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WWP EN Study Visit Report 2024

Hosting Country: Malta

Hosting Organisation: *Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)*, STOP! The Violence and Abuse

Dates: 11th – 13th September 2024

List of Participants:

- Fatjon Taipi – *Woman to Woman* - Albania
- Stefanija Serfarska – *HERA* – Macedonia
- Elmir Ibralic – *Vive Zene* – Bosnia Herzegovina
- Eliška Linda Fischerová - LOM – Czech Republic
- Pavel Tuvacov – NGO Artemida – Moldova
- Mája Chytrá - Diakonie – Stop násilí - Czech Republic
- Francesco Corona – Associazione Senza Violenza APS - Italy
- Rashi Chauhan – WWP EN – Germany

Study visit Programme:

11th September 2024

During the first day of the visit, participants had the opportunity to engage with the core team responsible for leading efforts to support both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The team provided a warm introduction, establishing a foundation for a productive and insightful experience. This session aimed to familiarise visitors with the Foundation's set-up and the agency's far-reaching impact of its services. Through in-depth discussions on the Domestic Violence Services, participants gained an understanding of the critical role that the organization plays in addressing the complexities of domestic violence from multiple perspectives. This introduction not only highlighted the organization's mission but also emphasized its commitment to fostering a safer and more supportive community for all those affected by these issues.



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As the visit progressed, the team at one of Malta's Domestic Violence Hub offered a comprehensive explanation of recent modifications in their domestic violence support structure. They outlined the latest changes that had been implemented and provided a strategic overview of future plans, particularly the development of additional domestic violence hubs. These hubs, designed to provide targeted support to vulnerable individuals, will serve as part of a broader network dedicated to addressing Gender-Based and Domestic Violence (GBDV). The Assistant Commissioner of Police, Ms Louise Calleja explained how these new hubs would

seamlessly integrate into the existing framework, ensuring enhanced coordination between the Malta Police Force and the Risk Assessor Team and allow further accessibility of services for those in need. This discussion offered visitors valuable insights into the long-term vision, emphasizing a forward-thinking approach to expanding and strengthening domestic violence support systems.

Amid the visit, cultural exploration was also introduced. The study-visit participants and team got the chance to visit the historically significance, late-Neolithic site of Ħaġar Qim, a monumental site of megalithic buildings situated atop a ridge. Although the focus of the visit was on domestic violence initiatives, the inclusion of Malta's rich historical and archaeological heritage provided an added layer of depth to the visit and a chance to slow down.



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To conclude the day, participants were treated to dinner in Marsaxlokk, a charming fishing village in the Southeastern Region of Malta. This first shared dinner not only provided a taste of Maltese cuisine but also served as an opportunity for participants and the team to bond and discuss their first impressions of the visit.

12th September 2024

The second day of the visit began with an insightful meeting with the CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and the Operations Director of Aġenzija Appoġġ. This session provided participants with a deeper understanding of the overarching strategies and operations that drive the country's social welfare initiatives. The discussions focused on the key challenges faced in supporting vulnerable populations and how collaborative efforts between various entities contribute to addressing these issues effectively. Both Mr Alfred Grixti and Ms Graziella Castillo (respectively) emphasized the importance of maintaining a cohesive and responsive framework to better serve individuals affected by domestic violence, child protection issues, and other social concerns.

Following this, participants visited the Child Protection Services premises, where they were given an overview of the work carried out by the Directorate. The discussion highlighted the importance of an integrated approach in safeguarding children who are often directly or indirectly affected by domestic violence and other issues which place them at risk. The visit provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by child protection professionals and the extensive resources required to ensure the well-being and safety of vulnerable children.

Later in the day, participants visited the Probation and Parole Offices. A comprehensive overview by Ms Carmen Borg, Parole and Probation Services Director, showcased the work done in collaboration with the STOP! Programme, which focuses on rehabilitation and intervention for individuals involved in domestic violence. The presentation offered a look into the complex dynamics of criminal justice and social rehabilitation, shedding light on the efforts being made to reduce recidivism and support the reintegration of offenders into society.

The group then proceeded to Ghabex, an emergency shelter dedicated to supporting victims of domestic violence. During this visit, participants viewed the premises and had the chance to engage with some of the residents currently residing at the shelter. This experience allowed visitors to gain a firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence and the crucial role that emergency shelters play in providing immediate safety and long-term support.



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Conversations with both staff and residents highlighted the profound impact that shelters like Ghabex have in offering refuge, empowerment, and hope to those escaping abusive situations.

After the visit to Ghabex, some participants returned to their accommodation for some free time, allowing them to reflect on the day's events and rest before the evening celebration. Other participants took this opportunity to visit Malta's capital city – Valletta.



The day concluded with the End of Programme Celebration, where participants attended an event celebrating individuals who had successfully completed the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programme. This moment offered a unique opportunity to meet and interact with program graduates for Cycle 31, who shared their journeys of personal growth. Light refreshments were served as participants and graduates connected, reflecting on the

significance of the program and its transformative impact. The celebration marked a fitting end to the day's experiences.

To wrap up the day, the group also took time to explore Mdina, Malta's fortified medieval town. The exploration of Mdina was a fitting cultural closure to the second day of the visit, offering both historical insight and a quiet moment of tranquility.

13th September 2024

The final day of the visit commenced with a visit to the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, an essential body established under the Domestic Violence Act on March 1, 2006. With its mandate expanded in May 2018 to encompass gender-based violence, the Commission plays a pivotal role in shaping national policy and coordination efforts to combat both domestic and gender-based violence. During the visit, participants met with the Commissioner, Ms Samantha Pace Gasan, who provided an in-depth overview of the Commission's work and its collaborative efforts with various stakeholders. The presentation detailed the Commission's role in



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advocating for victims, influencing legislation, and ensuring the implementation of robust policies aimed at protecting vulnerable individuals. Ms. Gasan highlighted the ongoing challenges and successes in addressing these complex societal issues and provided our participants with the *2023 Annual Report* and the *National Strategy on GBVDV 2023 - 2028*.



Following the visit to the Commission, participants were introduced to the MARAM (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meeting) offices, where they met with the Chairperson, Ms. Ruth Sciberras. MARAM is a crucial element of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy, coordinating the efforts of various

agencies working with victims, perpetrators and their children. During the visit, participants learned about the essential role that MARAM plays in ensuring effective collaboration between key entities involved in domestic violence cases. Ms. Sciberras emphasized the importance of timely information sharing and strategic decision-making to mitigate risks and enhance the safety of those affected by domestic violence. The presentation underscored how MARAM's work not only improves the response to individual cases but also strengthens public safety as a whole. This session provided valuable insights into the mechanisms of interagency cooperation and the ongoing efforts to enhance the overall system of support for victims of domestic violence.

As the visit drew to a close, participants gathered for a final meeting to recap the study visit and reflect on the experiences and knowledge gained throughout the program. The closing discussions provided a platform for participants to share their thoughts, ask any remaining questions, and engage in meaningful dialogue about the key takeaways from the various site visits and presentations. The group discussed the practical applications of the insights they had gained, and participants took a particular interest in the specific topics discussed in our perpetrator programme. This final session fostered a sense of shared purpose and commitment among participants, as they prepared to return to their respective roles.



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The final day encapsulated the essence of the study visit, leaving participants with a comprehensive understanding of Malta's approach to tackling domestic and gender-based violence, with special focus on perpetrator work. The blend of organizational visits, expert presentations, and reflective discussions allowed for a well-rounded and impactful conclusion to the program.

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