



# SAFE

Newsletter, 1 - 2 May, 2018

## ITALY

*Anziani e non solo Cooperative*

The SAFE project, through the help of different professionals working with older people, has the purpose of improving the knowledge and expertise on the topic of older women abuse, developing a specific and multi-professional Training Curriculum, a Policy Paper on prevention and intervention in case of violence and abuse against older women, and a Multi-Agency Set of Procedures.

In Italy, these professionals worked together from January to March at Anziani e non solo social cooperative of Carpi (Province of Modena), the Italian partner of the SAFE project. They were divided in three different Collaborative Learning Groups with the purpose of exchanging knowledge, practices, experiences and strategies for the prevention and intervention against older women abuse.

### The topics discussed were three:

In **January** the Group 1, which has involved 10 different elderly care professionals from various parts of Italy, discussed the topic “knowledge and practice on prevention and intervention in case of violence/abuse against older women”, starting from the definitions of older women abuse:

- “gender based violence that affects older women (the emotional vulnerability linked to gender connotes the specificity of the abuse): there are several cases of violence, whether sexual or in-family involving older women as victims”;
- “elder abuse in which the victims are women (age-related vulnerability connotes the specificity of the abuse)”.

In **February** the Group 2, which has involved 7 different elderly care professionals from various parts of Italy, talked about the theme “assessment of professionals’ needs regarding violence/abuse against older women”: identifying the abuse/violence assumptions; learning how to prevent the violence/abuse and how to intervene; knowing the law; knowing the support services of the local territory.

In **March** the Group 3, which has involved 6 different elderly care professionals, discussed the problem “defining the

roles and responsibilities of social and health care organizations/professionals and other stakeholders in defying and intervention in case of violence/abuse against older women”. The participants hypothesized the transfer of the gender-based violence prevention and intervention model in case of abuse against older women.

In the next months, the results of the three Collaborative Learning Groups will be collected together in a research report and used to construct the Multi-Agency set of procedures.

## FINLAND

*Voimaa Vanhuuteen – osk VoiVa*

The participants of the Collaborative Learning Groups in Finland were social and health care professionals and teachers from public and private elderly care organizations, such as from Comprehensive Service Centres, Home Care, Social Work, Assisted Living and Vocational College. Groups met eight times altogether during January and March 2018 in Helsinki and Vantaa city.

The professionals shared their views, experiences and challenges in the field of elder abuse. They felt the elder abuse cases are complicated and very difficult to help. The cases an older competent person denies intervention and refuses the help make professionals to feel helplessness and they are worried about the situation all the time. These situations need long standing work with the victim.

Helsinki city has published a guidebook on working with elder abuse cases but there is a need also for organization-specific instructions. A challenge especially for the home care was how to support victims and families in a long run with very limited time and staff resources. The

professionals also expressed their training needs of comprehensive and updated knowledge on prevention and intervention strategies. One of the biggest needs is to improve multi-agency collaboration in practice. The health care teachers expressed the need of teaching tools/methods in their work and in their opinion elder abuse/abuse of older women should be a compulsory part of curriculum, not just a voluntary course, as it is now in many vocational colleges.



### Well-being Exhibition 6 April 2018

Kustaankaratano Comprehensive Service Centre in Helsinki had Well-being Exhibition 6 April 2018. Safe project was introduced there. The older people visiting the exhibition and the staff of the Comprehensive service Centre were interested in safety and elder abuse issues. Päivi Helakallio from VoiVa had many fruitful discussion with the older persons.



## PORTUGAL

*University of Minho*

**Safe project in Portugal was taken by the School of Psychology of University of Minho (EPSI).**

As an ERASMUS+ project targeted to benefit older adults, mainly older women, this was the second project in which we were involved. In our school of psychology, other ERASMUS+ projects are underway, coordinated by other colleagues. The first project on mistreatment against older women in which we were partners, was carried on 2009-2011, was a DAPHNE research project, titled AVOW, and it was very successful. However, their main goals were not practice oriented but focused just on the identification and prevalence rate of abuse and risk factors associated as well as dissemination of results. Now in this new project we have new goals and a new rationale, more practice-oriented, involving practitioners and stakeholders directly.

The goals are seen by us as strongly adequate in building foundations for the development of a more sustainable approach to prevent and intervene on older women and older adults' mistreatment namely the development of (1) a training curriculum on prevention, (2) a multi-agency set of procedures for intervention and (3) a policy paper on prevention and intervention. The project will target social and health care teachers and trainers/educators, social and health care professionals working in the home care sector and in residential settings and local/regional social and health care decision makers

However, for us, the main novelty and advantage of this project is that those goals and the corresponding tasks are grounded on the results of the work of three collaborative learning groups (CLG) coming from a Professional Learning Community. Therefore, for us, this project has a lot of novelty and demands skills very different from research-oriented projects that use standard methods of research.

In Portugal, the collaboration between different professionals to prevent or intervene on older adult's abuse and neglect is not a common practice. Perhaps because of that reality, participants of the CLG tended both to explore each other's daily practices and its adequacy to the legislation. In a second moment participants tended to explore the potential contribution and rationale of each professional on intervention and prevention. The way the Collaborative learning Groups evolved was generally perceived as quite positive, very important and an opportunity to learn a lot about many things they did not know.

In these learning groups we had the participation of the following professionals: four faculty members [(where three of them have not any experience in targeting older adults abuse as a topic in their teaching): one from medical school, one from law school, two from nursing school and other from psychology school (as coordinator)]; one social worker, working within a large hospital; one psychologist and director of a residential facility; the main responsible of an official office of victim support in a large city;. one psychologist and one social worker, working within the central

services of a municipality; and one educator with directive responsibilities within a Catholic organization of services to older adults. We had also a doctoral student that is guided by the coordinator of Portuguese team, Jose Ferreira-Alves, and is doing a research within the domain of older adults' mistreatment. All these participants were invited to the three collaborative learning groups, but not all were present in every meeting. Finally and in sum, we are enthusiastically involved but also expectant with our own ability to carry on adequately this good project.

## ROMANIA

*Asociatia HABILITAS Centru de Resurse si Formare Profesionala*

In Romania, the 3 Collaborative Learning Groups were organized in 6 meetings, in the period February – April 2018, in Bucharest, by Directia Generala de Asistenta Sociala a Municipiului Bucuresti (DGASMB – coordinator of the SAFE project). The meetings were co-facilitated by DGASMB and Asociatia Habilitas – Centru de Resurse si Formare Profesionala (project partner). The number of institutions/ organizations which attended to the CLG was 18 (public social services from the 6 sectors of Bucharest, public institutions – the National Council of Older Persons, NGOs active in the aging field and NGOs providing social services for older women and for domestic violence victims, Police etc.), and the number of specialists/ representatives which attended to the CLG was 28 – social workers, psychologists, police officers, counselors.

The problems identified during the meetings were the following:

- lack of clear work procedures,
- lack of clear roles of each institutions,
- lack of training programs in the field,
- lack of public policies, in the area of prevention and intervention of violence and abuse against older women

The next rational steps would be:

- formulating work procedures,
- formulating public policies,
- elaborating a training program for professionals working in this field

The general guidelines and recommendations for the work in this field, extracted from the CLGs, are:

1. Focus on prevention rather than on intervention in the field of prevention and intervention of violence and abuse against older women
2. Training for professionals - specific on violence/ elder abuse
3. Common instructions for the general public (families, elderly, institutions, youth people) as a prevention tool in the field
4. Elaboration of work procedures – which have to be clear, specific, practical, common to all the specialists in the field, and shared between them.
5. Networking - written collaboration agreements between institutions which have responsibilities in this area.

## GREECE

*KMOP*

As part of the SAFE project activities, which promote multi-agency and multi-professional cooperation to strengthen identification, intervention, referral and protection of older women victims of violence, three (3) Collaborative Learning Groups were developed in Greece, organized by KMOP. The Collaborative Learning Groups consisted of social and health care workers, field workers in NGOs and Municipalities services, medical staff from public hospitals, as well as stakeholders from local and regional departments and representatives of the VET education field. The goal of these Groups was to work for identifying challenges on the prevention and intervention field of violence/abuse against older women; in addition, the participants of the Collaborative Learning Groups worked together so as to identify gaps in the training curricula of professionals and needs of teachers' training. Each of the three Collaborative Learning Groups have met twice the period from the end of January 2018 until the end of March 2018, at KMOP's office in Athens. The first Collaborative Learning Group worked on the topic of knowledge and practice on prevention and intervention of violence/abuse against older women. The second Collaborative Learning Group focused on the topic of assessment of professionals' needs, both of them who work in the health and social care fields and of the VET teachers/trainers in the health and social care fields regarding violence/abuse against older women. The third Collaborative Learning Group's theme concerned the theme of defining the roles and responsibilities of social and health care organisations/professionals and stakeholders in identifying and intervention in cases of violence and abuse against older women. All three Collaborative Learning Groups provided very valuable data on the abovementioned topics, which will contribute to the development of a Multi-agency set of procedures for intervention in cases of violence and abuse of older women.



## ABOUT US

This project's frame of reference is elder abuse however it will focus on violence against older women. Elder abuse has traditionally been viewed as "gender neutral," leading to inadequate responses that focus exclusively on personal or interpersonal problems. Elder abuse can be defined as "a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person" (WHO 2008). The objective of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is the elimination of all forms of neglect, abuse and violence against older persons (MIPAA, 2002). In addition, it was acknowledged clearly in the Plan of Action that "Older women face greater risk of physical and psychological abuse due to discriminatory societal attitudes and the nonrealization of the human rights of women". Given the longer life expectancy of women, the aging population is predominately a female one, living in poverty, on social welfare, and suffering. Abuse of older people is not a new phenomenon, however, the conceptualisation of 'elder abuse' only received wider public and governmental attention towards the end of the 20th century. Addressing elder abuse is now regarded as a universal reflection of worldwide concern about human rights, gender equality, domestic violence and population ageing. In Romania, Greece, Finland, Italy and Portugal (project countries), like in all EU, population ageing also brings the need to protect and develop protective measures for older people. Age and being female, among the others, are identified risk factors that make older women more vulnerable to elder abuse.

Neglect, abuse and violence against older women have been overlooked as a focus of research and development of services; this is in spite of the fact that older women as a group experience unique and compounded disadvantages. There is the need to give greater visibility to older women.

The European Commission on the Status of Women 57th session 2013 agreed conclusion to urge actions to prevent violence against older women. Recommendation CM/Rec(2014) of Council of Europe notes that member states should implement sufficient measures aimed at raising awareness among medical staff, care workers, informal carers or other persons who provide services to older persons to detect violence or abuse in all settings, to advise them on which measures to take if they suspect that abuse has taken place and in particular to encourage them to report abuses to competent authorities.

Violence/abuse against older women can be of several types: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, neglect, and can occur in any setting – at home (perpetrators being family members/informal carers or home care professionals) or in long-term care settings (residential centres or day-care centres, where perpetrators can be other residents or health/social care professionals). There are no specialized teaching/training curricula for social and health care teachers or professionals in partner countries with the focus on abused older women. Especially the gender aspect is missing; in existing training the general term used is "elder abuse" which is gender neutral term homogenizing all older people as the same.

SAFE project, using a cross-sectoral, international human rights and women's rights approach, will develop a Training Curriculum on prevention of abuse of older women based on Collaborative Learning Groups in the frame of Professional Learning Community, a Multi-Agency Set of Procedures for intervention in cases of violence and abuse of older women and a Policy Paper on prevention and intervention in cases of violence against older women.

The project will target social and health care teachers and trainers/educators, social and health care professionals working in the home care and in residential settings and local/regional social and health care decision makers in the community.

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