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**RESPONSES TO MEN WHO USE  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:  
A EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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**THE SPANISH PERSPECTIVE 2: REPORT  
SUMMARY**

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# **Responses to Men Who Use Violence Against Women: A European Comparative Analysis.**

## **The Spanish Perspective 2: Report Summary**

by  
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### **Panorama of Police interventions into the problem of domestic violence in Spain**

*In Spain the eruption in the communications media of episodes of domestic violence did not occur until the 1990s. The Spanish police took special measures to look after women victims of domestic and sexual violence long before the public campaign of denouncing the woman's situation in the domestic ambit began. The three levels of Spanish police corps –state, autonomic and local- have taken special initiatives and developed interventions to deal with domestic violence.*

In Spain there are some 70,000 police officers for a population of approximately 40 million (1.7 police officers: 1,000 inhabitants) thus making it a country with one of the highest ratio of police officers per inhabitant in Europe. The police structure is divided into three levels: state, autonomic and local. The state called *Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado* which are formed by two bodies: the *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía* (CNP) for urban areas and the *Guardia Civil* (GC) for rural areas. Three autonomic police forces have been created in the Basque Country, Catalonia and in Navarra. The local police – also known as *Guardia Urbana* – correspond to the municipal police. The Police play an important role in the attention given by the State to the problem of violence against women. From 1983 onwards the problem of violence against women raised a certain interest within the police. The first police body to be concerned with the problem was the CNP, which from the year 1986 initiated the first specialised services for the attention of female victims, formed aboveall by women police officers.

The principal initiatives and interventions of different Spanish police in the terrain of domestic violence are:

## **1. National Police Corp: *Servicio de Atención a la Mujer (SAM)***

This service was established in 1986 in the context of concern for the victim in general. One of the first difficulties found by the CNP was the low number of female police officers. Another difficulty was –and continues to be– being able to make all officers aware of the fact that they should treat this kind of offence with the same rigor as all other acts of violence against people and not justify the violence as family problems which are *habitual* thus taking away all importance. The CNP was the first official institution to assume the aim of making it possible for female victims to give a statement in private. Nowadays there are 11 services for the attention of female victims. Today, this type of service has not been generalised in all the CNP squads. The causes provoking this are: either a shortage of female police officers or the low number of reports of such violent incidents.

The squads of SAM are composed of both male and female officers although it is the women who dedicate attention to the victim and the men to the investigation. They are exclusively competent with sexual and domestic violence within the CNP; this is a permanent service (in function 24 hr a day) in the working unit. The officers of SAM are by majority women so that the police officer-woman relationship will flow more smoothly, be more intimate and less traumatic and will give rise to more offences being reported. Nevertheless, it seems to be an implicit question as even the CNP criticise the fact that the female officers who attend exclusively to the female victims express a sexist conduct against the male officers, as if men were not capable of dealing with this type of assistance and investigation. The police officers working in SAM follow a specialisation in addition to this, all officers receive knowledge about female victims of sexual and domestic violence.

In 1996, ten years after the creation of SAM, the CNP concluded that the act of dealing with female victims had improved and it had even anticipated the social demands which vindicated the protection of women's rights. Another achievement of SAM has been the increase in numbers of offences reported by women. It is interesting to see that from the magazine published by the General Police Management; it reports criticism of the behaviour of officers of the CNP and the GC about the attention given to women victims of sexual or domestic violence. It reports on the criticism of the passive attitude demonstrated by some police officers and civil guards. This passive attitude sometimes corresponds to the concept of the domestic sphere of being a private sector in which not even the State should intervene. Another attitude which has been detected is attempting to convince the woman that *for her own good* she should not sign the statement or that she should try, on her own agreement to reconcile with her partner.

We can therefore conclude that at normative and organisational level the correct steps have been taken but there is still a long way before all officers adopt these measures and abandon old moral practices.

## **2. Civil Guard: *Equipos Mujer-Menor (EMUME)***

In the GC the reaction regarding the problem of domestic violence is yet to arrive as in the period 1995-97 the number of offences/misdeeds related with ill treatment doubled, creating great alarm. On the idea to act on the growing social concern about these offences and in accordance with the recommendations of the Government, specialised teams for assistance to minors and women victims was set up in the 1990s, the EMUME. In the Women-Minor Team (EMUME) there are female civil guards who have followed a specialised course organised by the institution itself. Since 1995 one GC from each Unit is specialised in violence against women and minors. There is a EMUME Central constituted by psychologists and the EMUME formed basically by two civil guards (women) and in 14 cities by three (2 women and 1 man). Any female –adult or minor- that has been the victim of ill treatment either physical or psychical and wishes to make a report before the GC can be attended to by the EMUME.

In their reports they consider it as much more of a social, cultural and educational problem rather than a police problem, they remain reluctant to act in a sector of private conflict, it is called “the sanctuary of intimacy”, and it is related to the affect and relationship of the couple. The best response is to educate and make them aware. They consider it to be a woman’s problem, together with minors, who are according to them “the most vulnerable victims in society” and “the weakest groups”.

I find it questionable that the aggressor is also considered a victim of the situation. This concept arises due to the fact that our society is essentially sexist –as if it were impossible to change this mentality because it is rooted in the up-bringing and encouraged by women themselves-. The man would become an aggressor because of bad family relationships and/or a clash of personalities. A clear criteria of intervention has not been forthcoming, there seems to be a contradiction between the problem as a social conflict and the orders to intervene.

## **3. Regional catalan Police: *Mossos d’Esquadra (ME)***

The Catalonian police are provided with a school, the Catalonian Police School (EPC), which is dedicated to the carrying out of basic and specialised training activities for the Mossos d’Esquadra and the Catalonian local police. The topic of domestic violence has been incorporated into the set of themes worked on in the different subjects of the basic training course.

In January 1998 a domestic violence group was created within the Regional Unit of Investigation of the ME in Gerona. It was a response to the increase in reports of aggression in the family sector which stood out at the end of 1997. The Domestic Violence Group of the ME is formed by two sergeants, a man and a woman, supported by three mossos from the group along with those who have the task of investigating. In fact, it is functioning as guide/pathfinder which will transfer in the rest of the Catalonian provinces as soon as the Mossos d'Esquadra take over there. The officers in this group do not wear uniform so as to safeguard the intimacy of their clients. No specific professional profile is required in order to participate in this group.

Their aims are: to carry out a police follow up to the reports which have been made in the domestic violence sector and to improve dealing with the victim of domestic violence. During this first and a half current year the acts mostly carried out are to give information to the victims and to receive the primary demand when the conflict is at the top. Many women do not carry through with the report afterwards. They have a very good relationship with judicial authorities, the public prosecutor and judges, who in this type of offences are more at ease due to the fact that they have already been alerted. Often as provisional measures of separation the husband is ordered to abandon the place of residence.

#### **4. Local Police in the Basque Country: Training Courses**

The training carried out by the local police in the Basque Country was created in order to make them sensitive to domestic violence and to give them better working instruments. The promoter of this training is EMAKUNDE, the Basque Women's Institute. The courses are funded by the Basque Government. The trainers are women who are specialists external to the police force.

The aims of these courses are: to make local police officers sensitive to the offences committed against women from a sociological, juridical and psychological frame; to give local police strategies of behaviour to be used in the face of situations of domestic ill treatment and sexual aggression and to inform about any changes produced in the penal legislation in relation to ill treatment and offences against sexual liberty.

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