

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

3 rd Partner meeting in Vienna - Success of WHOSEFVA Project 27 February 2018

One year after the launch and Kick Off Meeting of the WHOSEFVA Project in Greece, project partners will gather in Vienna, Austria from 1 -3 March 2018 to share and discuss key results and outputs of the project to date. This two-year project co-funded by the European Commission under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme aims to increase the capacity of domestic violence organizations to better able 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. The WHOSEFVA project is currently being implemented in the following six partner countries: Austria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia and the UK.

Violence against older people, especially female elder abuse violence against older women, occurs in all social classes and cultures and is a widespread problem in Europe. The extent of the violence is serious and affected women are experiencing many facets of violence in the family, public and institutional spheres, yet we have not talked much about it. “With WHOSEFVA, we were once again able to bring the subject of violence against older women out of the taboo,” according to Maria Rösslhumer, project partner in Austria.

Since the start of WHOSEFVA, a total of 14 Mutual Learning Workshops have taken place in the partner countries. In the process, partners have been able to inform, sensitize and strengthen 280 doctors, social workers, carers from social and health care and experts from victim protection institutions against violence against older women. The contents of the workshops were very extensive, with the aim to mutually exchange knowledge and experiences and develop a clear attitude against all forms of violence. Violence against older women requires close cooperation with many different experts, so the multi-agency approach is critical.

In addition, WHOSEFVA has had the opportunity to speak with 67 women and men in the context of focus groups about their experiences of violence in old age. The results of both activities are very helpful in articulating concrete policy demands to end violence against older women - both at national and European level.

A central and common EU-level WHOSEFVA requirement would be the legal implementation of training for professionals - especially professionals in the health care sector and on the issue of gender based violence and the theories of abuse in the Istanbul Convention recommends in Article 15.1: “Parties shall provide or strengthen appropriate training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, on the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, as well as on how to prevent secondary victimisation.

One key component of the training of professionals would be the WHOSEFVA Training Manual which has recently been published, and aims to provide an overall training programme on elder abuse and violence against older women, with special consideration to the needs and concerns of older women. This Training Manual will become available on the WHOSEFVA project website by the summer of 2018, and translated into all national partner languages (English, Estonian, German, Greek, Finnish, and Latvian). Throughout the duration of the project, WHOSEFVA will develop replicable guidelines on how to implement the intervention measures for better prevention and identification of violence against older women in health and social care settings.

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