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WHOSEFVA
Working with Healthcare Organizations to
Support Elderly Female Victims of Abuse



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National policy recommendations for Austria regarding Violence Against Older Women¹

Background

Austria has been a pioneer in the protection of violence and victims in Europe for many years. This also highlights the 2017 published GREVIO report by the Expert-committee of the Council of Europe (The GREVIO report was September 27th, 2017. See: [Http://www.a oef.at/images/03_gesetze/3-5_istanbulkonvention/Official_GREVIO-Report_Austria_Web.pdf](http://www.a oef.at/images/03_gesetze/3-5_istanbulkonvention/Official_GREVIO-Report_Austria_Web.pdf)) and welcomes a number of positive measures, including the long-standing political commitment to combating violence against women. In particular, GREVIO praises the strong leadership that Austria has taken in the last 20 years in the introduction and further development of the direction and the prohibition of trespassing for perpetrators of domestic violence. Further changes in the law, particularly in criminal law, have led to a comprehensive catalogue of offences and made possible far-reaching legal and psychosocial process support for victims of violent and sexual offences. Reporting requirements for staff in the health and system were introduced in order to facilitate the display of experiences of violence and to support them better, this refers to the victims ' protection groups/units in hospitals that have been legally enshrined since 2010.

Austria has a nationwide infrastructure for victim protection: for 20 years a national Womens Helpline against violence with the free number 0800/222 555 which is occupied 24/7; 30 women's shelters with 766 places for women and children, 5 regional Counselling centres for sexual violence and rape, 9 Interventionscentres, who support victims of domestic violence after a police interventions and by stalking, at least one men's counselling service in each state, one anti-violence program for violent men, a men's emergency call for violent Men and men seeking help.

Austria has ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2014 and has therefore committed itself to doing everything in its power to prevent violence against women and to protect and fully support violence-stricken women. But there are still many gaps and shortcomings in the protection of violence and so there is still much to be done to the recommendations of the Istanbul Convention, which has ratified Austria 2014 and Austria, by ratifying the Istanbul Convention, has adopted a new mandate for action in Area of violence protection.

There is a **large deficit in the protection of violence against older people**, particularly for women affected by violence. In recent years, there have been many scandals about violence

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and murders of old people in institutions, which has made (institutional) violence more visible to older people. However, violence against older women in the family is still a big taboo. This topic is still in "infancy". Some nursing facilities and mobile services, such as the Red Cross, have already started to develop quality standards and started training and training in dealing with elderly people affected by violence.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection has its own department of senior citizens. In recent years, this department has developed and published brochures and information materials for nursing care facilities and caring relatives. Although there is a telephone counselling centre for people with violence, the opening hours are very limited and have little financial and human resources.

The women's shelters also have too few places for older women, especially if they are in need of care. In all federal states there is a facility that supports older people, but the staff is barely trained and sensitized to the subject of violence. There is no national coordinating body for people and women affected by violence and there is no regional interdisciplinary and multi-institutional cooperation and cooperation, which is essentially and urgent needed.

Austria has numerous men's counselling and an anti-violence programs for violent men, but this is relatively well implemented only in Vienna. An expansion is necessary and above all we need a working focus for dealing with older perpetrators of violence. Here too, interdisciplinary cooperation is lacking.

The police are relatively well trained in family violence, but far too little in the area of violence against the elderly, especially in dealing with older perpetrators of violence, who are also caregivers.

Recommendation

- 1. Improvements in healthcare and special support services for elderly people**
 - Establish victim support groups in all hospitals for identification gbv regarding victims of elderly women and examination and documentation and referring them to victim support services
- 2. Research and data collection**
 - Promote research and projects relating to the abuse of older people and gender based violence
- 3. Training, support and working conditions for professional and informal caregivers**
 - Implementation the issue/topic on gender based violence and elderly abuse into the education of all professionals especially of the health care system



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- Binding Trainings for all professionals, who are working with older people and elderly abuse victims
- 4. Multi-agency cooperation**
- Establishment of regional and national multi-agency co-operation work on the issue of elderly abuse with all relevant stakeholders (health care, police, justice, victims support services senior centres etc.)
- 5. Protection and support services for victims of elderly abuse**
- Establish a national women's helpline with the minimum standards (24/7, free of charge and multilingual) and promote them also for elderly women.
- And we need low-threshold and easy access for elderly abuse women into women's shelters. Increase the number of women's shelter places to support elderly abused women
- Provide advice and support to older people experiencing harm or abuse, and those who care for or are concerned about older people
- 6. Raising public awareness and enhancing elderly people's knowledge of their rights**
- Campaign for the best possible support and prevention framework
- Raise awareness of the wide range of abuse experienced by older people, which includes physical, sexual, psychological, financial and neglect
- Provide information material in different or most relevant languages for elderly people – especially for migrants
- 7. Licensing, quality standards and quality control (of nursing homes and home care)**
- In cases where care is provided by informal caregivers, home visits to assess living conditions and needs of elderly people, as well as to provide informal caregivers with necessary support and training materials should be introduced.
- Prepare specific programmes for elderly intimate partner, who are perpetrators, especially if they take care of their wives.