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THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction

Safety and security are basic needs of all human beings in development of their aspirations, stability, ambitions and pursuits. The implementation of plans and achievement of wellbeing requires the elimination of fear from one's personal life. Social roles, satisfaction of needs, and the development of personal features require a lot of engagement in social interaction.

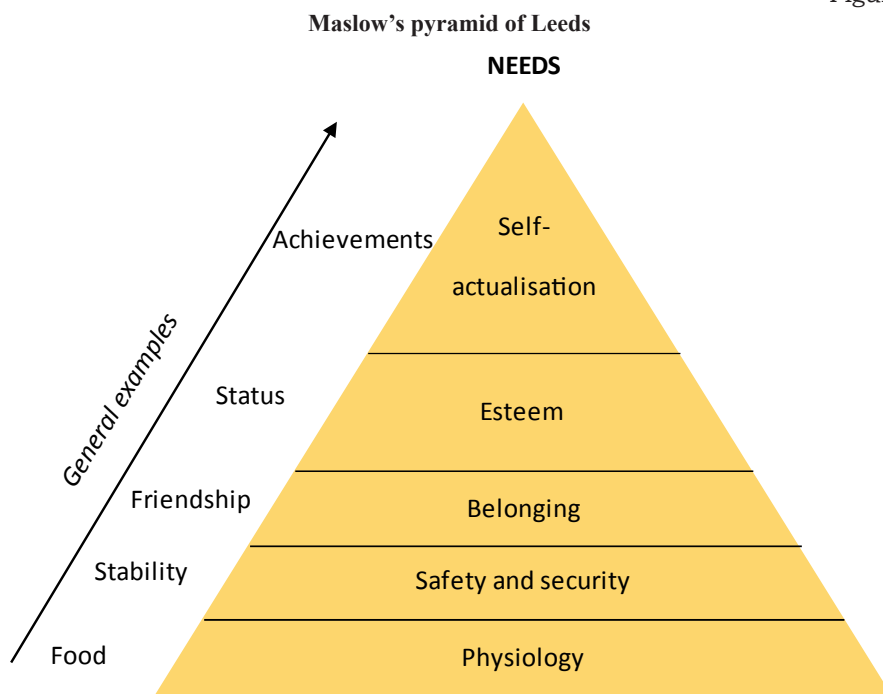
The nearest and further environment affects behaviour which determines the personal development of an individual. Abraham Maslow provides a pyramid of needs which are experienced during the entire human life.

Social safety guarantees that basic existential needs are met, standards of living are enhanced and basic human rights are respected. Domestic violence comes as a social problem which not only undermines the basic rights of families for development, but also significantly hinders proper personal development. This situation requires constant research studies, identification of threats related to social exclusion and identification of responsibilities for assistance, which falls within the competence of entities of government and self-government administration, and non-government organisations.

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Figure 1



Source: Miller-Zawodniak A., Teorie potrzeb jako współczesne teorie motywacji, [in:] *Obronność – Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Obrony Narodowej* No. 4, Warsaw 2012, p. 104 [in:] Kałużny S., *Skuteczne kierowanie przedsiębiorstwem*. Kwantum, Warsaw 1996, p. 91.

It is necessary to increase the efficiency of preventive programmes and to tighten up procedures applied to deal with perpetrators of domestic violence. It is also necessary to change the social attitude towards support for particular families and victims.

Methodology

The problem of domestic violence requires scientific research and analysis which can indicate possibilities to eliminate or significantly limit the harm done to family members. The subject of the research comprises problems related to domestic violence; first of all, a diagnosis of the above-mentioned phenomenon, which should be of a more incidental nature at the beginning of the 21st century. The entities responsible for the proper functioning of families and activities undertaken to eliminate threats of social exclusion are also significant. The aim is to indicate possibilities to find solutions to the problem of domestic violence. The main research problem is the following question:

How should domestic violence be counteracted in the development of proper family functions?

There are also the following specific questions:

How do the current legal regulations efficiently protect victims within families?

How do entities of government and self-government administration, and non-government organisations assist families struggling with domestic violence?

How do preventive programmes contribute to the prevention of domestic violence?

How do social opinions and behaviour affect the problem of domestic violence?

The research methodology requires a proper procedure which can solve the research problem in an optimal way. In order to achieve this, the research methods are conclusive in the proper scientific procedure. The research methods applied in the study are: statistical, descriptive, explanatory, and heuristic methods, methods of deduction, induction, synthesis, reasoning, and analysis of specialist literature.

The main hypothesis is based on the assumption that more determined actions should be undertaken at the levels of government and self-government administration, and non-government organisations to support families with the problem of domestic violence. The subsequent hypotheses refer to the assumption that the current legal regulations are insufficient to protect families from violence. Entities of government and territorial self-government administration, and non-government organisations should intensify their actions to support families more actively than they do at present. For example, preventive programmes are advisable to raise awareness of the problem of domestic violence. In the society, it is necessary to draw more attention to problems of social exclusion in families.

Problem of violence against women in the EU countries

'Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2014', a report provided by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, presents the problem of violence against women. The abovementioned research survey comes as the first study of this kind in the field related to the problem of violence against women². The research survey was carried out in 28 EU member countries. It was based on 42,000 interviews with random respondents. The women were asked about behaviour and experience related to physical, sexual and psychological violence, acts of domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, abuse and violence experience during their childhood. The results of the report indicate that in the European Union:

² A Report of the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA): Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2014, Vienna, 2015. *Electronic source*: <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/raport-agencji-praw-podstawowych-unii-europejskiej>, *accessed*: 6.12.2019.

- one woman in three has experienced physical or sexual violence by the age of 15;
- one woman in five has experienced stalking;
- every second woman has experienced at least one form of sexual harassment;
- one woman in ten has experienced sexual violence by the age of 15;
- one woman in twenty has been raped;
- one woman in five has experienced physical or sexual violence from their current or former partners;
- one woman in ten has admitted to have become a victim of sexual violence from an adult before the age of 15;
- only 14% of women reported the most serious cases of domestic violence to the Police;
- only 13% of women reported the most serious cases of non-domestic violence to the Police³.

The analysis of the data provided in the report explicitly indicates that women in the particular EU member countries experience physical, psychological and sexual violence to a large extent. Women's fundamental rights such as dignity, respect for private and family life⁴, are violated. Frequently, women experience humiliation, harm, and suffering. The aggression they experience is unfair and requires the particular EU member countries, as well as the European Union, to undertake some determined steps to improve the sense of safety of women. The fact that only 14% of women have reported cases of domestic violence to the Police is highly worrying⁵.

The problem of domestic violence in Poland

The safety and security of Polish families and their functioning should become priorities in the social policy of the State. The problem of domestic violence should be in the centre of interest of all of the services responsible for social safety and security. The role of non-government organisations which statutorily operate in the field related to the fundamental functions

³ A Report of the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA): Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2014, Vienna, 2015.

⁴ The European Convention of Human Rights, Article 8 1. 1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. 2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, *accessed*: 22 Nov 2019.

⁵ A Report of the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA): Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2014, Vienna, 2015. *Electronic source*: <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/raport-agencji-praw-podstawowych-unii-europejskiej>, *accessed*: 6.12.2019.

of a family and family safety and security is highly significant. An important element is also the lack of social acceptance for domestic violence, including informing the relevant services about any cases where there are grounds for suspecting domestic violence. All citizens should become individually sensitive to any signs of domestic aggression. Furthermore, preventive programmes and media campaigns highly contribute to the higher awareness of the problem of domestic violence. In Poland, the Blue Card procedure has been implemented as an institutional tool to counteract domestic violence⁶. The Blue Card procedure should be more familiar to the society than it is at present. It includes not only spouses or partners but also children, minors, underage youth, disabled and elderly people and any other inhabitants sharing the same households. The procedure is initiated after information about a case where there are grounds for suspecting that domestic violence has been confirmed. A Blue Card is composed of A, B, C and D forms.

The Blue Card procedure is initiated by the completion of Form A, which is most often completed in the presence of domestic violence victims. If it is not possible to contact the victim, Form A can be completed without the victim's participation. For each completed Form A, an interdisciplinary team/working group is appointed. After a Blue Card Form A is completed, it must be submitted to a social assistance centre – a leader of the interdisciplinary team/working group – not later than within seven days.

The interdisciplinary team is composed of people who represent particular institutions of government and self-government administration and organisations acting against any forms of domestic violence. The assistance is provided not only to victims of domestic violence, but also to other family members.

The Act on counteracting domestic violence⁷ defines the operation of the interdisciplinary teams/working groups. Interdisciplinary teams are appointed by municipal heads or mayors. Members of interdisciplinary teams represent:

1. organisational units of social assistance;
2. municipal committees for solving alcohol problems;
3. the Police;
4. education;
5. health care;
6. non-government organisations⁸.

Moreover, interdisciplinary teams also include probation officers and, if required, prosecutors and representatives of organisations other than the abovementioned entities (pts 1-6) which counteract domestic violence.

⁶ The Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 13th Sept 2011 on the Blue Card procedures and Blue Card specimen forms; Journal of Laws 11.209.1245 of 3 Oct 2011.

⁷ Act of 29th July 2005 on counteracting domestic violence, Journal of Laws 2005 no. 180, item 1493.

⁸ Act of 29th July 2005 on counteracting domestic violence, Journal of Laws 2005 no. 180, item 1493, Article 9a.

Leaders of interdisciplinary teams are appointed from the team members during the first meeting of the teams. Meetings of interdisciplinary teams are held when required, but at least once a quarter (every three months).

Interdisciplinary teams may, if required, appoint working groups in order to solve problems related to domestic violence in individual families. Working groups are composed in a way similar to interdisciplinary teams.

The basic tasks of interdisciplinary teams include:

1. providing a diagnosis of problems related to domestic violence;
2. undertaking actions in the environment where families are threatened by domestic violence in order to prevent any further abuse;
3. initiating intervention in the environment affected by domestic violence;
4. disseminating information about possibilities, institutions and people who can provide assistance in local environment;
5. initiating actions against domestic violence perpetrators.

The basic tasks of working groups include, in particular:

1. developing and implementing assistance schemes in individual cases of domestic violence;
2. monitoring families where domestic violence is used and families who are threatened by domestic violence;
3. documenting actions undertaken in families where domestic violence is used, and the results of these actions⁹.

Leaders of interdisciplinary teams should immediately – but not later than within three days – brief members of interdisciplinary teams or working groups on the details provided in the Blue Card Forms A which have been completed. The basic tasks of interdisciplinary teams or working groups include, first of all, providing assistance to victims of domestic violence in legal, moral, economic, social, psychological, health, and education aspects. Furthermore, considering the problems of individual families who experience domestic violence, the basic tasks also include developing assistance schemes for victims and for other family members. Families receive assistance until their problems related to domestic violence are solved.

Blue Card Forms B are given to victims, parents, legal or actual guardians or to people who have reported their suspicions of domestic violence cases. A Form B provides a victim with information about types of behaviour which can be defined as domestic violence¹⁰, legal regulations related to domestic violence, and institutions and their responsibilities in relation to problems of domestic violence.

⁹ Act of 29th July 2005 on counteracting domestic violence, Journal of Laws 2005 no. 180, item 1493, Articles 9a, 9b.

¹⁰ Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 13 Sept 2011 on the Blue Card procedures ... The Blue Card B: domestic violence is one-off or repeated purposeful actions or acts of negligence which violate the personal rights or property of family members and other inhabitants sharing the same household or premises, particularly actions or acts which expose these people to the danger of losing their lives or health, or which infringe their dignity, physical or sexual integrity, or freedom, which cause harm to their physical and mental health, which cause suffering and moral harm in victims of domestic violence.

Blue Card Forms C are completed in the presence of people who are suspected of being domestic violence victims. The absence of the domestic violence victims does not stop the procedure.

Blue Card Forms D are completed in the presence of people who are suspected of using domestic violence in their families¹¹.

Entities which are directly engaged in providing assistance to victims of domestic violence by the completion of Blue Card forms are:

- the Police, particularly constables who most often complete Blue Card forms;
- units of social assistance, social workers;
- committees for solving alcohol problems – committee members;
- education centres – teachers, school counsellors, school psychologists;
- health care centres – physicians, paramedics, visiting nurses.

The mass media presents the problem of domestic violence most often by providing the numbers of Blue Card forms completed by domestic violence victims and referring to statistical data given by the General Police Headquarters, while other institutions which also complete Blue Card Forms A are not included in those numbers.

Statistical data provided by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy indicate that the highest number of Blue Card Forms A was completed by Police officers in 2017: 75,600 (in 2016:73,500) and by social workers: 13,600 (in 2016: 11,700).

Table 1

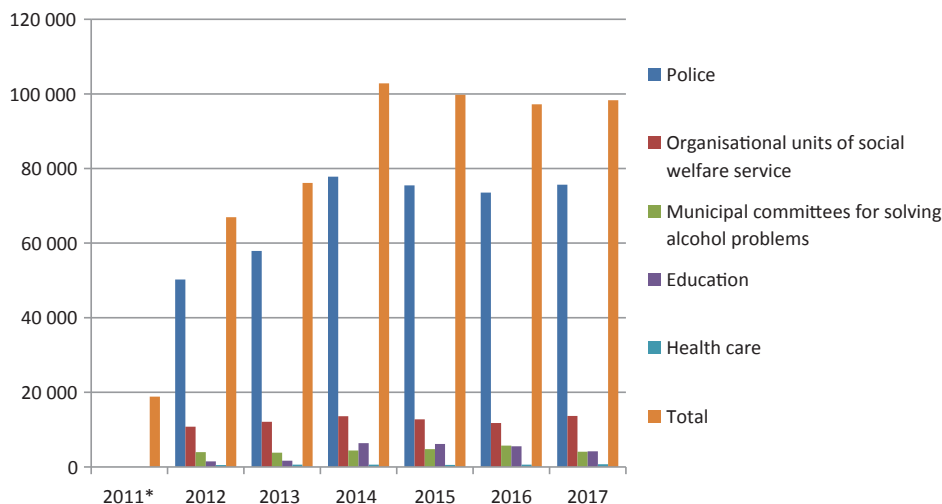
The number of Blue Card Forms A completed by representatives of the particular entities which initiated the procedures in the years 2011–2017.

	2011*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Police		50,236	57,902	77,808	75,495	73,531	75,662
Organisational units of social assistance		10,800	12,114	13,606	12,743	11,789	13,667
Municipal committees for solving alcohol problems		3,961	3,819	4,412	4,788	5,736	4,081
Education		1,473	1,671	6,358	6,166	5,547	4,184
Health care		491	619	627	557	607	713
Total	18,857	66,961	76,125	102,811	99,749	97,210	98,307

Source: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/sprawozdania-z-krajowego-programu-przeciwdzialania-przemocy-w-rodzynie>, A report on the National Programme for Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2017; *in 2011, data referring to Blue Card Forms A were completed only by representatives of organisational units of social welfare service.

¹¹ Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 13 Sept 2011 on the Blue Card procedures.

Chart 1
Number of Blue Card Forms A completed by representatives of the particular entities which initiated the procedures in the years 2011–2017.



Source: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/sprawozdania-z-krajowego-programu-przeciwdzialania-przemocy-w-rodzynie>, A report on the National Programme for Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2017; *in 2011, data referring to Blue Card Forms A were completed only by representatives of organisational units of social welfare service.

The data of the analysis presented in Chart 1 indicate that the highest number of Blue Card Forms A was completed by the Police during the last three years: 2015 – 75,495, 2016 – 73,531, and 2017 – 75,662. Considering these three years, the highest number of Blue Card Forms A was reported in 2017. Subsequently, employees of social welfare units completed the following numbers of Blue Card Forms A: 2015 – 12,743, 2016 – 11,789, and 2017 – 13,667, and again, the highest number of Blue Card Forms A was completed in 2017. Employees of education centres occupy the next position on the list—they completed the following numbers of Blue Card Forms A in the subsequent years: 2015 – 6,166, 2016 – 5,547, and 2017 – 4,184. Representatives of municipal committees for solving alcohol problems completed the following numbers of Blue Card Forms A: 2015 – 4,788, 2016 – 5,736, and 2017 – 4,081. The lowest number of Blue Card A forms was completed by employees of health care, namely: 2015 – 557, 2016 – 607, and 2017 – 713; however, the highest number of completed Forms A was reported in 2017. It is indicative to observe that in 2017, Blue Card Forms A were completed more often than in 2016. The abovementioned data indicate that domestic violence is a social problem which requires some determined action from entities of government and self-government administration, non-government

organisations, the mass media, local communities and also from individual citizens.

Based on the Act on counteracting domestic violence, teams for counteracting domestic violence are appointed. Their basic tasks include, in particular:

1. initiating and supporting activities undertaken to counteract domestic violence;
2. monitoring activities undertaken to counteract domestic violence;
3. expressing opinions about matters related to the implementation of the Act and initiating amendments to the regulations in the field of counteracting domestic violence;
4. expressing opinions on disputes among units of public administration and non-government organisations which perform tasks in the field of counteracting domestic violence;
5. expressing opinions on matters related to public tasks in the field of counteracting domestic violence and on matters related to commissioning such tasks for implementation by the entities listed in Article 9(1);
6. developing standards of assistance provided to domestic violence victims and standards of working with people who use domestic violence in their families;
7. developing (in cooperation with the entities listed in Article 9(1) mechanisms of informing about standards related to assistance which should be provided to domestic violence victims and about standards of working with people who use domestic violence in their families;
8. disseminating results of monitoring activities undertaken in the field of counteracting domestic violence¹².

Under the National Programme for Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy has been analysing the discussed problem in four fields:

- preventive activities and social education;
- activities undertaken to protect and to assist domestic violence victims;
- monitoring and affecting people who use domestic violence in their families;
- activities and improvement of qualifications of services and representatives of units engaged in counteracting domestic violence¹³.

The statistical data provided by the General Police Headquarters also indicate the problem of aggression in families.

¹² Act of 29th July 2005 on counteracting domestic violence, Journal of Laws 2005 no. 180, item 1493, Article 10a.

¹³ A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 provided by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. Warsaw, 2018.

Table 2

The number of Blue Card Forms A completed exclusively by the Police (no data provided on activities undertaken by other stakeholders responsible for counteracting domestic violence)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Blue Card Forms A completed	75,495 (including 61,133 initiating the procedure and 14,362 referring to the subsequent cases during the procedure)	73,531 (including 59,590 initiating the procedure and 13,941 referring to the subsequent cases during the procedure)	75,662 (including 61,980 initiating the procedure and 13,682 referring to the subsequent cases during the procedure)	73,153 (including 59,829 initiating the procedure and 13,324 referring to the subsequent cases during the procedure)
Total number of victims of domestic violence	97,501	91,789	92,529	88,133
Number of female victims	69,376	66,930	67,984	65,057
Number of male victims	10,733	10,636	11,030	10,672
Number of underage victims	17,392	14,223	13,515	12,404
Total number of people suspected of using domestic violence	76,034	74,155	76,206	73,654
Number of female suspects	5,244	5,461	5,878	6,045
Number of male suspects	70,484	68,321	70,035	67,306
Number of underage suspects	306	373	293	303
Total number of alcohol drinking suspects	48,841	46,537	46,092	43,182
Number of alcohol drinking female suspects	1,972	1,993	2,028	1,903
Number of alcohol drinking male suspects	46,830	44,499	44,037	41,257
Number of alcohol drinking underage suspects	39	45	27	22
Number of children put in safe environment (such as foster families, relatives, childcare centres)	275	598	413	427

Source: <http://statystyka.policja.pl/st/wybrane-statystyki/przemoc-w-rodzynie>, accessed: 22.11.2019

An analysis of Table 2 indicates that the number of Blue Card Forms A completed during the last four years is still high. It can be observed that, statistically, the number of women suspected of using domestic violence systematically increases in those four years: 2015 – 5,244, 2016 – 5,461, 2017 – 5,878, and 2018 – 6,045. This is a worrying phenomenon, especially considering the fact that the number of women who use domestic violence may be underestimated because men often struggle with high psychological barriers which prevent them from reporting cases of domestic violence.

Men are most often domestic violence perpetrators: 2015 – 70,484, 2016 – 68,321, 2017 – 70,035, and 2018 – 67,306. Domestic violence perpetrators require special supervision by the services responsible for public security.

Legal regulations allow competent services to isolate domestic violence perpetrators at any stage of pre-trial procedures. The Prosecution is the body which decides on the scope of preventive measures.

The most important preventive measures intended for domestic violence perpetrators are:

- remand detention;
- Police supervision with a prohibition of contacting the victim (Article 275(2), Code of Penal Procedure);
- Police supervision in lieu of remand detention, pursuant to Article 275(3), Code of Penal Procedure);
- an eviction order (Article 275a, Code of Penal Procedure). The amendment to the Act on counteracting domestic violence of 2010 supplements the Code of Penal Procedure with a regulation of Article 275a providing a preventive measure in the form of an eviction order for a perpetrator who has committed a domestic violence offence to the detriment of a victim living in the same household, if there is a reasonable concern that the perpetrator will repeat committing offences with the use of domestic violence against the victim, especially if the perpetrator has threatened to do so. The abovementioned protective measure is applied for a period not longer than 3 months. If the grounds for the application of the abovementioned preventive measure still exist, the court of first instance competent to hear the case may prolong its application upon the request of the prosecution, however for a period not longer than 3 months (Article 275(4) Code of Penal Procedure)¹⁴.

As the provided data suggest, the number of domestic violence victims, who usually need psychological, economic, legal and social support, is high: 2015 – 97,501, 2016 – 91,789, 2017 – 92,529, and 2018 – 88,133. Domestic violence victims should obtain not only institutional support, but also support provided by their families and their closest environment. Non-government organisations providing assistance to domestic violence victims perform a particularly important role. Assistance should

¹⁴ A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020..., *op.cit.*, p. 88

be provided not only to domestic violence victims, but also to members of their families who share the same households.

Table 3

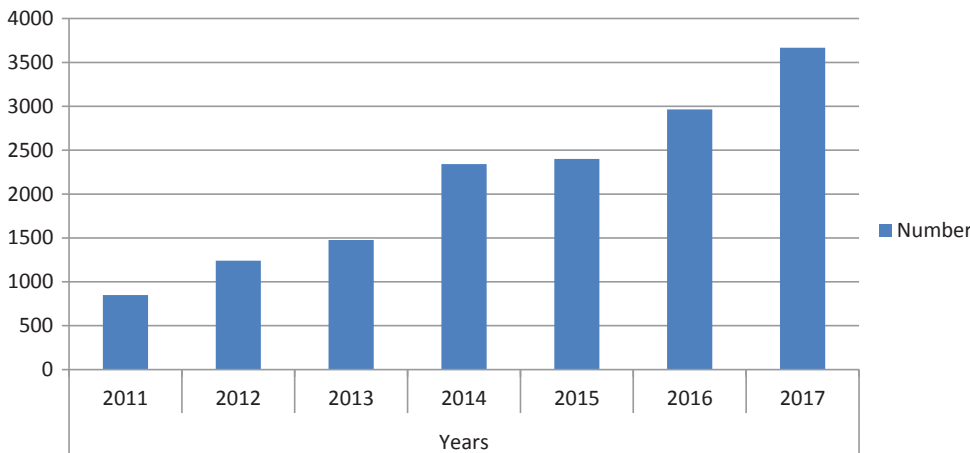
Number of suspects who received eviction orders and had to leave households shared with their victims in the years 2011–2017.

	Years						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number	849	1,241	1,477	2,341	2,400	2,965	3,668

Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counter-acting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 89

Chart 2

Number of suspects who received eviction orders and had to leave households shared with their victims in the years 2011–2017.



Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counter-acting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 89

Worryingly, an analysis of the data presented in Table 3 indicates that every year, the number of cases in which it is necessary to apply preventive measures in the form of eviction orders issued for domestic violence perpetrators to remove them from the households shared with their victims increases. Hence, it is possible to assume a high level of severity in domestic violence, which indicates the seriousness of the present situation. It becomes a challenge to all services responsible for safety and security of families to undertake more efficient and effective action. The data are highly worrying, and they suggest that more social empathy is needed for domestic violence victims. In 2017, district courts issued 2,251 judicial decisions referring to preventive measures in the form of eviction orders

issued for domestic violence perpetrators; in 2016 there were 1,868 such decisions issued¹⁵.

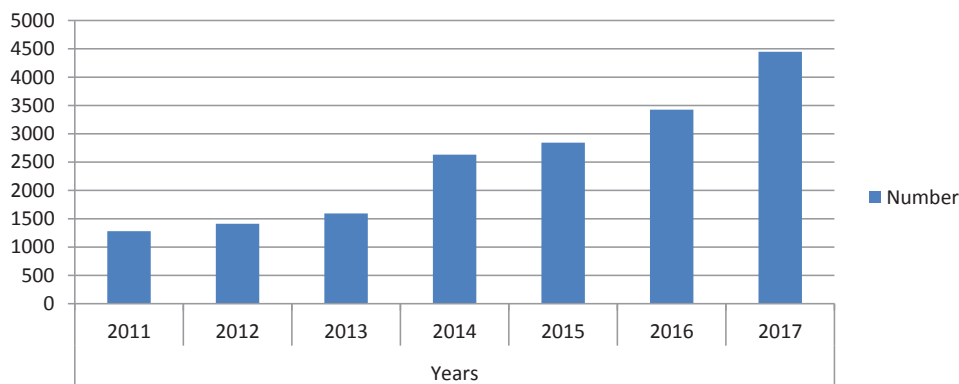
Furthermore, the statistical data provided by the General Prosecution indicate that the number of applications for the prolongation of protective measures in the form of eviction orders (Article 275(1 and 4), Code of Penal Procedure) issued for domestic violence perpetrators who share households with their victims is constantly growing: 2014 – 64, 2015 – 72, 2016 – 103, and 2017 – 151. This fact represents another argument for more efficient action which should be undertaken to provide assistance to domestic violence victims¹⁶.

Table 4
Number of suspects who were put under police supervision with the prohibition of contacting their victims in the years 2011–2017.

	Years						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of suspects	1,280	1,412	1,593	2,633	2,844	3,427	4,448

Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 90

Chart 3
Number of suspects who were put under police supervision with the prohibition of contacting their victims in the years 2011–2017.



Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 90

¹⁵ A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020... *op.cit.*, pp. 89–90.

¹⁶ A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counteracting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020..., *op.cit.*, pp. 89–90. Electronic source: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/sprawozdania-z-krajowego-programu-przeciwdzialania-przemocy-w-rodzynie>, accessed: 6.12.2019.

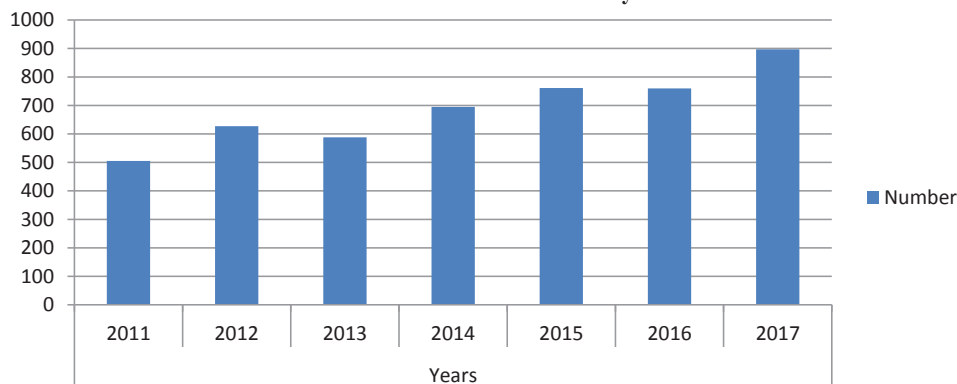
The results presented in Table 4 clearly indicate that the number of suspects who were put under police supervision with the prohibition of contacting their victims is also systematically growing (Article 275(2), Code of Penal Procedure): 2011 – 1,280, 2012 – 1,412, 2013 – 1,593, 2014 – 2,633, 2015 – 2,844, 2016 – 3,427, and 2017 – 4,448.

Table 5
Number of suspects who were put under police supervision under the condition of leaving the households shared with their victims in the years 2011–2017

	Years						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of suspects	505	627	588	695	761	760	897

Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counter-acting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 90

Chart 5
Number of suspects who were put under police supervision under the condition of leaving the households shared with their victims in the years 2011–2017



Source: A report on the implementation of the National Programme of Counter-acting Domestic Violence in 2014–2020 ... p. 90

A statistical analysis of the data presented in Table 5 indicates that the number of suspects who obtained Police supervision under the condition of leaving the households shared with their victims, pursuant to Article 275(3), Code of Penal Procedure, keeps growing. It proves that the situation of families in terms of aggression applied at home is bad: 2011 – 505, 2012 – 627, 2013 – 588, 2014 – 695, 2015 – 761, 2016 – 760, and 2017 – 897¹⁷.

Undoubtedly, the abovementioned statistical data explicitly indicate that the number of domestic violence victims is very high; the level of

¹⁷ Electronic source: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/sprawozdania-z-krajowego-programu-przeciwdzialania-przemocy-w-rodzinie>, accessed: 6.12.2019.

aggression in families also keeps growing. These data should motivate all services responsible for family security and safety, and social policy to undertake more determined and more efficient actions to counteract the discussed problem in the legal, social and psychological fields.

Conclusions

The problem of domestic violence can be observed in all EU member countries; therefore, it requires comprehensive actions. Sexual, physical, psychological and economic abuse of women generates serious problems in the European Union. The statistical data provided by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights¹⁸ clearly indicate harm and suffering of women.

Undoubtedly, domestic violence in Poland is a social problem which requires some strong initiatives, activities and actions undertaken by bodies of government and self-government administration, and non-government organisations. Furthermore, it is necessary to draw more attention to social empathy, including empathy in distant family members who are often aware of domestic violence. Each individual initiative undertaken to reveal cases of domestic violence cannot be underestimated because it can contribute to the elimination of suffering caused by domestic violence perpetrators.

The Blue Card procedure is a form of counteracting domestic violence. However, the outcomes and actions undertaken under the Blue Card procedure should be disseminated in the society more widely. The mass media should familiarise the society with preventive programmes developed to counteract domestic violence in a more intensive way. Social sensitivity to one's neighbours' suffering should become natural. Reporting cases of domestic violence may save families from tragedy.

Urszula Nowakowska, the founder and the head of the Centre for Women's Rights, estimates that in Poland, 400–500 women die annually because of domestic violence¹⁹.

Monika Całkiewicz estimates that about two thirds of all female convicts sentenced for murder, pursuant to Article 148, Criminal Code, are domestic violence victims²⁰. She also believes that these women *had never*

¹⁸ A report presented by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: *Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2014*, Vienna, 2015. *Electronic source*: <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/raport-agencji-prawpodstawowych-unii-europejskiej>, accessed: 6.12.2019.

¹⁹ *Electronic source*: <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/w-polsce-w-wyniku-przemocy-domowej-ginie-400-500-kobiet-rocznie/j0yy9hn>, accessed: 6.12.2019.

²⁰ *Electronic source*: <https://kobieta.dziennik.pl/aktualnosci/artykuly/579230,kobieta-morderczyni-wiezienie-praca-przemoc-domowa.html>, an opinion provided by Monika Całkiewicz, Ph.D. of Kozminski University, accessed: 6.12.2019.

entered into conflict with the law before, they had not planned what they did, and they do not know how cope themselves in the reality of prison²¹.

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Keywords: domestic violence, Police, interdisciplinary teams, *Blue Cards*

Summary: Despite many activities undertaken by entities of government and self-government administration as well as by non-governmental organisations statutorily dealing with domestic violence, it is still a significant social problem. The activities undertaken by the abovementioned entities are insufficient to limit crimes committed against the family. Therefore, threats of social exclusion related to families affected by domestic violence require more effective action and additional research.

²¹ *Electronic source*: <https://kobieta.dziennik.pl/aktualnosci/artykuly/579230,kobieta-morderczyni-wiezienie-praca-przemoc-domowa.html>, an opinion provided by Monika Całkiewicz, Ph.D. of Kozminski University, accessed: 6.12.2019.