



“Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union under Grant Agreement no JUST/2015/RDAP/AG/VICT/9320”

## **Report of best practices in services for elderly women victims of domestic violence\***

### **Austria**

Since 2011 there is an Austrian federal law to provide victim protection groups in health care systems which translates as ‘Federal law for the implementation of victims of gender based violence in public health care systems.’ According to this law health care systems need to provide victim protection teams for children and adults. One of the key components is to recognize early domestic violence and suspicion of violence in order to strengthen sensitization of the staff on the issue of domestic violence. Women’s groups lobbied for this law based on the success shown by child protection groups that are legally mandated in Austria.

The victim protection teams must have two representatives of medical services who are specialists in trauma surgery as well as gynaecology and obstetrics. In addition, members of the nursing service and the persons responsible for psychological and psychotherapeutic treatment in the hospital must belong to the victim protection groups.

This law has been an important improvement for the support of victim protection in health care systems. It has facilitated linkages between the entire staff, medical as well as nursing, and improved the support of victims of gender-based violence.

With this legal framework for health care systems, Austria follows the Council of Europe Convention on preventing violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) that states, according to Article 15.

Approximately 10% of the 279 hospitals in Austria have established victim protection groups to date.

### **“Lady Companion” - Community involvement initiative in Estonia**

Exclusion and deprivation of older people are serious issues in Estonia. In Viljandi region there is initiated the community based and voluntary work project ‘Seltsidaam’ (‘Lady Companion’) <http://mtuteeme.com/teenused/seltsidaami-teenus/>. Today there are 12 companions in the region and they have in contact with one or two older persons. Volunteers call it provision of companion service. Their visits depend on agreement and needs. Usually visits are limited to one or two times a week.

In UK the paid position for the companion could be found (‘Kind, well-organised, caring, mature, well-educated, female live in carer/companion wanted for pleasant elderly lady. As this position requires maturity and experience, only applicants over the age of 40 will be considered.’). In the Tallinn region exists a private business of elderly day and home care with the same name (Seltsidaam OÜ, established in 2014).

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### **“Friendship Clubs” – Municipal initiative in Greece**

“Friendship Clubs” for elder persons is an initiative of the Municipality of Athens. The clubs operate at community level to provide services to older persons. They are spaces for social gathering for older people in order to meet their peers; exchange views, opinions and ideas; pass their free time creatively; take part in artistic and physical activities and daily excursions. There are also health services provided in the clubs. This initiative was developed by the Municipality of Athens in 1985. Today there are 25 Friendship clubs along the municipality area with more than 5000 members. The clubs are open to individuals that reside in the municipality, who are over 60 years or pensioners that are even younger than 60 years old. There is a registration fee that corresponds to 5 euros per year.

### **Finland**

In Finland Suvanto – For A Safe Old Age runs a weekly peer support group for older people who are or have been experiencing abuse. The group is guided by two professionals. Its aims are to raise awareness of different types of abuse, stop abuse and empower older people to control their own life. Each candidate member is interviewed for making sure she/he is able to join and work in the group. According to feedback from the members, the group has been beneficial for their life situation to stop abuse and improve their quality of life. [suvantory.fi/en/](http://suvantory.fi/en/).

The organization also coordinates the annual event World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15th of June. On this date various events are held in many parts of the world to highlight the problem of elder abuse and to inform both the professionals and the public about the importance of the violence prevention work.

### **Northern Ireland – COPE (Connecting Older People Electronically)**

Kilcooley Women’s Centre (KWC) is the main female support organization for the region of Ards North Down, in Northern Ireland. It offers a comprehensive range of support services for all ages, with a particular focus on support for elders. This includes poverty, disadvantage, mental and physical well-being and peer support. This includes older women who have been or are living in an abusive home. The organization uses a range of methods of supporting this group, including referring for counseling, support in the home, arts programmes to build confidence, events and outings.

Kilcooley Womens Centre in partnership with Co Down Rural Network have co-designed a project to assist older people to communicate, keep in touch electronically and assist them to maximize the new social media platforms and multiple devices many of them now use. The project COPE (Connecting older people electronically) specifically work with groups to enable them to access electronic crime prevention and reporting platforms to tackle crime and the fear of crime amongst this age group. The project delivers training workshops to older people in three community hubs - Kilcooley Womens Centre, Ballywalter and Portaferry. The workshops help them to understand, use and maximize social media to communicate. Help is given to understand “smartphone”, IPAD/Tablet and other devices. The older persons gain skills in skype and further via internet, helping them save on telephone calls and reduce the feeling of social isolation.



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### **Latvia**

Marta Centre runs toll-free helpline for domestic violence victims. It offers professional assistance and support in crisis situations. A social worker, psychologists, psychotherapists, lawyers and other specialists provide a broad range of services. It is possible to call the centre or write there. In 2015 there were 17 women aged 58+ who turned for help to MARTA, because they were suffering from domestic violence. It is ~6% of all clients of MARTA. Women were provided with legal assistance and psychological help. In most of cases they suffered from physical abuse by partners or sons and abusers had alcohol abuse problem. The problem is to motivate woman to continue collaboration with service provider and apply for help of law enforcement agencies.