

Summary of evaluation of criminal-law approach to honour-related violence

The interdepartmental policy programme on honour-related violence was launched in 2006. The programme was comprised of four themes: social prevention, protection and shelter, criminal law approach and local administrative approach.

When the programme ended in 2010, the Minister of Justice at that time promised that an evaluation would be carried out. The DSP group has evaluated the implementation of the criminal law approach under the policy programme. This summary sets out the main findings and conclusions of its evaluation.

Main principles of the approach

The objectives of the criminal law approach were formulated as follows:

- Emergency service workers ¹are able to recognise honour-related violence and threats thereof.
- Emergency service workers ²are able to help victims and potential victims of honour-related violence.
- Police and the judicial authorities are able to track down and prosecute perpetrators of honour-related violence.
- Police, women's shelters, the Public Prosecution Department and other relevant authorities record cases of honour-related violence in a similar way.

The activities pursued in order to achieve these objectives were grouped into five main strands

The research distinguished five main strands within the criminal law approach:

1 *The roll-out of the LEC EGG national method*

LEC EGG is the Dutch abbreviation for the National Expertise Centre for Honour-Related Violence. This centre - part of the Haaglanden police force - has developed a method that the police can use to recognise, analyse and tackle honour-related violence.

2 *Laying the groundwork*

Some of the activities within the programme are intended to lay the groundwork to make it possible to tackle honour-related violence and to ensure that the approach becomes embedded within the criminal justice system. These activities concern police financing and Public Prosecution Department policy.

3 *Improving cooperation*

The co-operation between the criminal law partners and emergency services is regarded as an important requirement for a successful approach to honour-related violence. Under the programme, co-operation agreements were developed to facilitate co-operation at local/regional level.

¹ In this context, emergency service workers means *police officers*, see De Kogel (2009).

² In this context, emergency service workers means *police officers*, see De Kogel (2009).

4 Promoting expertise

Educating the various partners in the criminal justice system was another important priority within this approach. This covered both initial training for new police employees and extra training for police, prosecution and judicial officials who may have to deal with honour-related violence in practice. Recognising honour-related violence, applying the LEC EGG method and other aspects of the approach, including criminal law aspects, play a central role in this respect.

5 Records

The final strand of the criminal law approach to honour-related violence is establishing a similar recording system. A similar recording system is needed in order to obtain an understanding of the scope and nature of honour-related violence. To this end, it was necessary to develop a system to enable the police to record possible honour-related cases.

Structure of study

The central question to be addressed by this study was as follows:

To what extent has the 'criminal law approach project' from the honour-related violence programme been implemented? What are the benefits of the criminal law approach in practice and what are its shortcomings at present?

The central question was translated into five research questions, which were addressed in two phases. The first phase of the study investigated which activities are carried out at national level and what the results of those activities are. During this phase, key figures at national level were interviewed and an internet survey was held amongst liaison officers for honour-related violence from all of the police regions.

The second phase of the study investigated the effect of the national approach at regional level. Five regions were selected - Amsterdam Amstelland, Limburg Noord, Utrecht, Zuid-Holland and the three co-operating regions Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe - and interviews were conducted with the main partners in the criminal justice system.

Conclusions

With regard to the scope of the results, the first three years of the criminal law approach were generally used to make preparations, generate support amongst partners involved in the criminal justice system and to develop training. The actual implementation of activities mainly took place in 2009-2010. At the same time, our conclusion is that the national implementation of activities as part of the criminal law approach to honour-related violence was largely in line with the plans, despite delays.

- The LEC EGG was introduced across the nation and is now used in all police regions. Two persistent problems in applying the LEC EGG method were the time that needed to be spent by police staff, particularly on the checklist³ and the fact that the query⁴ no longer worked in some regions due to problems with the police national law enforcement database.

Note 3 The checklist developed by the LEC EGG is used for the further analysis of suspected honour-related cases with the aid of a number of preset questions. See 4.2.1.

- Laying the groundwork to enable the criminal law approach to become embedded (finance, referral) did not prove to be entirely successful. Long-term financing for the LEC EGG was not secured within the duration of the programme, despite the subject having been the focus of attention for a long time. A promise of long-term financing for the LEC EGG was not obtained until February 2011. The centre's financing for 2011 and 2012 was provided by the Ministry of Security and Justice on an incidental basis.
- At national level, sufficient groundwork was done to enable local co-operation between the police, the Public Prosecution Department and relief organisations (women's shelters). There was also co-operation between the partners in the system in the regions that we studied. The implementation of the criminal law approach is largely in the hands of the police, who are responsible for recognising and analysing cases, in most regions in close co-operation with relief organisation such as women's shelters, or ASHG centres for advising and supporting victims of domestic violence in other regions. There is room for improvement in the co-operation between the Public Prosecution Department in relation to honour-related cases, mainly in relation to the exchange of information with the police. The nationally developed co-operation protocol is not followed everywhere, although arrangements have generally been established.
- The first post-introductory courses for police officers started in 2009 and were implemented under the programme until the end of 2010. The number of employees trained in each region differed substantially, but the target for the number of police employees to be trained was met. The training was regarded as a useful basic course on honour-related violence and as an introduction to using the LEC EGG method. In a number of regions, supplementary training was organised, due to a need for greater depth and background knowledge. A large number of staff from the Public Prosecution Department and the judiciary also followed the honour-related violence course run by the Training and Study Centre for the Judiciary (SSR), starting in 2009. However, the participants included relatively few judges. It also appears that not all of the Public Prosecution Department's liaison officers followed the course on honour-related violence.
- During the interdepartmental programme, preparations were made for the introduction of a national registration system within the police force. It was introduced in all the regions in 2011 and the figures for 2011 show that almost all of the regions (23 of 25) were using the system. However, the extent to which the system has been applied in a similar way is unclear. The differing numbers of cases recorded by the regions in 2011 gives rise to the suspicion that the recorded numbers are affected by differences in working practices. The police partners do not keep similar sets of records, which makes it difficult to exchange information. The fact that the Public Prosecution Department either does not keep records or does so in a different manner constitutes a persistent problem.

Achievement of objectives

- According to those concerned, the main progress has been made in relation to the objective: *Emergency service workers are able to recognise honour-related violence and threats thereof.* According to both the police and other partners in the criminal justice system (the Public Prosecution Department, women's shelters), police officers are increasingly becoming better at recognising honour-related violence and know how to respond to the warning signs. The

Note 4 The query is an automatic search that regional police forces can use to track down possible honour-related cases within changes. See 4.2.1.

introduction of the LEC EGG working method in the regions has made an important contribution in this respect, according to those concerned.

- With respect to the objective *Emergency service workers are able to help victims and potential victims of honour-related violence*, those concerned say that improved recognition of honour-related violence has made it possible to offer better help to victims. The LEC EGG method and the support offered by the LEC EGG allow for a more specific and targeted approach to honour-related violence, such as mediation at an early stage. Promoting expertise enables partners in the system to be aware that honour-related violence requires a specific approach. With respect to offering help to victims, the biggest improvements were achieved by two of the specialist partners: the police and women's shelters. Lack of expertise remains a persistent problem in the case of the other partners.
- It is difficult to establish what progress has been made in relation to the objective: *Police and the judicial authorities are able to track down and prosecute perpetrators of honour-related violence*. There are no figures available to provide a clear picture. The system does provide a way of recording the volume of possible honour-related cases handled by the police and Public Prosecution Department, but it is not fully used. The police do record the volume of work handled, but that information is not passed on to the Public Prosecution Department, which means that the information flow comes to a halt. The Public Prosecution Department makes only limited use of the possibility of treating violence as honour-related. In some regions, it makes no use of the possibility at all, while in others it uses the qualifications domestic violence and honour-related violence interchangeably. In any case, the Public Prosecution Department cannot elaborate on how the police have qualified the deed, simply because that information is not exchanged. This means there is no overall picture of the total volume of honour-related cases handled.

Co-operation and exchange of information

- In most regions, the co-operation between the police and women's shelters - or in some regions, ASHG centres for advising and supporting victims of domestic violence - has intensified in recent years. The police and women's shelters trust each others' expertise, while a lack of expertise on the part of other partners - such as youth care and the child care and protection board - forms an obstacle to improving co-operation with them. In four of the five regions that were studied, the division of roles between the co-operating partners is clear and the parties' expectations of each other are well matched. However, Limburg Noord is an exception: a lack of understanding between the police and relief workers has obstructed the exchange of information.
- The exchange of information on cases takes place in a variety of ways in the different regions. Sometimes there are regular case consultation meetings to exchange information, whether on honour-related violence or otherwise. In some regions, this takes place through the Safety House. In other regions, the exchange of information is incidental, taking place in response to specific cases. The partners value both forms of exchange. There is barely any exchange of reports of honour-related violence between the police and women's shelters; such an exchange only takes place in regions in which a central reporting desk for honour-related violence has been established (such as Amsterdam). As a result of the co-operation between the police and women's shelters, women's shelters now also use the analyses carried out by the LEC EGG via the police.

Persistent problems and areas for improvement

- The police officers who were interviewed thought that it would be desirable for expertise to be promoted amongst some partners in the system, such as the youth care bureau and the child care and protection board. It was also argued that there should be broader and more in-depth expertise within the police force.
- In relation to co-operation, the exchange of information between the police and the Public Prosecution Department was regarded as the main area for improvement. Safeguarding privacy and safety were mentioned as a general point for attention in relation to the exchange of information.
- Further possible areas for improvement concerned victim protection. It was argued that there should be specific legal tools to help victims. The traceability of victims was also regarded as a persistent problem. Finally, it was argued that the Monitoring and Security System could be used more often.
- At the moment it is not possible to obtain a national picture of the results of the criminal law approach to honour-related violence or to obtain a picture of the results of the efforts of the police and the Public Prosecution Department to track down and prosecute perpetrators. The information from the police and the Public Prosecution Department needs to be linked in order to obtain an understanding of the results of the criminal law approach.
- During the programme, the police made substantial progress in training staff at all levels. It is important to ensure that the organisation retains this expertise in future. On the one hand, this means regularly updating the expertise that key persons have, and on the other hand it means ensuring that the subject of honour-related violence becomes securely embedded within introductory police training. It is already covered, but attention needs to be paid to ensuring that the teachers retain sufficiently up-to-date expertise to give lessons on the subject. After the initial promotion of expertise amongst teachers, there has been a widespread failure to keep knowledge in this area up-to-date.
- Even now that the programme has ended, regional police forces still require policy support in relation to organising the criminal law approach. Although all the police forces are responsible for their own organisation, liaison offices often have lots of questions about the organisation and implementation of the methodology. For instance, there are currently lots of questions concerning the formation of the national police force and the effect that it will have on the implementation of the approach in the regions. According to those concerned, this development offers an opportunity to promote co-operation between the regions and to improve the uniformity of the approach.