, refuges, housing and social services) and lost output of the economy (as a result of time off work due to injuries), as well as recognising the suffering of pain and injury. A follow-up report after a period of investment in services showed **a reduction in the extent of domestic violence and hence substantial savings to the economy**. Such research shows that there is an economic justification to reduce and eliminate gender-based violence. This is relevant in the context of competing policy priorities and limited budgets. But the cost of violence to the economy and society is not the only, or even the main, reason to act. Violence against women is wrong. It is unjust. It is a crime. It is a violation of human rights. Violence against women is wrong for many reasons, not only its cost.

EIGE's report 'Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the EU Member States: Violence against Women/Victim Support' is available on EIGE's website at: www.eige.europa.eu

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