

REPORT

WWP Network Workshop 2013

29.11. to 1.12. 2013 in Erkner/Berlin/Germany

The Work With Perpetrators (WWP) European Network's 2013 workshop and network meeting took place over three days from Friday 29th November to Sunday 1st December at the Erkner Education Centre near Berlin, Germany with the steering committee meeting for a fourth day on Monday 2nd December. The workshop provided an opportunity for network members to meet, network, exchange and learn and helped to strengthen the ties between people working with perpetrators across Europe.

Participants

69 participants from 26 countries¹ attended the meeting including some representatives from countries outside of Europe. A representative mixture between the diverse interest groups that work in the context of perpetrator programs has been assembled. An important interest group are European practitioners working with perpetrators of domestic violence that agree to the guidelines to develop standards² which have been developed during the 2006-2008 Daphne II Project "Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP)". An equally important interest group are the victim support services because they contribute the knowledge and the perspective of the survivors, which is crucial to maintain the overall goal of the network, the improvement of the security of women and children. The spectrum is completed by researchers and political activists in the field of Domestic Violence.

Presentations and key issues

The overall topic of this year's workshop has been "What are the **roots of violence**". Therefore, the senior researcher on an elaborated, evidence based model to understand violence against women and children³, *Carol Hagemann-White*, has been invited. In her keynote presentation, she demonstrated the usability of the complex model, which differentiates violence as a multidimensional phenomenon with several levels, to the practitioners. According to the WHO's ecological model⁴, this enriches the psychological perspectives, which often focus on individual and systemic factors, with factors like e.g. peer-group, media discourse and culture. The model consist of three different perspectives on the relationship between a specific form of violence and factors, which influence that form of violence. First, the "perpetration model" allows to choose one or more forms of violence and see what factors have a weak, moderate or strong influence. The "factor perspective" is helpful for the development of interventions, since this perspective can suggest what forms of violence might then be reduced. Furthermore, "path models" show the interplay among factors related to six different forms of violence.

¹ Except Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania and Luxemburg, at least one representative of each members of all E.U. states participated.

² http://archive.work-with-perpetrators.eu/documents/standards/wwp_standards_2008_vers_1_1.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/daphne3/multi-level_interactive_model/understanding_perpetration_start_unix.html

⁴ http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf, see p. 9ff.

For a better understanding of the **context of perpetrator work**, a round table shed light on the importance of institutional frameworks that need to be provided on state and local level to embed perpetrator work. Following the key insight of the Gondolf study⁵, “the system matters”, which points out that perpetrator programs are most successful if they are embedded in a system of interventions, actual developments on a policy level in Europe have been discussed. *Rosa Logar* presented the **Istanbul Convention** of the Council of Europe, which has been signed by 32 countries and yet been ratified by 8 countries. If the convention comes into force, the states that have ratified it, will have to implement the structures recommended in the convention, in their legislation. This means “to adopt and implement state-wide effective, comprehensive and coordinated policies [...] to prevent and combat all forms of violence [...] and offer a holistic response to violence against women” (Art. 7). Concerning perpetrator programs, states need to “take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programs aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behavior in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioral patterns” (Art. 16). Logar then presented a model which outlined the necessary institutional framework to fulfill the requirements of the convention. In the following discussion, the existence of a working European network, which guarantees the development of standards in the sense of the improvement of the security of women and children, has been stressed as very important issue. When states are in need of building up perpetrator programs, it is necessary to provide the collected experiences that already exist in the field. The round table has been completed by the presentation of the changes in the Spanish legislation concerning domestic violence during the last 10 years. *Meritxell Pérez Ramírez* gave detailed and profound insights in the **Spanish institutional framework for perpetrator programs**. During the last ten years, Spain has emerged from a country with very low protection of the rights of women and children towards a country with a strong and effective prevention and intervention policy. Pérez Ramírez also outlined the police intervention routines, the common risk assessment methods, and the design of the perpetrator programs. In the discussion, the question was raised if and under what circumstances the other countries can learn from the Spanish example.

A panel about current **research on perpetrator programs** had an emphasis on the presentation the ongoing research project IMPACT, in which several network members are engaged. At first, *Christian Scambor* presented the **IMPACT project design**, which consists of a European online survey and the collection of evaluation studies. Both lay ground for the development of a Toolkit for outcome monitoring that can be freely accessed and used by European perpetrator programs to improve their documentation practice. Subsequently, *Jeppe Budde* presented the current state of the analysis of the collected evaluation studies, followed by *Heinrich Geldschläger*, who briefly showed the results of the online survey and afterwards demonstrated design criteria for the **Toolkit for outcome measurement**. The already in the survey identified high demand for the Toolkit has been confirmed by the participants of the workshop. For many programs, the availability of a professionally designed Toolkit would significantly increase the possibility and willingness to systematic outcome monitoring. The session had been completed by the presentation of currently completed research studies on perpetrator programs. *Ingólfur Gíslason* demonstrated the research design and results of an **Icelandic evaluation study**. *Juha Homa* introduced into the pioneer work of using **qualitative process research** to understand the process of perpetrator programs more profoundly. He gave an overview on the most important finish studies which e.g.

⁵ Gondolf, W. Edward (2002): *Batterer Intervention Systems. Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations*. Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage Publications.

researched the discursive construction of women during the perpetrator programs, the impact of a female therapist on the group, or on conversational tools that practitioners use to deal with differently motivated perpetrators.

The session on **media in and about perpetrator programs** has been introduced by *Věra Víchová* and *Anna Stodolová* from the SOS Centrum in Prague/Czech Republic. They presented the media coverage about their after they had released a “Perpetrator – Czech dictionary”. This lay ground for the discussion on the problem on customization and even affirmation of violence that media reception about domestic violence can have. Since violence often is presented with positive connotations in the media and has a frequency that has an effect of emotional blunting to its recipients, the coverage of domestic violence needs in the media needs to be treated with a special caution. These considerations then have been discussed in-depth by *Allessanda Pauncz*, who outlined her ideas on media campaigns about domestic violence in general and for programs that cooperate with the media in particular. Enriched with many examples on successful⁶ as well as inappropriate media campaigns she was able to increase the sensitivity towards a **good practice on collaboration with the media**. Finally, *Heinrich Geldschläger* and *Jeppe Budde* presented extracts from the Spanish movie “Te doy mis ojos” (Take my eyes). Using a scene about uncoordinated contact between the perpetrator and his (ex-) partner, Geldschläger demonstrated the importance of the implementation of a supervised, **pro-active partner contact** during the perpetrator program. Budde then took a different sequence of the movie and showed how they are using it in Danish perpetrator programs. The sequence that illustrates the increasing arousal of the perpetrator after an argument with his wife induces strong reactions in the group sessions, which can be used to pass important **methods of self-reflection** on to the perpetrators.

For the panel on **how to start a perpetrator program**, *Dean Adjukovic* gave an input about his best practice on successfully implementing perpetrator programs in Croatia. The following group work and general discussion has been facilitated by *Katarzyna Wojnicka*. In this session, important ideas and concepts for a submitted Daphne III application could be collected, which intends to develop a frame for knowledge transfer on perpetrator programs to newcomer countries.

To give the participants an overview on the aims and activities of the network, *David Nax* presented the **structure of the WWP** network and the **guidelines to develop standards**. In a further session, David Nax and *Ralf Puchert* facilitated a discussion about the **future of the network**. Ralf Puchert and *Heinrich Geldschläger* have been responsible for the **general facilitation**. During and in-between sessions, the audience has been arranged at eight **round tables** to establish small group discussions.

Feedback

At the conclusion of the workshop participants were asked to fill out a written, anonymous feedback form addressing four issues: aspects participants liked about the workshop, aspects participants disliked about the workshop, wishes for future meetings and wishes for the future of the network. 28 feedback forms were completed by participants before leaving the workshop. Participants generally rated the atmosphere, diversity of participants, networking opportunities and workshop presentations very highly. Though dislikes were few, important ones included concern over the topic of media in working with perpetrators and the issue of who has a voice in the network. Suggestions for future meetings and the future of the network included more space and time for discussion, a more explicit focus on the primary goal of ensuring

⁶ Here is an example of an appropriate approach: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzDr18UYO18>

the rights and safety of women and children and further developing exchange, support and communication amongst network members.

Praise and positive aspects

Overall participants found the conference informative, inspiring, lively and very well organized. The atmosphere was frequently rated highly as good and open and many people found this environment to be conducive to thinking, learning and discussion. The diversity of people, approaches and ideas was appreciated and many participants expressed the hope that this diversity would continue at future meetings and in further network interactions. Related to this, the networking opportunities the workshop provided was one aspect that participants found particularly valuable. Meeting international colleagues working in the field of work with perpetrators was interesting and enjoyable for participants. Furthermore, this networking was very important for many people, especially those working in countries where work with perpetrators is not well established, for creating a sense of solidarity with others working in the field. Realizing that those who work with perpetrators are 'not alone' provided many people with both support and encouragement in their work.

The workshop presentations were found to be interesting and of a high quality. Participants enjoyed hearing about standards for working with perpetrators and research into the field and especially enjoyed hearing about connecting research and practice. Accordingly, Carol Hagemann-White's presentation on a research-based model for understanding perpetration and her suggestions for using this model in prevention work were very popular amongst participants. The forthcoming evaluation toolkit also generated interest. Many participants mentioned that they are looking forward to the development and subsequent release of the toolkit which will be very important for their work. Some participants stated that they would have liked to learn more about whole family approaches. One aspect participants particularly enjoyed was gaining detailed information about perpetrator programs in different countries. Thus, participants found the presentation on the Spanish experience for instance to be particularly interesting. Many participants stressed that they would like to hear more about specific perpetrator programs in the future and wanted to be presented with more real cases, examples and practices from different countries.

Concerns and problematic issues

Though the workshop was generally found to be enjoyable, open and valuable some concerns were raised in the feedback. The session on the media in and about work with perpetrators, for example, raised some debate and contention. Many participants felt that more discussion on this topic was necessary in the workshop in order to delve into concerns surrounding the issue. It was also suggested that a conversation should be had about what good media about work with perpetrators could look like. There was also some concern about who had a voice at the workshop especially surrounding discussions about the future of the WWP network. Some participants mentioned that those who were most vocal or confident steered the conversation and had the final say in discussions, leaving little room for others to speak or offer their opinions. Some participants felt that more space needed to be created for all voices and that differing perspectives and experiences should be more highly valued. This was seen as important for maintaining the richness of the network and ensuring that everyone, not only the most vocal members, has an input into discussions.

Future network and workshop directions

Concerns about the network and workshop were, however, limited with participants mainly providing suggestions in their feedback for future workshops and the future of the network. A very common theme in the feedback was the need for more time and space for discussions in future workshops. Not only did participants find that the time for discussion was too limited but some participants also found that it was too noisy to hear one another properly, particularly as English was not a first language for many participants. Ideas given in the feedback for solving this dilemma included reducing the amount of presentations, stricter facilitation of the presentations, stricter adherence to the schedule and separate rooms or spaces for discussion. Some participants would also have enjoyed mixing the discussion groups in order to meet new people and hear different perspectives.

Another common issue that arose in the feedback was the call for more women's support service organizations to be represented and included in the network and to maintain the network's gendered focus. Many participants found it important to iterate more explicitly the network's primary goal of ensuring the rights and safety of women and children and desired the discussion to be extended to focus more specifically on this. These points were also declared to be important for the future of the network and the discussion about plans for the new international organization, a topic that was found to be difficult but also very important for many participants.

The sharing of information and the exchange of experiences, problems and knowledge was rated very highly by participants and many people specifically expressed their desire for this exchange to continue. Another important topic for participants was support for network members, both practitioners and others. People expressed a strong desire to be able to both support and be supported by other members in their work with perpetrators outside of the workshops. The issues of exchange and support both led to the topic of communication which arose as a very common theme in the feedback. The desire to remain in contact between workshops was very strong for many participants and many wanted to facilitate this communication through technology such as phone calls, emails and social networking sites. Communication was seen to be important for supporting one another, sharing views, experiences and problems, networking, learning and receiving and distributing regular information.

Conclusion

The feedback from participants on the WWP Erkner workshop reflected the strength of the network and the willingness of members to work together, learn and share. The praise for the environment and organization of the workshop, the opportunity to network with such diverse colleagues and the quality of the presentations demonstrates the value the network meetings and workshops have for network members. Importantly, the wish to continue the exchange of knowledge and information between members and to enable support for members suggests that through strong communication the network has the possibility to thrive and remain effective between meetings. The problems and suggestions raised in the feedback such as issues about media representations, creating a supportive space for all members' voices, enabling more time for discussion and making the focus on women's and children's rights and safety more explicit give the network clear goals and focuses to help it grow stronger and develop into the future.