

# Preventing sexual and gender-based violence in migrant communities and strengthening support to survivors in EU cities

Update May 2020: Migrant Families



[#EqualCity](#) [#GenderEquality](#)

[#SGBV](#) [#MigrantFamilies](#)

Five months have passed since the start of the regional Equal(c)ity project, coordinated by the Country Office of Belgium and Luxembourg of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by the European Commission. The project aims to improve urban services in 4 different EU cities to tackle sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against migrants, by each developing a specific toolbox:

- Brussels: SGBV against LGBTQI+ migrants and the creation of safe spaces
- Luxembourg: SGBV against female migrants
- Rome: SGBV against unaccompanied migrant children (UMC)
- Gothenburg: SGBV in a family context, focusing on honor-related crimes

Now, more than ever, urban services are under pressure, first line workers are at the forefront of a relentless, strenuous battle whilst socio-economic inequalities are exacerbated. COVID-19 has the world in its grip and continues to put a strain on local, national and global resources. Despite the challenging circumstances, the project Equal(c)ity project partners are continuing their activities.

With this thematic project update, the project team would like to brief you on the activities already conducted, the future steps, and the impact of COVID-19 on migrant communities.

You can access the other three project updates here: [LGBTQI+ / Female Migrants / UMC](#)

## Objectives of the project in Gothenburg



**City of  
Gothenburg**

Parenting is a new journey which brings fascinating but also challenging experiences. Fortunately, relatives or society can offer support through the most difficult moments. But what about [parenting in a new country](#)? Although the struggle of being a parent is universal, raising children is even more challenging when adapting to a new culture, where different norms and conditions affect the parenting system. A high number of people who migrate to Sweden come from collectivist countries, yet they are emigrating to one of the world's most individualistic and secular countries. In order to adapt to a new country and a new way of parenting, migrant parents need support to understand the context they are living in, how society works, their rights and obligations and how to transition in parenthood. Frontline workers, including social workers, teachers, community guidance workers and civil society actors, are in a position to [support newly arrived parents](#), children and youth to ensure their well-being, learning and development. The importance of good cultural competence among frontline workers, including building trust and reinforcing relations through value-based dialogue should not be undervalued when working with the target group.

The City of Gothenburg, in partnership with IOM Belgium and Luxembourg, aims to address the challenges that migrant parents and frontline workers face in relation to transition in parenthood. The main aim is to prevent SGBV and especially honour-based violence (HBV) by building on and strengthening existing urban services that focus on parenthood transition through intercultural dialogue, trust-building interactions and empowerment. As part of the activities, awareness raising tools will be developed and disseminated to migrant communities, and frontline workers will be provided with training in [intercultural and value-based dialogue](#).

### Activities – State of Play

The promotion of [value-based dialogue](#) with parents, children and youth is stated as the first interim objective of the [City of Gothenburg's Plan against Honour-related violence and oppression](#) and is central in the activities implemented in Gothenburg. These dialogues aim to counteract the fear or ignorance vis-à-vis authorities, by not only reinforcing trust and confidence in public institutions, but also by strengthening the professionals' cultural awareness and sense of security in dealing with the issue of HBV and oppression.

In the first months, two main activities have been developed: a) a program theory/logic model of the work package, explaining why, how and under which conditions

### Future activities

To achieve the objectives, a series of activities will be performed in the upcoming six months.

The development of [awareness raising material for migrant parents and children](#) is in progress and will involve a course about parenting in a new country, including leaflets and illustrations. This material could be used by frontline workers to facilitate value-based dialogue, either individually (with the mother, the father, the child or youth) or with a larger group (e.g. migrant parents, family members who share the same language).

The [training curriculum](#) and method manual will aim at training frontline professionals in value-based

project outputs will occur, and b) a needs assessment analysis. The needs assessment analysis has been developed with two objectives. The 1st objective is to identify (non-)municipal frontline workers' training needs and level of preparedness. A survey consisting of 14 questions on thematic topics, such as intercultural dialogue, HBV and violence in close relationships, was distributed to frontline workers in social services, pre-schools, primary schools and civil society in the District of Eastern Gothenburg. Trainee cities will be able to use this questionnaire to assess their challenges in parenthood transition and in combatting HBV.

The 2nd objective is to ensure migrant parents' and children's involvement in the development of the SGBV toolbox. Due to the current pandemic, interviews and focus groups with migrants are delayed and may take place remotely. An interview guide has been developed for interviewing informants and will also be part of the toolbox.

For more information on the tools and activities in Gothenburg, please contact Ms. Somita Sabeti: [somita.sabeti@socialresurs.goteborg.se](mailto:somita.sabeti@socialresurs.goteborg.se).

dialogue and cultural awareness. The method manual will be thematically organized, including appendices for the specific professional groups. A graphics-rich resource will be designed, enhanced by pedagogical tools for reflective practice, discussion and hands-on methods that frontline workers can use in their work. 6 trainers (municipality/social workers) will attend a "Train the trainer" training during 1½ day at the end of 2020 with a focus on the themes in the method manual.

The City of Gothenburg will host **two feedback moments** on the preliminary toolbox to challenge the ideas and key deliverables: through the gathering of municipal actors (i.e. social services, schools, Administration for allocation of Social Welfare), meetings with the civil society, and finally an independent expert panel. This will guarantee that the tools and instruments are checked by independent experts and practitioners, both from a conceptual/ theoretical perspective as from a practical perspective, ensuring replicability of the tools at EU level.

## What is honour-based violence?

**Honour-based violence (HBV)** is a type of intimate partner and family violence which is carried out and justified with the aim to protect or restore the honour of a family and/or a community. According to the [Swedish government's action plan for combating men's violence against women \(2007\)](#), control over girls' and women's sexuality is a key aspect of HBV and is strongly linked to family and community norms. Scholars in the field often note that while young men and boys can be victims of HBV, women and girls are more at risk (Alizadeh et al. 2011). The reason for this lies in the fact that the honour culture focuses on virginity and chastity, and the family's reputation and prestige are perceived to depend on the actual, alleged or suspected behaviour of girls and women. The most extreme form of HBV is honour killings, but less extreme forms of HBV, such as coercive control, are far more common. This may range from everyday forms of limitations in girls' and women's lives regarding aspects such as choice of dress, social life and freedom of movement, to limiting life choices such as education and employment, marriage and divorce.



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To **effectively prevent HBV**, measures need to be carried out at several levels, ranging from awareness-raising activities for specific target groups, training of frontline workers, advocacy work and city coordination meetings for intervention and protection measures for victims of HBV (such as shelters and telephone helplines).

In the Swedish context, the measures against HBV and oppression, including female genital mutilation and early, forced and child marriage has primarily been reactive, focusing less on preventive efforts. In "[Discussions In progress: On honour-related violence and oppression](#)", the [Swedish Gender Equality Agency](#) underlines the need for implementing processes for **violence prevention methods**, working in a local context and adapting to various target groups one of which being parents living with honour-related norms. Moreover, the first interim objective of the City of Gothenburg's Plan against Honour-related violence and oppression advocates the promotion of value-based dialogue with parents. But

how should agencies responsible for the social services, the education system and civil society get parents involved in discussions on deep-seated attitudes in order to bring about long-term change? How do we approach conflicts between what parents want and the rights of children? How do we strengthen the professionals' cultural awareness and sense of security in dealing with the issue of honor-related violence and oppression?

In Gothenburg, three local initiatives for trust-building and awareness raising target migrant parents and frontline workers specifically.

- [The Integration Center Gothenburg](#) is a meeting place for (newly arrived) migrants and Swedes and provides civic orientation course on the rights and obligations in the Swedish society. The project Parental support for newly arrived migrants in the Gothenburg region offers a course called "Parent in new country" targeting migrant parents which promotes dialogue and reflection in order to offer parents confidence in their parenting in Sweden. This is done by providing a thorough insight into how society and authorities work as well as into parenting norms and expectations.
- [Building Bridges by the NGO Action4Change](#) aims at strengthening professionals' intercultural skills in the meeting with parents and caregivers by providing tools and support for a process-oriented value-based dialogue. The aim is to strengthen children's rights, promote integration and prevent HBV and oppression.
- [The Resource Unit 1 District Administration Eastern Gothenburg](#) supports families in developing and strengthening own resources and strengths, so they can manage their needs and concerns.



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Given their experiences, some of these actors have agreed to provide feedback and support in the creation of the toolbox, which will attempt to formulate an answer to the three relevant questions above.

## COVID-19 and the impact on migrant parents

The COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, and at the same time [amplifies and deepens existing inequalities](#). Migrants, especially when undocumented, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic. They may face obstacles in accessing health care and other support services, are subject to increased stigmatization and discrimination, and risk income loss due to less favorable employment conditions. [Migrant workers are at the frontline of the response to COVID-19](#), whilst at the same time

enjoying less favorable working conditions which may also have a direct impact on their health. For migrants in reception or detention, conditions are also particularly challenging, as they are faced with the suspension of group activities for residents and face-to-face counselling, limited visits from external visitors, whilst at the same time knowing that their procedure might be halted due to the lockdown. They might not be able to follow social distancing rules or to self-isolate, which could be harmful for their/others' health, and at the same time have no ability to request medical or psychological assistance due to i.e. overburdening of social and medical services. For newly arrived persons in need of international protection, the situation is also very insecure as they might not be able to file their application and have no access to an official reception structure.

Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, these impacts of COVID-19 are exponential for [migrant families](#).

First of all, many poor households live in overcrowded circumstances which is not only a risk factor for the spread of COVID-19 but can also increase tensions. Reports on [domestic violence](#) have increased globally since the COVID-19 outbreak. Indeed, mobility and quarantine restrictions force many women – and their children – to isolate themselves with their (potential) abusers. However, according to the [Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention](#) it is difficult to draw conclusions on the correlation between the pandemic and increased violence against women, especially in the short-term perspective. A second concern relates to the [economic impacts](#) of the crisis. These have dramatic effects on the well-being of families and communities. The Swedish newspaper DN states that "Sweden's immigrants are hit the hardest by the corona crisis". Given the large number of migrants in the service sector and SMEs, which are particularly affected, there will be a relatively greater impact on them directly. Saving small businesses is economically important, as non-action will also have profound and long-lasting consequences for integration and Sweden's social and political sustainability. For vulnerable families, lost income due to the outbreak could lead to increased inequality in the society as well as in the labour market.

One crucial part of the response to COVID-19 is to ensure that all members of society have the information they need to stay healthy and follow quarantine guidelines. Migrant community outreach is therefore a priority. Outreach in Sweden has been carried out by national and local authorities by translating official health guidelines, posters, short videos and other important information into the languages spoken by populations in the country, as well as making sure that people can easily receive the information.



@ IOM



The Integration Centre Gothenburg has shared [short videos](#) about the risks of the spread of COVID-19 from an intercultural perspective in four different languages: Arabic, Dari, Tigrinya and Somali.

For more information on how COVID-19 impact migrants, and links to interesting initiatives undertaken to protect migrants, please click on the image:



The tools created by the City of Gothenburg will be discussed and shared with the following interested cities/actors:

- Amsterdam (NL)
- Leeuwarden (NL)
- Rotterdam (NL)
- Madrid (ESP)
- Karlstad (SWE)
- Malmö (SWE)
- Ghent (BE)
- Palermo (ITA)
- Turku (FIN)
- Oulu (FIN)
- Bilbao (ESP)
- NGO Dona Daria (NL)

Interested in receiving the finalized tools? Find our contact details below!

## General info on the Equal(c)ity project

Financed by: the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

Implemented by: IOM Belgium and Luxembourg, in collaboration with IOM Italy

With the Support of: Brussels Capital Region and City of Luxembourg

Geographical coverage: Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Sweden.

Duration: 24 months, started in November 2019

## Implementing Partners



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UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

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## Contacts

For more information on the project, please contact Elisabeth Palmero at [epalmero@iom.int](mailto:epalmero@iom.int) or +32 (0)2 287 74 39

Interested in receiving the finalized tools of this project, please contact Anke Van de Velde at [avandvelde@iom.int](mailto:avandvelde@iom.int)

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This project supports the implementation of the following Sustainable Development Goals

3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



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