SCIENTIFIC ANNALS OF „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA" UNIVERSITY OF IAȘI
VOLUME XIX/1, SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK, 2026

DOI: 10.47743/asas-2026-1-876

THE CAUSES OF FEMICIDE: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON EUROPEAN STUDIES

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Abstract: Femicide represents more than the extreme form of gender-based violence; it functions as a revealing indicator of persistent structural inequalities in contemporary Europe. Starting from this premise, the article proposes an interdisciplinary analysis based on European studies and 2025 institutional reports produced by bodies such as EIGE, Eurostat, and the European Parliament. The central aim is to understand the mechanisms that make femicide possible by examining the interplay between cultural, relational, and systemic factors. The analysis identifies seven interdependent causal categories: gender inequality and patriarchal norms as the underlying structural foundation; prior intimate partner violence as the most consistent proximate predictor; coercive control and possessive jealousy; cultural norms that legitimise male dominance; institutional impunity and deficiencies in protection systems; cumulative vulnerabilities arising from intersectionality; and technology-facilitated violence as an emerging factor. A comparative analysis positions Romania below the European average across indicators of legal framework, institutional capacity, and social attitudes towards gender-based violence. Best practices from Spain, Austria, and Sweden are examined as transferable models. The central conclusion is that femicide is a predictable and largely preventable phenomenon, contingent upon an integrated approach of legal, educational, social, and cultural measures sustained by genuine political will and adequate institutional resources.

Keywords: femicide, gender-based violence, coercive control, European studies.

Résumé : Le féminicide représente bien plus que la forme extrême de la violence fondée sur le genre ; il constitue un indicateur révélateur des inégalités structurelles persistantes dans l'Europe contemporaine. Partant de cette prémisse, l'article propose une analyse interdisciplinaire fondée sur des études européennes et des rapports institutionnels de 2025, produits par des organismes tels que l'EIGE, Eurostat et le Parlement européen. L'objectif central est de comprendre les mécanismes qui rendent le féminicide possible, en examinant l'interaction entre les facteurs culturels, relationnels et systémiques. L'analyse identifie sept catégories causales interdépendantes : l'inégalité de genre et les normes patriarcales comme fondement structurel sous-jacent ; la violence antérieure entre partenaires intimes comme prédicteur proximal le plus constant ; le contrôle coercitif et la jalousie possessive ; les normes culturelles qui légitiment la domination masculine ; l'impunité institutionnelle et les défaillances des systèmes de protection ; les vulnérabilités cumulatives découlant de l'intersectionnalité ; et la violence facilitée par la technologie comme facteur émergent. Une analyse comparative positionne la Roumanie en dessous de la moyenne européenne sur les

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indicateurs relatifs au cadre juridique, à la capacité institutionnelle et aux attitudes sociales à l'égard de la violence fondée sur le genre. Les bonnes pratiques de l'Espagne, de l'Autriche et de la Suède sont examinées en tant que modèles transférables. La conclusion centrale est que le féminicide est un phénomène prévisible et largement évitable, conditionné par une approche intégrée juridique, éducative, sociale et culturelle soutenue par une véritable volonté politique et des ressources institutionnelles adéquates.

Mots-clés : féminicide, violence fondée sur le genre, contrôle coercitif, études européennes.

Rezumat: Femicidul reprezintă mult mai mult decât forma extremă a violenței de gen; el constituie un indicator revelator al inegalităților structurale persistente în Europa contemporană. Pornind de la această premisă, articolul propune o analiză interdisciplinară bazată pe studii europene și rapoarte instituționale din 2025, elaborate de organisme precum EIGE, Eurostat și Parlamentul European. Obiectivul central este înțelegerea mecanismelor care fac posibil femicidul, prin examinarea interacțiunii dintre factorii culturali, relaționali și sistemici. Analiza identifică șapte categorii cauzale interdependente: inegalitatea de gen și normele patriarhale ca fundament structural de bază; violența anterioară între partenerii intimi ca predictor proximal cel mai consistent; controlul coercitiv și gelozia posesivă; normele culturale care legitimează dominația masculină; impunitatea instituțională și deficiențele sistemelor de protecție; vulnerabilitățile cumulative rezultate din intersecționalitate; și violența facilitată de tehnologie ca factor emergent. O analiză comparativă poziționează România sub media europeană la indicatorii privind cadrul juridic, capacitatea instituțională și atitudinile sociale față de violența de gen. Bunele practici din Spania, Austria și Suedia sunt examinate ca modele transferabile. Concluzia centrală este că femicidul este un fenomen previzibil și în mare măsură evitabil, condiționat de o abordare integrată juridică, educațională, socială și culturală susținută de o voință politică autentică și resurse instituționale adecvate.

Cuvinte-cheie: femicid, violență de gen, control coercitiv, studii europene.

1. Introduction

Femicide occupies a distinct position among the most severe forms of gender-based violence, functioning simultaneously as a social tragedy and as a diagnostic lens through which the depth of structural inequality in contemporary European societies becomes legible. Its roots, though historically entrenched, have only recently begun to receive the systematic analytical attention they demand, a shift accelerated, in no small part, by the adoption of European Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, the first instrument of mandatory legal force at Union level to acknowledge and directly confront this reality.

Against this backdrop, the present article undertakes a detailed examination of the causes of femicide, anchored in European studies and 2025 institutional reports principally from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Eurostat, and the European Parliament. The analysis proceeds from an interdisciplinary standpoint, weaving together sociological, legal, and human rights frameworks in order to construct a coherent and comprehensive account of

the structural, relational, and cultural factors that converge in the production of this phenomenon. A dedicated chapter is devoted to positioning Romania within the European context, through a comparative analysis of the legal framework, institutional capacity, and cultural norms across several member states.

The starting point of the analysis is EIGE's continuous perspective, according to which *„femicide can be understood as the extreme end of a long chain of violence against women occurring in all member states of the European Union"* (EIGE, 2021a; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012). This framing, which situates femicide within an ongoing continuum of violence rather than treating it as a discrete and exceptional event, demands a layered causal approach, one attentive to both proximate risk factors and the broader social conditions that make them operative

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Any causal analysis of femicide must begin with a clarification of the conceptual framework within which it is situated. The absence of a uniform legal definition at European level is itself a problem, as will be shown in subsequent chapters; this gap affects both the production of comparable data and the capacity of member states to intervene preventively.

The European Institute for Gender Equality defines femicide as *„the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender"*, emphasising that this extreme form of violence is deeply rooted in the power imbalances that exist at the social level (EIGE, 2021a). The definition is deliberately broad, in order to accommodate the diversity of forms the phenomenon takes across different cultural contexts.

The typology of femicide, elaborated through the United Nations Vienna Declaration, subsequently integrated by EIGE into its operational framework, delineates several distinct manifestations: lethal violence perpetrated by intimate partners; torture and killing driven by misogyny; honour-based killings; killings occurring within armed conflicts; killings arising from disputes over dowry; killings motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity; the killing of girls through selective infanticide or feticide; and killings associated with human trafficking or organised crime (EIGE, 2021a; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012).

This multidimensional typology has an important methodological consequence: the causal analysis of femicide cannot be reductive. It must address a complex network of structural, relational, and situational determinants that interact and mutually condition one another. In the European specialist literature, this network is often represented through an ecological model of violence, which distinguishes between the individual, relational, community, and societal levels of causation (European Parliament, 2021).

Beyond this typological clarification, a robust explanatory account of femicide requires anchoring the empirical causal factors identified later in this

article within established theoretical frameworks of gender-based violence. Five interrelated theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant to this endeavour.

Feminist theory offers the foundational explanatory lens, situating femicide within broader structures of patriarchal social organisation rather than treating it as an aggregate of isolated criminal acts. Walby's (1990) conceptualisation of patriarchy, developed in *Theorizing Patriarchy*, as a system of interrelated social structures spanning paid work, the household, culture, sexuality, and violence, through which men as a group exercise dominance over women, provides the theoretical scaffolding for the structural cause discussed in Section 4.1, namely gender inequality as the deep determinant of femicide.

Power and control theory refines this structural account at the level of the intimate relationship. Johnson's (1995) distinction between situational couple violence and what he termed patriarchal terrorism - a pattern of violence embedded in a broader strategy of coercive control - offers a direct theoretical explanation for the empirical findings presented in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 regarding prior violence and coercive control as proximate predictors of femicide. Understood through this lens, femicide represents the fatal culmination of an ongoing dynamic of domination rather than an isolated act of interpersonal conflict.

Ecological theory supplies the integrative framework needed to hold these structural and relational explanations together with situational and community-level factors. Heise's (1998) integrated ecological model, itself informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) broader ecological approach to human development, conceptualises violence against women as the product of interacting influences at the individual, relational, community, and societal levels. This model accounts for why the causal factors examined in Section 4, from patriarchal norms to institutional impunity, must be understood cumulatively rather than in isolation, and it underlies the ecological representation of the femicide typology already introduced above (European Parliament, 2021).

Intersectionality theory extends this multilevel account by addressing differential vulnerability within the category of women itself. Crenshaw's (1989) framework, which foregrounds the compounded disadvantage experienced by women situated at the intersection of multiple axes of subordination, provides the theoretical basis for the elevated risk documented among rural, economically disadvantaged, disabled, and ethnically marginalised women discussed in Section 4.6.

Finally, social learning theory contributes an explanation of the intergenerational and cultural transmission of violence-supportive norms. Bandura's (1977) account of behaviour as acquired through observation, modelling, and social reinforcement, developed in *Social Learning Theory*, helps explain the persistence of the cultural tolerance of violence and the normalisation of possessive control examined in Sections 4.3 and 4.4, suggesting that exposure to violence within the family or community increases the likelihood of its reproduction across generations.

Taken together, these five perspectives are not mutually exclusive but complementary: feminist theory identifies the structural root, power and control

theory explains the relational mechanism, ecological theory integrates the multiple levels of causation, intersectionality theory accounts for differential vulnerability, and social learning theory explains normative transmission. This theoretical synthesis underpins the causal analysis developed in the remainder of the article.

3. The Typology of Femicide: Forms and Definitions

Understanding the phenomenon of femicide requires, prior to causal analysis, a rigorous clarification of its types. The diversity of forms that femicide takes depending on the type of bond connecting victim and perpetrator, the motivational logic driving the act, and the social and cultural environment within which it unfolds all carry significant consequences for both how the phenomenon is captured statistically and rendered visible in official records, and for the calibration of preventive responses deemed most suitable. The European specialist literature, as well as the emerging legislation at national and European level, has developed several classification systems, partially overlapping, which will be presented and analysed in what follows.

3.1. The UN Vienna Declaration Typology

The first systematic attempt to classify femicide by type emerged through the United Nations Vienna Declaration of 2012, a framework subsequently adopted in its entirety by EIGE as an operational standard at European level. The classification distinguishes several distinct forms of femicide, differentiated on the basis of the relationship between victim and perpetrator and the cultural or social context within which the killing takes place (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012; EIGE, 2021a).

Killing perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner husband, cohabitant, or boyfriend represents the most frequently recorded and empirically documented form of femicide at both European and global levels. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that, in 2024, approximately six out of ten women whose deaths were classified as intentional homicides were killed by a partner or a family member (UNODC & UN Women, 2025). It is also the form most thoroughly documented in empirical research, owing to the relative ease with which the victim-perpetrator relationship can be established in the course of judicial proceedings.

Non-intimate family femicide refers to the killing of women by family members who are not intimate partners: fathers, brothers, uncles, fathers-in-law. This form frequently includes honour killings, through which the family punishes a woman perceived as bringing dishonour through her behaviour: refusing an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, engaging in disapproved romantic relationships, or simply asserting personal autonomy (ANAIS Association, 2025; EIGE, 2021a).

Sexual femicide refers to the killing of women associated with sexual assault or rape, followed by murder, or crimes in which sexual motivation is

central. This form is typically committed by perpetrators who do not belong to the victim's intimate circle and is characterised by a high degree of physical violence and the presence of a strong misogynistic element (European Parliament, 2021).

Dowry-related femicide, prevalent predominantly in South Asian communities but documented also in some European diasporic communities, consists of the killing of a wife by the husband's family as a result of a conflict over the dowry or marital assets. Although its direct incidence in Europe is limited, EIGE includes it in the typology in order to ensure comprehensive coverage of at-risk populations (EIGE, 2021a; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012).

Femicide motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity encompasses the killing of lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women on account of who they are their identity, their orientation, or both. Situated at the intersection of gender-based violence and discrimination rooted in sexual orientation, this form of femicide has gained increasing visibility in European hate crime reporting over recent years, reflecting a broader recognition that such killings constitute a distinct and compounded form of targeted violence (EIGE, 2022).

Female infanticide and sex-selective feticide designate the deliberate ending of the lives of newborn girls or female foetuses on the sole basis of their biological sex. Although more frequently associated with contexts in Asia or Africa, these forms are documented in some traditional European communities, either as a cultural practice or as a consequence of discriminatory pronatalist or antinatalist policies (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012).

Femicide associated with armed conflicts, and femicide committed in the context of human trafficking, organised crime, or sexual exploitation, complete the UN typology. These forms highlight that femicide is not exclusively a phenomenon of the private sphere; it can be instrumentalised as a weapon of war or can be the product of criminal structures that treat women as tradeable commodities (EIGE, 2021a; European Parliament, 2021).

3.2. The Spanish Classification

Spain, recognised as a European model in combating femicide, has developed its own statistical classification, officially used since 2022, which has influenced legislative debates in several member states, including Romania. The Spanish classification is officially documented by the Ministry of Equality of Spain, which periodically publishes detailed statistics and typologies on femicides (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2025).

Femicide within the couple or former couple, which maintains a historical series from 2003, covers all cases in which the perpetrator is the current or former intimate partner, regardless of the legal status of the relationship. It is the best statistically documented category, and it is the one with respect to which the Spanish Minister of Equality announced, in February 2025, a decline of over 30 per cent between 2003 and 2024, attributed to the cumulative effects of Organic Law 1/2004 (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2025).

Family femicide encompasses killings committed by relatives, parents, siblings, children, parents-in-law, while sexual femicide includes cases in which the principal or sole motivation is of a sexual nature. Social femicide refers to killings committed by persons known to the victim but not belonging to the family or intimate relationship neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances whose motive is directly connected to the victim's gender identity. A further category, uniquely Spanish in its legal codification, is femicidio vicario, defined as the killing of the victim's children as a means of punishing the mother: the perpetrator does not kill the woman directly, but murders her child to inflict maximum suffering and to exert ultimate control over her (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2025).

3.3. The Classification in Romanian Legislation

The draft law on the prevention and combating of femicides, adopted by the Romanian Senate and undergoing legislative procedure in 2025-2026, introduces into Romanian law a legal classification of femicide types. This classification, inspired by European models and EIGE recommendations, operates with three principal categories (Romanian Senate, 2025).

Intimate femicide is defined as femicide committed by a partner, spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, or any other person with whom the victim shares or has previously shared an intimate relationship with the perpetrator. Non-intimate femicide covers killings in which no such relational bond existed between victim and perpetrator, but where gender constitutes the determining motivation, including sexual femicide, femicide committed by acquaintances or by unknown persons. Indirect femicide refers to situations in which the death of a woman occurs as a result of acts of physical violence, blows, serious injuries, or other offences committed with force without the killing having constituted the perpetrator's primary intention (Romanian Senate, 2025; Euractiv Romania, 2025).

This tripartite classification has considerable practical value: it enables the collection of disaggregated data, the calibration of sentences according to the type of femicide, and the design of differentiated preventive policies. The recognition of indirect femicide is, in particular, a significant legal innovation; it covers cases, frequent in practice, in which the perpetrator claims not to have intended to kill, even though his acts of violence were of an objectively lethal severity.

3.4. The Conceptual Distinction: Femicide vs Feminicide

An important terminological clarification, with implications both academic and legal, concerns the distinction between the terms *femicide* and *feminicide*. Although sometimes used as synonyms in public discourse, the two terms have different origins and connotations in the specialist literature.

The term *femicide*, introduced by Russell and Radford (1992), refers to the act itself: the killing of a woman because of her gender. The term *feminicide* was proposed by Mexican anthropologist Lagarde (2006) to designate a broader phenomenon, which includes not only the individual act but also the societal and institutional context that makes it possible: state impunity, the absence of

protection mechanisms, and cultural tolerance of violence against women. In Lagarde's theoretical elaboration, feminicide is inseparable from the notion of state accountability: the failure of institutions to prevent, prosecute, or remedy such violence is not incidental to the concept, but central to its meaning. The ANAIS Association, among the most active civil society actors engaged with this issue in Romania, describes femicide as a pattern of violent acts against women unfolding in a systematic, repeated manner, against the backdrop of a patriarchal climate that promotes gender-based stereotypical thinking and cultivates unequal power relations between men and women (ANAIS Association, 2025). This perspective in practice integrates the systemic dimension of the concept of feminicide into the operational definition of femicide, reflecting a growing consensus in the Romanian and European specialist literature.

In recent legal literature, the concept of *„legicide"* has also been proposed, designating the killing of women as a result of systemic deficiencies in the legislative framework or in public policy. The term is not, however, established in international literature and is not used in European institutional documents, being regarded as an emerging theoretical contribution.

4. The Causes of Femicide in European Studies from 2025

4.1. Gender Inequality and Patriarchy: The Deep Structural Cause

The consensus of European research is unequivocal: gender inequality and patriarchal norms constitute the deep structural cause of femicide. This perspective does not reduce the phenomenon to the individual pathology of the perpetrator, but rather situates it within the context of social systems that normalise male dominance, minimise women's autonomy, and treat violence as a legitimate instrument of control.

The European Parliament report *Femicide, its Causes and Recent Trends: What Do We Know?* argues that the social vulnerability of women, legal inequality, and limited access to education cumulatively generate gender stereotypes and discrimination that function as facilitating factors of femicide (European Parliament, 2021). The risk becomes particularly high in traditional communities where women who transgress patriarchal norms have no institutional protection mechanisms available.

The statistical relevance of this factor is confirmed by Eurostat data: in 2023, the rate of intentional killings of women by partners or family members was 4.1 per million women in the EU, nearly double the equivalent rate for men, which stood at 2.2 per million men (Eurostat, 2025). This asymmetry is not accidental; it reflects historically sedimented unequal power structures in which women remain, in the perpetrator's perception, subordinate and controllable.

The socio-feminist perspective adopted by EIGE in its programmatic documents interprets femicide as the expression of a system in which men resort to violence to maintain their dominance when it is challenged. Lethal violence occurs, in this logic, precisely at the moment when a woman attempts to reclaim

her autonomy through separation, through refusal of submission, or through seeking institutional help (EIGE, 2022).

4.2. Prior Violence in the Relationship: The Most Consistent Predictor

If gender inequality represents the underlying structural cause, prior violence in the relationship is the most consistent proximate predictor of femicide. European research converges on an unambiguous conclusion: femicide is rarely an act without antecedents. It is inscribed, as a rule, within an escalating continuum of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

EIGE states explicitly that *„femicide is often the result of previous forms of violence exerted upon women in their own homes"* (EIGE, 2021a, p. 3), identifying at the same time a series of indicators of acute risk: death threats, repeated attacks with weapons, strangulation, complete social isolation of the victim, and prior attempted homicide. The presence of any of these indicators should trigger an emergency response from the authorities, not merely the recording of a complaint.

Data from Romania validate this causal relationship in a troubling manner: in 2025, over 11,000 provisional protection orders were issued, of which approximately 4,000 were violated by perpetrators without immediate consequences. These data originate from national institutional sources (the Romanian Police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs) and from media reports based on official communiqués (EVZ, 2025; Europa Liberă, 2025). A protection order that is not enforced no longer constitutes, under these circumstances, an instrument of safety; paradoxically, it becomes a signal of impunity amplifying, rather than reducing, the risk of lethal escalation.

4.3. Coercive Control and Possessive Jealousy

Closely articulated with the history of physical violence, coercive control represents a distinct causal factor, increasingly well documented in the European literature. Unlike discrete episodes of violence, coercive control refers to a systematic pattern of behaviours isolating the victim, constantly monitoring her activities, restricting her access to financial resources, repeated humiliation, and the use of threats through which the perpetrator establishes and maintains a state of total dominance over his partner.

EIGE (2022) emphasises that femicides are not isolated acts, but are frequently situated within a continuum of violence that may begin with controlling behaviours, threats, and harassment, including online, which can escalate and, in the most serious cases, contribute to causing lethal harm. The recognition of coercive control as an autonomous form of violence and not merely as a circumstance of physical violence is reflected in European Directive 2024/1385, which obliges member states to criminalise it explicitly.

Possessive jealousy, frequently invoked in public discourse as a natural human emotion, is reinterpreted in the specialist literature as an expression of the conviction that a woman is a man's property, a conviction nurtured by patriarchal

cultural norms that legitimise male control and penalise female independence. Judicial analysis of femicide cases places possessive jealousy among the most frequent motives, precisely because it is a form of asserting property rights (European Parliament, 2021).

4.4. Cultural Norms, Tradition, and Social Tolerance of Violence

A further category of causes, more diffuse in their effect but no less significant, concerns the normative and cultural context in which femicide occurs. Social tolerance of violence against women, the cultural validation of male dominance, and the enduring presence of rigid traditional gender norms do not directly generate femicide, but create the climate in which it becomes possible and, sometimes, comprehensible or even justifiable in the eyes of the community.

Data from the Eurobarometer of November 2024 on gender stereotypes and violence against women show that, although attitudes are gradually changing at the European level, significant minorities in several member states, including Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, endorse forms of victim-blaming or minimise intimate partner violence, regarding it as a private matter (European Commission, 2024). The European survey on gender-based violence, coordinated by EIGE and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights between 2021 and 2024, confirms that Romania is below the European average on indicators relating to the social rejection of domestic violence (EIGE, 2025).

Femicides committed in the name of honour, present in some traditional communities across Europe, including in Romania, constitute the most direct and brutal expression of these cultural norms. They aim to punish women perceived as bringing dishonour upon their family through the refusal of a matrimonial arrangement, through seeking a divorce, or through looking for external support. Classified separately in the EIGE typology, these crimes cannot be explained by individual psychological factors; they are, by definition, acts with collective roots, culturally legitimised (EIGE, 2021a).

4.5. Institutional Impunity and Deficiencies in the Protection System

Institutional impunity the perception or reality that the perpetrator will face no serious consequences for his behaviour functions as a multiplying factor of the risk of femicide. When protection orders are violated without prompt sanctions, when complaints are minimised at police counters, and when perpetrators are rapidly released after arrest, the message conveyed is that violence against women is tolerated.

The European Parliament report warns that *„perceived impunity increases the likelihood that the perpetrator will act without fear of consequences"*, and that the vulnerability of victims is directly proportional to the absence of effective public measures to reduce gender inequality (European Parliament, 2021, p. 4). This observation takes on particular weight in the Romanian context.

Romania is among the states for which Eurostat does not hold official data on femicide alongside Belarus, Norway, and Slovakia, which reflects the absence of an adequate legal and statistical framework for recording this specific category of crimes (Eurostat, 2025). The absence of data does not signify the absence of the phenomenon; on the contrary, it produces a form of institutional invisibility that prevents an accurate evaluation of the phenomenon's true scale and forecloses the design of interventions grounded in solid empirical evidence. Without official statistics, civic monitoring organisations FILIA Centre and the ANAIS Association have documented 59 confirmed femicides by the end of 2025 (Scena9, 2025; FILIA Centre, 2025).

4.6. Intersectionality: The Dimension of Cumulative Vulnerabilities

Recent European studies increasingly and consistently introduce the intersectional perspective into the analysis of the causes of femicide, arguing that vulnerability to lethal violence is not uniformly distributed among women. Certain categories face significantly higher risks, as a result of the overlapping of multiple forms of inequality and marginalisation.

Women from rural areas, those with limited economic resources, women with disabilities, those from ethnically marginalised communities, and adolescent girls present, according to EIGE reports, an elevated vulnerability compared to the general average. In the case of adolescent girls, the risk is amplified by a lack of experience in managing intimate relationships, by emotional and financial dependence on a partner, and by cultural norms that normalise control within couple relationships at young ages (EIGE, 2022).

The concept of intersectionality, introduced into feminist research by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and extensively adopted in the European literature, enables an understanding of the way in which gender interacts with social class, ethnicity, disability, and age to generate specific configurations of vulnerability. Applied to the analysis of femicide, this conceptual framework directs preventive interventions towards groups at maximum risk and undermines any uniformising approach to victim protection.

4.7. Technology-Facilitated Violence: An Emerging Factor in 2025

An emerging trend, signalled with growing consistency in recent European reports, is the role of digital technology in the dynamics of gender-based violence as it escalates towards femicide. Digital stalking, online patterns of coercive control, sustained harassment across social media platforms, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images are forms of digital violence that can anticipate and facilitate lethal physical violence.

European Directive 2024/1385 reflects this reality, obliging member states to explicitly criminalise digital gender-based violence, including cyberstalking and online harassment. This legislative recognition marks a paradigm shift: digital violence is no longer treated as a separate and less serious phenomenon, but as a further manifestation of the same coercive logic that may ultimately lead to

femicide. The evaluative studies on the directive's implementation, scheduled for 2026, will enable a more rigorous quantification of this causal connection (EIGE, 2022).

The causal factors identified in the previous chapter structural, relational, and situational are present, in varying proportions, in all member states of the European Union. What differentiates states from one another is not the absence or presence of these factors, but the capacity of legal, institutional, and cultural systems to recognise them, to monitor them, and to intervene preventively before violence escalates to femicide. Romania, as will be shown in what follows, presents a specific vulnerability profile: although the risk factors are well documented, the response mechanisms remain insufficiently developed in relation to the scale of the phenomenon and to European standards.

5. Romania in the European Context: A Comparative Analysis

Adequately understanding the causes of femicide in Romania presupposes positioning the phenomenon against the wider European backdrop. An examination of other European Union member states reveals both common features rooted in structural gender inequality and national particularities related to the legal framework, institutional capacity, and cultural norms. This comparative perspective does not serve a purely descriptive purpose: it enables the identification of specific deficiencies within the Romanian system and of transferable good practices from states with proven performance.

5.1. Comparative Statistical Situation

Direct statistical comparisons between EU member states remain difficult to carry out, owing to methodological heterogeneity at the European level. EIGE has repeatedly warned that femicide data vary considerably from one state to another depending on source, definition, and method of recording, rendering direct comparisons methodologically questionable (EIGE, 2021a).

An investigative study led by the Mediterranean Institute for Investigative Reporting (MIIR) in collaboration with 14 European editorial teams from the EDJNet network found that an investigative report estimated that between 2012 and 2022, at least 4,221 femicide victims were recorded across Europe. Romania, alongside Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, and Poland, is not included in this total due to the absence of comparable data (MIIR - Mediterranean Institute for Investigative Reporting & EDJNet, 2024), an absence that structurally illustrates the inability of the Romanian system to render the phenomenon visible.

Eurostat reports, for 2023, a European average rate of 4.1 women killed per million, in the context of intimate partner violence or family violence. This average conceals significant variations: Latvia, Lithuania, and Austria consistently register the highest rates in Europe, whilst Ireland, the Netherlands, and Greece report lower rates (Eurostat, 2025). According to EIGE's country profile for Romania, published in 2025, in 2022 the police recorded 67 victims of homicide by an intimate

partner, a figure which, measured against the adult female population, exceeds the European average. This figure is not directly comparable with the 59 femicides documented by civic organisations for 2025: the EIGE data draw exclusively on police-recorded intimate partner homicide, whereas the civil society count applies a broader definition encompassing all gender-motivated killings, regardless of the perpetrator's relational status. The phenomenon of intimate violence is more prevalent in Romania compared with the EU average, according to data from the EIGE/FRA survey published in November 2024 (Romania Insider, 2025).

5.2. Comparison on the Dimension of the Legal Framework

One of the most significant differences between Romania and European states with better outcomes lies in the legislative framework governing the recognition of femicide. The significance of this gap extends well beyond the symbolic: a coherent legal framework makes possible the systematic collection of data, the professional training of specialists, the appropriate sentencing of perpetrators, and, ultimately, effective prevention. Spain continues to serve as the primary European point of reference in this regard. Its Organic Law 1/2004 on comprehensive measures against gender-based violence established a fully integrated architecture of specialist courts, dedicated prosecution offices, unified databases, and sustained public awareness campaigns demonstrating that sustained institutional commitment can translate into measurable reductions in lethal violence.

France adopted, in response to a wave of femicides in 2019, a legislative package of 30 measures including mandatory electronic bracelets for perpetrators and systematic risk assessments at the moment of police referral; in 2025, French parliamentarians proposed a new regulatory framework with over 50 measures, as a reaction to an 11 per cent increase in lethal attacks against women compared to 2023 (Euronews, 2025). Italy introduced femicide as an aggravating element in homicide cases in 2013 and has continued to revise its legislative framework through 2025. Romania, by contrast, still lacks an independent legal definition of femicide.

"Domestic violence is not a standalone offence in the Romanian Criminal Code, but merely an aggravating circumstance for other offences" (European Data Journalism Network, 2024, para. 1). The draft law on the prevention and combating of femicides, currently undergoing parliamentary debate in 2025, represents a significant first step, but its implementation remains uncertain in the absence of the necessary resources and institutional framework (Romanian Senate, 2025). An EIGE analysis places Romania in the category of states that recognise gender as an aggravating circumstance in homicide above states that entirely disregard the gender dimension, but clearly below states with comprehensive legislation and specialist courts (EIGE, 2025).

5.3. Comparison on the Dimension of Institutional Capacity

Differences in institutional capacity for response are perhaps the most serious of all the comparative axes analysed. They translate directly into victims.

EIGE's country profile for Romania, published in 2025, records that, in 2022, of the 49,254 men reported to the police for domestic violence, only 1,372 were prosecuted, representing approximately **2.8 per cent of total reports,** and only 235 received final sentences (EIGE, 2025). This conviction rate of under 0.5 per cent contrasts dramatically with states such as **Spain, which is distinguished by high judicial celerity** approximately 73% of gender-based violence cases are resolved in less than one year (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2024INE) and with Austria, where every police intervention in domestic violence cases triggers a mandatory standardised risk assessment and may lead to an immediate prohibition of access to the home.

The Nordic paradox is relevant in this context: Scandinavian states record higher rates of domestic violence reporting than Romania, without this necessarily indicating a higher prevalence of the phenomenon. EIGE research has documented that high reporting rates reflect, in reality, higher degrees of institutional trust and organisational cultures more receptive to victims' complaints, variables in which Romania is situated, according to the same research, well beneath the European benchmark.

5.4. Comparison on the Dimension of Cultural Norms

According to EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2025, Romania ranks below the European average in the area of violence, a position that reflects the convergence of elevated prevalence rates, persistently low reporting, and a comparatively greater social tolerance of domestic violence.

The November 2024 Eurobarometer on gender stereotypes confirms that significant minorities in Romania endorse forms of minimisation of gender-based violence or victim-blaming, in contrast to states in Northern and Western Europe, where such attitudes are clearly marginal in representative samples (European Commission, 2024).

A geographical contextual element of particular relevance to the present work: according to data presented at the conference *„Femicide Cases in Romania"* held under the auspices of the ANAIS Association, Vaslui County figures among the counties recording the highest number of recorded cases, alongside Iaşi, Botoşani, Cluj, and Ilfov. This regional distribution suggests that poverty, geographical isolation, limited access to social services, and the limited presence of victim support organisations amplify, in the North-East Region, a risk that is already elevated at national level (European Data Journalism Network, 2024).

5.5. Lessons from European Good Practices

The comparative analysis does not pursue a purely descriptive aim: it is equally concerned with identifying transferable good practices in the Romanian

context. Several European models are consistently cited in EIGE and European Parliament reports as examples of proven effectiveness.

Spain has demonstrated that a comprehensive law, supported by specialist courts, dedicated prosecutors, and long-term public campaigns, can generate measurable structural changes. Austria has developed a standardised risk assessment protocol, applied systematically by law enforcement at every intervention in domestic violence cases, a model recommended by EIGE as an exportable good practice. Sweden has consistently invested in education for healthy relationships, incorporating dedicated prevention modules on preventing gender-based violence into formal education from the earliest school years. The common thread running through all these approaches is a fundamental reorientation of perspective: gender-based violence is no longer relegated to the private sphere, but addressed as a question of public health and societal responsibility.

The shared premise of these models, highlighted in EIGE reports and confirmed by European research from 2025, is that femicide is a predictable and, in large part, preventable phenomenon provided there is political will, adequate institutional resources, and a cultural framework that treats gender-based violence as a human rights issue (EIGE, 2022).

6. Discussion and Implications for Social Policy

The analysis presented in the preceding chapters permits the formulation of several conclusions with direct implications for social policy and for social work practice in Romania.

In the first place, the multicausal character of femicide requires integrated responses. No single cause acts in isolation: femicide is the product of the interaction between structural factors (gender inequality, patriarchal norms), relational factors (prior violence, coercive control), and contextual factors (institutional impunity, deficit in protection services). An effective preventive strategy must act simultaneously on all these levels cultural, legal, educational, and social rather than sequentially and in a fragmented manner.

In the second place, the legal recognition of femicide as a distinct offence is a necessary, even if insufficient, condition. The draft law currently undergoing parliamentary debate in 2025 represents an important step, but it must be accompanied by an integrated system for data collection, training of professionals in the justice and social assistance systems, and accessible and functional social services for victims. Romania's absence from the Eurostat database on femicide is, in itself, a form of institutional invisibilisation with practical consequences (Eurostat, 2025; Romanian Senate, 2025).

In the third place, social workers are situated, by the very nature of their profession, at the front line of preventive intervention. The systematic assessment of femicide risk using instruments validated at European level such as the intimate partner violence risk assessment scale, familiarity with escalation indicators, and

the capacity to connect victims with emergency resources should become standard competencies for practitioners in social services, in accordance with EIGE recommendations and with the obligations deriving from the Istanbul Convention.

Not least, the economic argument complements the moral one: an EIGE report estimates that, in 2019, gender-based violence cost EU member states a combined total of 366 billion euros (EIGE, 2021a) in medical, judicial, policing, and social assistance expenditure, a figure that, whilst subject to methodological limitations inherent in any such estimation, points unambiguously to the scale of the systemic burden. Investment in prevention is therefore not only a moral obligation towards potential victims, but also a rational decision from the perspective of the efficient use of public resources.

7. Conclusions

European studies from 2025, in particular EIGE reports, Eurostat data, and European Parliament documents, offer a complex and nuanced picture of the factors that produce femicide. The argument developed throughout this article rests on a central claim: femicide cannot be adequately explained by reference to the individual pathology of the perpetrator alone, but must be read as the outcome of unequal social arrangements, cultural frameworks that normalise violence against women, and institutional structures insufficiently equipped to protect them. Gender inequality remains the deep structural cause, which feeds and amplifies all the other identified factors: prior violence in the relationship, coercive control, patriarchal norms, institutional impunity, cumulative vulnerabilities generated by intersectionality, and, more recently, violence facilitated by digital technology. These factors do not simply add to one another; they mutually condition each other, forming a causal network with multiple possible entry points for preventive intervention.

The comparative analysis situates Romania in a position of elevated vulnerability below the European average on indicators relating to the legal framework, institutional capacity, and social attitudes towards gender-based violence but also alongside identifiable lessons offered by European models of good practice. The experiences of Spain, Austria, and Sweden illustrate that meaningful progress in reducing femicide is achievable on condition that the response is coherent, politically committed, and sufficiently resourced.

Without these conditions, the figures documented by civic organisations in Romania in 2025: 59 confirmed femicides, equivalent to almost one woman killed every six days (Scena9, 2025) will continue to represent the expression of a recurrent systemic failure. Femicide will remain, in the words of EIGE (2021a, p. 1) describes femicide as „the end of a long chain of violence" that society and the state have chosen, through inaction, not to interrupt.

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