# Legislation on Domestic Violence in Belarus – Concept of Victimisation Will Protect the Perpetrators instead of the Victims

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Relatively recently – in 2012-2014 - Belarus acknowledged the problem of domestic violence and started developing national response system. The prevalence of violence in families is confirmed by both state (law-enforcement and social service providers) statistics and results of researches – 77% of Belarusian women experience violence during marriage or in intimate relations. A comprehensive law against domestic violence simply did not exist but some regulation of instances of domestic violence was present in the Law on Basic Activities Aimed at Offences Prevention (became effective on April 16, 2014). The document contained specific measures of prevention of domestic violence and responsibilities of different stakeholders, however did not have a holistic approach to the issue and poorly addressed inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination.

Given the recognition of the problem, in 2014 the Vice-minister Mr. Tozik assigned the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) to develop a concept of Comprehensive Law against Domestic Violence. After approval of a concept the draft Law will be developed and might be submitted for consideration to the Parliament in 2016.

On September 22–23, 2015 the International Training Center on Migration and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Belarus hosted the International Workshop “Exchange of Leading Experience and Best Practices in the Sphere of Combating Human Trafficking: Domestic Violence as a Root Cause”. Representatives of competent authorities from Belarus, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Poland and the Russian Federation attended the event to analyze the cooperation of competent government authorities of the represented countries and non-government organisations in their activities of prevention of domestic violence, development of legislation, implementation of preventive measures, and exchange of best national practices.

During the above workshop the Commission on women’s rights of the Republican Public Association “Legal Initiative” proposed to introduce into the draft Law on Domestic Violence Prevention the approach based on victim mentality (victimisation).

Representatives of 5 women’s non-profit organizations with extensive practical experience in domestic violence prevention and rendering assistance to women-survivors and their children in Belarus strongly disagreed with the above approach on victimisation. They sent an open letter to the authorities and CSOs involved in domestic violence prevention stating their reasons for objection and describing what negative circumstances might occur once the suggested approach is implemented into the law.