

# Poland steps up efforts to protect women and children from domestic violence

“It is completely unacceptable to me that, in the 21st century, domestic violence rates in Poland – a member of the European Union – remain alarmingly high,” says Deputy Minister Zuzanna Rudzińska-Bluszcz.

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Deputy Minister Zuzanna Rudzińska-Bluszcz (Poland) 2024.

One of the top priorities for the Polish Ministry of Justice is to establish a coordinated and effective system to protect people against domestic violence, says Deputy Minister Zuzanna Rudzińska-Bluszcz. (Photo: Max Zieliński)

“We need to increase the effectiveness of help and support for those at risk and those already impacted by domestic violence, especially children,” says the Polish minister Zuzanna Rudzińska-Bluszcz, one of the keynote speakers at the SYNERGY conference that will be held in Warsaw 25–26 September (see fact box).

On the agenda at the conference will be improving the protection of vulnerable people, such as women and children, who are victims of domestic violence.

The most frequent victims of violence in Poland are women (over 66 per cent), followed by children (21 per cent), says Rudzińska-Bluszcz.

“The conference will provide an opportunity for those working on preventive measures and providing support for people already impacted by domestic violence to exchange experiences, views and opinions,” says Rudzińska-Bluszcz.

## There needs to be an integrated support system for victims

One of the top priorities for the Polish Ministry of Justice and other institutions working in this field is to establish a coordinated and effective system to protect people against domestic violence, explains Rudzińska-Bluszcz.

“Such a system should guarantee the victims of domestic violence – whether it be psychological, physical, sexual or economic – the support they need and protection from further attacks by the perpetrator,” says Rudzińska-Bluszcz.

The Minister emphasises the importance of developing, strengthening and disseminating preventive measures, as well as raising awareness and improving the cooperation between institutions that work with combating domestic violence.

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## Poland has improved its family law

In recent years, Poland has actively introduced numerous policies and amended legislation in order to protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups in society, such as women and children, and improve their safety, writes Monika Bąk and her colleagues from the Norway Grants team in an email (see fact box).

The changes have primarily been seen in the areas of family, civil and administrative law and they enhance protection against violence, particularly for children and women.

“Every instance of a child being harmed is a reminder that the measures are insufficient”

“The adopted measures allow for an immediate response from the police and social service, and can help victims without the need to bring criminal proceedings against the offender,” says Bąk from the Ministry of Justice in Poland, the organiser of the conference.

Marta Świnecka from the Counsel of the Prevention Department Bureau of Prevention Police Headquarters highlights that one of the police’s fundamental roles is to protect people’s lives, well-being and property from unlawful attacks. The new police responsibilities have been designed to directly protect people experiencing domestic violence.

“The existing authority of police officers includes the power to apply protective measures in the form of orders and prohibitions relating to jointly occupied apartments, a ban on coming within a defined number of metres of a victim of domestic violence, and a ban on contacting the victim,” explains Świnecka and adds:

“In addition, they also have the power to ban entering or staying on the premises of a school, educational, care or artistic facility, a sports facility attended by the victim, or a place of work,” explains Świnecka, one of the panellists at the upcoming conference in Warsaw.

## New standards for the protection of minors

In 2023 and 2024, new institutions were introduced to the Polish legal system, designed to prevent child abuse and detect instances of such abuse at the earliest possible stage. The changes were made after the Ministry of Justice researched the legislation applicable in Poland.

Bąk explains the changes:

“These are the standards for protecting minors, verifying individuals responsible for children’s care, and a child’s representative in legal proceedings.”

“Public and private institutions that children attend or stay at for study, recreation or to otherwise pursue their interests must adhere to the standards for the protection of children,” informs Bąk.

These standards specify how to prevent the sexual abuse of children by adults using various measures, such as verifying adults by checking their criminal records and whether they are included on a special sex offender registry. Such checks may prevent convicted sex offenders having contact with children, for example at schools.

“This helps eliminate the danger to children,” says Bąk.

## A special team to analyse serious cases involving children

*A Team for analysing cases that resulted in the death of a minor or serious bodily injury* has also been established under the Ministry of Justice. The team consists of specialists in various fields, including law, psychology, psychiatry, paediatrics, pedagogy and social work.

“The team’s task is to analyse cases in which children have suffered death or serious injury and to reveal the shortcomings that exist in the child protection system,” says Bąk.

The inspiration for establishing the team came from [Serious Case Review](#), a project that has been operating in the United Kingdom for many years.

“Every instance of a child being harmed is a reminder that the measures to protect against violence are insufficient,” says Bąk and adds:

“It is vital to constantly modernise systems, institutions and mechanisms to eradicate violence, and in order to help victims, society must recognise the importance of responding to every sign of abuse, especially when it involves children, women or other vulnerable people.”

## Knowledge exchange across countries

The conference and accompanying [SYNERGY Network](#) meeting in Poland will address various aspects of domestic violence and methods for dealing with it, explains Bąk and her colleagues who are organising the conference.

“The topics will include issues relating to protecting children from violence and the issue of economic violence. Also on the agenda of the two-day conference is a discussion about ‘justice chain’, which involves the cooperation of various stakeholders to implement effective measures and procedures to protect people from violence,” says Bąk.

“The participants will have an opportunity to learn and discuss the issues from the perspective of institutional and national standards, as well as best practices. They will also have the chance to inspire each other to implement the measures that are most effective,” she says.

*“What do you hope will be the outcome of the conference?”*

“The valuable outcome will be the opportunity to have inspiring exchanges of views and opinions, and to share effective practices from different countries and institutions,” says Bąk and adds:

“Equally important, if not more so, will be discovering and identifying shortcomings that need to be addressed, as well as the needs and observations of different institutions and services. This insight will be crucial for addressing the problem of domestic violence more fully and effectively.”

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