https://www.eeagender.org/good-practices/How-prevent-gender-based-violence/preventing-violence-against-the-elderly-and-people-with-disabilities/

Preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities

The project applies a comprehensive approach to the problem of domestic violence, including gender-based violence, focusing on victims with special needs, in this case the elderly and people with disabilities.



(Illustration: iStockphoto)

About the project

Domestic violence is a social problem in Poland. The elderly and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse due to their age, health conditions, dependence on others and lack of awareness of their rights. These factors can also hamper their ability to report violence. Hence, the elderly and people with disabilities often do not to seek external help and might have difficulties accessing information and support services. Thus, the main objective of this project is to improve the domestic violence prevention system for the elderly and people with disabilities.

The project will contribute to:

- The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of measures in the field of counteracting domestic violence, both in terms of prevention of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as in terms of support services provided.
- Raising public awareness, increasing competences of professionals and development of a support model.

Activities:

The following activities are planned under the project:

1) Nationwide prevalence study (diagnosis) on violence against the elderly and people with disabilities

The purpose of the study is to gain knowledge on the prevalence of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities in Poland. The study will provide multiple data on the characteristics and scale of the problem, such as for example exposure to various types of violence, characteristics of perpetrators and families in which violence occurs, stereotypes concerning violence against the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as the existing support system. The findings from the study will provide the basis for the development of the prevention and family support model, as well as awareness raising activities, i.e. the countrywide social campaign.

2) Development and evaluation of the prevention and family support model

The project will develop a prevention and family support model that will focus on the situation and needs of the elderly and people with disabilities and their families. The model will entail measures on two levels: prevention and intervention and support measures. It will involve identification of the elderly and people with disabilities at risk or experiencing violence. An assessment of the family situation, based on the diagnostic tool developed, will be carried out. In case violence is detected, measures based on the “Blue Cards” procedure will be implemented, tailored to the specific needs of the victims with regards to age or/and disability. The model will also involve family support measures and social work in cases where no violence is detected, but the family requires assistance. Following a pilot implementation, the model will be evaluated to verify the tested solutions and to ensure that adequate and the best possible prevention and support measures are implemented. The family support model will be disseminated in electronic and paper form.

3) Social campaign

A countrywide social campaign aiming at increasing public sensitivity and raising awareness of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities will be implemented under the project. The main goal of the campaign will be to increase knowledge on the rights of the elderly and people with disabilities, inform about available support services and encourage witnesses to act

and report violence against the elderly and people with disabilities. The campaign will involve various media (TV, internet, the press) to reach a wide audience.

4) Training for professionals

Training courses for front-line staff working in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence will be organised under the project, in all voivodships. The aim is to increase the competences and skills of professionals in supporting victims of violence, especially the elderly and people with disabilities, and to improve multiagency cooperation between various services. This will thus contribute to the improvement of the effectiveness of the domestic violence prevention and support system.

The project is primarily focusing on prevention of domestic violence. However, the activities implemented under the project will also contribute to the protection of victims of domestic violence with special needs and to the development of integrated policies. The model developed will be specially aimed at the elderly and people with disabilities and their families and will be based on high competences of staff involved in preventing domestic violence and multi-agency cooperation of the local services. The model applies a comprehensive approach to counteracting violence, and will include measures implemented on two levels: prevention and intervention and support. Moreover, the project might also indirectly contribute to improved detection and prosecution, for example by delivering training to professionals and increasing their knowledge about legal provisions.

How will these four activities contribute to combat domestic and gender-based violence?

The diagnosis will provide extensive data, including information on the prevalence and characteristics of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities. It will form the basis for the development of activities aimed at counteracting violence and providing assistance and support to those affected.

The development of the prevention and family support model will be tailored to the specific needs, resources and limitations of this target group. Based on the cooperation of the local services in the field of preventing domestic violence, it will enable development of prevention as well as intervention and support measures addressed to the elderly and people with disabilities. The model will be piloted in 24 communes in Poland, which will allow the developed solutions to be tested.

The evaluation will enable assessment of the project achievements in terms of the project objectives and results achieved, applying the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness, usefulness, efficiency and sustainability. After the evaluation, the revised model will be disseminated, in both paper and electronic form, to enable its wide application beyond the project’s timeframe.

Measures raising social awareness and sensitivity to the problem of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities are among key components of violence prevention strategies. It is important to disseminate knowledge about the rights of the elderly and people with disabilities to challenge indifference and to encourage witnesses to act and report violence to the relevant services. Therefore, a countrywide social campaign is essential. The campaign will be targeted to witnesses of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities, i.e. all in the age group 18-59. A broad target group and the use of various media (TV, internet and the press) will ensure that a wide audience throughout the country is reached.

The training for a wide range of professionals will increase knowledge and skills of staff of various institutions working in the field of domestic violence all over the country, and will enhance multiagency cooperation. The training will focus on providing support to the elderly and people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence, and will be based on the prevention and support model developed under the project.

Hence, in the long-term, the project will result in reducing violence and improving the quality of life for the elderly and people with disabilities and adapting the local infrastructure to their needs. Moreover, it will contribute to raising social awareness of the problem of violence and to increasing numbers of professionals with competences in the field of supporting the elderly and people with disabilities, victims or at risk of domestic violence.

Collaborators: Relevant Ministries and professionals working in the field of domestic violence

The project is not implemented in a formal partnership. However, the Project Promoter will collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior and Administration throughout the whole implementation phase.

The project focuses on preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities. The cooperation with the Ministry of Health, regarding issues relevant to the quality of life and health of the elderly population, is thus very important. The Ministry of Interior and Administration, which is responsible for public security and law enforcement, will also be involved in the cooperation. The police, as well as health care professionals, are involved in the implementation of the “Blue Cards” procedure (see fact box). The cooperation will include expert support and consultations on the implementation of the main project activities.

Moreover, the future involvement of a Norwegian partner shall be further explored in the project or under the bilateral fund.

Sharing information and good practices

The Synergy Network enables exchange of good practices among professionals representing various institutions from different countries. Combating domestic and gender-based violence requires interdisciplinary approach, hence it is very important to share knowledge and experience across sectors.

The Network can provide a platform for sharing information on interesting events, studies, reports, campaigns etc. The information on projects and activities implemented by the Network members can also provide inspiring ideas for new initiatives in other European countries.

The resources developed and disseminated by the Synergy Network can be relevant for not only network members, but also for other professionals working on preventing and combatting domestic and gender-based violence. Therefore, these resources should be accessible to a wide audience.

Reported by: Ministry of Justice, Poland (Program operator) and Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Poland (Project promoter)

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