

## **Cross-border cooperation between Liepaja and Klaipeda for better tackling domestic violence. Collaboration plan**

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### Summary of Safe City Project

Project is aiming at elimination of domestic violence in Liepāja and Klaipeda. Project introduced and improved support and counselling services for women and children – victims of domestic violence. These services are based on interdisciplinary teamwork approach – where a social worker, a lawyer and a psychologist work as a team to help victim to end violent relationships and to start a life without violence. The project addressed improvement of cooperation between institutions to tackle domestic violence more effective. Experience exchange visits between Liepāja and Klaipeda, comparative analysis on victims needs and accessibility of services in Klaipeda and Liepaja, joint trainings for representatives of key institutions and development of guidelines for specialists have been carried.

It was expected that 120 women victims and 40 child victims will receive support and counselling services within project and 100 women victims and 50 children victims will benefit every year after the end of the project.

The project brought together knowledge and expertise of Latvian and Lithuanian NGOs and municipal agencies.

Duration of the project: 01.06.2018 – 29.02.2020 (21 months)

Interreg V-A Latvia – Lithuania Programme 2014-2020, project “Women and Children – Safe in their City” (“Safe City”), project No. LLI-392

Project partners:

[Association “MARTA Centre” \(LV\)](#) – Lead partner

[Liepāja city council Social services \(LV\)](#)

[PO Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services Center \(LT\)](#)

[Budgetary Organisation Klaipeda Family and Child Welfare Center \(LT\)](#)

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## Domestic violence challenges in Liepāja and Klaipeda

Domestic violence is a serious violation of human rights and international governmental organizations like WHO, UN, the Council Of Europe, the European Commission consider domestic violence as one of the common causes of social exclusion of women and children all around the world.

Many studies on domestic violence show its hugely negative impact on development of the countries and regions – by violating human rights, increasing social exclusion of many women and children, causing both short term and long term government expenditures and losses to economy. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in the study of 2014 estimates costs of gender-based violence against women in the EU of almost 226 billion euros. It makes around 450 euros per capita in a year.

Prevalence of domestic violence in Latvia and Lithuania hits the highest numbers in the European Union. EU-wide survey of 2014 conducted by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reveals Latvia and Lithuania among countries where prevalence of intimate partner violence against women is above the EU average. 32% of women in Latvia and 24% in Lithuania have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner. 60% of women in Latvia and 51% in Lithuania have experienced any form of psychological violence by a partner. 51% of women in Latvia and 44% in Lithuania have been victims of psychological abuse by a partner since the age of 15. Many studies show direct link between domestic violence and poverty and it is obvious also in case of Latvia and Lithuania. Both countries are facing big social exclusion. According to Eurostat (2012) 36.2% of Latvia's inhabitants and 32.5% of Lithuania's inhabitants live at risk of poverty (the EU average is 24.7 %).

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With the presence of domestic violence as a common challenge in Liepaja and Klaipeda region, Klaipeda has succeeded more than Liepaja in terms of providing quality support services for domestic violence victims. Project partners in both cities recognize gaps in coordination and monitoring of inter-institutional cooperation in domestic violence cases and there is a clear need for development of inter-institutional cooperation model in long term, in order to ensure a strategic victim centred approach in combating domestic violence. Since not all services are victim centred and don't meet needs of victims many victims choose not to seek support due to common features of domestic violence victims – feeling socially isolated, lonely, blaming self for beatings, etc.

## Project Safe City Approach

Several studies (conducted by WAVE, EIGE, FRA) have shown that in different EU member states vast differences prevail as regards the extent and the service capability provided to victims of violence against women. Thus, the practice and methods of risk evaluation and coordinated response are still to be developed in some EU countries, including Latvia and Lithuania.

The second specific objective of the project is to improve inter-institutional cooperation model in work with women and children victims of domestic violence in Liepaja and Klaipeda. Systemic approach is crucial to make new-made or improved services to work efficiently. Improved services alone can't make them effective without establishing of a strong framework for systemic inter institutional collaboration and allocation of reasonable funds. An inter-institutional cooperation model for domestic violence cases in Liepaja is nonexistent. Governmental and municipal agencies and NGO in Klaipeda have their cooperation protocols in place, but there is a need for regular monitoring and evaluation of cooperation.

Both cities Liepaja and Klaipeda needs a comprehensive development plans for inter-institutional cooperation model to ensure durability and regular upgrades. Often products of many well-developed projects haven't proved their sustainability after the end of projects due to lack of well-considered follow-up activities and strategic development plans. The project “Safe City” is to develop such plans closely together with other stakeholders and decision makers in local municipalities.

## Cooperation Dimension between Liepaja and Klaipeda

Liepaja and Klaipeda is historically linked cities and has a long history of a good cooperation. Firstly, there is a need to integrate and design social services in a complementary manner across the border to ensure their better accessibility and efficiency to target groups. Secondly, there are different approaches applied and the best practices are accumulated in each country because the social service systems are different. Therefore exchange of experience and, other capacity building activities had facilitated identification/joint development, and while the dissemination of new solutions will improve social inclusion.

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Implementation of the project demonstrate strong interest from specialists of both cities to meet and exchange experiences further beyond project Safe City on regular basis. During the project in 2 experience exchange meetings has been held, one two days long joint training took place in Klaipeda and joint study on domestic violence in Klaipeda and Liepaja has been carried out to identify common challenges and differences between cities in terms of response system to domestic violence. Both cities have developed Strategic development plans for interinstitutional model for next five years and some of the planned activities have potential to contribute to closer collaboration between Klaipeda and Liepaja.

## Collaboration activities

Disclaimer!!! All activities are indicative and do not bear any legal liability of agencies involved.

	Activities	Aim of activity	Agencies involved	Responsibilities	Timeframe (Year, months)
<b>1</b>	<b>Protection of domestic violence victims</b>				
1.1.	Development of joint template for case analysis	Exchange of experience and identification of best practices	NGOs	MARTA and KSPSC	March – May, 2020
1.2	Comparative case analysis in Liepaja and Klaipeda	Exchange of experience and identification of best practices	NGOs	MARTA and KSPSC	June – October, 2020 (on regular basis once in a year in following years)
1.3	Case analysis presentation in joint intersectional meeting	Exchange of experience and identification of best practices	NGOs, governmental and municipality agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	November – December, 2020 (on regular basis once in a year in following years)
1.4	Discussion on protection measures for domestic violence victims (protection orders issued by court or police)	Facilitate better protection for victims	NGOs, law enforcement agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
1.5	Discussion on crisis intervention models	Facilitate development of better responses to domestic violence cases in crisis situations	NGOs, governmental and municipality agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
<b>2</b>	<b>Support and assistance to domestic violence victims</b>				

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2.1	Development of joint services model to domestic violence victims	Enhance and improve available services for victims un Klaipeda and Liepaja	NGOs	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
2.2	Exchange of information about budgeting models for domestic violence victims, comparative analysis	Facilitate sustainable and feasible financial support for services for domestic violence victims	NGOs, Klaipeda and Liepaja municipalities, responsible ministries in each country	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
2.3	Discussion on motivational aspects for victims seeking support and assistance	Facilitate development of better models of services tailored to victims needs	NGOs, governmental and municipality agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
<b>3</b>	<b>Prevention of domestic violence</b>				
3.1	Discussion on effectiveness of intervention programmes for perpetrators	Exchange of experience and identification of best practices	NGOs, Liepaja Social services, Probation services in both cities	Social services, Probation	March – December, 2020
3.2	Joint Informative campaigns, discussion on better channels to disseminate information to different social groups	Increase of numbers of victims seeking help	NGOs, governmental and municipality agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020
<b>4</b>	<b>Practical tools</b>				
4.1	Discussion on information exchange tools between agencies for more effective response to domestic violence cases	Increasing capacity of agencies to tackle domestic violence cases and mutual collaboration	NGOs, governmental and municipality agencies	MARTA and KSPSC	September – December, 2020

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