



Concept on
**MEN'S COUNSELLING
AND SUPPORT CENTERS
IN THE REPUBLIC OF
NORTH MACEDONIA**



REAC—OR
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INTRODUCTION – THE CONCEPT



The concept for men's counseling and support center represents the grounds of establishing quality and accessible counseling and therapeutic programs for men and boys as one of the strategies for comprehensive prevention of violence against women and gender-based violence in North Macedonia. The Concept provides initial directions for the needs, possibilities and ways of work of the men's counseling and support centers, and it is based on the main principles of prevention in working with men and perpetrators of violence adopted from national and international experiences in prevention. Setting up such a concept for counseling for men, should enable more involvement of men in prevention of violence against women, but also a decline in violent behavior and keep perpetrators of violence and sexual abuse from re-offending in the future.

During the process of the preparation of the Concept, a work group was formed with representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, and civil society organizations. Thus, a multisectoral approach was provided in addressing the needs of the country for setting up men's counseling centers, with one main goal – through more involvement in care for men to contribute in declining of violence against women and gender-based violence in the country.

The Concept was prepared within the project "Establishment of Multi-Professional Prevention of Gender-Based Violence, Victim-Safety Oriented Work with Perpetrators and Men's Counseling in North Macedonia" supported by the Association for Men's and Gender Issues Styria, Graz, Austria (Verein für Männer-und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark) with financial support from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. At a national level, the project is implemented by the association HERA – Health Education and Research Association in partnership with Reactor – Research in Action. The Austrian organization Association for Men's and Gender Issues Styria, Graz, Austria provided the expertise and good practices to make an attempt and adapt a men's counseling center in Skopje to the models existing in Austria. Experiences from the Netherlands and Croatia were also used in the process of developing the Concept.

Setting up a specialized counseling and support center is a relatively new concept in the field of social work, for which there is insufficiently accumulated experience to develop a unified model which can be cloned in other countries. That is why this Concept for men's counseling and support center in Skopje should be treated as a provisional model and should be modified continuously according to the social concept and needs of the country. In addition, it is of great importance to use the whole knowledge and expertise acquired within the framework of the project, so that the long-term goals that were set can be achieved.



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



Our gender exerts a significant impact on our lives. We are perceived by others as a specific gender - our gender is an important part of our personality and identity. Gender-specific risk factors also go hand in hand with this. Men often wait too long to seek help and habitually view their problems as individual failures rather than societal problems. There are male-specific crises and problems. When it comes to violence, there is a strong gender-specific component as well. Overall, men are significantly more often involved in acts of violence. In partnerships, it is predominantly women who are affected by this violence. In public, men are often the victims of violence by other men.

The programs for support for men and the theories of men and masculinity occur in the 1980s in the 20th century as a reaction, a consequence of the programs for support and help for women. In the beginning, a lot of social workers and psychologists did not take seriously the providing help and support for men, they considered these men "weak and soft" and that is the reason there was strong resistance because it appeared that men suffer along the road to the desired social positions and thus their domination becomes questionable.

In this way, gender plays an important role in the design of expert consultation, advice, and intervention in terms of social work. After 15 years of work and the existence of services for help and support for men, the foundations for support for men were created and led to the shared knowledge of the issues and needs of men. Today there are numerous institutions and programs for men, as well as groups that work on various issues, for example, violence, employment status, isolation, relationships with partners, fatherhood, drug/medication use, aggression, and sexuality. There are also a lot of independent organizations that develop their own programs for help and support for men.

New research also shows that the treatments intended for the prevention of GBV must take into consideration the specific needs, perspectives, and life situations of men and women. The gender roles of men and women often are subject to deep-rooted changes during crises, and that is why the return to the usual models of behavior is difficult. A large number of men identify themselves as and play the role of the provider in the family ("they bring the bread to the family"). If he becomes unemployed because of the economic crisis, the difficulty of fast and easy securement of a new job takes away this role (the traditionally given gender role) and because of this, these men face a situation in which they can have an identity crisis. As a result of this identity crisis, these boys and men can suffer a great deal of stress that can lead to addiction and violent forms of behavior, including sexual and gender-based violence. This is the reason for the recommendation of the programs for GBV that focus on psychosocial support, promote balance, nonviolent behavior, and learning alternative models of masculinity (e.g. caring masculinity).

We are convinced that by focusing on specialized support services for boys and men, we are noticeably lowering the inhibition threshold to seek help. We want them to learn that it is also normal for boys and men to have problems and to get help. We want to empower men to make the best use of their resources and make responsible decisions, especially in a crisis.

The Concept of a men's counseling and support center begins with a brief theoretical framing that focuses on Raewyn Connell's construction of masculinity and male-specific dynamics of violence. This is followed by a discussion of the need for these services and the specific target groups and reasons for establishing men's counseling and support centers. The focus will be also on the goals of the counseling services as well as the prevention and intervention of violence. In conclusion, there is a closer look at the external framework conditions, working methods, and organizational structure.

Masculinities are social constructions that are historically changeable and embedded in political and economic relations. We oppose natural, pseudo-biological and pseudo-historical, concepts that understand masculinity as a rigid, indispensable category. They must be seen as products of historical processes: masculinities change throughout history and differ from culture to culture. Gender is thus both a product and a producer of history. In this process, men and masculinities are active participants and can have an impact on their environment. In this process, masculinity is always subject to internal contradictions and historical ruptures (Connell, 2005).

Gender is a central social ordering feature and structural category. The construction of masculinity takes place in specific social practices and the double logic of distinction and dominance. At the same time, the construction of masculinity only ever exists with the contrasting concept of femininity (Connell, 2005). Masculinity is the result of understanding, interpreting, learning, and experiencing the environment. In this process, boys and men need support. Often, as they grow up, they lack adequate masculine role models in their identity formation. Due to the gender-specific division of care work in the family and the professional context of social work, orientation possibilities about the shaping of one's masculinity are often denied. Due to this lack, people often orient themselves to the prevailing stereotypes and media representations of the constructions of masculinity. Traditional images of masculinity and the distribution of roles are still prevalent here. The man is seen as a lone fighter, he is muscular, strong, ready to use violence if necessary, and always in control of the situation. Thus, boys have images in their minds of manhood and masculinity that have little to do with reality. Heteronormative, dual-gender stereotypes are often the standard. The motto still applies – if you can't cope with your problems as a man on your own, you're a failure and not a real man. The fact that they have worries and problems is quickly pushed into the background.

The tone between boys is often rough and many are unsure where to go for support when problems arise. At the same time, they run the risk of becoming victims of bullying and violence from other boys. Perceiving and showing their feelings, such as fear, sadness, or helplessness, is often not allowed because they do not want to be seen as "wimps". Feelings are also constructed in a gender-specific way. Thus, in childhood and adolescence, the foundation is laid for an attitude that accompanies many men even as adults. From the very beginning, they lack opportunities to discuss their role as a man with other men – and women. They compensate for problems with dangerous behavior, such as alcohol or drug abuse. Homelessness, delinquency, gambling addiction, and violence can be the consequences.

At the same time, masculinities are also constantly changing – images of masculinity seem to have fanned out and pluralized in recent years. The German sociologists Sylka Scholz and Michael Meuser describe a structural change on three levels:

1. Hegemonic masculinity loses its unquestioned status and is no longer an unmarked gender role. Masculinity thus becomes a visible and particularly marked position in gender relations.
2. Hegemonic masculinity experiences new framework conditions under the changed conditions of the globalized world.
3. Hegemonic masculinity opens in certain social fields. (Meuser & Scholz, 2011).

Even though images of diverse masculinity are fortunately increasing, even though a reduction of existing social inequalities between women and men is discernible, the image of traditional masculinity continues to predominate to this day.

MASCULINITY IN RAEWYN CONNELL'S WORK

For Raewyn Connell, masculinity describes a position in gender relations, the practices for taking that position, and the effects of those practices. Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered (Connell, 2005). At the core of Connell's concept of masculinity, there are four manifestations of masculinity, which are briefly outlined below. The first form is hegemonic masculinity, which occupies the leadership position in a social group. It manages to embody the answer to the legitimacy problem of patriarchy under the respective social conditions, thereby ensuring the dominance of men and the subordination of women. The second manifestation, subordinated masculinity, is characterized by cultural, political, and state repression and is at the lower end of the male order of domination. There is also assumed symbolic proximity to the feminine. The third manifestation, complicit masculinity, describes men who benefit from the dominance of a particular form of masculinity but do not fully conform to this ideal themselves. This form represents the majority of men. The actual fulfillment of the hegemonic ideal is often missed in practice. The last manifestation is marginalized masculinity and describes the possibly marginalizing interaction of gender and other structural categories such as *class* or *race* (Connell, 2005).

Connell points out that these categories are by no means rigid character types, but patterns of action. The hegemonic status of construction of masculinity is constantly renewed, defended, and modified in social interactions. Hegemonic masculinity is also always dependent on current social structures of power and domination (Connell, 2005).

Masculinity is also often linked to violence. A distinction can be made between homosocial and heterosocial violence: homosocial violence describes hierarchically structured violence and dominance among other men. Heterosocial violence means the delimiting and oppressive violence between different genders, for example, towards women. In this context, violence is considered a sign of deficiency in the constructions of power: a legitimate form of domination would not need any of this intimidation. Connell interprets the current extent of violence as a crisis tendency (Connell, 2005).

MASCULINE DOMINATION IN PIERRE BOURDIEU'S WORK

According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, male domination does not need justification; it is enough that it is repeatedly reflected in social practices and discourses (Bourdieu, 2001). In doing so, this domination is secured through symbolic power: through an immediate and pre-reflexive submission of the ruled, as well as unwitting consent through social practices, domination is secured (Bourdieu, 2001). For Connell, the term "hegemonic" also expresses that social superiority is not based solely on physical violence or the threat of it but involves a high degree of agreement between the privileged and the disadvantaged (Connell, 2005). At the same time, men themselves are also perpetual victims of their domination in various ways: they are also constrained in how they live their lives and are subject to dominant ideas (Bourdieu, 2001). It should be emphasized that the underlying power constellations are quite different mechanisms of action.

As has become clear in the research, the category of gender and thus also masculinity as a social structuring principle must always be thought of intersectionally (Connell, 2005): those who want to understand the manifestations of masculinity must also see their interconnectedness with other power structures, such as *race* or *class*. The counseling center tries to do justice to this approach. Individual structural categories are not considered in isolation but are analyzed in their interaction specifically with the category of gender and masculinity.

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDERS ON PROBLEMS AND PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

Gender has an undeniable influence on social care and protection. Men and women share different forms of difficulties and problems, they have different needs for care and protection and use it differently. Men and women have different psychological problems for which they seek help from social workers and professionals (psychologists, therapists, psychiatrists) for mental health. The financial problems related to employment, relations and relationships with children are due to the dominant social statuses of the genders. Problems with facing issues, personality disorders, addictions, eating disorders and trouble controlling impulsiveness, may occur as consequences of socialization of men and women. The problems with abuse of power and violence are connected to the difference of power between the genders. Developmental disorders are connected to biological differences. Less often men seek help from social workers and professionals for their mental health and care less for

their mental health in comparison to women. While they are growing up and all through their development, men are thought that they should not complain and they are asked to try and find a solution to their problem on their own. It is believed that "no one can help you more than yourself".

That is why when a man comes to ask for help, the situation is already very serious and difficult. In this kind of situation, the doctors more often send them directly to be treated in a hospital.

The study [NEMESIS](#) (Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study) has shown that 40% of the Dutch had some psychological difficulties. According to gender:

- ▶ Women are twice as likely to suffer from mood disorders and fear as men (10-20% of women and 5-10% of men are depressed). Men and women have different reasons for depression (biological vulnerability, socialization, social-economic status), and they deal with it differently. Men conceal their emotions of fear and listlessness with increased anxiety, drug and alcohol use, they are susceptible to frustration and often react violently.
- ▶ Men drink alcohol three to five times more than women. The significant difference is that more often highly educated women and undereducated men drink alcohol excessively.
- ▶ Antisocial disorders of the personality are 4 to 6 times more observed in men, compared to women.
- ▶ Repeated psychological problems and disorders are more observed in women (43,5%), in comparison to 26% of men.

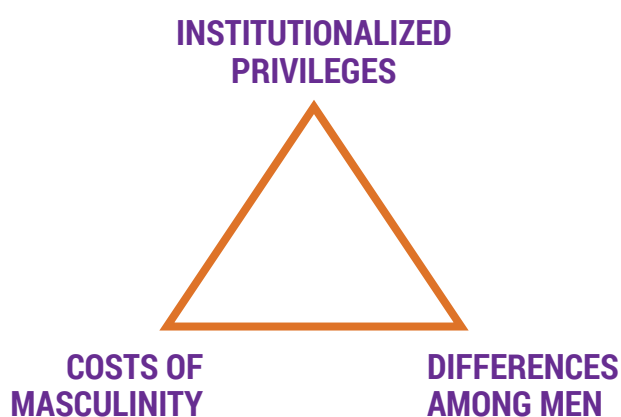
According to RIAGG (*Regional institute voor de ambulante geestelijke gezondheidszorg*-Regional Institute for Outpatient Mental Health Care), girls and women often have mood disorders, delirium/senility, anxiety disorders and eating disorders, whereas boys and men more often ask for help for developmental disorders (child/adolescence), schizophrenia, alcohol, problems with control and to overcome impulsivity. All the information listed above is significant and we should consider them so we can respond appropriately to the gender aspects in creating support centers and programs, so we can respond to the needs of men and women accordingly.

GENDER ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES OF THOSE DOING WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS ACCORDING TO MESSNER

There are attitudes and approaches which are necessary to strengthen gender-equal societies as a whole. With the help of the so-called "triangle model", developed by US sociologist Messner in 2000, it is possible to compare gender-political attitudes and approaches of people active in the field work with men and boys.

Messner differentiated three aspects that should be addressed in working with men and boys in order to support and strengthen gender democratic positions:

1. **Institutionalized male privileges** in society should be critically addressed. Think about power positions in societies, about economic resources unilaterally claimed by men, and also the fact that power positions seem to be independent of care work. This should be critically reflected when working with men.
2. **The costs of traditional power-based concepts of masculinity should be reflected upon.** Consider the disadvantages that can result from traditional concepts of masculinity (such as increased suicide risk, health risks, or risks in social well-being),
3. **The diversity of masculinity should be addressed.** Not all men are on top positions in society. Many men will never reach this position. For example, men with migration histories, homosexual men, men with disabilities, etc. Working with men in a gender-democratic way pays attention to the diversity of masculinities, and the diversity of men. Especially when it comes to violence and working with male perpetrators.



We know from research that unbalanced approaches in working with men solely focus on one corner of the Triangle – the “costs of masculinity”. Especially antifeminist men’s groups all over Europe support approaches through which individual experiences of men (e.g. divorce, custody) are generalized and used as examples for men as a discriminated gender group.

Myths of Antifeminist Men’s Rights Initiatives describe men as victims in the world of work, in the education system, in health policy, and on the topic of violence, with women as perpetrators of domestic violence. We need to overcome this battle, we need balanced gender-political approaches, and we need them also in our work with men and boys. We need perspectives:

- ▶ that are aimed at minimizing the “costs of masculinity”,
- ▶ while critically looking at male privileges in society,
- ▶ and paying attention to structural conditions of inequality, because some men profit from unequal power relations while others are affected by disadvantages. Social markers such as migration background, social situation, origin, etc. play a central role here.

If these aspects are taken into account, the complexity of the debate increases, but at the same time, the perception of this complexity clears the way for alliances and dialogues “at eye level” with women’s organizations or victims support organizations. This is why representatives of balanced approaches are often to be found in cooperation with women’s organizations.

Looking at approaches in men’s work in Europe, the European-wide systematic 28-country study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality showed that balanced approaches, focusing on costs, diversity of masculinities, and men’s privileges at the same time are more likely to be found in countries, where men are also actively involved in gender equality policy. And the active involvement of men in gender-equality measures is strongly connected with the countries’ overall advancement in gender equality policies and practices. That is why it is important to involve men in gender-equality measures, pay attention to the diversity of men, to the costs of traditional concepts of masculinity, and critically reflect men’s privileges in society.





LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH MEN AND PERPETRATORS



THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A FOUNDATION FOR WORKING WITH MEN AND PERPETRATORS IN THE PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence against women is internationally recognized as a form of discrimination against women and a violation of their rights. Although men can also be their partner's target of intimate violence, women represent a large majority of victims, and men a large majority of perpetrators.

Still, today, more and more awareness is increasing that men, especially in partnership with women, can have a significant role in the elimination of violence against women.

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) recognizes the treatment programs for perpetrators of violence and training of professionals as part of the priority measures in the prevention of violence against women. Concurrently, the countries are encouraged to develop programs that will actively include men in the prevention of violence against women. They can be developed in a form of education, media campaigns for raising awareness, setting up counseling services, etc.

The treatment programs for perpetrators are also important elements in securing an integrated and comprehensive approach to prevention and combating violence against women. These programs should also be integrated into the politics of every country. Working with men as perpetrators of family violence and sexual abuse can contribute to a more serious shift of cultural and political norms of the countries in the elimination of gender hierarchies, gender-based violence, gender discrimination as well as other forms of personal and structural violence and discrimination. Further, the development of appropriate programs for men as primary prevention of violence against women, especially including men who are not at risk of committing violence or maybe are at risk of continuing the circle of violence, have also a significant role in the elimination of the stereotypes of the gender roles and reducing violence.

Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention, clearly states the responsibilities of the countries that ratified the Convention for the development of working models for perpetrators of violence as one of the most important strategies in dealing with violence against women. Along with this, the counties are also required to develop special programs for work with perpetrators of violence which would focus on perpetrators of domestic violence as well as on violent sexual offenders as prevention. Additionally, these programs must guarantee the safety and support of the victims of violence, and the specialized services that provide the services for women victims, like shelters and crises centers to provide cooperation with the programs for work with perpetrators of violence.

It is crucial that these programs should not be isolated, but they should collaborate closely with the services for support and care of women who are victims of violence, institutions that are responsible for the implementation of the laws on prevention of violence against women, the judiciary, the probation institutions and the institutions for protection of children and children's rights. In accordance with the recommendations of the Istanbul Convention, the inclusion of perpetrators of violence in these programs can be mandated by the court or voluntarily. Considering that in both cases these programs for perpetrators can influence the victim's decision to stay or to leave the perpetrator or can provide the victim with a false sense of security, the needs and safety of the victims and their human rights must be prioritized over the ones of the perpetrator. Article 16 states the obligations of the countries to implement programs for working with perpetrators of sexual abuse and rape. These programs should be specifically designed for the treatment of convicted sexual offenders, in and outside of prisons, in order to minimize the possibility of re-offending. In the Member States of the European Council are identified a large number of positive practices for working with perpetrators under the Istanbul Convention. They can be managed by civil society organizations or by relevant state institutions such as probation institutions or jails, with one final goal – prevention of repeating violence and enabling integration of the perpetrators of violence within the community.

Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention – PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS

- (1) Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programs aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behavior in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioral patterns.
 - (2) Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programs aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex offenders, from re-offending.
 - (3) In taking the measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, Parties shall ensure that the safety of, support for, and the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programs are set up and implemented in close coordination with specialist support services for victims.
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LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH MEN AND PERPETRATORS

One of the fundamental principles of the *Law on the Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* is taking action for prevention and protection against gender-based violence and domestic violence. At the same time, the activities should be gender-responsive to and recognize the characteristics and differences that are due to the gender roles of men and women in society. In the same direction, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science are under the obligation to create and implement programs for equality of men and women, nonviolent conflict resolution, respecting diversities, promoting gender equality, and elimination of gender stereotypes of gender roles based on culture, customs, region, tradition, and other practices that are based on the idea of subordination of men and women. That implies setting up programs in schools and institutions for child care promoting gender equality and prevention of GBV, training teachers, organizing campaigns for raising public awareness, and implementing content from comprehensive sexuality education. That will enable a deeper discussion about masculinity and patriarchal relations as an important tool for changing the boys' understanding of gender roles and care for the family and family obligations, which can contribute to the prevention of GBV. The *Law on the Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* specifically recognizes the need for psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of family violence by setting up counseling centers for perpetrators of violence. The self-government units have the option to set up this kind of counseling centers or other services for perpetrators under the *Law on Social Protection*. The national action plan for implementation of the Istanbul Convention also includes setting up counseling centers for perpetrators of violence through establishing national standards and work procedures, and opening centers in 10 regions in the country by the end of 2023.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF MEN AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

According to the data published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 2020 there were reported 1.025 perpetrators of family violence, of which 930, or 90%, were men. 483 of them, or 52% are spouses or men in common-law unions.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, there are no nationally and/or locally set up men's counseling centers that would help with the prevention of family or gender-based violence. The country has provided only a pledge and the inceptions for work with men who are preparators of violence, which are not remotely satisfactory. Regarding the number of accessible counseling centers for psychosocial support of victims of violence, currently, there are 11, three of which are managed by civil society organizations. Only one civil organization offers a program for psychosocial treatment for perpetrators of violence. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has future plans to finance the municipalities to set up, besides counseling centers for women victims of violence, also counseling centers for perpetrators of violence through a pilot project for social services to increase the availability of counseling centers for work with perpetrators around the country. At the same time, the civil society organizations that would provide these types of services need to be licensed in accordance with the *Law on Social Protection* as providers of social services. According to information provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, only 11 professionals in the country were trained for working with perpetrators of violence. The specialized counseling centers for family and gender-based violence lack standards and a program for working with perpetrators of violence, although there were anticipated in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention 2018 - 2023.

According to research conducted by professionals, civil society organizations, and representatives of state institutions, opening specialized services for psychosocial support for men concerning parenting, relationships and self-care are the best strategies for including boys and men in the prevention of GBV (67%). In addition, setting up an SOS line is also considered an effective alternative strategy that can contribute to increasing the involvement of men in the prevention of violence. The educational institutions and the media are identified as the main sources of information and promotion which should be largely involved in the prevention of GBV through active participation of boys and men (more than 70%), whereas the health workers and NGOs are also considered to be relevant stakeholders that can contribute in such educational activities (around 50%). The training of the professionals (87%), sustainable financing (83%), informing the community (83%), and cooperation with female civil society organizations (83%) are crucial for setting up and implementing successful counseling and treatment programs for perpetrators.

THE NEED FOR SETTING UP MEN'S COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT CENTERS

Generally speaking, there are only several specialized services for support of men on a global level. There is often a lack of opportunities for exchanging ideas with other men and women to discuss the roles of men. At the same time, the requirements of men are diverse and complex. The legitimacy of establishing a men's counseling center certainly depends on the need and sociocultural context of the county. Usually, everywhere in the world, there is a lack of professional counseling services for boys and men to support them in answering questions about gender and masculinities as key aspects in the prevention and reduction of violence against women and GBV.

Another important task for this kind of concept is that it should be able to network with different stakeholders, counseling centers, and professionals from related fields in order to provide additional value in dealing with violence against women and GBV in the country as national strategic goals. Ultimately, not only men would benefit from this counseling center, but also all victims of male violence or those who suffer from patriarchal structures in the country.



MEN'S COUNSELING AND SUPPORT CENTERS

GOALS

The primary goals for the existence of men's counseling and support centers are to support men in their personal development so they can grow into responsible people who take responsibility for themselves and their behavior. Recognizing and respecting the boundaries, wants, and needs of men and their social environment are always crucial for personal development. That is why confidentiality between clients and counselors within the framework of the counseling center is essential.

Men's feelings certainly play a special role in their personal development. We are referring to the necessity to observe and accept the whole range of emotions that belong to someone who identifies as a man. That is why the goal of counseling is always fully accepting the responsibility for one's own behavior and developing a clear attitude as a person who respects one's self but also respects others. The counseling also includes the development of alternative forms of behavior for boys and men who are perpetrators of physical and/or sexual violence, but also an intervention in case of crises in which men find themselves. Men most often seek help and support when they are in a crisis (divorce, separation, ...), when they "cannot move on in life" and when they "need to find a new meaning and a new way of life". In these crises, they often seek answers to questions – What are my rights as a man? Can I get custody of my children? Alimony obligations? How to arrange a parenting time schedule? That is why it is recommended that the men's counseling centers provide services such as counseling and support in a crisis, for certain medical or legal questions which are related to sexual orientation and gender identity of men, as well as psychosocial treatment for violence, through which are learned constructive ways of resolution of conflicts, communication, and dealing with stress. Counseling for men who are victims of violence is also part of the counseling services of these programs. This includes taking actions that need to resolve the contradiction between masculinity and being a victim, basically making it easier for boys and men to see themselves as victims.

Besides the direct goals of counseling, there are also indirect goals, that is, long-term goals. They include prevention above all. The problematic behaviors which arise from masculinity should be prevented in advance. In the long term, boys and men should develop alternative models of behavior so they can take on specific actions for change and develop themselves into responsible people. Prevention in men who are victims of violence means raising awareness for the violence they experienced and opposing the taboo of "being a victim". Additionally, networking with different national and regional stakeholders who work in this field is necessary. In collaboration with other institutions and organizations, networks or non-formal bodies can be formed which will work together on this issue to create more efficient and comprehensive care and protection and care for men and boys on a national level.

The men's counseling and support center should always include possibilities for additional education and training for the professional institutions and the professionals for counseling and care for men. In addition, the involvement of the media and the

reporters is a very important strategy for addressing the needs and questions of men in prevention and raising public awareness.

By initiating a public discussion about masculinity and care for men, the opportunities for counseling and support of boys and men in violence prevention can be improved in the long term.

The biggest long-term goal of the men's counseling and support center lies in the research. This means gathering and analyzing data within the counseling center, implementing and sharing knowledge about the relations between gender/men, the work, organization, and identity, which will contribute to the development of gender equality on a national, but also on a regional and international level.

TARGET GROUPS

Basically, the men's counseling and support center can be a starting point for all boys and men who have "unresolved" questions about gender and masculinity or have a psychological crisis. The counseling of men is based on certain characteristics related to the target groups and the possibilities for counseling. When we talk about men as a target group, it also includes adolescent boys. Generally speaking, the counseling and support center should provide counseling for 1) men in crisis that suffered or are currently suffering major changes in certain areas in their lives and don't have enough recourses or way how to cope with these changes by themselves and 2) men who are perpetrators of violence and are going to counseling because it was court-ordered to get psychosocial treatment or voluntarily participate in the treatment for violence perpetrators. When we are talking about men in crisis, the list of the target groups can be long, but the Concept in its first phase takes into consideration especially the following groups of men which can be worked with in the center:

- ▶ Boys and men who are indirectly affected by violence in the family, physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence,
- ▶ Boys and men who are indirectly affected by violence outside of the family, physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence,
- ▶ Men who are direct victims of violence,
- ▶ Men who are going through a separation from their partner, including a divorce procedure.

In the following phases, the counseling for men can be expanded to counseling for men with medical, legal, and other problems related to their sexual orientation and gender identity, as a potential target group of men in crisis in the men's counseling and support center. Surely working with these groups requires additional training or a satisfactory level of expertise of the professionals, but also highly sensitized counselors regarding questions related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Also, the center can offer awareness-raising, knowledge and building skills in the areas of gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, emotional literacy, communication skills, self-care, child care, etc., intended for other target groups of boys – with a focus on young men aged 15 to 25 and fathers.

Because the situations and possibilities for counseling can vary from one person to another, this list of groups of men should be considered only as a direction, and along the line, it should develop and expand according to the possibilities and needs of men and boys who will visit the center.

LIFE STAGES AND CRISIS

Counseling can also be divided according to different stages of life or crises. A crisis refers to a problematic decision-making situation associated with a turning point. Crises among men are characterized in particular by the fact that they are hardly recognized at first or that men strive for an independent solution to a personal condition that is difficult to describe.

Four stages of life can be defined. Most boys and men go through these stages, but they differ in their time of appearance, intensity, and the respective way men deal with them. Whether such a life stage becomes a life crisis depends on the individual conditions of the men.

The first phase of life is boy-specific socialization or becoming a man. In the process of maturing into men, boys lack orientation and in particular, guidance as to what it might mean to be or become a “real” man. Many boys and young men share the longing to talk to an experienced man about what it means to start adult life as a man today. Due to the gendered division of private and professional care work, boys and men at this stage often do not have the opportunity to engage in this exchange.

The second important phase of life for men's counseling is when they become fathers themselves. This can often lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, especially in the beginning. While there is a wide range of support services for mothers during and after pregnancy completely justified, there are hardly any networking or counseling services for young fathers, although they are also affected by these changes in the same way as mothers, though in a different way. In counseling, questions about being a father, parenting, sexuality, and the relationship with the partner towards the child they share serve not only to relieve the man's burden but also, to a particular extent, to promote the child's well-being.

The third phase of life is reorientation or midlife crisis. It can also occur at different times and vary in intensity and impact. Gainful employment plays an important and identity-forming role, especially for men. If there are changes in the course of life or if one's job is suddenly evaluated differently, there may also be a need for a new start or restructuring. Especially in the second half of life, many men experience a decline in their performance and question their previous decisions. Their everyday life often

bores them and questions about how to shape the future come to the forefront of these men's minds. Counseling helps to question where changes should be sought and how they can be implemented.

The final drastic phase of life for many men is the transition from gainful employment to retirement, as well as the changes that come with old age. Due to the important role of gainful employment, this change can be particularly drastic for many men. Often, everyday life changes completely and new meaningful activities are sought. The risk associated with the age of becoming increasingly dependent on help and feeling that this also affects the body and health can also be very stressful.

Because of the prevailing constructions of masculinity and societal expectations of men, they are often already in the midst of a crisis before they seek counseling services. Seeking help does not fit into the traditional image of men. Therefore, we believe that it is especially important to design an individually suitable and low-threshold offer for men in their respective phases of life.

KEY ASPECTS AND GENDER-SPECIFIC COUNSELING FOR MEN

The gender-specific counseling for men involves certain main topics that occur repeatedly in the counseling sessions in various ways. People are social beings, which means that we are continuously engaged in certain relations and relationships. Relationships play a central role in our lives. We learn the larger part of gender roles and the way of building future relationships during the process of growing up and developing in the family, with peers, from the media, during the course of education, and from the relationships at work. Parents play the biggest role in the development of children from an early age. The parents encourage more expressiveness in their daughters, and the sons are more encouraged to explore the environment. The girls are taught more to take care of the needs of others, and boys are taught to compete and experiment. Boys are allowed to get mad and be aggressive, while they learn to suppress feelings of weakness and vulnerability. Instead, the girls can show fear, pain, insecurity, and can rely on someone. What are the consequences of this type of growing up and upbringing?

1. Men develop an "action-empathy" style: they primarily understand what others should do and want to solve the problem of others.
2. Men do not recognize their emotions enough and don't know how adequately to express themselves verbally, especially if vulnerability is an issue.
3. Men hide their vulnerability, they mask it with anger and being too busy.
4. Men channel their emotional care through sexuality and the role of the provider ("breadwinner").

Unlike men, women develop an “emotion-empathy” style: they primarily understand how others feel and what kind of emotional support they need. Talking about their emotions is usual for women. They channel emotional care by caring for the needs and wants of others. Women connect their emotions with their relationships and their relations with others.

Oftentimes, during their socialization men don't learn how to build and maintain these relationships. As a result, this leads to difficulties for many boys and men in forming relationships. Directly or indirectly, a crisis in a relationship plays an important role in the work of counseling centers.

Loneliness is the main issue for a lot of men. Especially when they are very busy at work and in other social structures, they don't have time for the family and maintaining friendships.

Especially when the closest relationships are in a crisis and feelings of loneliness emerge, this has a very stressful effect on men. Men often react to these experiences by withdrawing and shutting down increasingly as time passes.

Separation from a partner also can have serious consequences for many men. Insecurity, disappointment, and worries about existential issues emerge. The entire daily life and center of life can change. Often the question of self-blame is of vital importance to them. After these separations, men can suffer “emotional chaos” caused by fear, anger, and grief, which they will not know how to cope with. The counseling tries to focus on the models of communication, behavior in conflict situations, and the needs of men.

The abuse of alcohol or drugs also plays an important role in counseling. Especially, men use alcohol to dull the pain or to function normally in daily life. Alcohol is considered to be a primary strategy for men to deal with internal conflicts. Gambling, online surfing, work, drugs, sex, or pornography often serve to hide the crises they are currently going through and as a distraction from the problem.

Violence is always a problem. Violence destroys the future, trust and closeness, and destroys the partnership and the family. Violence is typically a learned behavior, and that is why it can be changed. Almost every boy or man has been faced with violence in their life, whether as a perpetrator or as a victim. This is one more reason for defensive behavior which is specific to boys and men. During arguments, men often see their friends and colleagues as responsible for their actions. In counseling, it is of utmost importance to point out that the perpetrators are solely responsible for their violent acts and the consequences. This knowledge is the most important precondition to deciding against violence in the future. The experiences of men with violence as victims also have an important role in counseling. Men who were victims of violence often are ashamed to talk about it, because it is the opposite of the public image of the power of men. To this day, the question of men as victims of violence is discussed in a negative context, even mocked, implying that the man who was a victim was not strong enough, “not man enough”. The counseling has the goal to reduce prejudice against the possibility of men being victims of violence.

Working on violence prevention can be divided into three phases. In the primary prevention of violence, the goal is to predict and stop the acts of violence perpetrated by men. Secondary prevention has the goal to prevent long-term and continued violence in the life of men by recognizing the forms of violence in its early phase and providing intensive support. With tertiary prevention, the already existent and persistent violent behavior should be resolved, and prevent a repetition at best.

Illnesses and mental health are also topics that often tend to repeat in life. Men often don't acknowledge mental health problems. Even today, depression and other mental health illnesses are considered to be characteristics of weak men and unmanly ones. Men as the "stronger sex", cannot and must not allow themselves to have weaknesses, especially mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety. The perception during providing medical care also has gender-specific characteristics. Men often-times see this as a single-time thing so they can function again. Men frequently reject medical advice or don't take it seriously. As for mental health, men often exhibit nontypical psychosomatic symptoms in a larger number of cases, which makes it more difficult for early diagnosis. The act of suicide shows how dramatic this situation can become. Frequently, even close relatives of suicide victims were not aware of the presence of a mental illness.

The importance of income, unemployment, or burnout from working are also often seen as curtail issues in counseling. They represent a test for a high level of stress in men because they directly oppose the prevailing models of male behavior. Men who go through this kind of process tend to withdraw from their social environment. They are ashamed of being unemployed and avoid society because of fear of discrimination and stigmatization. The constant search for finding work or higher-income jobs, the pressure of finishing all work obligations, and the fast pace at work result in asking too much from many employees. Because of shame, the burnout symptoms are not perceived or are perceived much later.

Many men feel unable to cope with their own emotions in extremely emotional situations, like death, sadness, and loss. The male image that devalues men who are crying or are sad is still predominant and barely gives them a chance to live these emotions. In such situations, there is a higher risk for men to behave destructively and enter into a crisis.

WORK PROGRAM

The Center for support for men is designed to answer the needs of counseling for two main target groups: 1) men in crisis and 2) men that are perpetrators. The men who will be using the services can visit the center on their initiative (informed by social media or promotional activities) or be referred to by civil society organizations, social services centers, institutions for social protection, probation services, or courts.

The collaboration and referral should be official, with a signed Memorandum of Collaboration. To answer the needs of men, there will be two separate programs that the center will work with:

Program for support for men in crisis – a counseling program with a duration of three to four months. On average, every man can have 10 to 12 individual or group sessions. The program is completed within three or four months (on average, 3-4 visits per month, or one one-hour session per week for individual counseling and 2 hours of group counseling). The work contents of the psychosocial support for men should be regarding parenting, relationships and self-care, work and work relationships, separation, coping with loss, existential questions, and crisis. If group counseling is implemented, it is important to go through all the phases of group work within the period of 12 sessions, which will cover content and topics of interest to clients, that is:

Phase 1: Establishing relationships between members of the group and between the members and the counselors/therapists;

Phase 2: Psychological education of clients about the development and persistence of PTSD symptoms and information about a current crisis or trauma; identifying basic beliefs, negative self-talk, and the trauma they lived through;

Phase 3: Identifying maladaptive coping strategies used in the past; using role-play techniques for adopting healthy ways of expressing anger and other relevant emotions; learning effective coping strategies and communication techniques;

Phase 4: Termination sessions during which every member of the group shares his gains from the previous sessions; make personal plans and changes in the plan if necessary; set up long-term goals and an implementation plan.

A psychosocial treatment program for men and perpetrators – a treatment program with a duration of 4 to 6 months (16 counseling sessions and 2 evaluation sessions for the adequacy of the client for the treatment). On average, every client has 13 to 18 individual sessions or three to four visits per month.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SESSIONS

Initial individual client assessment. The coordinator schedules the client for an individual entry interview with a therapist. One or two sessions during which the therapists make an assessment of the personal capacities of the client and their adequacy for entering the program, and assess whether individual or group therapy is adequate. Individual therapy is for perpetrators that were referred to for pedophilia, sexual violence, or rape.

FIRST SESSION: Getting to know the group members and presenting the program

Goals:

1. Introduction of the therapist and the group members
2. Presenting the program and method of work
3. Development of group cohesion and shared frame of reference
4. Motivating the members to participate in the group

Content:

1. Introductory notes (example in the materials for the therapists – introductory part of the first session)
2. Introduction of the therapist and the group members
3. Presenting the program
4. Group format
5. Participation agreement
6. The initial revealing of violent behavior
7. Handing out assessment sheets for the group meeting

SECOND SESSION: Consequences of violence and violent behavior

Goals:

1. Learning the definition and types of violence and discussing the types through examples provided by the members
2. Working on one's own violent behavior and recognizing the violent behavior of the other members

Content:

1. Checking homework from the previous session and report
2. Working on recognizing one's own violent behavior and recognizing the violence of the other members
3. Learning the definition and types of violence and discussing the types through examples provided by the members
4. Assigning homework

THIRD SESSION: Consequences of violent behavior

Цел:

1. Learning about the consequences of the violent behavior
2. Facing responsibility when choosing violent behavior (violent behavior by own choice)
3. Self-observation of the violent behavior in order to identify early alarming signs

Content:

1. Report and check homework
2. Learning about the consequences of violent behavior and connecting them to personal examples
3. Early warning signs and self-observation
4. Homework

FOURTH SESSION: Learning about anger

Goals:

1. (Re)defining the individual goals of the treatment
2. Understanding the role of anger in the development of the violent behavior
3. Clarifying that when control is lost over your anger, the negative consequences outweigh the positive consequences
4. Recognizing individual anger signs and sharing them with the group

Content:

1. Checking homework from the previous session and reporting
2. (Re)defining the personal goals of the treatment

(See exercises below)

EXERCISE 1: Personal goals of the group member

NAMES OF THE MEMBERS:	PERSONAL GOALS:
Marko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to stop physical violence ▶ to learn to control his anger
Mirko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to recognize on time that he is getting violent ▶ to learn to control his anger ▶ to communicate more with his partner in a nonviolent manner

After the goals are set and written, the exercise ends with a summarization of the range of the goals, and emphasizes that the personal goals will be circled back to in different ways, and every time they fill out the meeting assessment sheet, they can reflect on how much they have learned and how close they are to their goals.

EXERCISE 2: Association with the term ANGER

The word ANGER is written on a poster. The members of the group are asked to:

- ▶ Give examples of situations that they relate to anger (in which often they and the others are angry, according to them)
- ▶ Share specific thoughts that they have while they are angry
- ▶ Share feelings they associate with anger

The therapist writes down all of the associations, comments on the range and direction, and will announce during the meeting how it will be confirmed that a large part of what they said is considered anger.

1. Learning about anger through personal examples
2. Recognizing and controlling anger
3. Homework

FIFTH SESSION: Self-control of anger

Goals:

1. Understanding the role of controlling anger in the prevention of violent behavior
2. Understanding the importance of predicting the increase in anger in certain situations
3. Learn how to recognize the signals of losing control over one's own anger
4. Understanding the time-out procedure from the point of growing anger

Content:

1. Checking homework from the previous meeting and reporting
2. Learning about "BDA"(before-during-after) model for self-control of anger
3. Working on personal examples of self-control of anger
4. Homework

SIXTH SESSION: Constructive expression of anger

Goals:

1. Learn the difference between the most common way of expressing anger (suppression and expression) and the constructive way
2. To understand how suppressing and expressing anger lead to violent behavior
3. Practicing constructive expression of anger

Content:

1. Homework and reporting
2. Working on the topic
3. Homework

SEVENTH SESSION: Stress and cognitive coping skills

Goals:

1. Learning about everyday stress and how the interpretation of an event may contribute to growing or relieving stress
2. Learn to differentiate what objectively has happened from your interpretation
3. Learn how to reframe the negative thoughts (negative inner voice) into positive thoughts

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework – analysis of the examples of constructive expression of anger
2. Explanation of the term everyday stress using examples provided by the group members
3. Teaching the difference between the actual happenings and the interpretation
4. Practicing how to replacethe negative interpretation with a positive interpretation
5. Assigning homework

EIGHT SESSION: Stress and relaxation coping skills

Goals:

1. To understand the connection between stress and physical signs of stress
2. Learn how to recognize one's own signs of stress
3. Learn how to reduce the physical tension

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework from the previous meeting
2. Teaching about physical reactions, thoughts, and emotions during stress
3. Teaching about recognition of one's own physical reactions to stress
4. Explaining the role of breathing and muscular relaxation in the reduction of stress and demonstrating the procedure
5. Connecting stressful situations, coping relaxation skills, and avoiding violence
6. Assigning homework

NINTH SESSION: Socialization of man

Goals:

1. To teach about the influence of education and culture in the creation and transgenerational transfer of the sexes and stereotypes in the family; to analyze the influence on the sexes and behavioral stereotypes in the family
2. To teach about the role of socialization of men in the development of violent behavior
3. To encourage changes in the views towards the position and role of men in the family

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework from the last meeting
2. Working on the topic – characteristics and role of men in our culture; socialization of men in the development of violent behavior; the upbringing and transgenerational transfer of violence; Discussion: changing the social context and present-day views on violence and family
3. Homework

ELEVENTH SESSION: Views on male-female relations and violence in the family

Goals:

1. Understanding the dynamics of change in the partner relationships
2. Identifying one's own weaknesses and strengths as a partner
3. Recognizing one's own beliefs about partner relationships

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework
2. Working on the topic – dynamics of partner relationship
3. Analysis of one's own positive and negative traits as a partner
4. Relation between the views on male-female relations and domestic violence
5. Homework

TENTH SESSION: Shame and self-respect

Goals:

1. To understand the influence of shame and self-respect on the behavior
2. To connect shaming with low self-respect and controlled behavior
3. To understand the importance of self-respect and to recognize the characteristics of a person with high self-respect

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework from the previous meeting
2. Working on the topic – shaming and characteristics of a person raised with shaming; positive and negative components of shame, sources of shame; what is self-respect, how does it form, and what are the characteristics of a person with high self-respect
3. Exercise for raising self-respect: My positive traits
4. Homework

TWELFTH SESSION: Power, control, and self-control

Goals:

1. To understand the role of self-control and self-respect
2. To connect the controlled behaviors with shaming and low self-respect
3. To understand the role of control over others and self-control in the development of one's own violent behavior.

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework from the previous meeting
2. Teaching about the power and control of violent attitude
3. Recognizing one's own controlling behavior
4. Teaching about the relationship between control and low self-respect
5. Recognizing the situation between appropriate self-control and self-respect
6. Homework

THIRTEENTH SESSION: Communication and active listening

Goals:

1. Learning about the rules of communication
2. Learning about the fundamental (basic) assumptions for constructive communication
3. Connecting misunderstanding in communication with one's violent behavior
4. Learning what is active listening and its advantages

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework
2. Basic communication principles and assumptions for business communication
3. Different types of poor listening and characteristics of active listening
4. Active listening through roleplay
5. Homework

FIFTEENTH SESSION: Understanding and conflict resolution

Goals:

1. Learning the basic terms and the meaning of conflict resolution
2. Learning the basic ways of resolving a conflict
3. Connect the previous contents regarding communication, getting angry, and self-respect with understanding and positive resolution of conflict
4. Initiating a process of using communication skills in conflict resolution

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework
2. Explain the basic terms and their meaning for understanding and positive conflict resolution and connect the acquired knowledge with personal experiences in conflict resolution
3. Assigning homework

FOURTEENTH SESSION: Communication – "I" message

Goals:

1. Learning about new ways of clear expression of one's own needs, thoughts, and feelings
2. Understanding the differences between "YOU" and "I" messages
3. Learn how to use "I" messages

Content:

1. Reporting and checking homework
2. Explain the clear verbal communication of the characteristics of declarative sentences
3. Experience in learning the skill of using "I" messages
4. Assigning homework

SIXTEENTH SESSION: Evaluation of the success of the program

Goals:

1. Evaluation of one's own progress and the progress of the other group members
2. Overall evaluation of the program
3. Parting with the group members and the counselors/therapists

Content:

1. Checking homework
2. Evaluation of program success
3. Final notes of the counselor/therapist
4. Parting with the group members

Evaluation techniques

- ▼ Individual self-assessment
- ▼ Group discussion

Program for Enhancing Gender Equality Awareness and Knowledge and Skills of Boys and Men

– in addition to the implementation of the mandatory programs supporting men in crisis and providing psychosocial treatment to male perpetrators of violence, the center can carry out various awareness-raising activities and knowledge-building and skills for different areas in life. Among other things, these activities may include training and workshops on comprehensive sexuality education, emotional literacy, fatherhood, self-care, and other topics related to caring masculinity, etc. Educational activity programs, workshops, and training should be further adapted and introduced according to the existing needs and resources of the center.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TEAM

The basis of successful counseling is the confidential relationship between the man and the counselor/therapist. Therefore, it is expected that counselors/therapists have high professional and emotional competencies. The values of responsibility, empathy and true interest in compassion are central. Moralizing and scandalizing views should be avoided, but without taking away the responsibility from the man for his actions. This can result in tension between empathy and confrontation. Through continuous training and continuous education, counselors/therapists can use this area of tension in their work with men and thus work more efficiently on certain issues.

In all forms of counseling – individual, group or family, the gender of the counselor/therapist has an important role. As a rule, a same-gender counselor is preferred in individual counseling in the following situations:

- ▶ If the client has experience with sexual violence or abuse or other experience that makes them feel ashamed or guilty, and now talks about it for the first time;
- ▶ If it is a clear matter of gender, so only someone from the same gender can recognize and express understanding (e.g. problems related to the perception of the body, pregnancy, menopause, giving birth, eating disorders, sexuality and intimacy, work, and care for the family);
- ▶ If the problems are deeply rooted in the socialization of the genders (care for others, being overwhelmed, insufficient independence, mother-daughter relationship, sexuality, work, isolation, aggression, violence);
- ▶ If the clients have low self-esteem, low personal capacity, or low degree of independence;
- ▶ If in contact with the opposite gender, there is a greater risk of erotism, temptation, abuse, etc.

For these reasons, the focus of the center for support for men is to engage male counselors/therapists, but if there are not enough available male professionals, female professionals would be engaged as well.

The general requirements to be able to provide a gender-specific response for all counselors are:

- ▶ Insight into personal norms, values, expectations, and views on masculinity and femininity, and how they can influence providing help and support;
- ▶ Preparedness to re-examine the personal stereotypes in terms of opinions, views, and behaviors of the gender roles;
- ▶ Being aware that the advantages and disadvantages of gender roles and their conflicts depend on social belonging and culture, times and culture of their own generation, gender identity, and that the clients can perceive that as an obstacle or encouragement;
- ▶ Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of the client's dominant ideals of masculinity and femininity, but also of one's own;
- ▶ Understanding the fact that men and women oftentimes struggle with internalized gender roles which can particularly cause internal disagreements and conflicts;
- ▶ Awareness of the differences in communication and behavior of men and women in a stressful situation;
- ▶ Know how to take into account the basic facts while presenting the problem;
- ▶ Know how to recognize the influence of gender on the client's transference and one's own countertransference, and discuss if necessary.

During group work in the men's counseling center, the work should be towards forming closed types of groups for personal growth and development, 5–6 persons with a therapist (a man) and co-therapist (a woman). Group work should be applied in the following situations:

- ▶ There are more clients with a similar problem that can fit within a broader social context;
- ▶ The clients are ready to hear the experiences and personal stories of others;
- ▶ The clients seek to recognize similar experiences and acceptance of their problems and experience;
- ▶ The clients want to end their social isolation;
- ▶ The individual approach has an insufficient influence on the client.

The center for support for men should be open 5 business days (Monday to Friday), open 7 hours a day. The center needs a coordinator present for 35 hours per week. The coordinator should be a social worker or a psychologist. Practical experience and client counseling are considered an advantage, but it's not required. The coordinator is the first point of contact with the client, because of this a male should be prioritized for this position (because of the gender specifics mentioned above). The social anamnesis (entry interview), consulting meetings, meetings of the counselors/therapists, networking, and directing are the main responsibilities of the coordinator.

The coordinator (a social worker or a psychologist) is also responsible for keeping and updating client records, daily communication with the providers of the services (counselors/therapists), keeping minutes of staff meetings, preparing program reports according to the requirements of the state institutions and donors, as well as the presence and promotion of the center in the media.

The counselors/therapists should be professionals in the field of psychology, social work, and policy or psychiatry, with an educational background in psychotherapy or counseling practice. Practical experience in counseling and working with clients is mandatory. Practical experience in working with men perpetrators and trauma is recommended, but not required.

Qualifications for therapist/co-therapist

- ▶ Graduated Psychologist /Social Worker or a Psychiatrist;
- ▶ Certified Counselor or Therapist;
- ▶ Practical experience in the field of counseling and working with clients is required;
- ▶ Certificates of successfully completed training for work with perpetrators of domestic violence and trauma-focused interventions are considered an advantage.

At the beginning of the operation, the center should start with a team of 4 therapists/counselors. Two of them will be engaged in the support and counseling of men in crisis, and two (male and female therapists) will be working with men who are perpetrators of violence. Intervision and continuous education (at least once a year) are mandatory for the team members. Additionally, once per year every team member will be individually educated/trained according to their individual need, in order to maintain the quality of the service and prevent burnout.

As to the staff implementing the programs for awareness-raising and knowledge and skills- building in the area of gender equality, the staff shall have undergone adequate training in the given area (e.g. trainer of trainers or certified peer educator for comprehensive sexuality education, trainer for prevention of gender-based violence or gender equality, etc.) or any relevant higher education (social work, psychology, and gender studies) and subject-specific upgrading (psychotherapy on topics related to emotional literacy or communication skills, etc.).

CONCLUSION

Today masculinity represents a challenge for many boys and men. In general, there is a lack of developed programs in the institutions which would work with men on improving their socialization in society and acquiring responsible behavior models. This is the reason that the media's portrayal of masculinity is oftentimes the only tool that serves as a compass and a source of models of behavior adopted in their social environment. These male images are diverse in the public discourse, which can generate tension and crises for men in developing their masculinity. The consequences can influence them differently and certainly, can create problems for men and their social environment. This is the reason why it is necessary to support men by setting up counseling centers, that is, we would like to state the values of these models to the progress of gender equality through active engagement of men and their gender. Thus, we will encourage men to develop their own concepts of masculinity. Moreover, men are not the only ones who will have direct or indirect benefits from this relatively new field of social work and counseling services. It is about overcoming gender stereotypes in society which will expand the range of individuals' actions in different social interactions. Counseling for men is a tool to shatter the existing structures of dominance in society and move closer to social justice.

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