



NATIONAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

ENDING RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

Haven Horizons
Report to GREVIO

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Overview of Recommendations

This submission focuses on the articles of the Convention which relate to the work of Haven Horizons. The recommendations when implemented together have potential to radically change the local and national interagency response to DSGBA crimes with new practices, policies and legislation informed by an evidence-based data and new Irish research.

Key Recommendations

Chapter I – Integrated polices and data collection

Recommendation Article 11 – Data collection and research

- The State should resource the established TUS/ Haven Horizons **DSGBA Community of Practice** research collaboration.
- The State should fund members of the DSGBV Community of Practice to attend the biennial **European Conference on Domestic Violence** to share their work practices, knowledge, and research findings at European and International levels.

Chapter III Prevention

Recommendation Article 15 Training of professionals

- The State should resource Haven Horizons to co-ordinate the national **geographical** roll out of the Level 6 **online CPD training** and to co-ordinate the **facilitation of the establishment of DSGBA Local Area Networks** in each area post training.

Chapter VI – Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures

Recommendations Articles 50 and 51

- The State should resource an implementation team (Praxis International, Haven Horizons, and oversight statutory body) to introduce a **Safety and Accountability Audit** and a **Blueprint for Safety Demonstration Division** in Co. Clare.

Introduction

Haven Horizons is a national voluntary organisation dedicated to ending domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse (DSGBA) by focusing on primary prevention and changing systems through collaborative partnerships. Key areas of work:

- A National Gender-based Abuse Research and Knowledge Centre.
- Designing and delivering accredited continuous professional development training in collaboration with The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS).
- Development of a DSGBA Community of Practice in collaboration with TUS
- Promoting models of best practice for the justice system, (Safety and Accountability and the Blueprint for Safety) in conjunction with Praxis International.

Haven Horizons is a member of the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women which is chaired by the National Women's Council (NWC) and has contributed to and endorses the shadow report compiled by the Irish Observatory.

Haven Horizons is a member of The National Women's Council, (NWC), The Association of Criminal Justice Research and Development, (ACJRD), Clare Local Area Network on violence against women (CLAN), the Public Participation Network (PPN) representative on the Clare Joint Policing Committee.

The Issue

Domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse are crimes predicated by complex patterns of repeat victimisation, victim attrition, low conviction rates, and high-risk and lethality, requiring the consistent and effective engagement of a wide range of statutory and non-statutory agencies at local and national level.

The Irish State's Response

Ireland ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2019, adopting the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention in its Third National Strategy on DSGBV (2022 -2026).

For the first time the Programme for Government (2019) recognised domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) as a priority. In recent years there have been important legal changes aimed at protecting victims and improving the justice system's response to DSGBA. These include The Domestic Violence Act 2018, which introduced the new offence of coercive control, The EU Victims of Crime Act 2017, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020. The Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022 will increase the maximum sentence for assault causing harm, one of the most common charges in cases of domestic abuse, from 5 to 10 years, stalking and non-fatal strangulations will be introduced as stand-alone offences. The Garda National Protective Services Bureau and Divisional Protective Services Units are operational.

Collectively, these developments and the implementation of the Third National Strategy have the potential to be transformative. However, the co-ordination of local and national responses lacks a systems change approach to identify the barriers and to close all the gaps that leave victims at risk of re-victimisation, serious injury and homicide. This submission proposes four key actions that have the power to revolutionise the Irish State's response to DSGVA at a systemic level which will progress the attainment of Zero Tolerance to DSGVA in Ireland.

Relevant Chapters

Chapter II: Integrated policies and data collection

Article 11 – Data collection and research

1. For the purpose of the implementation of this Convention, Parties shall undertake to: support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention.
2. Parties shall provide the group of experts, as referred to in Article 66 of this Convention, with the information collected pursuant to this article in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking. Parties shall ensure that the information collected pursuant to this article is available to the public.

Gap in current provision

Currently research in the field is fragmented and findings are not translated into practice, policy and legislation quickly enough and there is no mechanism to share this knowledge nationally or internationally. To support DSGBA research that studies root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, and to ensure that the findings are accessible to the public, an effective DSGBA is essential.

To implement this article a vibrant DSGBV research network is required. A Community of Practice which facilitates networking between academic researchers, policy makers, legislators, frontline practitioners, and people directly impacted by DSGBA has been established by Haven Horizons and TUS to make research in the field more engaged, impactful and accessible and to ensure engaged research and timely research translation addressing the disconnect between research practice, policy and legislation, changing understanding, laws, responses and saving lives.

The Community of Practice will build utilise the [Integrated Knowledge Translation Capacity Framework](#) developed by Dr. Jacqui Cameron.

Recommendation on Article 11

- The State should resource the established TUS/ Haven Horizons DSGBA Community of Practice research collaboration.
- The State should fund members of the DSGBV Community of Practice to attend the biennial European Conference on Domestic Violence to share their work practices, knowledge and research findings.

Chapter III. Prevention

Article 15 – Training of professionals

1. Parties shall provide or strengthen appropriate training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, on the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, as well as on how to prevent secondary victimisation.
2. Parties shall encourage that the training referred to in paragraph 1 includes training on co-ordinated-multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in cases of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

To deliver co-ordinated-multi-agency co-operation and appropriate responses to and investigation of DSGBA referrals, accredited interagency training for front line professionals must be delivered on a geographical basis. [Reflecting on and Responding to Abuse and Coercive Control](#) is delivered online to frontline domestic abuse professionals: Gardaí, domestic abuse advocates, social workers, social workers, probation officers, courts service personnel, survivors' representatives, social care personnel, educators, staff from community-based organisations and people working with perpetrators.

The CPD training must be followed by the establishment of a DSGBA Local Area Network to build on the interagency collaboration and to close the gaps in responses to victims and perpetrators at local level. This was piloted by Haven Horizons and Longford West Meath in 2021. to co-ordinate the national roll out of the pilot CPD training and the follow-on facilitation of the establishment of the Longford / Westmeath. The establishment of geographical DSGBA Local Area Networks of well-informed frontline professionals have huge potential to positively impact the way in which DSGBA is understood and responded to in Ireland.

Recommendation - Article 15

The State should resource Haven Horizons to co-ordinate the national roll out of geographical online CPD training and to co-ordinate the facilitation of the establishment of DSGVA Local Area networks in each area.

Chapter VI – Article 50 Investigation, prosecution, procedural law, and protective measures

Article 50 – Immediate response, prevention and protection

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the responsible law enforcement agencies respond to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention promptly and appropriately by offering adequate and immediate protection to victims.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the responsible law enforcement agencies engage promptly and appropriately in the prevention and protection against all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including the employment of preventive operational measures and the collection of evidence.

Chapter VI - Article 51 – Risk assessment and risk management

Article 51 – Risk assessment and risk management

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that an assessment of the lethality risk, the seriousness of the situation and the risk of repeated violence is carried out by all relevant authorities in order to manage the risk and if necessary to provide co-ordinated safety and support.

To ensure that all law enforcement agencies respond to DSGBA cases promptly and appropriately offering immediate protection to victims, it is crucial that the systems gaps that lead to DSGBA re-victimisation and fatalities must be identified and closed. A international model, Blueprint for safety has been proposed and a seminar on the model for the criminal justice system agencies has taken place in Ireland.

In St. Paul, Minnesota, the introduction of the Praxis International Safety and Accountability Audit and Blueprint for Safety radically change the response to DSGBA victims, reduced lethality, and increased public confidence in the justice systems' ability to hold perpetrators accountable.

The Safety and Accountability Audit / Blueprint for Safety revolutionises the immediate response, the investigation, prosecution, and interagency co-operation in responding to domestic abuse crimes. The audit is not focused on how individuals perform, instead it reveals how laws, polices, forms, standard operating procedures, work routines practices create systematic obstacles or gaps in effectively responding to domestic abuse crimes.

A Safety and Accountability Audit spearheads institutional and cultural change in justice systems response to domestic abuse crimes.

After the completion of a Safety and Accountability Audit the Blueprint for Safety model is introduced. Using the Blueprint, a coordinated justice system can respond to DSGBA offences more quickly and effectively, enhancing its capacity to stop violence, prevent re-victimisation, reduce harm and serious injury and save lives.

This next generation multi-agency justice system response to DSGBA crimes can be used to link agencies together in a coherent, effective, philosophically sound domestic abuse intervention model. The Audit and the Blueprint for Safety are systems approaches that provide those working in leadership and supervisor positions with the means to systematically address, implement, supervise and monitor outcomes in the processing and prosecuting of DSGBA cases. This also shifts the burden of holding the offender accountable from the victim to the system.

Systems Change – Safety and Accountability Audit & Blueprint for Safety
Haven Horizons is working in collaboration with Praxis International (St. Paul, MN) to establish a demonstration site for a ‘safety and accountability audit’ and the ‘Blueprint for Safety’ in Ireland. The Safety and Accountability Audit and the Blueprint for Safety find and fix the gaps in the justice systems’ response to domestic abuse crimes and put a laser focus on victim safety and perpetrator accountability at every single step in the processing of domestic abuse crimes – changing attitudes, reducing harm, and saving lives.

Praxis International – [Safety and Accountability Audit](#)

Praxis International - [Blueprint for Safety](#)

Recommendations on Articles 50 and 51

The State should resource an implementation team (Praxis International, Haven Horizons, and new statutory body) to introduce a Safety and Accountability Audit and a Blueprint for Safety Demonstration Division in Co. Clare.

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