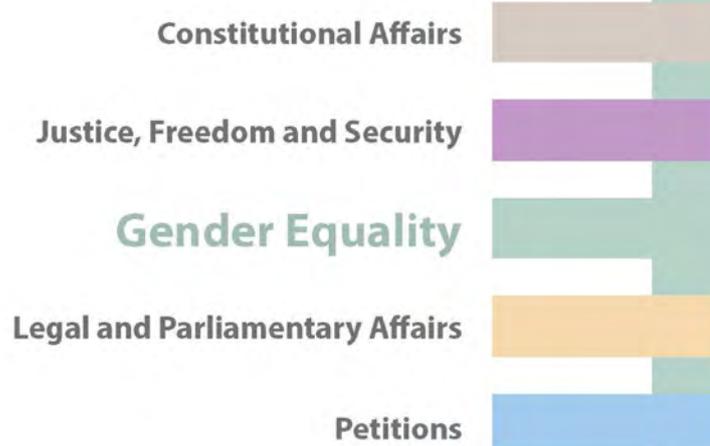


DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT **C**
CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS



**Knowledge and Know-how:
the Role of Self-defence in the
Prevention of Violence
against Women**

STUDY REQUESTED BY FEMM COMMITTEE



DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

**POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

WOMEN'S RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

Knowledge and Know-how: the Role of Self-defence in the Prevention of Violence against Women

STUDY

Abstract

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs upon request by the FEMM Committee, examined research on the effectiveness of self-defence and its place in policies at EU and Member State levels. It concludes that there is a growing evidence base that feminist self-defence can be effective in preventing violence. Whilst references to self-defence are present in the EU and Council of Europe policy documents, they are not substantial and yet to be developed into a coherent approach. Self-defence should be considered a promising practice and be better promoted and supported. More space should be made for it in policy, financing and research.

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To contact the Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs or to subscribe to its newsletter please write to: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE

Eeva Eriksson
Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs
European Parliament
B-1047 Brussels
E-mail: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

AUTHORS

Professor Liz Kelly
Nicola Sharp-Jeffs

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the elimination of discrimination Against Women
CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
ESD	Empowerment self-defence
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FSD	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
MA	Master's degree
NAP	National Action Plan
NCVS	National crime victimization survey
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
REA	Rapid evidence assessment
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence against women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WSD	Women's self-defence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Self-defence has been used for over a century by feminists to defend their bodily integrity **and assert their right to citizenship. However, women's resistance to violence has been less** documented or acknowledged in work on Violence against Women (VAW).

Self-defence was considered a radical intervention in the 1970s, with many Rape Crisis Centres building it into their services. Critiques led to ambivalence amongst feminists and policy makers. This meant its potential contribution to prevention has been neglected, but there has been a resurgence of provision and research, especially in the United States, in the last decade.

A rapid evidence assessment approach was taken to the depth study with 58 journal articles and books identified, and findings synthesised. Policy development was studied through searches on the Europa website, analysis of Member States Plans of Action, CEDAW and GREVIO reports. A list of manuals was generated, but these were not analysed as they are commercial products not connected to the studies under review. No European minimum standards, or funding streams were identified.

Self-defence could contribute to implementing Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention¹ in that it challenges constructs of a vulnerable, timid femininity and enables women and girls to develop a confident relationship with their bodies. It has also been adapted to groups **considered 'vulnerable'** – specifically girls and women with disabilities; it is also provision that many survivors take up. In terms of empowerment, self-defence is one of the few interventions that takes embodied empowerment as its focus and purpose: unlike much **safety advice which may limit women's freedom, self-defence** seeks to expand it.

Whilst references to self-defence are present in the European Union and Council of Europe policy documents, they are not substantial, and yet to be developed into a coherent approach. There are less references to self-defence in Plans of Action at Member State level than previously. No funding streams were identified at Member State level.

In terms of definitions women's self-defence (WSD) is a combination of techniques drawn from martial arts and assertiveness taught within different pedagogies. WSD includes feminist self-defence and variations such as padded attacker courses. It does not include safety advice or training which advises **restricting women's freedom. Feminist self-defence** includes critical analysis of VAW which holds perpetrators accountable and challenges victim blame.

Minimum standards, developed from the literature, include: accurate information on VAW; the opportunity to explore and challenge constructions of femininity; trusting intuition and **setting boundaries; learning to use voice; practicing simple techniques adapted to women's** bodies and capacities; witnessing other women/girls in a group grow in confidence and competence; that the decision which technique, if any, to use is personal and contextual. WSD involves the co-construction of knowledge and know-how within three principles: reframing victimisation; liberating the self; enabling the body.

¹ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2011.
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e1f0>

The most common form of VAW across EU Member State is sexual harassment, the form WSD dealt with, initially followed by sexual violence. It has been developed to address violence from partners. Victim survivors who undertake training find it has the potential to reduce trauma symptoms. While training has been adapted to the needs and capacities of girls and women with disabilities, challenges remain with respect to the different experiences of women of colour.

Within the research review, only 7 of 58 identified studies were conducted in Europe: analysis was, therefore, thematic. Studies which document successful resistance are often minimised, but they show clearly that it is possible and can be effective.

A minimum of 23 000 women and girls took self-defence courses in EU Member States in 2001, but provision is not institutionalised, and possibly has decreased over the last decade.

Feminist self-defence has wider and deeper impacts than padded attacker courses, and martial arts courses have serious limitations.

Five studies with control groups and post training follow up show that training decreases the amount of aggression and reduces the likelihood that assaults will be completed: in other words it is successful in preventing violence.

Women and girls, including victim-survivors, take up self-defence when it is easy to access.

Self-defence should be considered a promising practice in preventing VAW, with a clear, if implicit, theory of change. It is, however, marginalised and poorly supported at EU and Member State levels. More space should be made for it in policy, financing and research.

1. INTRODUCTON

KEY FINDINGS

- Self-defence has been used for over a century by feminists to defend their bodily integrity and assert their right to citizenship.
- **Women's resistance to violence** has been less documented or acknowledged in work on violence against women.
- Self-defence was considered a radical intervention in the 1970s, with many Rape Crisis Centres building it into their services. Critiques led to ambivalence amongst feminists and policy makers.
- It has been neglected as a prevention intervention, but there has been a resurgence of provision and research, especially in the United States, in the last decade.

Women's self-defence (WSD) is often associated with the early years of the **Women's Liberation Movement** in the 1970s, but earlier recorded classes took place at the beginning of the 20th century, organised by suffragists in the United Kingdom and understood as both a means of emancipation and self-protection (Godfrey, 2013). Edith Garrud opened her own dojo in London in 1905 and was involved in the athlete's branch of the Women's Freedom League. She offered classes to activists who were encountering harassment at suffrage events and later trained the **Women and Social Political Union's bodyguard (Looser, 2010)**. A similar process has been documented in the United States (Rouse & Slutsk, 2014). **Self-defence classes were taken by 'new women' in the 1920s, as part of claiming the right to be present in public space unaccompanied (op cit)**. More recently women in Egypt organised the Tahir Bodyguard, following mass harassment and assault of women involved in the uprisings earlier this decade. A group of 200 women patrolled the square interrupting harassment and assaults and offering self-defence classes to women activists in the square.

For more than a century, therefore, women in diverse contexts have seen the necessity of defending both their bodily integrity and their right to be political actors. It is worth reflecting on why we know far more about the abuse and victimisation of women in these contexts than we do their chosen methods of resistance. This is echoed in the literature on violence against **women (VAW) generally which has neglected women's resistance (see for exceptions, Bart & O'Brien, 1985; Kelly, 1987) and in which the origins and practice of self-defence has been misunderstood and misrepresented (Seith & Kelly, 2003)**. WSD had origins in critical politics, **forged at a time where women's reports of violence to public authorities were met with scepticism and blame**.

Women's self-defense training aims to arm women with the skills to avoid, interrupt, and resist assault... Early second-wave feminists, aware of the pervasiveness of violence against women and critical of society's reluctance to address it, took their safety literally into their own hands, adapting martial arts techniques to suit women's needs; adding verbal, psychological, and emotional skills; and integrating a critical gender consciousness into their trainings (Telsey, 1981 cited by Hollander, 2016, p. 207).

Bevacqua (2000) reviews the early history of the anti-rape movement in the United States

and notes that self-defence was a key strategy reflecting the politics of the time: self-sufficiency and rejection of a timid, vulnerable femininity. The sexism of the martial arts sector and a strong distrust of the criminal justice system led to a search for alternatives and a number of women were involved in developing what at that time combined aspects of martial arts and assertiveness training. Through most of the 1970s many rape crisis centres, in the United States and the United Kingdom, offered self-defence training as a core component of how they supported victim-survivors, challenging what has become known as 'rape culture'. **Whilst having radical origins, responses of other feminists to self-defence were often ambivalent, it was: "criticized for its liberal assumptions, for it promotes change one woman at a time and seeks to empower individuals to overcome their own passivity and submissiveness rather than rooting out that oppression" (op cit, p. 69). The practice ceased to be a core activity, replaced by counselling and advocacy, which ironically are also provided to individuals, whereas WSD is always taught in a group.**

This retraction meant limited investment in provision and even less in research. The last decade has, however, witnessed a renewal, especially in the United States where significant funding has been invested in efforts to decrease sexual assault on university campuses² (Gidycz et al, 2015). Simultaneously, a new generation of scholars working on sexual violence have revisited the issue from a more evidence based position. Anne Cahill (2009), from an Australian perspective, commends self-defence as a way to decrease fear through unpicking rape myths and giving survivors space to think and reflect. Nicola Gavey (2005: 220) also locates it as one strategy within a wider political project.

Not only do women need to be enabled to fight back when the situation calls for it, but our standard scripts for heterosexual sex need to be overhauled so it is clearer sooner that the man who keeps pursuing an unwilling woman is entering the territory of sexual coercion and potentially rape.

This report has six chapters. This introduction is followed by a brief description of how the depth study was undertaken, leading into policy analysis and a discussion of definitions and standards. The research review on the extent to which self-defence can contribute to prevention follows, a set of conclusions and policy recommendations.

² Attitude change programmes, however, remain the most common intervention.

2. HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE

KEY FINDINGS

- A rapid evidence assessment approach was taken with 58 journal articles and books identified.
- Policy development was studied through searches on the Europa website.
- **Member States' Plans of Action were searched for references to self-defence.**
- A list of manuals was generated, but these were not analysed as they are commercial products not connected to the studies under review.
- No European standards of funding streams were identified.

In this chapter we present a summary of how this desk based study was undertaken. The fields the study was to address were:

- Set out how (feminist) self-defence fits into the overall strategy for the prevention of violence against women as it is put forward, for example, in the publication of the Council of Europe on Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention³.
- A summary of different views and (mis)understandings about what (feminist) self-defence means and how (feminist) self-defence addresses the most current form of violence against women, i.e. domestic violence.
- Where available, a summary of Member States' policies that have legal provisions and/or prevention programmes including self-defence courses, and related experiences.
- A summary of the relevant international standards and of applicable European laws in the field of self-defence.
- Details on available funding at the European level.

2.1. Policy review

Assessment of whether WSD features in prevention at EU level was undertaken through searches on the Europa website, with particular attention paid to the Daphne page and that of the FEMM committee. Exploring these issues at Member State level would best have been done through country reports, but the time frame precluded this. We therefore accessed the latest Plans of Action on VAW (n=28) which were reviewed for references to WSD. As Chapter 3 shows there has been relatively little explicit policy development on self-defence at the EU level, so policy analysis has involved reading self-defence into 'relevant international and EU standards and legislation', specifically how prevention is formulated.

³ <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e1f0>

2.2. Research on self-defence

A rapid evidence assessment (REA) approach was chosen. This involved a systematic search of London Metropolitan University's library databases to identify books and journal articles, and more general searches to include grey literature. The search terms combined 'self-defence', 'women', 'violence' and 'prevention'. Most of the material was accessed through our own subscriptions and permissions. In addition, an MA student identified recent studies published in German and French. A template was created to extract the key information for each of the identified studies, completed in English for each source, forming the data set for the evidence review. In total, 58 relevant journal articles and books were identified, with 38 addressing the impact of self-defence. Analytic work was then undertaken to assess the density and quality of evidence, alongside identifying evidence gaps.

Chapter 5 presents a synthesis of this material supported by an annex (Annex 1) which lists all the studies identified along selected key dimensions: authors; date of publication; the location the data was collected in; the sample size and if there was a control group; key findings. This table is presented to ensure transparency of the analysis and conclusions reached.

2.3. Women's self-defence manuals

A list of published WSD manuals (n=38) was generated from titles available at the British Library (Annex 2). Such publications are commercialisations of practices which are constantly evolving; and none of these publications are the curricula used in the studies reviewed. Given that the main interest is the impact of WSD, and we cannot connect commercially produced texts to outcomes, we have not analysed these texts. Rather we have extracted descriptions of the approaches taken to self-defence in some of the studies and evaluations (see Annex 2). Feminist self-defence is taught in an interactional way, it is not manualised so much as a set of principles and practices which are adapted to the groups – both in terms of who the participants are (girls/women, able bodied/disabled) and the specific experiences they bring into the teaching context. So not only are curricula currently in use rarely published, they are living documents/practices which are adapted to contexts and communities. We also did not identify any European standards, but present a set of principles in Chapter 4. No funding streams at the European or Member State level were found.

3. POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

KEY FINDINGS

- Self-defence could be an intervention that contributes to implementing article 12 of the Istanbul Convention to the extent that it challenges constructs of a timid femininity and enables women and girls to experience their bodies confidently.
- **Self-defence has also been adapted to groups considered 'vulnerable'** – specifically girls and women with disabilities, it is also provision that many survivors take up.
- Self-defence training takes embodied empowerment as its focus and purpose.
- **Unlike much safety advice which may limit women's freedom**, self-defence seeks to expand it.
- Whilst references to self-defence are present in EU and Council of Europe policy documents, they are not substantial and are yet to be developed into a coherent approach.
- There are less references to self-defence in plans of action at member state level than previously.
- No funding streams were identified at EU or Member State levels.

In this chapter we explore how (feminist) self-defence fits into the overall strategy for the prevention of violence against women: our reference point was Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention⁴, and especially the accompanying paper (Hester & Lilley, 2014) which elaborates what implementation might comprise. Later sections present analysis at Member State level.

⁴ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2011.
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e1f0>

3.1. Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention

Box 3.1 sets out the general obligations covered by Article 12: self-defence is not mentioned explicitly, nor is it covered in the accompanying guidelines (Hester & Lilley, 2014). We therefore present an analysis of how it could be relevant.

Table 1: Article 12

Article 12 – General obligations
1. Parties shall take the necessary measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention by any natural or legal person.
3. Any measures taken pursuant to this chapter shall take into account and address the specific needs of persons made vulnerable by particular circumstances and shall place the human rights of all victims at their centre.
4. Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
5. Parties shall ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
6. Parties shall take the necessary measures to promote programmes and activities for the empowerment of women.

Source: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e1f0>

Self-defence is most relevant to paragraphs 1, 3 and 6. Whilst the research evidence on self-defence is presented in Chapter 5, here we show what, if it is effective, it could contribute to implementation of Article 12.

General obligation 1 focuses on gender regimes, the ways in which inequality between women and men is based in ‘customs and traditions and all other practices’ that presuppose women’s inferiority and/or reproduce stereotypical roles embedded in limited framings of femininity and masculinity. The idea that women are the ‘weaker sex’ has for generations been used to limit access to public space and to activities linked to strength and physical exertion. Whilst recognising that these notions are applied differentially to women across the intersections of race, class and region, such ideas have multiple consequences. The embodiment of women and girls is further impacted through sexualisation and experiences of violence. Customs, traditions and stereotypes contribute to cultural contexts in which women and girls

experience their bodies as sites of tension and uncertainty, available to others in discomforting ways and even not owned or inhabited comfortably by themselves. One ambition of feminist self-defence is to challenge these constructs: to offer women and girls opportunities to be in their bodies in confident and connected ways, to experience their self and other women as strong and capable, and to refuse a timid femininity.

General obligation 3 addresses the importance of paying specific attention to those who are vulnerable due to specific circumstances and to place human rights at the centre. One of the early philosophical justifications of self-defence was that socialisation into femininity both made women and girls more vulnerable to violence and less able to resist/contest it. Developments within WSD led teachers to extend its reach to groups which are often designated inherently vulnerable – girls, women with disabilities – and for whom WSD was deemed impossible or inappropriate (Seith & Kelly, 2013). Adapting the method to different bodies and social positions was a challenge a number took up (see Chapter 4). It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the few references we did find to WSD in EU policy documents refer to girls and women with disabilities, but not women as a category. That many victim-survivors choose to take self-defence classes is also relevant here, given that we know having been victimised as a child is linked to re-victimisation as an adult (Messman Moore & Long, 2000).

General obligation 6 encourages the promotion of programmes and activities that empower **women, with the accompanying paper (Hester & Lilley, 2014) noting: "This is said to refer to empowerment in *all aspects of life, including political and economic empowerment*" (p. 37).** That self-defence would fit here is in one sense obvious, but in another is connected to which definition of this intervention is adopted (see Chapter 4). Relevant here is the recent re-naming, especially in the United States, to "**empowerment self-defence**" (ESD).

The supporting paper to Article 12 (Hester & Lilley, 2014) argues that prevention must be a strategic priority if the long-term vision of ending violence against women is ever to be achieved (op cit, p. 5). Prevention can take place at multiple levels (individual, group, community, institution, region, national, supra national) and over varying time scales (short, medium, long term). Simplistic critiques of WSD note that it is a short term and individual based intervention, despite the fact that it invariably operates at a group level, and even over the medium term within institutions such as universities. Few of these critiques apply the same arguments to prosecutions – which take place against individuals – or shelters, which also work at the individual level. Both of these interventions are deemed to be part of tertiary and even secondary prevention.

In exploring theoretical models on prevention the authors recognise that:

Measures are needed at the institutional (meso) level to change norms and values about 'compliant behaviour of women' (op cit p. 11).

WSD is arguably one of the only interventions which takes this as a starting point, with a number of texts (see for example, Hollander, 2009; McCaughey, 1998) stating that traditional femininity encourages compliance and this ill-equips women and girls to believe they should have sovereignty over their own bodies, that they have a right to set boundaries to defend their bodily integrity, or that they might develop the capacities and confidence to do this.

The section on campaigns addresses concerns about safety advice.

Campaigns that tend to tell women how they "ought" to behave can imply that rape and sexual assault are an inevitable feature of society and place the responsibility on the actions of women rather than the perpetrator which may actually harden rather than challenge problematic attitudes (op cit, p.19).

Traditional safety advice has been criticised for unintentionally restricting women's freedom through commending avoidance strategies to decrease risk (Brooks, 2011). Whilst feminist WSD places strong emphasis on placing responsibility for violence and abuse on perpetrators it also offers women and girls options other than passivity if they encounter violence: a stance that can increase rather decrease freedom.

Another section explores the importance of working with the education system, one part of which addresses the promotion of:

Positive images of women which can prevent the formation of negative stereotypes and attitudes towards women that can contribute to an acceptance of gender-based violence (op cit, p. 24).

We have already noted stereotypes of women as weaker and as unsuited to 'fighting', and imagery associated with VAW tends to reproduce notions of passive victims. Positive images in relation to VAW might include ones depicting resistance. Beyond this, however, offering self-defence to girls and young women as one part of physical education, as happened in some areas of Germany and the Netherlands in the 1990s (Seith & Kelly, 2003) has potential to change how girls are viewed within an entire institution.

The paper also notes that we currently have a weak evidence base on prevention and that this is a young research field.

Absence of evidence should not be seen as evidence of absence and programme developers are encouraged to base programmes on the results and lessons learned from prevention work considered as 'promising' that is practice that: uses a gendered and human rights approach; provides a local evidence base; is sustainable and replicable; enables excluded members of society; includes community ownership; and includes partnership (op cit, p. 13).

It is here that the failure to include WSD is to be regretted, as unlike some prevention strategies, it can claim to have evidence of impact (see Chapter 5).

3.2. Self-defence within European Union and Council of Europe policies

A search was undertaken for any references to WSD within EU and Council of Europe policy documents and funded projects. The first reference can be found in the 1986 European Parliament Resolution on Violence against Women⁵. Article 24 (c) within the section on 'violence in the private sphere' calls for:

... the creation of national budgetary lines designed to finance the work of women's self-defence and self-help groups where women may be enabled to become more confident and self-reliant.

⁵ Doc. A2-44/86 OJ. C. 176, 14 July 86, p. 73-83

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOC_1986_176_R_0046_01&from=EN

Later in Article 66 within 'recommendations for action in the educational field' the text reads:

Introduction of courses to prepare children and young peoples for adult life and continuous monitoring of the implementation of these programmes [including] special defence courses for girls at schools.

There is then a big gap until 2011 and with the European Parliament Resolution of 5 April on priorities and the outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women⁶. The explanatory statement of this Resolution states under 4.7 (measures on behalf of young people):

It is important to educate schoolchildren and young people to understand the seriousness of sexualised violence. It is important that young people learn at an early stage to respect each other's integrity and to be aware of destructive and degrading behaviours, particularly such behaviour which is directed at young girls. Targeted measures aimed at young girls may therefore consist, for example, in offering courses in self-defence designed to teach various techniques to defend oneself against violence.

Self-defence is also noted in a 2016 study *The Issue of Violence against Women in the European Union: Study for European Parliament*⁷, which updates a 2011 report. It observes that 'self-defence has been regarded as a means of prevention of VAW' but notes that 'it is Member States' responsibility to prevent VAW and to ensure the conviction of perpetrators' (p. 41). Under 5.21.1 – prevention of violence against women the study also states that:

Some NAPs also include self-defence courses for women as a form of preventive measure (p. 45).

At the EU level, therefore, there has been some recognition of self-defence as a prevention strategy, but little work beyond this. An exception to this was funding of a study through the Daphne programme which explored WSD across 11 Member States (Seith & Kelly, 2003) and a later one on women with disabilities in Germany. The question about funding for the review, therefore, suggests that there is no funding stream at EU level.

WSD first appears in Council of Europe documents in the 1997 Council of Europe Final report of the activities of the EG-S-VL including a Plan of Action for Combating Violence Against Women⁸. Section 13 (13.23) on education states that:

Girls and young women should have access to free self-defence training, with the option for women instructors, and courses should be specially designed to include disabled women and girls.

The 2002 Recommendation 1582 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe⁹ is a report from the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men which sets out measures to be taken regarding the prevention of domestic violence. In Article 7 this includes (xi) 'to encourage women to learn self-defence techniques'. This is one of the few references which refers to women without further specification.

⁶ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2011-0065+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

⁷ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556931/IPOL_STU\(2016\)556931_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556931/IPOL_STU(2016)556931_EN.pdf)

⁸ http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/library/resource/IAV_AD75183

⁹ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17055&lang=en>

A subsequent 2008 Council of Europe publication - Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support service¹⁰ concluded that few Member States could claim to provide adequate resources for victims of violence.¹¹ The report recommends minimum standards for the amount and range of support services which Member States should achieve/implement in order to meet their international obligations. A section is included on self-defence, training and education. It cites the Beijing Platform recommendation¹² that **States 'promote training for victims and potential victims so that they can protect themselves and others against such violence'.**

A 2010 position paper developed by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) Centre on Violence against Women in relation to the Council of Europe campaign Towards a Europe Free from All Forms of Male Violence against Women¹³ has a section on prevention.

A crucial role in changing gender-biased attitudes and behaviours is played by the training of women and girls in order to deconstruct prevailing myths about gender-based violence and to develop prevention skills (recognising potentially dangerous situations, implementing prevention and protection strategies, especially verbal and physical self-defence). After more than 30 years of ground-breaking and mostly invisible work in many European countries, the feminist self-defence movement needs official recognition and sufficient support (including funding) for extending this kind of efficient training to all women and girls (p. 14).

This is a strong endorsement, which recognises the longevity of the intervention and the fact that it is underpinned by an evidence base.

A report from 2014¹⁴ describes a Daphne-funded project for disabled women who have experienced violence involving partners from Austria, Germany, United Kingdom and Iceland. It notes that:

In all countries, specialised informal services stated as being particularly helpful included peer counselling, empowerment movements, self-defence classes and self-help-groups (p. 17).

3.3. Self-defence in UN documentation

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, convened a group of experts in Vienna in 2005. The '**Good practices in combating and eliminating violence against women**'¹⁵ report lays out the expert group's recommendations for elements in the areas of law, prevention, and provision of services. Section 5 suggests that all victims/survivors (and other women and girls) should **have the possibility to attend a women's self-defence course.**

All victims/survivors (and other women and girls) should have the possibility to attend a women's self-defence course, which evaluations

¹⁰[https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF\(2007\)Study%20rev.en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF(2007)Study%20rev.en.pdf)

¹¹ Combating Violence Against Women: Stocktaking study on the measures and actions taken in Council of Europe Member States, Directorate General of Human Rights, Council of Europe, CDEG(2006)3, Strasbourg, 2006.

¹² <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>.

¹³ <http://www.womenlobby.org/Towards-a-Europe-Free-from-All-Forms-of-Male-Violence-against-Women-December>

¹⁴ http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_394354_en.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-gp-2005/docs/FINALREPORT.goodpractices.pdf>

show increases self-efficacy and empowers women to resist where possible and appropriate (p. 24).

Here self-defence training is cited as the most 'obvious example' of training and capacity-building that can be directed at victims/survivors and at members of civil society to enhance their capacity to prevent violence against women (p. 36).

Women's self-defence has been adapted to work for all sorts of groups from young girls, to women with disabilities and those working in the sex industry. Women's self-defence now covers sexual abuse, sexual harassment and domestic violence and has been mainstreamed into schooling for girls in the Netherlands and in parts of Germany (p. 36)

The second thematic report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women to the Human rights Council in 2008¹⁶ explores possible indicators on violence against women and state responses. In the victim protection section it is noted that:

99. ... enabling women to live free of violence requires the integration of programmes for education, retraining and establishing sustainable livelihoods. Women's self-defence programmes have proved effective in removing the debilitating effects of fear.

Paragraph 104 includes provision for self-defence in the possible indicators for assessing state responses.

3.4. Women's self-defence at Member State level

As noted in the methodology chapter the time scale precluded commissioning country level reports. As an alternative route we reviewed national action plans, monitoring of Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence and reporting to GREVIO on the Istanbul Convention, no references to self-defence were found in any of the Council of Europe documentation.

3.4.1. National Action Plans (NAP)

An online search was undertaken to find the NAPs of Member States. The majority of these were accessed via the UN Women Global Database on Violence Against Women.¹⁷ Considerable effort was made to find the most up-to-date NAPs, however only eleven current were available online. The most recent available versions for the other countries (n=17) have been included in this analysis.

Annex 3 records the result of this exercise and reveals that only one explicit reference to self-defence **was identified. The Czech Republic's NAP** for 2011–2014 identifies the need for self-defence **courses but only for 'children endangered by domestic violence'**. The table also records the forms of VAW covered by NAPs: it is worth noting that the majority do not cover all forms of VAW, with sexual violence a clear absence in many.

We were made aware that some regional action plans in Germany include reference to self-defence for disabled women, but it was beyond the scope of the time available to locate and analyse local actions plans across all 28 Member States.

¹⁶

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:z4_aYaLAGcwJ:www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/7session/A-HRC-7-6.doc+&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clink&gl=uk

¹⁷: <http://www.evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>.

This absence further suggests that there are no state level funding streams for self-defence, with provision being decided on at regional and local levels. This echoes findings from an EU wide study (Seith & Kelly, 2003) which found limited institutionalisation (only at that time in the Netherlands, and this appears to have lapsed since) and precarious provision.

3.4.2. Country reports to CEDAW

Given the lack of reference to self-defence in the NAPs, attention was turned to country reports submitted to CEDAW (n=72), all of which were searched for references to self-defence.¹⁸ **Of the 28 Member State reports, only Germany's fifth periodic report (2003)** referred to WSD, and primarily with reference to women with disabilities.¹⁹ Within a list of general and specific measures and programmes by Länder, self-defence is mentioned twice: self-assertion and self-defence for smaller girls (Bremen); and projects on self-assertion and self-defence for girls and women with disabilities (Berlin).

3.5. Reflections

Self-defence could offer one route to achieve the goal of prevention as defined by Article 12 of the Istanbul convention, especially when considered in relation to the accompanying paper on implementation.

Whilst there are references commending self-defence as a measure that can contribute to the prevention of VAW stretching back over three decades, and clear suggestions that it may meet the needs of women and girls, they are limited. There has been negligible development of policy at the EU, Council of Europe or Member State levels with a resultant lack of funding support. In the next Chapter we explore ways self-defence has been defined and offer a set of minimum standards.

¹⁸ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm>

¹⁹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/250/50/PDF/N0325050.pdf?OpenElement>

4. DEFINITIONS OF WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENCE AND MEETING WOMEN'S NEEDS

KEY FINDINGS

- **Women's** self-defence (WSD) is a combination of techniques drawn from martial arts and assertiveness taught within different pedagogies.
- WSD includes feminist self-defence and variations such as padded attacker courses. It does not include safety advice or training **which advises restricting women's freedom**.
- WSD includes critical analysis of VAW which holds perpetrators accountable and challenges victim blame.
- Minimum standards include: accurate information on VAW; the opportunity to explore and challenge constructions of femininity; trusting intuition and setting boundaries; **learning to use voice; practicing simple techniques adapted to women's bodies and capacities**; witnessing other women/girls in a group grow in confidence and competence; that the decision which technique, if any, to use is personal and contextual.
- WSD involves the co-construction of knowledge and know-how within three principles: reframing victimisation; liberating the self; enabling the body.
- The most common form of VAW across EU Member States is sexual harassment, the form WSD dealt with, initially followed by sexual violence. It has been developed to address violence from partners.
- Many victim-survivors choose to take self-defence courses.
- While training has been adapted to the needs and capacities of girls and women with disabilities, challenges remain with respect to the different experiences of women of colour.

4.1. Defining self-defence

What constitutes women's self-defence (WSD) has been contested for decades, with multiple providers, methodologies and perspectives. In its contemporary and historical forms it has involved an adaption of skills from martial arts within various pedagogies. Few of the studies dealt with in Chapter 5 offered clear definitions. This chapter, therefore, explores the issues at stake.

Nower (2007) argues that the term self-defence refers to using multiple strategies to interrupt physical and emotional harm from an aggressor. Whilst accurate as a minimal definition, this fails to illuminate key differences in content and approach. Training offered by the police, by martial arts experts, in gyms and by specially trained women instructors from a feminist perspective all fit under this minimal definition, but are actually doing different things in different ways. Searles and Berger (1987) identified four approaches: police sponsored courses; martial arts focused and taught; martial arts based taught by women from a different standpoint; and feminist self-defence. They argued that the latter, whilst least able to garner **financial resources**, was **'inherently more radical'** (p. 79).

In the 70s and 80s police offered what were called 'self-defence' classes, they were all too often limited to offering a set of 'rules', many of which commended avoidant behaviours which restricted women's freedom. Similar critiques have been made of more recent police led awareness campaigns which take the realities of VAW for granted, and implicitly hold women responsible for managing the risks of encountering abusive men (see, for example,

Brooks, 2011). **In the context of this report such provision is not included in Women's Self-defence (WSD).**

The distinction which has generated the most heat, however, has been between models **rooted in martial arts and what many have termed 'feminist self-defence'** (Seith & Kelly, 2003). Bernatchez & Olivier (2014), both active in martial arts, acknowledge that there is a distinction between its goals and those of self-defence: the latter seeks to halt aggression and enable escape whereas the former is to outplay and dominate ones opponent. The skill sets are different with specialist self-defence teachers focusing on lower rather upper body **strength and teaching simple strategies adapted to women's bodies and which can be learnt** relatively quickly. In contrast martial arts requires ongoing training to reach proficiency. **It was in part due to the critiques of courses rooted in martial arts that 'padded attacker' courses** emerged – such training could be said to sit between traditional martial arts and feminist self-defence.

Feminist self-defence has always combined learning new skills with the provision of accurate information about VAW and enabling women and girls to become more confident in and about their body. This form of provision, therefore, is based on and communicates a critical analysis of violence against women (Rathbauer, 2000). Rather than taking this for granted, and implicitly making women feel responsible for their own protection, it places responsibility on perpetrators. Alongside this, however, it also refuses to position women and girls as passive victims, and draws on a critique of female socialisation which has discouraged, perhaps especially for white and middle class women, notions of female bodily strength and capability. It is this wider framing and curriculum that leads Brecklin (2008: 60) to argue:

The main goal of women's self-defence training is to strengthen women's capacity to defend themselves against potential attacks. Yet, the effects of women's self-defence training extend considerably beyond this objective, including physical, psychological, and behavioural impacts.

Weitraf et al (2013) expand upon this noting that whilst self-defence offers verbal and physical resistance skills, for these to be useful and used requires overcoming a number of barriers such as fear, embarrassment and uncertainty. WSD is, therefore a combination of **'psychoeducation', skill development and reinforcing that intuition can alert to potential danger.** Rather than resort immediately to physical strategies women and girls are encouraged to scan the environment, identify potential support from other people and possible escape routes. Verbal resistance is strongly commended, which requires encouraging and enabling women to use their voices in more assertive and loud ways than they may have previously felt comfortable with.

Some have proposed changed namings to more accurately reflect the intent and content of WSD, Senn (2011) refers to **'rape resistance' rather than 'risk reduction'**. This reflects Rentschler's (1999: 153) perspective that **"feminist self-defence enacts women's right and ability to defend themselves from harm"**. The term **'rape resistance' however limits the scope** to a single form of VAW, as does Rape Aggression Defense (RAD). Jones & Mattingley (2016) use the concept of **'empowerment self-defence' (ESD), an increasingly common usage in the US. They then proceed to claim that it has 'many names' including: "risk reduction, primary prevention, self-protective practices, assertiveness training, rape avoidance..., women's self-defence, personal safety education"** (op cit, p. 265–266)'. This rolling of everything into a new overarching concept, however, serves to disguise the fundamental differences in content and approach outlined above, which permits practices which are not that empowering to claim the same status as those which women find the most enabling.

With this in mind, drawing on and extending Rathbauer (2000) and Hollander (2010), an outline of the minimum standards empowering feminist self-defence should contain is offered:

- Accurate information and analysis of men's violence against women and girls – its forms, who the most likely perpetrators are, how common it is. This information allows women and girls to move away from stereotypes and critically evaluate the safety advice they encounter.
- Placing responsibility squarely with perpetrators, challenging ways women and girls are encouraged to blame themselves and each other in order to reframe victimisation.
- Exploring female socialisation to create self-awareness, self-worth, belief in legitimacy of self-defence, trusting one's intuition, managing fear, using anger.
- The opportunity to share stories, including of successful resistance.
- Trusting intuition and developing an awareness of one's surroundings/context.
- Verbal self-defence – practicing assertive boundary setting, using the voice to confront, name and/or summon assistance.
- Physical self-defence – learning to know and trust one's strength and about vulnerable spots in men, rehearsing simple techniques and the use of everyday objects to interrupt and to escape assaults.
- Adaptions to ensure access to those with particular needs/experiences: girls, women with disabilities, women of colour and older women.
- Strategies against violence that can be used in relation to others, including bystander interventions.
- A safe space to explore in a women-only group, with a female teacher.
- An underpinning that which, if any, of the strategies women and girls use in any situation is their choice and will be determined by the context they are in and their assessment of what might work.

Lienand (2015) stresses the critical pedagogy in WSD – the co-construction of knowledge **combined with 'know-how' and solidarity. The importance of the group context has been** stressed by other research (Brecklin & Middendorf, 2014; Fraser & Rusell, 2000). The combination of knowledge and know-how in a group setting ensures that the techniques taught are simple and accessible but linked to situational judgements. She notes that WSD is rarely institutionalised in Europe and faces challenges of sustainability.

What self-defence aims to do, as does participation in sport and other physical activity, is **change women's relationship with their own bodies within everyday lives. To the extent that** it is successful it should improve and expand options, and increase rather than limit freedom. It should also offer an opportunity for women to experience themselves in a group as powerful and rightfully in control of their own bodily integrity. De Welde (2003) summarises this in three useful principles: reframing victimisation; liberating the self; and enabling the body.

Hollander (2014) and Senn et al (2015), on the basis of research (see Chapter 5) both argue that the preventative potential of WSD resides in increasing the capacity of women and girls to set boundaries earlier which forestall harassment and abuse. Anne Cahill (2009: 378) outlines the conditions through which self-defence can be considered a form of prevention of VAW.

Self-defense courses that are not making the political connections between feminine bodily habits and a rape culture—that do not, for example, explicitly name conventional gender roles as part and parcel of a culture that condones violence against women—are unlikely to enact the embodied challenge to that culture that

feminist self-defense courses offer. Those that do, however, have the potential not only to transform individual bodies, but also to transform the meanings of both rape and femininity. To change social perceptions of what women's bodies are, and what they can do, is to change political discourse.

4.2. Meeting women's needs

The brief for this study specified that it should address domestic violence, as the most prevalent form of VAWG. It is indeed the most researched, and where the greatest attention to policy development and intervention has taken place. The recent EU-wide FRA survey²⁰, however, shows that the most prevalent – the form which more women and girls encounter in their lifetime – is sexual harassment. Interestingly this was the form of VAW that self-defence focused on initially, followed swiftly by rape and sexual assault. As the knowledge base on VAW grew training was adapted to known perpetrators, including partners. Self-defence has always taken seriously the fact that many women do at some point resist (see, for example Campbell, et al, 1998 and Downs et al, 2007 for domestic violence; Bart & O'Brien 1985 for rape. Cermele (2004, 2010) notes that stories of victimisation predominate in the VAWG literature to the **extent that students on a Women's Studies course questioned findings that documented successful resistance. Introducing participation in a self-defence course as part of the curriculum changed these students' perspectives.**

It remains the case, especially in the United States, that many courses are explicitly developed to address sexual violence (see Annex 1). They do not, however, in a feminist framing focus on strangers: the accurate information giving ensures that this is not the case. The possibility of the aggressor being a partner and what difference, if any, this makes to what strategies are selected will, therefore, be a topic for debate and exploration. Whilst the literature did not reveal evaluation of any courses directed specifically at domestic violence (see Annex 1), the authors are aware of courses developed for women in shelters and that in Europe the focus has been on VAW generally (Seith & Kelly, 2003). That said the focus on sexual violence in the US may have encouraged victim-survivors to enrol: Brecklin and Ullman (2004)²¹, reporting on the findings from a sample of 1623 victim-survivors at universities, suggest that rather than seeing such courses as making women responsible for their victimisation, survivors use them as one way of dealing with the legacies of victimisation. David et al (2004) report on 67 US female military veterans suffering from PTSD as a result of sexual/physical assault during service, the majority of whom wanted self-defence classes. Rosenblum & Taska (2014) argue that self-defence is a complement to psychotherapy as it creates an integrated body experience. The literature, therefore, shows that self-defence can be applied to all forms of VAW, especially if the pedagogical approach encourages participants to bring their own experiences and concerns into the teaching space.

A linked but different question is which women self-defence works for, discussed less in terms of forms of violence but other characteristics.

Ballan & Freyer (2012) argue for the consideration and inclusion of women with disabilities, but with minimal recognition of the extent of developmental work that took place in 1980s on this, especially in Europe (Seith & Kelly, 2003).

[S]elf-defense skills can be an integral component of intervention for domestic violence survivors with disabilities. Self-defense classes heighten self-confidence, reduce fear, and foster a positive self-image as well as feelings of self-worth (Ballan & Freyer, 2012 1095).

²⁰ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf

²¹ See also Brecklin (2004), in a study of over 600 university students those who took up self-defence were more likely have histories of child sexual abuse.

Bauer (2001) notes further that assertiveness and ownership of the body are critically **important for women and girls with disabilities, since they are often 'dispossessed' through medicalisation and presumptions of vulnerability.** Hermes (2001) surveyed 260 self-defence teachers, disability organisations and sports providers in Germany. Provision for disabled women and girls was concentrated in southern and central Germany, especially in large cities. The predominant model was Wendo with a specific method - Kae-in-Sog-In - created for those with disabilities. The majority of provision was for those with physical and learning impairments.

Hollander (2016) notes that self-defence training has been adapted for women who are physically disabled, visually impaired, developmentally disabled also for older women and girls. Creating models that work for girls and young women was also, arguably, most developed in parts of Europe (Germany and Netherlands) during the 1990s (Seith & Kelly, 2003).

De Welde (2003b) from her ethnographic study of 19 classes in the United States, notes that a small number of participants were women of colour, and raises the question of whether the notions of safety/danger and strength underpinning self-defence are constructed through an implicit whiteness. Speidel (2014) interviewed five African American women who had taken a Rape Aggression Defence class three years previously. Their reflections suggest that the ways that body image and beauty standards are presented are based on an assumption of **whiteness and did not consider 'radicalised femininity'.** **WSD needs to pay more attention to the different controlling images that confront women of colour, including the 'strong Black woman' stereotype.** She concludes that teaching should not presume all participants have been socialised to think of themselves as weak and that content should deal with racist harassment and assault.

A further complexity is whether the use of self-defence by marginalised women, especially women of colour, is more likely to lead to blame and criminalisation. Hollander (2016) notes the case of Marissa Alexander, an African American, who fired a warning shot near her abusive ex-partner and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

5. THE CONTRIBUTION OF SELF-DEFENCE TO PREVENTION

KEY FINDINGS

- Only seven of 58 identified studies were conducted in Europe.
- Self-defence acknowledges that women and girls do frequently successfully resist violence and it does not increase the risk of injury.
- A minimum of 23 000 women and girls took self-defence courses in EU Member States in 2001, but provision is not institutionalised.
- Feminist self-defence has wider and deep impacts than padded attacker courses, and martial arts courses have limitations.
- Feminist self-defence is empowerment through knowledge and know-how, it has the potential to reduce trauma symptoms.
- Five studies with control groups and post training follow up show that training decreases the amount of aggression and reduces the likelihood that assaults will be completed: it prevents violence.

Whilst we identified a significant body of work (see Annex 1 for a listing, the countries in which research was undertaken, the kind work and key findings) the field remains limited, especially in Europe, and somewhat marginalised. That said a new generation of studies were identified with more sophisticated research designs including control groups, longer follow ups and/or differentiating layers of impact. The fact that there was a special issue of the academic journal *Violence Against Women* on self-defence in 2014 is one example of an expanding evidence base.

The identified research can be presented in a variety of ways, one of which would be geographical, differentiating between European based and elsewhere. Undertaking the review, however, revealed that only seven studies have been undertaken in Europe. A more useful way of presenting what we know is in relation to the content and level of methodological sophistication. The evidence includes research reviews (6), conceptual and theoretical papers (10), re-analysis of existing data sets and the generation of new data (38). Many of the latter are small scale and qualitative, addressing one type of training (not always described in detail) with measures only at the end of the training. There is, however, an emerging body of work which includes follow ups – sometimes for as long as 12 months – which assess whether the strategies have been used, and for those with control groups compares victimisation rates. These studies assess the preventative impact of self-defence and are presented together in a later section of this chapter. Some studies disaggregate impacts for all participants and those for survivors, allowing an assessment of the claim that self-defence may make women feel more to blame if they are subsequently victimised. Whilst most of the studies reported on here do show positive effects, they are frequently measuring different things.

The literature has been organised through a series of themes: resistance; why women take up self-defence; provision in Europe; comparing martial arts and WSD; decreasing fear, increasing confidence; reframing VAW; embodied selves; and preventing VAW.

5.1. Acknowledging resistance

Cermele (2010) writes about the resistance to women's resistance, an unease with findings about this. Echoing this Hollander and Rogers (2014) analysed 1084 reports of sexual violence in US newspapers, in over a quarter (26,6 per cent) there was information on women's resistance, and in 15 per cent it was deemed successful. Revealingly this was represented as luck rather than capability, suggesting that women are rarely depicted as resisters.

Bart & O'Brien (1985) undertook one of the earliest studies on resistance and rape. Their sample was 94 women, of whom 51 were deemed 'rape avoiders'. Key findings were that the most effective strategies were yelling and/or physical resistance, and that the more strategies women used the greater their chance of rape avoidance. Key themes were also early recognition of danger, and strong determination to resist, anger and responding immediately.

McCaughey (1998) argues that within rape culture women's resistance is deemed 'unnatural', and that WSD can be part of challenging this construction.

Self-defense disrupts the embodied ethos of rape culture [by identifying] some of the mechanisms that create and sustain gender inequality but also a means to subvert them (p. 281).

Tark and Kleck (2014) undertook secondary analysis of the US National Crime Victimization Survey data on rape (n=733) and sexual assault (n=1278). The analysis suggests that resistance interrupted attacks – 88 per cent of rapes were completed where there was no resistance compared to 19 per cent if women resisted. Further analysis also showed that **resistance did not increase injury. The authors conclude that:** "self-defense training should focus on providing prospective victims with knowledge of a wide array of tactics, both forceful and nonforceful, from which to choose" (op cit, p. 290).

Scully (1990) interviewed convicted rapists who talked of expecting a predictable submissive response from women they targeted. Running away, shouting and physical resistance were all considered potential deterrents.

Whilst the literature on resistance is most developed with respect to sexual violence, there is some evidence that women do challenge within domestic violence, although this data is often minimised within accounts of victimisation: clearly some notions of victimhoods are built around not resisting or retaliating.

Acknowledging resistance is complex and challenging, since it is at times read as suggesting that women should, and should be able to so effectively. Not all resistance does prevent violence, but to avoid this issue does a disservice to women's experiences. The issue is whether it possible to change the script, to recognise successful resistance as an event in which women were powerful and creative.

5.2. Why women take up self-defence

Surprisingly little research explores women's interest in or reasons for taking up self-defence.

Jan Jordan (2005) interviewed fourteen women all of whom were victims of the same serial rapist. Each tried to regain control during the assault, with eight using physical resistance. Having resisted and having this recognised was important for women, it meant that they had 'withheld' something and refused to let the rapist exert total control over them. All of the women considered self-defence could be a strategy for coping with the aftermath of sexual violence.

In the US female university students have been a focus for provision: for example Brecklin (2004) cites a study from the 1980s in which almost a quarter (22%) of 3,187 young female

university students had accessed self-defence training, and some of the findings show that it is a resource that many survivors seek: women with childhood victimisation were twice as likely to take up self-defence training.

Hollander (2010) compares 110 female college students and 174 non participant controls. The strongest reasons for taking a WSD course were: the reputation of the course as recommended by other women; wanting to become more confident and to deal with fear of VAW.

5.3. Self-defence provision in Europe

Seith & Kelly (2003) remains the only study of self-defence within the European Union. It included a survey of 155 teachers, a survey of government ministries, expert interviews and 11 country reports. A minimum of 23000 women and girls accessed training in 2001, with 48 courses for women with disabilities and nine for shelter residents (p. 13). The ministry responses showed that only in the Netherlands had it been mainstreamed, through education **for girls. Reasons for not mainstreaming were that it was 'an individual response' and there was no evidence of its impact.**

The authors challenge this, arguing there is an evidence base, and at this time there were training for trainers' courses and European networks. WSD was both poorly supported and marginalised within wider VAW policy developments, with exceptions at this time being Germany and the Netherlands which recognised it as a prevention strategy, especially for girls. **The non-recognition means that achievements 'against the grain' were 'reliant on the commitment of teachers and organisers of WSD, and their belief – born out frequently in the responses of participants – that WSD works' (p. 69).**

5.4. Comparing martial arts and WSD

A debate which was live for much of the 1980s and 1990s was the difference between martial arts based and feminist inspired courses, exploring the differences in content and pedagogy and the relative impacts. Several research projects now address this.

Hamel (2001) accessed participants (n=86) through 11 self-defence providers in Canada, two of which used a feminist perspective. Over a third (41 per cent) had experienced an attack before taking the course. Findings included that all training had positive impacts, but the feminist inspired training scored higher on information, self-defence skills and pedagogy and was more effective in decreasing self-blame. These two courses were found to offer a broader range of strategies and they were the only classes led by women. The two feminist self-defence providers and two full-contact WSD providers had the best scores on the three **evaluation criteria. Several martial arts classes were criticised for teaching 'rules' and implying that good physical condition was necessary to defend oneself.** Assessments were more positive for longer courses, which was also linked to retaining new information. Noel (2009) echoes one of these findings in that both male and female martial arts practitioners were thought to reproduce stereotypes about male physical superiority.

Ball & Martin (2012) compared the impacts of a traditional martial arts programme, a padded attacker self-defence course taken by 25 to 35-year-old female students' (n=69) at a US university and a stress management programme. Outcomes were assessed in terms of perceived self-efficacy and fear. Both the self-defence and martial arts classes increased self-defence self-efficacy, and the self-defence course decreased life-threatening fear. Overall the self-defence class impact was deeper and more extensive.

These findings suggest that feminist self-defence training has a wider range of positive impacts, but padded attacker courses are evaluated positively on some dimensions. Courses

rooted in more traditional martial arts have significant limitations.

5.5. Decreasing fear increasing confidence

In terms of impact of self-defence assessed immediately after participation the intention is to decrease fear which leads to women restricting their behaviour and to increase confidence that resistance is possible.

McDaniel (1993) assessed the impacts for 49 women and girls taking a four week feminist self-defence course in New Zealand. The findings show a decrease in fear of crime and an increase in confidence: the participants were more fearful than a control group before the course, but less fearful afterwards.

Van Baarson and Van de Pligt (1995) surveyed 139 participants on courses in Amsterdam plus a control group. **They found an overall positive impact with women's sense of risk decreasing due to no longer feeling so vulnerable** (see also Weitraf et al, 2000).

Brecklin (2007) reviewed 20 quantitative studies, with most showing positive impacts across a range of psychological measures including: increased assertiveness and self-esteem; decreased anxiety/fear; increased perceived control; increased self-efficacy. Only a minority of studies measured subsequent behavioural impacts but here too there were positive findings with respect to physical competence, actual avoidance and use of strategies. She notes that many women pre training used avoidant strategies to limit the possibility of violence and self-defence increased their participation in social and cultural life.

5.6. Reframing VAW

It is a core component of feminist inspired self-defence to offer accurate information in order to challenge myths about violence and to place responsibility for aggression with the perpetrator. The goal here is to reframe violence against women as something that can happen in many contexts that known men are often the perpetrators and that victims are never to blame.

Brecklin (2004) found that women who took self-defence/assertiveness training were less accepting of rape myths, and scored higher on independence, self-confidence, stress resistance, with a number being themselves survivors of abuse in childhood. The author notes potential therapeutic benefits for women survivors, as well the potential to challenge **stereotypical gender norms and "transform women's consciousness"** (op cit, p. 494). Brecklin & Ullman (2005) re-analysed the same data set of US university students to explore the impact of WSD on survivors finding that those who had taken self-defence were more like to use verbal resistance and boundary setting and were less likely to blame themselves if they were victimised.

David (2006) reports a significant shift in negative impacts for survivors: at the six month follow up there was a decrease in avoidant behaviours, symptoms of PTSD including hyper arousal and depression. Women were more also active, less limited by fear and anxiety.

De Welde (2003) explores how unpacking stereotypes of perpetrators, expanding understandings of VAW and the contexts it happens in reframes violence, as does accounting **for one's own actions to others**.

The previous two sections show that decreasing debilitating fear is an important outcome for many participants, enabling women to become more self-confident in a range of settings. The impacts on survivors are the opposite of those often supposed: it decreases self-blame.

5.7. Embodied selves

De Welde (2003) maintains that WSD should not just be assessed on 'effectiveness' in terms of preventing future violence but whether it offers alternative narratives, including narratives about femininity and women and girls' embodiment. She argues it is a space in which "women's bodies are affirmed as strong, active and independent" (p. 272).

Orchowski et al (2008) assessed the impacts of a short two hour 'rape risk reduction' training for 300 18-19 year olds with a control group. At follow ups two and four months later there were more self-protective actions by those who took the course. Assertive body language and trusting their intuition were used more than explicit resistance strategies.

Fraser & Russell (2000) surveyed 59 professional women aged 22-57 who took a Model Mugging course in one of two US cities. Most reported increased confidence in defending themselves, more assertiveness and clarity about setting boundaries and a change in their perception of themselves as a woman. Participants noted the importance of a female instructor and the power of being in a group of women.

Gidycz et al (2015) followed up 650 female university students seven months after taking WSD training. They reported increased trust of their intuition, more positive body language, increased verbal assertion and use of a variety of strategies learnt.

Brecklin & Middendorf (2014) explored the processes of change for women on a four week RAD course. Two elements predominated: the women only group process which facilitated the sharing of fears and potential threats, support and a comfortable atmosphere. The second, also linked to the group format, was witnessing others grow in confidence and successfully use techniques, this encouraged them to develop their own capacities and skills.

McCaughey (1998) reports on an ethnographic study of women's self-defence through participating in 120 hours of classes, observing classes for 15 hours alongside 25 interviews. She provides a 'thick description' of how WSD functions, paying particular attention to the transformations it can engender focused within a culture in which VAW is normalised.

5.8. Preventing violence

In this section we report on studies which, due to large sample sizes, post training follow up and the use of control groups have studied the impact in terms of preventing future violence. Five studies fulfilled these criteria.

Brecklin (2004) used an existing large dataset to identify a group which had taken self-defence and who subsequently encountered sexual aggression, she also created a comparison group who had not taken a self-defence class from the same survey. The self-defence women reported less unwanted sexual contact and more attempted rapes suggesting they were more able to interrupt violence. They were also more likely to report that the attack stopped or was less violent due to their resistance.

Hollander (2014) evaluated a ten week 30 hour course comparing 75 women who took the course with 108 controls, with a follow up a year after the completion of the course. A quarter per study had been raped and almost a third (30,8 per cent) had experienced attempted rape. Women in the intervention group reported significantly less sexual violence during the year after the training: none reported a completed rape compared to three per cent of the comparison group. It was not just that completed attacks were lower, but the number overall, a finding that is considered more significant since the self-defence training expanded definitions of VAW.

Sarnquist et al (2014) report on an intervention in Kenya with girls: 1978 took a self-defence course with a control group of 428 who had life skill classes. The training lasted six weeks,

with 12 hours of instruction and three refresher sessions. The rate of reported rape decreased from 18 to 11 per cent over the next 12 months, with no change in the control group. Over half (53 per cent) reporting using the techniques to prevent or interrupt assaults. The most commonly used strategy was verbal resistance (45 per cent) followed by verbal and physical (29 per cent) and a quarter (25 per cent) just using physical. Two thirds (65 per cent) also reported using what they had learnt to interrupt sexual harassment. The researchers concluded that teaching self-defence is a cost effective prevention method.

Senn et al (2015) report on the only randomised control trial in the literature. Here 893 first year female university students were randomly assigned to a four session WSD class (n=451) or a control group (n=442) who were given information leaflets on sexual assault. Three waves of follow up were administered over a 12 month period. Reports of rape, attempted rape and sexual coercion were significantly lower in the intervention group. The programme itself had been modified on the basis of a pilot: it lasted longer and had more interactive and practice scenario content and placed more emphasis on escalating response if a perpetrator persisted.

A Dutch study (van Baarsen & van der Pligt, 1995) focused on a self-defence class over several weeks. 84 women completed base-line measures, 61 completed a follow-up four months after the course and 43 psychology students served as control group. The positive impacts of taking the course are reported as decreased sense of vulnerability to a range of forms of VAW and increased confidence in capacity to resist. There was a preventative effect with participants reporting fewer instances of harassment, sexual or physical violence.

These studies provide powerful evidence that where WSD offers a range of strategies women and girls are able to use them to avoid/limit/escape violence. Self-defence is not always successful, but it offers tools and increases capacities in those who take it up. The Kenyan study also shows the potential for scaling up, and that this is not limited to a Western context.

5.9. Answering the critics

Hollander (2004) notes that an unintended consequence of increasing awareness of VAW as **'cause and consequence' of women's inequality has reduced attention to women's strength** and resistance. In a later article (Hollander 2009) she explores the most common criticisms of WSD: that successful resistance is not possible; that to resist is dangerous; that it makes women responsible if they do not succeed. She skilfully addresses each through an argument that at a fundamental level these are based on, and reproduce, traditional ideas of gender and female victimhood.

Ballan & Freyer (2012) note that previous analysis of the US National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data showed that women who use **'self-protection' have an increased chance** of avoiding completed rape but at a cost of increased injury. They report that the vast majority (80,7 per cent) were referring to bruises, cuts, scratches, or swelling, and ask whether these minor injuries may have prevented more serious injuries had the assault not been interrupted.

5.10. Limitation of the evidence base

Whilst the evidence base is expanding on the positive impacts of self-defence, and its preventative potential, there are a number of limitations.

- The research evidence from Europe, whilst going in the same direction as that from the United States remains sparse.
- There is very little to date which evaluates the ways girls are affected by taking self-

defence.

- There is very little research which specifically addresses the application of techniques with respect to domestic violence or ongoing victimisation by known perpetrators more generally.
- There is little which enables assessment of the different modes of delivery, or which compares them, so the length of training and the essential content is yet to be clearly established.

5.11. Reflections

James and Mattingly (2016) argue that the weight of evidence shows that WSD can decrease both some of the harms of violence and its prevalence. Similarly, Gidycz & Dardis (2014) present an overview of changing perspectives on self-defence, concluding that active resistance increases rape avoidance and that this evidence base should lead to increased support for it as a primary prevention tool. Brecklin (2008) concludes that to date attitude change interventions have had limited impact: in this context an approach which offers women and girls tools to resist in the present should be part of prevention agendas.

De Welde (2003) argues there are three core components of feminist self-defence: reframing victimization – exploring constructs of femininity and stereotypes of perpetrators; liberating the self – **developing one's own embodied agency, sense of self, that women can be a** defenders of themselves, work on voice; enabling the body - learning techniques which deliver a sense of power and possibilities.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- Women and girls, including victim-survivors take up self-defence when it is easy to access.
- Self-defence is a promising practice, with an implicit theory of change, in terms of preventing VAW.
- It is, however, marginalised and poorly supported at EU and Member State levels. More space should be made for it in policy, financing and research.

Many women and girls take up offers of self-defence, especially when they are made easily accessible at schools, universities, workplaces. At least a third of those who take up the opportunity are survivors. Researchers who have documented positive impacts commend it as a prevention strategy:

Empowering self-defence training [expands] women's and girls' imagined possibilities to include a range of responses to violence [and helps them] to develop an analysis of violence, a deep connection to their bodies, and a comprehensive toolbox for becoming powerful agents of social change (Thompson, 2014: 357).

... the ability to fight back allows women to develop the sense that attacks are abnormal and undeserved apart from the warnings of others and to act on those feelings [...] the point is not simply to give women technical advantages, but to change the relations of power in the way they imagine personal and public space (Hengehold, 2011: 61).

There is an implicit theory of change with WSD which focuses not just on safety but on freedom.

- The threat and reality of **VAW limits women's freedom**
- Many women and girls fear the wrong people/contexts
- Accurate information is empowerment through knowledge (Coy & Sharp-Jeffs, 2016)
- Women and girls should be less complaint and trust their instincts
- This requires building confidence in voice, strength and the right to defend ones bodily integrity
- It is possible to learn simple techniques to resist and interrupt violence
- Knowledge and know-how expand space for action, freedom and citizenship, not just in relation to violence, but **women and girls' sense of self and embodiment**.

The evidence to date suggests that feminist/empowerment self-defence is a promising practice, and that it should be included as a prevention measure. In reality it is rarely institutionalised, poorly financed and misunderstood in much of Europe. To this end we make a series of recommendations.

6.1. Recommendations

The over a decade ago a study on self-defence training in the EU (Seith & Kelly, 2003) sought to move the practice in from the margins, to locate it within the range of innovative strategies **that women's movements have developed to respond to and challenge harassment, abuse and violence**. It concluded with nine recommendations which are still relevant and have been taken into consideration in those we make in this report.

Both reports concur that it is feminist (empowerment) self-defence training which has the positive impacts outlined in Chapter 5, and meets the minimum standards established in Chapter 4. Any policy developments at EU and member state levels should, therefore, begin from a clear statement that it is this specific framing, pedagogy and content that they are promoting.

The European Institutions and EU Member States should:

- **Promote increased knowledge and recognition of the contribution of women's self-defence training to the goal of preventing violence against women**, among EU and Member States policy makers and civil society, as well as relevant Council of Europe mechanisms such as GREVIO and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Include women's self-defence training** – using a feminist/empowerment pedagogy and minimum quality standards – **as a key element of comprehensive measures for the prevention** of violence against women in relevant **policies and national action plans** (for example on violence against women, child sexual abuse/exploitation, gender equality, education, health, crime prevention) at EU and national/Member State levels and **allocate appropriate budgets** for implementation.
- Acknowledge in policy-making that **single-sex provision** is a necessary approach to create safe spaces that enable critical thinking, explorations of embodiment and disclosure of experiences of abuse, and that this constitutes a necessary positive action strategy that fits within EU frameworks for gender mainstreaming. Such single-sex spaces should be supported and funded by public authorities in close cooperation and consultation with feminist self-defence organisations.
- Support the development of **Europe wide quality standards** and potentially a quality control/certification **system for women's** self-defence training/trainers, and provide support for qualification. The minimum standards in Chapter 4 of the report to serve as a starting point for the standards, to be developed further in consultation with experts from the feminist self-defence sector.
- Support **European dialogue and networking among women's** self-defence practitioners and organisations, to share and exchange information including new research and evaluation, adaptations in content and pedagogy, funding opportunities, project cooperation. Such a network could provide and develop expertise and knowledge about the sector - **activities could include a mapping/directory of women's** self-defence in the EU, work on Europe wide quality standards/certification system, development of a basic, adaptable training-for-trainers curriculum based on the **agreed standards, promotion of women's** self-defence training within the broader violence against women, education and crime prevention sectors.

- **Ensure appropriate allocation of resources** to women's self-defence. This should include **funding to ensure provision of initial and further training for women** including courses crafted for girls, women with disabilities, migrant and minority women, older women and women in prostitution. This should also include **support training/professional development measures for self-defence teachers** to ensure EU-wide provision, including in currently underserved regions and communities.
- Support further **research and evaluation on women's self-defence. Possibilities here include:**
 - a cross-European evaluation study to analyse the impacts and outcomes of **women's** self-defence training for women and girls;
 - a study on the economic, social and cultural benefits of investing in self-defence training;
 - investigating the **political and organisational conditions that allow women's self-defence to thrive or which create insurmountable obstacle.**
- As part of human resources/staff development and health promotion, the **EU Institutions** should **offer empowerment self-defence (ESD) training** (based on the previously mentioned quality standards) **to all female staff members, parliamentarians and trainees/interns.**

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: THE STUDIES WHICH FORM THE BASIS OF THE RAPID EVIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Author and year	Location of research	Type of research	Sample	Forms of violence addressed	Key findings
Ballan & Freyer (2012)	-	Research review	-	IPV	Safety plans must be specific to each victim, taking into account the complexity of her life, but the decision of whether or not to use self-defence must be her own, including for women with disabilities.
Bart & O'Brien (1985)	USA	Qualitative	94 women; 43 raped and 51 avoided	SV	The most effective combination of strategies was physical force or yelling. Early recognition of danger, strong determination to resist, sense of indignation, immediate anger and forceful response was most effective.
Brecklin (2004)	USA	Survey	3,187 female university students	SV	Women with multiple forms of childhood victimization were almost twice as likely to participate in self-defence/assertiveness training.
Brecklin & Ullman (2004)	USA	Survey	1,623 female university student sexual assault survivors	SV	12.9% took self-defence/assertiveness training after victimisation. Assaults were primarily committed known perpetrators. Over half (52.9%) of survivors thought resistance interrupted the violence.

Brecklin & Ullman (2005)	USA	Survey	3,187 female college students ²²	SV	Victims with pre-assault training were more likely to say that their resistance stopped/interrupted the violence. Women with training were angrier and less scared during a subsequent assault.
Brecklin (2008)	-	Research review	-	SV	Risk reduction programs including discussion of protective behaviours, preventive strategies, and assertive behaviours led to a reduction in sexual victimisation for a proportion of participants.
Brecklin & Middendorf (2014)	USA	Impact/evaluation	34 women interviewed; observations of training	SV	Women's self-defence courses offer participants a beneficial and supportive group atmosphere.
Burrow (2012)	-	Conceptual/theory	-	VAW	Self-defence training is a key source of resilience because it cultivates self-confidence.
Caignon & Groves (1987)	USA	Qualitative	54 women who have successfully defended themselves	SV	Women who resist do interrupt/escape and often escape injury
Cahill (2009)	-	Conceptual/theory	-	SV	Feminist self-defence training gives the opportunity to move in and through the world in a new way. These insights and bodily practices extend women's participation in social and political life and thus erode the effects of a rape culture.
Cermele (2004)	USA	Qualitative	Students in women's WSD class	VAW	Participation in WSD increased willingness to engage with research on resistance.
Danylewich (2001)	USA	Qualitative	50 sex offenders	SV	Argues women not conditioned/socialised to defend

²² Same data set used in Brecklin (2004)

					themselves appropriately, and offenders expect there to be no resistance.
David et al. (2004)	USA	Survey	67 female outpatient veterans receiving mental health services due to sexual/physical violence	VAW	Traumatized female veterans believe that self-defence training would be a powerful addition to more traditional treatments for PTSD.
David et al. (2006)	USA	Impact/evaluation	10 women who had undertaken 12 week SD programme (survivors)	SV	Results at 6 months follow-up indicate significant reductions in behavioural avoidance, PTSD hyper arousal, and depression, with significant increases in interpersonal, activity, and self-efficacy.
De Welde (2003)	USA	Ethnography	125 women taking courses	VAW	Self-defence training creates in a physical agency within which narratives about femininity are reinterpreted and re-embodied as powerful rather than vulnerable.
Dempsey Cole (2009)	-	Research review	-	VAW	Evaluations of the relative efficacy of various types of self-protection training have yet to be conducted.
Fraser & Russell (2000)	USA	Qualitative	59 women taking courses	SV	Not only did the women feel confident to defend themselves against assault, they also described a variety of ancillary effects including greater assertiveness, enhanced clarity about boundaries, changes in their relationships, and shifts in their self-perceptions, particularly their sense of themselves as women.
Gidycz et al. (2006)	USA	Impact/evaluation	500 college women (pre-test) 309 women (after 6 months)	SV	Intervention group significantly increased their protective behaviours compared to the waiting-list control group.

			Intervention group: 148 Control group: 161		Intervention group women who were victimised during the 3-month follow-up period evidenced less self-blame and greater offender blame.
Gidycz et al. (2015)	USA	Impact/evaluation	650 college women (pre-test) 504 women (after 6 months) Intervention group: 207 Control group: 297	SV	Programme participants increased self-protective behaviours over the 4-month follow-up and maintained these gains over the academic year. Decreased self-blame was also maintained.
Gidycz & Dardis (2014)	-	Research review	-	SV	Lack of self-defence training on university campuses is problematic, given that active resistance is significantly more likely to lead to rape avoidance. Studies on self-defence training have promising findings.
Hamel (2001)	Canada	Impact/evaluation	86 women enrolled in SD classes	VAW	Women benefit from SD training. Longer classes lead to better information retention. Reduction of fear is linked to the increase in confidence. Survivors did not report any negative effects and had decreased self-blame.
Hasday (2001)	USA	Review and survey	22 students who took RAD course; 15 RAD instructors	VAW	Self-defence acknowledges a level of societal danger and female physicality that makes policymakers uncomfortable. It is a tool in prevention.
Hermes (2001)	Germany	Survey	62 self-defence teachers, disabled women's networks, mainstream disability	VAW	The provision of self-defence for women and girls with disabilities is concentrated in Southern and Central Germany and large cities; it is largely absent in Eastern Germany.

			organisations and sports organisations for the disabled		Accessibility and mobility are major obstacles for participation in otherwise highly sought-after lessons.
Heydon et al. (1999)	-	Research review	-	SV	Self-defense training can contribute to psychological health and prevent sexual assault.
Hinkleman (2004)	USA	Impact/evaluation	68 women university students; 75 women in control group	SV	The women's self -defense course significantly increased assertiveness, confidence and belief in capacity to resist.
Hollander (2004)	USA	Impact/evaluation	36 women enrolled in WSD classes	SV	Effects extend to influence many aspects of women's daily lives, self -confidence, relationship to their bodies, and their gender concepts. Reducing women's fear of violence and increasing their competence to deal with it makes women's everyday lives less fearful.
Hollander (2005)	-	Conceptual/theory	-	SV	Focusing only on victimization disempowers students' lives. Information on women's resistance counters the myth that women can never defend themselves.
Hollander (2009)	-	Research review	-	SV	Explores the criticisms of and ambivalence about self-defence. Argues that a refusal to recognise that women can resist successfully reproduces gender stereotypes.
Hollander (2010)	USA	Mixed methods	20 women interviewed; 118 women enrolled in six SD classes; and 174 women enrolled in other classes.	SV	Reasons for taking: friends' recommendations, visions of the "possible selves" they could become, and fear of violence. Many women who had never enrolled in a self-defense class reported having considered doing so. Barriers include time, money, and availability of classes.

Hollander (2014)	USA	Impact/evaluation	286 students completed the first survey (117 WSD; 169 control); 75 of WSD students and 108 of control completed the follow-up. 20 interviews with students.	VAW	Intervention group reported significantly fewer sexual assaults during the subsequent year. No women in the self-defence group, but 3% of the comparison group, reported a completed rape. Self-defence but not comparison group reported significant increases in their confidence that they could defend themselves against an attack from a stranger, acquaintance, or intimate.
Hollander (2016)	USA	Research review	-	SV	Empowerment-based self-defence training helps to change the root conditions that allow violence against women to flourish.
Hughes et al. (2003)	USA	Impact/evaluation	368 women; 136 enrolled in WSD class	VAW	Self-defence students had decreased fear and increased confidence.
Jones & Mattingly (2016)	-	Research review	-	VAW	Empowerment-based self-defence (ESD) is an effective intervention for the prevention of violence.
McCaughey (1997)	USA	Ethnography	-	SV	Self-defence has radical potential for disrupting rape culture

McCaughey (1998)	USA	Ethnography	24 students and instructors	VAW	Highlights potential for undermining violence against women and sex inequality more broadly through disrupting gender ideology that makes men's violence against women seem inevitable.
McDaniel (1993)	-	Impact/evaluation	49 women	SV	The self-defence group reported a significant increase in confidence.
Orchowski et al. (2008)	USA	Impact/evaluation	300 undergraduate women enrolled in psychology courses, divided into intervention and control 2, 4 month follow ups	IPV	WSD was effective in increasing levels of self-protective behaviours, self-efficacy and use of assertive sexual communication. Reduction of attempted rape among programme participants at follow-up.
Ozer & Bandura (1990)	USA	Impact/evaluation	43 women enrolled on courses	VAW	Decreased fear increased confidence. These changes were accompanied by increased freedom and decreased avoidant behaviour.
Rathbauer (2000)	Austria	Impact/evaluation	60 women (30 intervention; 30 control)	SV	Self-defence increases confidence and provides accurate information.
Sarnquist et al. (2014)	Kenya	Impact/evaluation	1,978 adolescent girls in intervention group and 428 in a control group	SV	Self-defence decreased sexual assault rates among adolescent girls at a 12 month follow up. The intervention was also associated with an increase in disclosure enabling survivors to seek support.

Searles & Berger (1987)	-	Conceptual/theory	-	SV	Self-defence is an inherently more radical approach because it aims at prevention and seeks to challenge traditional gender roles.
Seith & Kelly (2003)	Europe	Surveys	155 self-defence teachers; government ministries, 11 country reports	VAW	Offers women a different and positive option in coping with the threat and reality of harassment and abuse. WSD is absent from most Plans of Action and prevention policies on violence against women and child sexual abuse. WSD is only institutionalised in the Netherlands for girls in schools.
Senn et al. (2008)	Canada	Impact/evaluation	88 women (34 in program group and 54 women in control group)	SV	Self-defence training decreases belief in rape myths and women blame.
Senn (2011)	-	Conceptual/theory	-	SV	Sexuality education is an important component of WSD particularly for heterosexual and bisexual women's agency in ongoing sexual relationships with men.
Senn (2013)	Canada	Impact/evaluation	88 undergraduate women: 34 in programme and 54 control 59 Grade 11 and 12 female high school students; 41 completed the post-tests	SV	Self-defence training decreased self-blame, increased confidence.
Senn et al. (2013)	Canada	Methodological	-	SV	Research design for randomised control trial.
Senn et al. (2015)	Canada	Randomised Control Trial	451 women in WSD group; 442 in control group	SV	Completed rape was significantly lower 1 year later for the intervention group.

Shay (2003)	-	Conceptual/theoretical	-	VAW	Engages with arguments for and against self-defence as a prevention intervention.
Sinclair et al. (2013)	Kenya	Impact/evaluation	522 girls – 402 in intervention, 120 in control 489 at 10-month follow-up	SV	Sexual assault decreased at follow-up for intervention group. Over half the reported having used the self-defence skills to avert sexual assault in the year after the training. Rates of disclosure increased in the intervention group, but not in controls.
Söchting, et al. (2004)	-	Research review	-	VAW	There is more evidence on the effectiveness of WSD than for attitude change programmes.
Speidel (2014)	USA	Qualitative	Five African American women	VAW	Although the participants found the self-defence training empowering, self-defence curricula could improve by including an intersectional approach and including racist violence.
Thompson (2014)	USA	Qualitative	29 self-defense instructors	VAW	Empowering self-defence training is a distinct practice: places violence in a social context; holds perpetrators responsible for violence; centres embodiment; offers a comprehensive toolbox.
Van Baarsen (1995)	Netherlands	Impact/evaluation	84 women on WSD course (61 at follow up); 43 in control group	VAW	Participants reported fewer instances of harassment, sexual or physical violence, and they handled aggressions after training with more purpose, feeling less afraid, more angry. Article points to a possible therapeutic effect of self-defence participation for victim-survivors.

Weitlauf et al. (2000)	USA	Impact/evaluation	99 university students (49 intervention; 50 control)	VAW	WSD empowers women by giving them greater control over their own physical safety and wellbeing.
Weitlauf et al. (2001)	USA	Impact/evaluation	96 female undergraduate students (26 in SD class, 29 in enhanced SD class, 41 in control group)	VAW	As compared to the waiting list control self-defence training increased self-efficacy perceptions not only for self-defence skills but also sports competencies, and coping skills.
Weitlauf et al. (2013)		Research review	-	SV	Argues for more systematic testing of the contextual factors.
White & Gees (2014)	-	Comparison	-	SV	Compares a proposed commercial product with WSD. The latter offers more positive impacts in women and girls lives.
Wortberg (1997)	Germany	Survey	15 girls	VAW	The self-defence class helped girls to be aware of their body language and use it consciously. Girls felt more self-confident and stronger.

ANNEX 2: SELF-DEFENCE MANUALS IDENTIFIED AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Author	Year	Title	Publisher	Place
Gardner, Ruth B.	1971	Judo for the gentle woman	Tuttle	Rutland
Stock, F. Patricia Pechanec	1975	Woman alert!: personal and property defense techniques with body exercises	Burgess Pub.	Minneapolis
Steiner, Bradley J.	1976	Below the belt : unarmed combat for women	Paladin Press	Boulder, Col
Sugano, Jun	1976	Karate and self-defense for women	Ward Lock	London
Hudson, Kathleen	1977	Every woman's guide to self-defence	Collins	Glasgow
Neff, Fred	1977	Self-protection : guidebook for girls and women	Lerner	Minneapolis
Bateman, Py	1978	Fear into anger : a manual of self-defense for women	Nelson-Hall	Chicago
Bartho, Robert G.	1979	Protect yourself : a self-defense guide for women from prevention to counter-attack	Prentice-Hall	London
Smith, Bronilyn	1979	Defend yourself! : a step-by-step guide for women	Pelham	London
Hudson, Kathleen	1982	Women against rape	New Horizon	Bognor Regis
Biffen, Chris ; Gay Search	1983	Hit back! Self-defence for women	Fontana Paperbacks	London
Harvey, Mike	1983	Women's code for self-defence	Kaye & Ward	Kingswood
Quinn, Kaleghl	1983	Stand your ground : a woman's guide to self-preservation	Orbis Publishing	London
Redgrave, Paul	1983	Self-defence for women: a manual	Hale	London
Whitelaw, Judd	1985	Protect yourself : every woman's survival course	Blandford	Poole
Adams, Frederick ; Gillian Webster	1986	Hands off ! Hap-ki-do self-defence for women	Jarrold	Norwich
Warren-Holland, Diana (et al.)	1987	Self-defence for women	Hamlyn	Twickenham
Quinn, Kalegh	1988	Stand your ground : a woman's guide to self-preservation	Optima	
Sliwa, Lisa ; Greenberg, Keith Elliot	1989	Attitude: common-sense defence for women	Sidgwick & Jackson	
Davies, Jessica	1990	Protect yourself : a woman's handbook	Piatkus	
Hicks, Kevin	1990	Resisting and planning escape	Image Publications	Banbury

Grosser, Vicky ; Rani Parmar ; Gaby Mason	1992	Take a firm stand : the young woman's guide to self-defence	Virago	
De Paul, Lynsey ; Clare McCormick	1994	Taking control	Boxtree	London
Quinn, Kaleghl	1994	Stand your ground : a woman's guide to self-preservation	Pandora	London
Croft, Ashley ; Pat McAuliffe	1996	Staying safe : the complete illustrated guide to personal safety for women	Amersham	Amersham
Davies, Jessica	2000	Safe in the streets : how to be safer in the streets, in the home, at work, when travelling	Piatkus	London
Sanders, Brent	2001	How dangerous men think : (and how to stay safe for life)	Random House	London
Baty, Kathleen	2003	A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do : what every woman needs to know about staying safe in the 21st century	Rodale	London
Harrison, Simon	2003	Kung fu for girls : self-defence for divas	Ebury	London
	2003	Go on girl: self-defence for women : a practical introduction	@anti-copyright	Great-Britain
Kaiser, Robert ; Gerry Smith	2004	Be safe: the guide to women's personal safety	CSPA UK Ltd	Pateley Bridge
Neligan, Annie	2004	Sleeping warrior : women, self-defence and feminism	ReadingLasses Press	Wigtown
Varnado, Michael L.	2004	Soft targets : a woman's guide to survival	Pelican	Gretna, La
Sharman, Alison	2005	Self-defence and protection awareness for women: the art of self-belief	AuthorHouse	Bloomington, Ind.
Gervasi, Lori Hartman	2007	Fight like a girl – and win : defense decisions for women	Griffin	New York
Lindquist, Scott	2007	The essential guide to date rape prevention : how to avoid dangerous situations, overpowering individuals and date rape	Sourcebooks	Naperville, Ill
Marsh, Stephen	2007	Fight for your life: self-defence for women and children		
Bruce, Fiona	2008	Savvy : the modern girl's guide to doing it all without risking it all	Bantam	London
Nezhadpournia, Frank	2008	Defending against attack for women	Actikarate	Biggleswade
Campion, Buzz	2010	Simple self-defence for women : the A to Z of self-protection	Know-How Publications	S.I.
Flower, Charly	2011	The power in softness : a guide to personal protection and empowerment for women	Direct POD	Brixworth

Self-defense manuals for women referenced in the British Library (keyword search: self-defense for women)

<http://www.bl.uk>, accessed on 27/10/15

Descriptions of content of self-defence courses in papers used in this study

Brecklin & Middendorf (2014) describe a RAD course consisting of four 3 hour classes co-taught by two RAD certified law enforcement officers (one male and one female). During the final class, the students participate in various mock-attack scenarios, where they fight back **against padded male "offenders" to demonstrate their learned skills and techniques.**

Cemerle (2004) describes IMPACT Basics, a 20 hour programme in which scenarios involving stranger and acquaintance assaults, drawing on a framework which seeks to enable women to deal with the fear based arousal in such situations. The training focuses on replicating the physiological and psychological conditions of actual situations, and practicing both avoidance and skills.

Hollander (2004) describes a feminist self-defence class taught at a US university. The class is taught by a female instructor. It includes 45 hours of instruction over 10 weeks; three hours per week of physical and verbal self-defence training plus required weekly 1.5-hour discussion sections. The class includes instruction and practice in physical and verbal self-defence skills, as well as awareness and prevention strategies and accurate information about violence against women. Physical techniques are practiced in slow motion against other class members and full force against **pads held by the instructor and her assistants; unlike "model mugging", padded "attackers" are not used.**

David (2006) assessed Taking Charge (TC), which last for 12 weeks with 36 hours of instruction. This is designed specifically for survivors and addresses: assertiveness; boundary setting; prevention skills; and physical techniques. The three hour sessions have sections: psycho-education and role play focussed on assertiveness and boundaries; learning and practicing physical self-defence skills; de-briefing.

Fraser (2000) describes Model Mugging, which has 24 -30 hours of instruction. Courses have female instructors and male padded attackers. The goal is to reach the point where students **can use full force to 'knockout' the attacker. This is assessed** by the instructor: that were the attacker not protected they would have been rendered unconscious.

Speidal (2014) describes a RAD course which comprised 35 hours of training over 14 weeks. The content included: how to speak assertively; practicing yelling; how to slip out of certain holds and chokes; strikes, kicks, and methods of defending oneself from the ground. Techniques were practiced against someone wearing protective pads and against kick bags. Repetition of moves aims to create body memories that will be activated if needed. The final **section involved practicing against a 'padded attacker'**. This was supplemented by reading, films and discussions.

ANNEX 3: SELF-DEFENCE AND NATIONAL ACTION PLANS IN EU MEMBER STATES

Member State	Timeframe	POA focus	WSD included Yes or No
Austria	2014–2016	Domestic violence; trafficking; sexual abuse; forced marriage;	Unclear: references violence prevention workshops
Belgium	2015–2019	Intimate partner violence; female genital mutilation; forced marriage; honour-based violence; sexual violence; violence in armed conflict; unwanted sexual behaviour at work; prostitution	No
Bulgaria	2011 ²³	Domestic violence; gender violence; human trafficking	No
Croatia	2013	Domestic violence; trafficking; sexual exploitation	No
Cyprus	2010–2013	Domestic violence	No
Czech Republic	2011–2014 ²⁴	Domestic violence	Yes but limited
Denmark	2014	Family violence; intimate relationships	No
Estonia	2015-2020	Violence between children; abuse of children; domestic violence; intimate partner violence; sexual violence; trafficking	No
Finland	2010–2015	Domestic violence; sexual violence	No

²³ Text in red indicates that the NAP has expired.

²⁴ 2015-2018 approved in February 2015 but not available online.

France	2014–2016	Domestic violence; sexual violence	No
Germany	2010–2013	Physical and sexual abuse within childhood; trafficking; sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation; forced marriage	No
Greece	2009–2013	Domestic violence; rape; trafficking	No
Hungary	2010–2021	Domestic violence; sexual harassment; harassment and stalking; prostitution; human trafficking; pornography	No
Ireland	2016–2021	Domestic violence; sexual violence; gender based violence	No
Italy	2010–2013	Sexual and gender violence	No
Latvia	2008–2011	Domestic violence	No
Lithuania	2007–2009	Domestic violence	No
Luxembourg	2015–2018	Domestic violence	No
Malta	2008–2009	Domestic violence	No
Netherlands	2008–2011	Domestic violence	No
Poland	2006	Domestic violence	No
Portugal	2007–2010	Domestic violence	No
Romania	2005–2007	Domestic violence	No
Slovakia	2014–2019	Domestic violence	No
Slovenia	2009–2014	Family violence	No
Spain	2013–2016	Femicide; domestic violence; forced marriage; female genital mutilation; trafficking; sexual violence; honour crimes; sexual exploitation	No
Sweden	2015	Men's violence against women: femicide; honour crime; children	No

		witnessing intimate partner violence; sexual violence; workplace violence; and male victims of intimate partner violence	
UK	2016	Domestic violence; sexual assault; stalking; so called 'honour-based' violence; female genital mutilation; forced marriage.	No

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