

Press release:

Launch of a new EU-Project:

MARVOW - Multi-Agency Responses to Violence against Older Women – in Austria, Estonia, Greece and Germany.

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Violence against older women is a gender-specific and major social problem worldwide and in every European country. The extent and prevalence of that violence is enormously high. According to the FRA 2014 survey^[1] 5% of EU women older than 50 reported physical and/or sexual violence, 3% of those claimed domestic violence caused from their partner. **Whereas 19% of women over 60 were rated to be abused by a partner in their life.** Astonishing only 14 % of women reported their most serious incident to the police. The number of unreported cases will be much higher. Not to forget that older aged victims are more vulnerable than younger women. **Older women are usually exposed to a higher risk of violence. For several reasons: because they are old, female, often affected by years of partner violence, life-long confronted with various forms of violence, specific and multilayered disadvantages, often very economically dependent and especially if they are already in need of care. But yet these dimensions of gender violence are often overlooked.**

The new project “MARVOW”² will face this problem and develop the **first multi-agency model for elderly victims of abuse and perpetrators of violence against older women** in order to face this problem. The Project team consists of six partners in four European Countries: **Austria, Estonia, Greece and Germany.** The idea is to implement case conferences for older victims and develop a set of innovative tools to support the model, following a need-based approach by engaging stakeholders. **The goal is to create a network of cooperation between diverse groups which are devoted specifically to cases of violence against elderly women, such as eldercare services, social workers, healthcare providers, police or victim support groups. Participants will receive training on the topic, share best practices and develop joint solutions for common problems.**

In this way MARVOW focuses on the need identified in the DAPHNE funded WHOSEFVA project – “Working with healthcare organizations to support elderly female victims of abuse”³. The project-study pointed out, the lack of institutional frameworks which lead to a failure in meeting the needs of abused victims. In fact 96.9% of the 327 professionals surveyed indicated that they have never or rarely

¹ EU. Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2014). *Violence against women: An EU-wide survey: Main results*. FRA, EU FRA

² 2 years Project from September 2019-September 2021

³ <http://whosefva-gbv.eu/>

participated in trainings on elder abuse. As a consequence practitioners were unsure how to proceed with the victim, due to the multiple challenges older victims present/signalize. **Furthermore 96.9% of the participants that took part in the survey welcomed the idea of a Multi-Agency Cooperation, being a very important issue.** Older victims often require intervention by several institutional actors at once as they face barriers that keep them in their mostly long lasting relationship, such as the inability to obtain employment or the sense of obligation having to care for their abuser. Intimate partner violence can be a continuation of longstanding spousal abuse or can start in old age. Within elder abuse perpetrators are typically adult children, grandchildren, other relatives or paid caretakers. Issues related to cognitive and physical functioning are important, as some victims lack capacity to protect themselves. Complicating the issue is that abusers may have cognitive impairments or psychiatric illnesses.

The project adopts a multi-agency approach combined with capacity building for relevant professionals that will facilitate the reduction of under-reporting and will increase the efficiency of services. In conclusion, MARVOW will provide practical methods and solutions in order to support and protect victims of violence, and more specifically to address known gaps in the field, namely the gender dimension of elder abuse.

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