



**Men's
Development
Network**

Better Lives for Men, Better Lives for All



**White Ribbon
Ireland**

Men Ending Gender-Based Violence

**Submission on
the General
Scheme of the
Domestic,
Sexual and
Gender Based
Violence
Agency Bill**



**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice**

mensnetwork.ie

Introduction

As a national organisation which advocates for transforming masculinities, a feminist and intersectional approach to advance the changing of norms and behaviours and to promote equality,¹ Men's Development Network welcome the invitation to provide a written submission to Department of Justice on the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Agency Bill. Men's Development Network run a number of programmes in this area which means that we work on an ongoing basis with both perpetrators and victims of Domestic Violence as well as in prevention. These programmes include:

1. The CHOICES Programme the national domestic violence intervention programme working with male perpetrators to end their violent or abusive behaviour and become non-violent and respectful within their intimate partner relationships.
2. The Male Advice Line – the national freephone advice and support service for male victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
3. Men's Development Network is the lead agent for the White Ribbon Ireland Campaign and Capacity-Building Programme which seeks to engage with men and boys as allies for gender equality and in ending Gender-Based Violence.

This submission to the Joint Committee on Justice on the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Agency Bill will make some recommendations for minor alterations to the Heads 14 and 18 of the Bill.

Head 14 – Functions of the Agency

1. **Recommendation:** Men's Development Network recommend that perpetrator programmes which work at addressing and ending violent and abusive behaviour be included under Head 14.
2. Amendment to 14(1)(c)(ii) currently reads that the agency should '*monitor adherence to standards by service providers*'.

Recommendation: Men's Development Network recommend that this be altered to '*monitor and enforce adherence to standards by service providers*'

¹ 'Men's Development Network' <<https://mensnetwork.ie/>> accessed March 12th, 2023.

3. Amendment to 14(1)(e)(i)

*“Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women”.*²

The functions of the proposed agency are clearly outlined and give effect to Articles 7 and 10 of the Istanbul Convention in relation to provision of the necessary level of coordination to implement the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV). However, our recommendation relates to Head 14(1)(e)(i) which reads at present:

*“[D]evelop and implement general and sector-specific information campaigns for the purposes of – (i) increasing awareness of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, the associated risk factors, and the support services available to victims and persons who may be at risk of these forms of violence”.*³

Head 14(1)(e)(i) as stands reflects the need for awareness raising to create the conditions necessary for a ‘Zero Tolerance’ approach to DSGBV. However, the provision would benefit from including **specific reference to engaging men and boys through such information campaigns and awareness raising initiatives.**

The ‘Zero Tolerance’ Third National Strategy on DSGBV Implementation Plan tasks the proposed agency with three action items related to engaging men and boys as allies for gender equality and ending Gender-Based Violence:

1.1.1. *“Raise public awareness of DSGBV... As part of the campaign there should be messaging focused on “Encouraging men and boys to contribute to actively preventing all forms of violence”*

1.1.6. *“Support campaigns (e.g., the White Ribbon campaign) and other initiatives designed to engage men and boys in ending gender-based violence”*

1.1.8. *“Prioritise the development of effective approaches to engaging men and boys in tackling gender-based violence and changing male behaviour which supports a zero-tolerance attitude to violence against women”.*

Under regional human rights treaties such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), Chapter III on

² Preamble of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011).

³ Draft General Scheme of a DSGBV Agency Bill at Head 14(1)(e)(i).

Prevention further notes in its General Obligations that State Parties are required to “*encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence...*”.⁴

The absence of specific reference to engaging men and boys runs the risk of the agency in implementing its functions failing to address the root causes of DSGBV which is necessary. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in General Recommendation 35 on Gender-Based Violence against Women notes that States’ prevention work must address the underlying causes of Gender-Based Violence and these include “*patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes*”.⁵ *Root causes include, but are not limited to, “gender-related factors such as men’s entitlement, privilege and social norms regarding masculinity”.*

The risk of proceeding with Head 14(1)(e)(i) as presented in the Draft General Scheme is that it dilutes a fundamental element of prevention by failing to apply a gender lens or gender focused approach in preventing DSGBV. To ensure that the Prevention Pillar within the National Strategy and Istanbul Convention is in no way diluted, engaging with men and boys in prevention work should be specifically mentioned as among the agencies functions and this should be captured within a statutory footing.

Article 6 of the Istanbul Convention provides an undertaking from states to adopt a gender perspective and to ensure policies are gender sensitive in the implementation and evaluation of actions undertaken as part of their state obligations.⁶ The amendment of Head 14(1)(e)(i) to include a gender specific focus of engaging men and boys in its awareness raising and campaigns is vital to ensuring the Draft General Scheme of a DSGBV Agency Bill adheres with Article 6 of the Istanbul Convention and creates the conditions necessary for a ‘Zero Tolerance’ approach to DSGBV.

Recommendation: Men’s Development Network recommend the amendment of 14(1)(e)(i) as follows: “*To develop and implement general and sector-specific information campaigns for the purposes of – (i) increasing awareness of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, with a specific focus on engaging men and boys, the associated risk factors, and the support services available to victims and persons who may be at risk of these forms of violence*”.

Head 18 Membership of the Board

⁴ Article 12(4) of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011).

⁵ CEDAW General Recommendation 35 on Gender-Based Violence against Women (2017) at paragraph 34.

⁶ Article 6 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011).

18(2)(a) currently reads that *“the board shall be comprised of at least two members having sufficient experience and expertise relating to the functions of the agency”*.

Recommendation: Men’s Development Network recommend that 18(2)(a) be amended to ensure that membership of the Board includes persons with experience in Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence service delivery.