

PRESS RELEASE

## Achievements of the WHOSEFVA Project

### EU Project – “WHOSEFVA – Working with Healthcare Organizations to Support Elderly Female Victims of Abuse” (2017-2018)

14 December 2018 - Violence against older people, especially violence against older women, occurs in all social classes and cultures and is a widespread problem in Europe. However, there remains in Europe a lack of accessible and sustainable training programmes for healthcare and other providers – an issue with the WHOSEFVA project (ending in December 2018) addressed over a two-year period.

WHOSEFVA interviews with health care workers revealed even bigger gaps in health care settings than previously known; for instance interviews with healthcare workers revealed that 96% of health professionals have never or rarely participated in training on prevention of elder abuse and 96% have never or rarely met victims at work- Despite elder abuse being not only a severe human rights violation but also a major public health concern, with 81% believing that elder abuse is a moderate or serious problem in their country –69% of health professionals indicated that recognizing victims is not a priority in their workplace.

By the end of the project, WHOSEFVA carried out 11 Mutual Learning Workshops and 11 local trainings which increased the capacity of 532 professionals from health and social care settings in six countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia and the UK) to better represent the interests and voices of older women victims of violence in healthcare and healthcare policy, thus helping to better comply with the desires of the EU. After the the capacity building activities 94 % of the participants identified the domestic violence against elderly as an important issue to address.

Focus groups with 161 older people (14% of who identified as victims/survivors of domestic violence) demonstrated that older people who have experienced violence feel infantilized, that their concerns are not taken seriously when they do speak out, and that they are excluded or not communicated with. Empowering older people to disclose their experiences of violence and to seek support, while also ensuring that professionals are adequately trained to support victims, was one key outcome of WHOSEFVA.

Furthermore, an analysis of the situations in six partner countries was carried out to assess how closely the existing national legal frameworks and operating environments align with key international directives on the issue. European Policy Recommendations, based on the above assessment, were developed for further actions to be taken for improving support for victims of elderly abuse in Europe. One recommendation resulting from the analysis is for trainings to systematically integrate the capacity to observe, detect and handle even the most ‘invisible’ types of elder abuse and discrimination, and that these trainings must be targeted at a wide range of stakeholders such as caregivers, elder abuse helplines, doctors or the police.

Useful tools developed by the WHOSEFVA Project which can facilitate the implementation of such a recommendation are the WHOSEFVA Training Manual and a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) which can support future trainings in healthcare settings around Europe to sensitize health professionals and social workers on how to effectively provide care for elder victims of abuse. These two tools can be downloaded for free on the WHOSEFVA website.

For any further questions about the WHOSEFVA Project, and if you are interested in implementing elements of the project in your country, contact any of the partners below for more information.

#### Key contact information of WHOSEFVA partners:

Women’s Support and Information Centre, Estonia, Pille Tsopp-Pagan: [pille.tsopp-pagan@naistetugi.ee](mailto:pille.tsopp-pagan@naistetugi.ee)

University of Tartu, Estonia, Hector Pagan: [hector@ut.ee](mailto:hector@ut.ee)

Sirkka Perttu, Finland: [slperttu@gmail.com](mailto:slperttu@gmail.com)

Kilcooley Women’s Centre, UK, Roberta Gray: [roberta@kilcooleywomenscentre.co.uk](mailto:roberta@kilcooleywomenscentre.co.uk)

Union of Women’s Associations of Heraklion Prefecture, Greece, Nicholas Spetsidis, [projects@kakopoiisi.gr](mailto:projects@kakopoiisi.gr)

MARTA Centre, Latvia, Dita Lāce: [dita@marta.lv](mailto:dita@marta.lv)

Austrian Women’s Shelter Network, Austria, Maria Rösslhuber: [maria.roesslhuber@aoef.at](mailto:maria.roesslhuber@aoef.at)

Women against Violence Europe, Europe, Kelly Blank: [kelly.blank@wave-network.org](mailto:kelly.blank@wave-network.org)

WHOSEFVA Project Website: [www.whosefva-gbv.eu](http://www.whosefva-gbv.eu)

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