

Evaluation of judicial strategies to address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): a large scale analysis based on statistical registration in Belgium

Charlotte Vanneste

Senior researcher at the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (Brussels) and Professor at the University of Liège – Belgium

In the framework of a National concerted Action Plan, the Belgian judicial authorities established in 2006 new instructions to address IPV cases, embodying a clear call for firm and swift reaction in line with a more zero-tolerance approach. At the same time, the correctional courts began to register information about the IPV context of the cases reported to, and handled by, the prosecution authorities. This large database constitutes a very rich set of information to study the nature of reported IPV, the profiles and trajectories of the (presumed) authors of these IPV and the decisions taken in these cases by the prosecution authorities. In addition, this information can be completed by linking it, within certain limitations, with data on the nature of the convictions or/and about the type of psycho-social interventions or programmes registered in two other databases: the criminal records database, and the database of the 'Justice Centres' which are responsible for the execution of measures and sanctions applied in the community. Through these integrated research approaches we are able to analyze and evaluate the judicial practices actually applied to address IPV, in view of the declared aims.

In our communication we will present the main results of a longitudinal study involving all the (presumed) authors reported in 2010 to the prosecution authorities for at least one IPV offence (about 39,500 persons). To evaluate the effect of judicial policies, one first criteria taken into account is 'recidivism', defined as new reporting to the prosecutor for new IPV acts occurring after a judicial decision.