



StoP Domestic violence

Community matters!

StoP Replication Plan



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1. Overview of the plan

The StoP Replication Plan consists of a summary of the requirements for implementing new StoP projects in the European Union, based on the lessons learned from the StoP project partners.



“Violence against women raises less questions about the quality of a relationship than about the quality of a community.” (Prof. Carol Hagemann-White)

“StoP – Community matters” is an innovative concept for prevention and intervention in the area of domestic violence. It is about protection and help, as well as sustainable change in attitudes and actions. For the first time, the StoP concept (protected concept) combines theoretical and practical knowledge from work against gender-based violence and social space-oriented work; it is located at the intersection of equality-oriented, violence-prevention work, adult education, the promotion of civil courage and empowerment, group networking, neighborhood and public relations work. In technical terms, it is based on the methods and principles of community work and community organizing. The experience gained in its concrete implementation in numerous cities and municipalities in Germany and Austria since 2010 proves its successful practical applicability. It has been proven that the inclusion of neighborhoods and the development of (transcultural) local social networks in this field of action is

possible and a sensible, further step. StoP complements existing support and projects in the prevention/intervention of gender-based violence and closes a key gap in the system of protection against violence.

The Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women, ratified and to be implemented by many European Union Member States, requires the involvement of civil society and calls for measures to prevent violence, raise awareness and change norms (Chapter II, Art. 9, Chapter II, Art. 12, 13, 16). With its holistic, participatory approach, StoP can make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Convention.

StoP emerged from women's shelter work and sees itself as part of a feminist movement for the comprehensive democratization and change of gender relations. A substantive and political point of reference are the premises as formulated in international conventions (EU, UN). In other words, the work is based on the "recognition of the fact that the realization of legal and de facto equality between women and men is an essential element in the prevention of violence against women" (preamble of the "Istanbul Convention").

When we speak of women and men, we understand these genders as social constructs and as the social, cultural, psychological and physical reality of people.

The replication plan is for organisations and individuals who are considering to start a Stop project in their respective context. This includes current partners who want to spread the StoP work further in their respective country, as well as new organisations that did not participate in the EU project.

2. Requirements for establishing new StoP projects - StoP replication

StoP is a sustainable, innovative and ambitious concept with eight action steps that lead to the local establishment and anchoring of violence prevention and strengthening the protection against violence and local civil society involvement.

The StoP concept was developed over the course of more than 20 years by Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand, Professor at the HAW in Hamburg, Faculty of Economics and Social Affairs, Department of Social Work, scientifically substantiated, practically initiated and implemented, researched and continuously developed. This means that copyright applies here. This means that this concept, the name and the logos may not be used without the consent of Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand.

This also means that every StoP partner organization and StoP coordination is obliged to make the copyrighted concept recognizable under its own name - StoP and with reference to the authorship (Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand) - and as part of the nationwide or international StoP context (e.g. through the participatory use of the StoP toolbox, associated website www.stop-partnergewalt.org or www.stop-partnergewalt.at, the logo and the StoP colors).

Basic conditions and frameworks for the establishment of new projects:

- A new StoP project can only be established with the consent of the concept developer Prof. Sabine Stövesand.
- A basic requirement for establishing StoP in a district is to complete the comprehensive StoP training on gender-based violence prevention work and community work, community organizing and social space.
- After receiving a StoP certificate, StoP can be established locally.
- The practical work at the various locations is based on the implementation of the eight action steps of the StoP concept.
- The presentations and basic flyers created by the concept developer and StoP e.V. form the binding basis for local public relations work and its independent further development.

- The concept developer Dr. Sabine Stövesand is the scientific director for the StoP training courses and organizes these in cooperation with local educational institutions and associations for new prospective StoP coordinators in Germany and Austria.
- Organizations that want to establish StoP should either be involved in gender equality work, victim protection and violence prevention work
- One quality feature is the orientation towards the transformation of patriarchal traditions and structures in the direction of democratic gender relations. This includes an awareness of the interconnectedness of different forms of discrimination such as social origin, "race"/ethnicity and body, etc.
- StoP men's work can only be implemented with a feminist perspective advocating for gender equality and empowerment of women. Men who act as allies against partner violence and work together with women's and neighbourhood organizations to prevent and end it are very welcome.
- StoP coordinators and supporting organizations meet regularly for mutual exchange and networking. The copyright and the requirements mentioned here serve in particular to ensure the quality of StoP's work. The reasons for this are manifold and should be taken seriously:

1. StoP is particularly responsible work in the field of violence and victim protection and in the immediate environment. It is about providing people from the neighborhood and civil society with in-depth knowledge about the causes of partner violence and domestic violence. Well-trained experts in violence protection work and community work are therefore needed.

2. Neighbourhoods are very heterogeneous, very diverse and have many different views, attitudes and opinions about partner violence and violence against women and children. These opinions are often tainted with myths and stereotypes, prejudices and racism, which need to be made clear and used to create a change in thinking. This important awareness-raising work also requires good expertise and a wealth of experience.

3. StoP works preventively, carefully and prudently. StoP does not want to encourage chauvinism, vigilantes or denunciation. This must be clarified with all those involved and appropriate trust must be built up. It therefore also requires good knowledge and a responsible approach to the neighbourhood

and, above all, to those affected. StoP does not want to “report” everything, but stands for non-violence, self-determination and solidarity.

4. StoP is always embedded in an organization that has many years of expertise in gender equality work, victim protection work and/or community work. StoP coordinators work independently, they do not work without the ongoing support and guidance of this supporting organization, they are networked both in the district and with all StoP locations.

5. Networking and good cooperation is central to equality work, victim protection work and community work. Partner violence is very complex and needs to be constantly rethought and considered together. StoP thrives on close networking with many institutions and NGOs in the field of victim protection and protection against violence, as well as with (state) authorities and institutions. This is the only way to implement StoP and good community work in terms of victim protection and the overall objective. For this reason, regular regional, national and international networking meetings are held.

6. StoP thrives on further development. Community work/community organizing in cases of intimate partner violence is a new approach and must be regularly reconsidered and expanded through ongoing training courses. StoP is a joint “learning project” in the sense of improving victim protection and transforming society.

7. Violence against women, whether cis or trans, is usually perpetrated by men. It can only be ended together with all genders. StoP therefore places particular emphasis on the participation of men who want to make a contribution against partner violence. This project is a challenge that can only be met through an intensive examination of (toxic) masculinities, patriarchal structures, upbringing and traditional role models. We not only need violence prevention in schools, we also need male role models who empower children and young people. We need diverse allies against partner violence, we need male role models and responsible men, fathers, partners, friends, etc. This work is a separate branch of knowledge that needs to be expanded. This includes the critical thematization of exclusive, binary, heterosexual gender concepts.

8. StoP develops methods of civil courage against partner violence and domestic violence. Civil courage must be learned, practiced and lived. Exercising moral courage, especially in the neighbourhood, is a great challenge for many people because it is associated with fear and many considerations. After all, everyone wants to continue living here, wants to support those affected and wants perpetrators to take responsibility, but does not want to be the target of aggression from perpetrators of violence. Self-protection and de-escalation are important issues. This includes thinking about how to continue living together with the neighbourhood.

StoP is much more than a one-off awareness campaign

“StoP-Districts without intimate partner violence” is not a one-off awareness campaign. StoP is a sustainable and future-oriented overall package in the prevention of violence and holds great potential and inspiration for positive change in society. It is a project that explicitly and directly addresses civil society, actively involves it and offers concrete, applicable options for action. StoP shows what each individual can do to stop partner violence against women and queer people. Accordingly, StoP is also an appeal to civil society to take a clear stance against violence against women and children.

All people in local communities are invited to take an active stand against femicide, partner violence and domestic violence against women and children. StoP empowers and enables neighbours to show civil courage in cases of gender-based violence and they learn to take a clear stance against all forms of violence. Neighbourly intervention can create solidarity with those affected and generate empathy so that women and their children can find trusted people in their immediate vicinity.

StoP is also a signal to the perpetrators of violence and is intended to show that civil society is no longer prepared to accept, tolerate or tolerate partner violence and domestic violence. The reaction or non-reaction of the neighbourhood has an influence and can encourage or hinder perpetrators.

With StoP, neighbors learn to build a neighborhood in which violence against women and queer people is no longer ignored and tolerated, so that those affected no longer have to hide, feel ashamed and be questioned - a neighborhood in which violence no longer has a place.

What is needed to achieve this goal?

The short, medium and long-term goal must be to establish StoP in every city, municipality and district so that a sustainable change is created and partner violence against women and children no longer has a chance. However, short-term funding is not enough to successfully achieve such an important social goal. Rather, it requires

- Securing multi-year funding for StoP projects in the districts and communities and
- knowledge transfer and coordination of StoP projects between the funding bodies, the respective municipalities, state governments and the federal government and, last but not least
- the inclusion of the community-based StoP approach in a national prevention strategy.

Requirements for local providers of StoP work and costs

The idea is that StoP is anchored in an existing neighborhood institution, not a separate project.

For example, a community center, multigenerational house, family center or neighborhood store could rededicate a position for StoP work or a few hours and/or set up a new one for this purpose. StoP works best in cooperation with at least one or two other social organizations that support this work, thus creating synergy effects.

Costs:

This depends very much on the local conditions, but around 60,000 euros should be factored in.

- StoP is aimed at everyone in the district, in the neighborhood, so it would make a lot of sense to hire a team of two consisting of different genders. Otherwise, at least one 30-hour position plus honorarium funds for the men's/boys' work is needed.
- Material costs for rent and office materials (depends on the provider, as StoP is not intended to create its own facility, but rather docks onto an existing facility: "piggyback" principle)
- Material costs for public relations work, i.e. website, flyers, events, group work: EUR 6,000 - 10,000
- One-off: participation in a StoP training from Prof. Sabine Stövesand

StoP quality standards

Conditions that should be fulfilled by the provider so that a StoP© project can be started and well established are:

1. social space: a physical or virtual space such as a social center or other gathering place where people can gather and interact.
2. district competence: has been active in the district for more than three years, is well anchored there, i.e. is active in local structures and well networked and known to the population (district committees, present in the district press, cooperation contexts...)
3. institutionalization: is financed in the long term, i.e. will probably continue for at least the next three years
4. approaches to cross-target group work: has direct or indirect access to different population groups (migrants, diverse genders, adults, young people...)
5. low-threshold: i.e. (also) open offers, e.g. leisure and cultural work, provider has a room/offer that can be used and accessed without making a specific appointment and without specific problem situations
6. demonstrable experience in working with (resident) groups, public relations and event organization
7. demonstrable experience in gender-sensitive social work (concept, projects)
8. further training in the StoP approach must have taken place or corresponding agreements must have been made with the overall StoP project of the HAW/Prof. Dr. Stövesand. By completing the training, the StoP provider also acquires the authorization and obligation to use the name and concept as well as materials already developed (logos, poster templates, flyers, website) in the event of the initiation and implementation of their own "StoP" project.
9. establishment of at least one position for two years to set up the project, plus fee funds plus material resources for public relations and group work as well as specialist advice and a workplace, as well as the

prospect of being able to establish StoP work after the start-up phase. StoP is not a project, but sustainable change work and that takes time. Due to the specific subject matter and objectives, it is necessary that a person with a feminist approach be hired as a priority and that at least one other gender is an honorary employee or, better still, a second (partial) position for a suitably competent different gender be announced in the future).

10. the work is carried out on the basis of the eight methodological steps set out in the StoP concept.

11. on the basis of the concept, the StoP specialist should have the greatest possible autonomy in the content-related, network-related and public organization of the StoP work.

12. willingness to systematically document the project, to participate in quality assurance and to provide findings and information for use by Prof. Stövesand and the joint StoP website.

For more information about successful existing StoP work:

StoP Toolbox: <https://stop-toolbox.eu/>

StoP EU project: <https://www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/stop>

StoP Austria: <https://stop-partnergewalt.at>

StoP Germany: <https://www.hamburg.de/politik-und-verwaltung/behoerden/sozialbehoerde/themen/soziales/opferschutz/projekt-stadtteile-ohne-partnergewalt-48464>

3. Case study: StoP Replication in Austria

Since its launch in Austria in 2019, StoP - Stadtteile ohne Partnergewalt has experienced remarkable growth. What started as a single project in one Viennese district has, in just six years, expanded to nearly 40 active StoP projects across the country in 2025. This rapid development reflects both the urgent need for community-based approaches to domestic violence and the strong support StoP has received from decision-makers.

One of the key strengths of the StoP initiative is its ability to fill critical gaps in victim protection and support systems. By focusing on a community-based approach, StoP empowers bystanders to take meaningful action in cases of domestic violence. This shift in responsibility - from perpetrators or victims alone - encourages a collective response and promotes a sense of shared responsibility across the community. It empowers civil society to actively advocate on behalf of those affected by violence and gives citizens a voice to publicly influence policy-making. For example, former victims have come forward and are now vocal and visible advocates for the project. In addition, the initiative has expanded rapidly with specific focuses such as work with men, youth and BIPOC communities, further increasing its impact and reach.

As the lead organisation, the Association of Autonomous Austrian Women's Shelters (AÖF) has been instrumental in the expansion of StoP in Austria. The success of the first StoP project in Vienna laid the foundation for further growth, and Maria Rösslhuber, the former manager of AÖF, played a key role in advocating for the national roll-out of StoP. Strong advocacy was instrumental in gaining strong support from the policy makers and funding bodies, creating the necessary momentum for StoP to expand beyond its original location.

Since 2024, with Christina Kopf as the StoP Austria Coordinator overseeing and coordinating all Austrian StoP activities, the project has continued to grow, further strengthening its network and deepening its impact across the country.

The StoP Pilot Project: Launch and initial phase in Vienna (2019)

The Association of Austrian Women's Shelters (AÖF) was founded in 1988 and serves as a network organisation for 16 autonomous women's shelters in Austria. The association also operates the national women's telephone helpline, the online counselling service, the information centre against violence and, since 2023, an empowerment centre.

In 2012, the AÖF encountered the STOP concept through its international work at a symposium in Hamburg. The concept was subsequently introduced in Austria at a symposium in Vienna in 2013. Former manager Maria Rösslhuber completed the STOP training in Hamburg in 2017-2018 and subsequently piloted the program in Austria. The pilot project was implemented in Vienna's 5th district, Margareten, where the association has been active since 1988. Thanks to a three-year grant from the Fund for a Healthy Austria (FGÖ), Vienna Health Fund (WiG) and the district council, the project was staffed with a team of 4-5 people, working part-time or on a marginal basis. The team coordinated services for women, men, youth, and overall project management. An external evaluation by the Institute for Conflict Research, led by Dr Birgitt Haller, yielded positive results. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was successfully adapted for online delivery.





Austrian-wide expansion: Growth of StoP throughout Austria, including rural areas (2021-present)

Building on the success of the initial StoP project, driven by advocacy and strong civil society interest, the small-scale pilot project was expanded to a national level in Austria. An application to the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK), submitted as part of a special directive on COVID-19 and poverty reduction, secured funding for the StoP project for one year (June 2021 to May 2022). The project was titled "StoP neighborhoods without partner violence - violence and poverty prevention through active neighborhoods." This enabled the project to expand to three additional locations within Vienna and to launch in seven out of nine federal provinces, establishing a total of nine new sites. Notably, this marked the first time the StoP program was implemented in rural areas, including Völkermarkt in Carinthia and Jennersdorf and Oberwart in Burgenland. Concurrently, the cities of Salzburg and Klagenfurt initiated the establishment of StoP sites with their own local funding.

By June 2022, with an additional year of funding secured from the BMSGPK, ten new sites were established, and existing projects in Vienna received further financial support from the FGÖ and WiG. This funding facilitated an expansion of the StoP men's work program and introduced a new focus on youth work in Vienna. A second evaluation by the Institute for Conflict Research assessed the men's work, leading to further refinements of the feminist approach to men's work within the StoP framework.



Picture: Press conference on the occasion of the further expansion and multi-year funding by the BMSGPK vlnr: Christina Kopf (StoP Coordination Austria), an active neighbour, Saya Ahmad (district governor), Markus Reiter (district governor), Johannes Rauch (federal minister), Maja Markanovic-Riedl (AÖF director), Salome Lixl (Footprint Vienna)

Evolving focus: Content development and thematic expansion of StoP

Over the years, activities have been adapted and coordinated to cater to specific target groups. Opportunities have been created for members of the BIPOC community to address intersectional risk factors and participate in low-threshold safe spaces. Activities within the framework of feminist men's work aim to strengthen the assumption of responsibility and encourage individuals to re-evaluate their

role models. Youth work employs an educational and empowering approach, including workshops on healthy relationships and identifying red flags. Furthermore, a focus has been placed on older women to raise awareness of issues such as partner violence, caregiving responsibilities, societal roles, and geriatric illnesses.

Austria-wide public relations efforts have played a crucial role in the expansion and continued success of the project. The networked presence of StoP projects across Austria and strong public relations initiatives have contributed to a high level of public awareness. Additionally, women who have experienced domestic violence have strongly identified with the project and have become advocates against domestic violence, underscoring the significance of community-based prevention approaches and the importance of supportive environments.

Training, cooperation and exchange in StoP

Consequently, the first StoP training program in Austria was launched in 2021, resulting in the training of 23 new StoP coordinators. This expansion also marked the beginning of Austria-wide cooperation, facilitated through monthly online meetings. Since its inception, the AÖF has assumed responsibility for the overall coordination of the StoP program in Austria. In 2022, a second StoP training course was conducted in Vienna, resulting in the training of an additional 20 coordinators. In 2023, ten coordinators were trained in a German-language training program. To date, more than 55 individuals have received training as StoP coordinators in Austria since 2021, with an additional 22 individuals scheduled for training in 2025. Currently, over 35 individuals are actively working as trained StoP coordinators.

Sustainable funding: Diversifying and securing support for StoP

Funding for StoP in Austria is diverse and multi-faceted, with an emphasis on co-financing from different sources. Ideally, the federal, regional and local levels of government should contribute to ensure the sustainability and broad reach of the initiative.

Additional funding (2023-24 and 2024-25) has been provided by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK, Department for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and CSR) for the project "Male Responsibility and Civil Courage against Domestic Violence", which focuses on raising awareness and activating men. In 2023-24 and 2024-25, the BMSGPK (Department for Elderly

Policy and Voluntary Work) also provided priority funding for older women under the title "Active neighbourhoods stop violence against older women".

Thanks to the funding strategy of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (2023-2024), the sub-project "Cooperation between the Together.Safe initiative and StoP community work" in the field of protection against violence continued to provide financial support for men's work, among other things, and a professional exchange with the police took place.

Impact assessment: Evaluating the success and outcomes of StoP

The StoP project underwent its first evaluation from 2019 to 2021, conducted by the Institute for Conflict Research in Vienna. This evaluation focused on participants of the initial StoP project in Vienna's Margareten district. Key findings from the women's group highlighted the importance of building relationships within the group, emphasizing the need for initial education and the gradual progression of participation following a sense of identification. Participation often occurred through a "snowball effect." In the men's group, the evaluation revealed that self-reflection was stimulated and awareness of the issue increased, however, the emotional component was perceived as lacking. The second evaluation, currently in its final phase, focused on men's groups with a particular emphasis on feminist approaches to men's work.

The third evaluation, the first impact measurement, was initiated by the Institute for Conflict Research in autumn 2024. This Austria-wide evaluation employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collected through questionnaires with qualitative data gathered through group interviews. Participants in the evaluation include activists, neighbors, project partners, and training participants. Focus group interviews will be conducted with StoP coordinators prior to the main data collection phase. The evaluation will assess impact across three key levels: awareness (recognition of domestic violence, including knowledge transfer), moral courage (intervention in cases of domestic violence, including actions and behavioral changes), and activities (distribution of flyers, awareness-raising campaigns, and public relations efforts). The findings of this evaluation are expected to be published by the end of 2025.

Recognition and achievement: Awards and honours for StoP

In 2020, the very first Austrian StoP project received the SozialMarie award for social innovation. In December 2023, StoP received first Austrian State Award for Volunteering. The award was presented to the StoP Vienna team in the Innovation category by the Federal Chancellor. In January 2024, the StoP Vienna team was invited by the President of Austria and the First Lady to the Hofburg to present StoP with a focus on men's work.

StoP's Growth in figures (2019-2026)

- 2019-2020: 1 project
- 2021: 15 projects
- 2022: 25 projects
- 2023: 30 projects
- 2024: 33 projects
- 2025: 40 projects
- 2026: 45 projects (forecast)

Current status and outlook

As of January 2025, there are 39 active StoP sites across Austria, with plans to expand to 45 sites by 2026. The third round of training, starting in March 2025, will enable the development of even more StoP coordinators, further facilitating the expansion and registration of new StoP projects across the country. In addition, the third evaluation, the first nationwide impact measurement of StoP, is currently underway. The continued operation of StoP projects, as well as regular exchange and collaboration between them, is financially secured until May 2026.

4. Case study: StoP Replication Plan Belgium

4.1.1 The political context of combatting domestic violence

Belgium has a long-standing history of policies and measures to combat domestic violence (DV). Since the 1970s, feminist NGOs developed specialist services such as women's shelters, raised awareness about domestic violence and pushed for legal reform and an official anti-DV policy. Feminist victim support services receive basic funding since the 1980s, and capacity has been increased considerably over time. Primary prevention of DV, however, was and has remained the poor parent in the larger struggle to combat DV, the focus of NGO and government efforts being on supporting survivors and prosecuting perpetrators.

The first national action plan (NAP) against violence against women was adopted in 1998, and subsequent action plans focussed exclusively on DV. With the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention in 2015, the NAP took on the format of the convention and broadened its scope again to include also other forms of gender-based violence, as well as, in its last, current, mutation, violence against sexual and gender minorities. The cooperation between governments and feminist NGOs has been considerably strengthened since the first GREVIO report in 2020. However, the June 2024 elections have ushered in a majority of center-right and antifeminist parties not only in Flanders, where gender neutrality in DV policy and programming has been a political reality for a long time, but also in French-speaking Belgium. This will negatively impact the possibilities of feminist NGOs to launch new programmes to combat DV, as much effort will be needed to defend the gains that have been made these last years.

Since the 1970s, the Belgian federal system distributes political competences between three political entities :

The communities (Flemish C., Federation Wallonia-Brussels, German C.) are in charge of language-related competences such as culture, education and research, youth, sports and media.

The regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels-Capital) are in charge of territory-related competences such as infrastructure, agriculture, land-use planning, environment, energy, but also employment, health and social service provision.

The federal government oversees the residual competences, among others foreign affairs, international trade, defense, justice, migration, interior affairs and police, public health and social security.

These three sectors are articulated at the same hierarchical level and overlap in terms of territorial and population coverage, making for a complex institutional mosaic, in particular in the bilingual region of Brussels. It has also to be noted that the question of who does what is an extremely contentious issue in Belgium, and the political process operates in a constant tension of actors defending what they consider as their private turfs while passing on the bucket on undesired issues, leading to an intense institutional ping pong. While in other countries, combatting violence effectively is made more difficult by the need to coordinate justice, police, social affairs, education etc., the Belgian system leads to an even less easily coordinated parallel development of policies and programmes. As a consequence, access to rights and services differs within Belgium, depending on where a person lives and to which language group they belong.

Unsurprisingly, GREVIO has strongly criticised this lack of a coordinated and integrated policy, leading to some first small improvements. The NAP strives to bring together the efforts on the federal level with the policies that have been developed autonomously in the regions and communities, which is similar to trying to stick a square peg into a round hole. For example, in addition to the NAP, there is the Flemish action plan to combat sexual violence, the FWB's action plan on women's rights, the inter-francophone action plan to combat violence against women, and the Brussels regional action plan to combat violence against women, each with their distinct rationales, priorities and measures.

The diverging policies are also held together by Belgium's international commitments. Among others, it has ratified CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As an EU member-state, Belgium also has

to transpose all relevant EU laws into national law, in particular the Victims Rights Directive and the brand new Directive on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. It remains to be seen if and how these instruments can be used as leverage to advocate for the implementation of StoP in Belgium.

The complex institutional landscape of Belgium presents a considerable challenge when developing a new type of activity or service that needs to fit somewhere into that structure to receive the necessary political support and funding. The preventative character of StoP does unfortunately not allow for a clearcut institutional attribution, because DV prevention can be federal (public health), community (primary prevention) or regional (secondary and tertiary prevention). Therefore, there is no single path to making the implementation of StoP in Belgium feasible. That said, we have identified different StoP elements with implications for the institutional slot it might fit into :

StoP is a local, territorial project, operating on the level of neighbourhoods. -> regional

StoP raises awareness about DV and changes social norms. -> community

StoP builds a bridge between survivors of DV and service provision. -> regional

4.1.2 Mapping existing local DV initiatives and StoP's unique selling points

Many actors are involved in combatting DV in Belgium; however, the local level is the least invested on this issue. In 2018, at the occasion of municipal elections, the largest French-speaking feminist NGO Vie Féminine sent an open letter¹ to all Brussels and Walloon municipalities urging them to implement the Istanbul Convention on the local level, with a set of priority actions. Only a handful of the 281 municipalities answered the letter, showing a low level of interest in the issue and in cooperation with feminist NGOs.

1 <https://www.axellemag.be/lettre-ouverte-conseils-communales-convention-istanbul/>

Most local initiatives to combat DV are either run by public authorities or by NGOs with relatively little crossover, except some municipalities claiming NGO initiatives as their own while only providing symbolic support.

4.2.1 Municipal initiatives

Belgian municipalities, in particular the Brussels municipalities, struggle with chronic underfunding. Therefore, they have little margin to initiate their own long-term programmes with staff cost-related budget implications. However, the regions provide project funding to municipalities on several relevant issues such as gender equality, safety and prevention or urban renewal. In addition, the federal government, via the Ministry of the Interior, launched a project call to municipalities for initiatives combating “family violence” in 2022. The call financed 15 projects (2.6% of the 581 Belgian municipalities). The trend clearly goes towards funding for pilot projects, while no or little support exists for making well-working local projects permanent.

Municipalities are overseen by the regions. Therefore, this section is organised into initiatives in Walloon and Brussels municipalities.

Walloon municipalities

In the absence of (sufficient capacity of) specialist services in their region, in particular in less urban areas, several Walloon municipalities have created their own specialist victim support service, from larger cities like Namur² to small, rural municipalities like Sprimont³. The town of Tournai has been running its own DV shelter since at least 15 years. However, there is no directory of these local DV services. In 2019, the Region of Wallonia has advised the municipal welfare benefit offices (CPAS) to assign a DV officer among their staff⁴. There is no centralised listing of these officers and most

2 <https://www.namur.be/fr/ma-ville/social/cohesion-sociale/prevention-et-securite/violences-intrafamiliales-d-une-rive-a-lautre>

3 <https://www.sprimont.be/ma-commune/social/violence-conjugale>

4 http://actionsociale.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/documents/Circulaire_CPAS-référents_violence.pdf

municipalities do not communicate their contact details publicly, but some CPAS reach out to victims proactively, e.g. Couvin⁵, Genappes⁶ or Profondeville⁷.

Many Walloon municipalities engage in awareness raising campaigns on DV, mostly around 25 November, with or without the cooperation of feminist NGOs. Following a femicide, the city of Charleroi, with the local specialist service that is co-funded by the city, has developed a yearly festival of awareness raising activities around 25 November. Liège, another city with a long-standing commitment to gender-equality and home to the largest feminist-run shelter of Belgium, is also very active in this regard.

Brussels municipalities

Anderlecht seems to be the first Belgian municipality to have signed the Istanbul Convention, in 2019⁸ (in the meantime, several other municipalities have followed this example, again, without a central register of these initiatives). No specific means were allocated to combatting DV, but there are symbolic actions like lowering the flag on the town hall at half-staff on 25 November in commemoration of the victims of femicide. Anderlecht also opened a DV shelter in 2021.

Watermael-Boisfort created its own municipal support service on “family violence” 15 years ago; however, with increasing capacity in NGO-run specialist services in the Brussels region, it has been redesigned for victims of all forms of interpersonal violence. Some municipalities publish brochures on domestic violence to help people identify it and access help. E.g. Schaerbeek has published such a brochure in French, Dutch and Turkish⁹. Still other municipalities organise local roundtables between service providers, police and civil servants, e.g. St Josse¹⁰ since 2013.

Many Brussels municipalities launch awareness campaigns on or around 25 November, often based on White Ribbon or Red Shoes designs; the Brussels Region promotes and funds this type of local campaign. Schaerbeek organised, in cooperation with Amnesty International and via its own Women's House, a yearly “March of Men” against violence against women on 25 November between 2010 and 2020. Since

5 <https://www.couvin.be/cpas/services/cellule-violence-entre-partenaires>

6 <https://genappe-cpas.be/4-2/>

7 <https://www.cpas-profondeville.be/services/aide-individuelle/violence-conjugale-et-intrafamiliale>

8 <https://www.anderlecht.be/sites/default/files/medias/Files/CP/CP425F.pdf>

9 https://www.1030.be/sites/default/files/Vivre_ensemble_Solidarite/cass-cpas-brochure_violences_conjugales-fr-01.pdf

10 <https://sjtn.brussels/fr/la-commune/cohesion-sociale-solidarites/plateforme-de-lutte-contre-les-violences-entre-partenaires>

the pandemic, it is looking into more static campaign formats such as expositions in public space. Watermael is planning a fresco on its central square to commemorate victims of domestic violence¹¹.

4.2.2 NGO initiatives

In Belgium, it is mainly women's and feminist organisations, as well as the French-speaking branch of Amnesty International, that campaign on DV. They either do so on the national level or towards their public. Few invest the neighbourhood level, except if that is their outreach level. Between 2000 and 2010, there were quite a few local volunteer committees of the Global March of Women against Poverty and Violence that took up the issue of domestic violence and organised actions around 8 March and 25 November. However, they have run out of steam and as far as we know, none still exist to this day. The feminist strike movement, active in Belgium since 2019, has some local chapters, but DV is one among many other campaign topics and tends to remain invisible in the overall range of activities.

Some current examples of NGO-led neighbourhood-level campaigning:

- Liège, “Quartier libre sans violence St Léonhard”¹²: One of the major feminist NGOs against domestic violence, CVFE, tries to mobilise since 2019 the Liège neighbourhood where their offices are situated, by participating in the local NGO coordination and proposing one-off activities during neighbourhood festivals, poster campaigns and currently a project on femicide commemoration. There is no recurrent funding for the overall project, and the activities are organised in an on-and-off rhythm with small project grants.
- Schaerbeek, “Tricothé workshops”¹³: A volunteer-run knitting workshop at the municipal Women's House produces knitted or crocheted 1x1m squares that are exposed in a public square and sold for the benefit of local NGOs combating domestic violence.

11 <https://www.watermael-boitsfort.be/fr/vivre-a-watermael-boitsfort/egalite-des-chances/sensibiliser-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes>

12 <https://www.cvfe.be/services/actins-ep/nos-actions-regulieres/quartier-libre> and <https://www.cvfe.be/publications/analyses/217-action-citoyenne-un-quartier-se-mobilise-contre-la-violence-conjugale-et-intrafamiliale>

13 <https://www.1030.be/fr/agenda/atelier-tricothe>

- Tournai: Vie Feminine organised a series of workshops and an action theatre group against domestic violence¹⁴.
- Charleroi: the White Ribbon NGO platform organises a series of actions in public space each 25/11 15, e.g. a demonstration, street actions, giant white ribbons throughout the city, renaming streets after victims of femicide, a Red Shoes exhibition...
- Namur: illegal poster campaign against femicide¹⁶.
- A theatre company has initiated monuments for the victims of femicide in Tournai and Quaregnon¹⁷.

4.2.3 Positioning the StoP project in this context

We have seen that a broad range of local actions are carried out by citizens, NGOs and/or public authorities, mostly to raise awareness about domestic violence or to provide support services. However, there are several shortcomings in practical and framing terms.

Practical shortcomings

- There is a huge array of different action forms, but no evaluation of what actually works.
- The actions/campaigns are one-offs, limited in time, mostly linked to a symbolic agenda, e.g. 25 November; no long-term campaigning and organising takes place.
- The existing initiatives are either volunteer-run, done on top of the “real” work of specialist services or based on project funding, making them unsustainable on the long term.

Framing shortcomings

- Domestic violence and violence against women are often conflated, erasing some forms of violence against women and some victims of domestic violence.
- Awareness raising is understood to be limited to identifying domestic violence and framing it as unacceptable. Citizens are not invited to act, and no specific behavior change is aimed for.

¹⁴ <https://www.viefeminine.be/lutte-contre-les-violences-faites-5078>

¹⁵ <https://plateformerubanblanc.be/>

¹⁶ <https://www.rtf.be/article/un-collectif-namurois-denonce-les-femicides-via-une-action-d-affichage-sauvage-10934624>

¹⁷ <https://compagniedelabetenoire.be/steles>

Little to no information nor incentives are given to intervene or act in any meaningful way, except from accessing support.

- The responsibility and power to act are firmly situated with, on the one hand, survivors (who are urged to “break the silence” and seek support) and, on the other hand, institutions of the state and professional service providers. Citizens in general and bystanders in particular do not have an active role.

The StoP approach offers remedies to these shortcomings, without replacing existing initiatives or service provision, which can easily be integrated as partners. Its 8-step-approach focuses on bringing together local actors and strengthen their agency in terms of combating DV through training, networking and advocacy. StoP awareness raising is based on a well-rounded and effective messaging and a visual identity, grounded in a gendered and intersectional understanding of DV. But most importantly, StoP aims to organise a diverse range of citizens who are not yet involved in DV activism or service provision, by activating them, raising their awareness of DV and handing them the tools to develop their own individual and collective actions. This brings additional person power, ideas and energy to the anti-DV sector, freeing professionals to focus on their main mission, improve their services and advocate for change. The StoP project further ensures that prevention messages are not disseminated top-down, but operates a bottom-up change of social norms in the neighbourhood.

4.3 Needs, funding and bottlenecks

To launch a new StoP project, an organisation needs four major assets:

- funding to cover staff costs and material (ca EUR 150 000/year) over a 3-year span
- StoP-trained staff
- at least one meeting venue in the neighbourhood
- a network of potential partners in the neighbourhood

Therefore, an organisation needs the capacity to invest time and energy upfront before the actual start of the project (and the funding). In the Belgian context, the last two points can be relatively easily implemented with such an investment. However, the feasibility of the first two points is much less

certain. Therefore, this chapter will focus on these two points; the last two points will be addressed in the next section as part of a deployment plan. For both of them, we will focus on Garance's situation as the only organisation in Belgium having had some hands-on experience with the StoP approach and therefore likely to implement StoP in this country.

First of all, the StoP approach fits the criteria of the “éducation permanente” (EP) – a sort of emancipatory adult education - decree of the FWB under which Garance receives its major structural funding. In broad terms, organisations operating under this decree have the mission to organise disempowered populations to allow them to act politically and culturally on their situation of oppression. In principle, Garance could use its EP grant to develop one or even several StoP projects. However, these funds are currently used to finance Garance's major service provision, i.e. primary prevention workshops for different target groups throughout the French-speaking part of Belgium. Using (part of) that grant would mean to significantly reduce the organisation's existing service provision geographically and/or quantitatively. The FWB inspection monitoring and evaluating Garance's compliance with the grant conditions probably would not appreciate this change which would put Garance's basic funding in jeopardy. In addition, EP funding is earmarked for working with adults in some types of contexts only, which would exclude coverage for StoP actions by and for minors or for adults in the workplace or in formal training. It also does not cover networking, individual outreach (activation interviews) and counseling. However, the EP grant could cover the work necessary for the preparation phase of a StoP project that then is run with additional funds.

Most Belgian funding opportunities accessible to Garance are project grants for max. 1 year, without guarantee of being able to access this type of funding during three consecutive years. These grants can cover or supplement material/activity costs of a StoP project, but for financing two staff positions, it is necessary to access longer-term funding. Here the possibilities are limited:

Scenario 1 - Garance could raise its own funds for a StoP project from one or several of these sources: Equal.Brussels, “subside structurel”, section d) (organisation of continuous information or awareness raising activities with respect to gender equality): EUR 50 000 – EUR 100 000 per year over 3 years for a coalition of at least 3 NGOs; this implies that Garance needs to find at least two NGOs as coalition partners who forgo their own potential funding from Equal.Brussels to finance the StoP project.

Urban.Brussels, Contrat de quartier (CdQ, neighbourhood contract): a measure aiming at the revitalisation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods through an injection of several million euros for a combination of urbanist improvements and social projects. Sufficient funding for a StoP project would be guaranteed for 4 years, and networking with local partners is part and parcel of a CdQ. Each year, 2 to 3 new CdQ are adopted in the Brussels region. However, accessing this grant necessitates a rather long preparation period (1-2) years to identify the up-and-coming CdQ neighbourhoods, select one or several and work with the local population, the social actors and the municipality to get the StoP project elected into the final project proposal that then needs to be approved by the Region. There is a risk that even if StoP gets elected into the final proposal, the Region could fund only part of it. On the plus side, Garance has experience in participating in such contracts.

Region of Wallonia, Plan de cohésion sociale (Social cohesion plan): this measure has similarities with the Brussels CdQ, however, Garance does not have any experience of the actual functioning of this type of plan and would need to invest time for more research. The timeframe of the measure is more restrictive, as there is one single plan for all of Wallonia containing the selected municipal projects, and a new plan is elaborated only every 5 years (but it would also mean that if a StoP project is selected, it could be funded for 5 years). Also, the networking in the preparation phase of such a plan is rather intense, and it would be difficult to be carried out from Brussels, without Garance staff already in place in the neighbourhood.

Scenario 2 - A municipality could raise the necessary funding (from the Region, the federal government or the EU) and pay Garance to carry out a StoP project; this needs a very stable partnership with the municipality that is immune to changes in the composition to the city council, as well as a rather significant commitment on part of the municipality for raising the funds and using them to pay an outside actor instead of its own initiatives.

Scenario 3 - A municipality raises the necessary funding and carries out its own StoP project; however, this would need a rather big step of trust from the municipality (constraining conditions for using the StoP concept, dependency of the StoP creator) in addition to language barriers, so this option seems only viable at a later time once StoP is firmly entrenched in Belgium.

Scenario 4 – Another éducation permanente NGO uses its funding to launch a StoP project, either by paying Garance for coordinating it or by having their staff trained. However, as for scenarios 2 and 3, there are many unknowns and the necessity for big leaps of faith and for stable partnerships and funding

situations for this scenario to work. Again, this seems more feasible once StoP has a stable and successful existence elsewhere in Belgium.

In addition to the funding, a second bottleneck is the training of StoP coordinators. Garance has trained four staff members during the current European project. However, each of these people already has a mission and role within Garance and is not immediately available for working on a StoP project. Either two of them wish to change their assignments, which implies that Garance needs to recruit and train other people to replace them in their current functions, or additional StoP-trained staff are needed. In both cases, Garance needs to invest time and effort into the transition/preparation phase. In terms of additional StoP training, very few options exist. Outside of the EU project, StoP trainings are only carried out in German, which is inaccessible to most people in Belgium, in particular for people with diverse backgrounds that are representative for local populations. Even a StoP training in English will exclude some people motivated and competent for community organising against DV. The ideal solution would be to organise a training in French, with simultaneous translation or French-speaking trainers, that could also be opened to other organisations in Belgium interested in the StoP approach, such as local councils, social housing agencies or feminist NGOs. On the long term, it seems unavoidable that StoP training needs to become independent from the StoP creator as the only person able to carry out such trainings. A second EU project would provide the possibility to develop a system of training and accreditation of national StoP trainers that would solve this problem.

Finally, there is also the option of conducting a second, follow-up EU-funded StoP project focusing on the implementation of StoP in all partner countries. Given Garance's capacity to raise short-term project funds, it would be relatively easy to find the necessary co-funding in Belgium. This might also help other project partners to implement StoP projects in more hostile contexts than Belgium and would allow to organise a second StoP training so that the bottleneck of trained staff can be overcome at least partially. However, this project would need to cover three years to allow for a full implementation cycle.

4.4 Implementation

It seems most probable that Garance will be able to start one StoP project in the Brussels region, either with Belgian (at the earliest in 2026/27) or European funding (at the earliest in 2026). This project could serve as a pilot to garner the traction needed for a larger rollout.

4.4.1 Preparation phase

This phase is equal to step 1 in the StoP approach of identifying a suited neighbourhood, finding partners and collect the necessary resources. In the case of funding through a CdQ, it would also include the networking and advocacy necessary to get the StoP project elected into the final proposal. This means not only building a network with all types of local actors, but also getting the upfront approval of the municipality, presenting the StoP approach in all kinds of citizen meetings, being present at street fairs and festivals, offering free StoP workshops to the local population and social actors, raise awareness about DV etc. In a nutshell: Garance would need to do a small-scale StoP project without funding or certain approval to get the chance to get both of them for the long term. This also demands a fine balance of raising expectations while not having the certainty that we will be able to meet them, should the StoP project not be (fully) selected.

4.4.2 Pilot project

During 3-4 years, the StoP project goes through steps 2-8 and ideally also raises the necessary support for continuing after the project end (a second step 1). The project needs to be timed in coordination with the StoP training, whichever form it will take, so that the StoP coordinators can carry out the neighbourhood assessment and activation interviews without delay, while receiving the training.

To maximise the impact during the pilot project and increase the chances for a project extension or replication, evaluation, networking and advocacy throughout the project cycle are crucial. Garance may be able to cooperate with a university so that scientific research can be published to increase the StoP visibility and build its reputation in Belgium. Also, they may need to network and advocate beyond the neighbourhood earlier than normally done in a StoP project, for these very reasons.

Finally, it would be extremely useful to have spaces where the StoP coordinators can exchange their experiences, ask questions and have a sounding board for their work. As this is a pilot project, such a space would need to be international, with or without the support and framework of a European project.

4.4.3 Rollout

Garance is confident that the pilot project will be a positive experience, providing the organisation with sufficient arguments for a further rollout of StoP in Belgium. There are several potential rollout routes, depending on funding opportunities :

- Multiplying Garance-led StoP projects in Brussels: One successful CdQ-based StoP implementation could be the blueprint for integrating StoP into all future CdQs. Without this “institutionalisation” of StoP, it will be impossible to raise funding for more than one StoP project at once.
- Enlarging the StoP scope to Wallonia: Through publishing and visibilising the success of the pilot project, networking with Walloon local actors and advocacy with the Region and the Federation of Cities and Municipalities, first Walloon StoP projects could be implemented, either led by Garance or by municipalities (see below).
- Involve more (types of) organisations in carrying out StoP projects : In addition to municipalities, there are several other types of organisations potentially interested in developing their own StoP projects, such as feminist/women's organisations (local ones or the local chapters of national-level NGOs), social housing agencies or NGOs accredited in *éducation permanente*.
- Enlarging the StoP scope to Flanders: This is the most tricky option for further rollout, not only because a careful translation and cultural mediation of all materials and messaging is necessary. As stated above, the Flemish approach to combating DV is largely gender neutral, and it will be a challenge to preserve the feminist, intersectional StoP approach in this context. Therefore, it seems necessary to put a feminist actor in charge of any pilot projects, networking of StoP coordinators and other key influential missions in Flanders.

In all rollout scenarios, two major limitations need to be taken into account. On the one hand, Garance's capacity to carry out additional StoP projects depends not only on funding levels, but a major rollout

could have major implications on the identity and structure of the organisation. On the other hand, the bottleneck of training additional StoP coordinators needs to be solved before even starting to reach out to potential donors, partners, project carriers etc. Garance could play the role of a Belgian national coordinator of StoP projects just like AÖF is in Austria. This would include the following missions: providing training in the national languages, organising practice exchanges between StoP coordinators, advocating for StoP on the national, regional and community levels for assuring stable funding and further rollout and liaising with StoP projects in other countries. This would allow for the StoP approach in Belgium to not be constrained by Garance's organisational capacity while guaranteeing that StoP projects remain faithful to the original concept and philosophy.

5. Conclusion

The StoP concept is an innovative model for action that closes a key gap in the system of protection against violence. For the first time, the socio-spatial environment of those affected by violence and perpetrators of violence is systematically and professionally included. StoP is an elaborate prevention and protection concept aimed at sustainable change.

While most measures take place at the tertiary level of prevention, i.e. after the act of violence, the secondary level, i.e. the local area and the potential of social relationships and those indirectly affected, has not yet been sufficiently taken into account. However, violence occurs in concrete, inhabited places. It has been proven (Browning 2002) that an enlightened neighbourhood willing to take action, in which partner violence is not seen as a private problem, can have a de facto life-saving and violence-reducing effect. The cases of fatal relationship and serious partner violence were clearly lower here than in other neighbourhoods!

Neighbours and friends, kiosk owners, employees in local daycare centres or neighbourhood stores have short distances and/or are often aware of situations. There is great potential here! The question is always whether they want to hear, see or say something. Fear, helplessness, certain gender concepts or taboos often play a blocking role. This is where more preventative, educational and supportive measures need to be taken, i.e. directly in people's immediate lives. This is StoP's starting point and expertise.

This EU cofunded project has shown that it is crucial that the quality of the StoP work is maintained as it spreads in the EU. For this reason StoP© is a copyrighted concept. It cannot be used without prior agreement and compliance with certain conditions. The following notice must be included in all public relations materials (flyers, press releases, media contributions, etc.): StoP© was developed by Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand. The name and concept are protected by copyright.

To initiate, support or contribute to StoP work, please contact the StoP founder, Prof. Stövesand via the website: <https://stop-toolbox.eu/contact>