

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. The extent and prevalence of this violence are enormously high in every European country According to the FRA 2014 survey^[1] 5% of EU women older than 50 reported physical and/or sexual violence, 3% of them claimed that domestic violence was caused by their partner, **whereas 19% of women over 60 were rated to be abused at least by one partner in their life.** Astonishing only 14 % of women reported their most serious incident to the police. The number of unreported cases is much higher. Not to forget that older survivors are more vulnerable than younger women. **Older women are usually exposed to a higher risk of violence for several reasons: they are old, female, often affected by years of partner's violence, life-long confronted with various forms of violence, with specific and multilayered disadvantages, and often very economically dependent, especially if 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 survivors of abuse and perpetrators of violence against older women.** 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 survivors 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 older women, such as eldercare services, social workers, healthcare providers, police or women specialist support groups. Participants will receive training on the topic, share the best practices and develop joint solutions for common problems.**

In this way, MARVOW focuses on the needs identified in– the WHOSEFVA Project (Working with Healthcare Organizations to Support Elderly Female Victims of Abuse).³ The project pointed out the lack of institutional frameworks which lead to a failure in meeting the needs of abused women. In fact, 96.9% of the 327 professionals surveyed indicated that they have never or rarely attended trainings

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/>

on elder abuse. As a consequence, practitioners were unsure of how to proceed with the survivors due to the multiple challenges older women present/signalize. **Furthermore, 96.9% of the participants that took part in the survey welcomed the idea of a Multi-Agency Cooperation, considering it a very important initiative.** Older women survivors of domestic violence often require intervention by several institutional actors at once, as they face barriers that keep them in their violent relationships, such as the inability to obtain employment and related economic independence, and the sense of obligation to their abuser. Intimate partner violence can be a continuation of longstanding spousal abuse, or it can start in old age., The perpetrators of abuse against elderly people are typically adult children, grandchildren, other relatives or paid caretakers. Issues related to cognitive and physical functioning are important, as some survivors lack the capacity to protect themselves. The fact that abusers may have cognitive impairments or psychiatric illnesses, complicate the situations

The project adopts a multi-agency approach combined with capacity building for relevant professionals, with the aim of facilitating the reduction of under-reported cases and increasing the efficiency of services supporting older women survivors of abuse. In conclusion, MARVOW will provide practical methods and solutions in order to support and protect survivors of violence and, more specifically, to address known gaps in the field, namely the gender dimension of elder abuse.

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