



Best Practices Report

MARVOW Best Practices Report

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Women's Support and
Information Center
There is a way out of violence!

FRAUENHÄUSER

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MARVOW - Multi-Agency Responses to
Violence against Older Women –
in Austria, Estonia, Greece and Germany.
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Introduction to the MARVOW Project

The MARVOW Project stands for “Multi-Agency Response to Violence against Older Women.” It is an innovative approach to address violence against older women, a dimension of gendered violence that has often been overlooked in the past. In the four partner countries Austria, Estonia, Greece and Germany the project was implemented within two and a half years (September 2019 – March 2022).

It was preceded by two other projects focusing on violence against older women: WHOSEFVA “Working with Healthcare Organizations to Support Elderly Female Victims of Abuse” and TISOVA “Training to Identify and Support Older Victims of Abuse”. The focus of the current project lies in implementing multi-agency networks and cooperation between a wide range of stakeholders from relevant sectors that are in contact with older women who experience violence and abuse. These include among others the health care and social sectors with special focus on eldercare, the police and judiciary, victim support services and perpetrator programs as well as local and regional policy makers. According to the outcomes of the preceding WHOSEFVA project, practitioners often do not know how to proceed when older victims are identified, due to a lack of knowledge about their situations and specific challenges.



The aims of MARVOW are therefore to impart knowledge on the situation of older female survivors of abuse, to establish and strengthen the bonds and co-operation between different stakeholders and bring them together to work on a multi-agency level to identify the gaps that exist within current systems as well as to develop innovative and adequate support services for older female survivors of violence and raise awareness on the topic throughout the help system and society. During the project a needs-based, survivor-oriented, stakeholder engagement approach was used which has increased our understanding of what multi-agency cooperation can look like in different regions to best address violence against older women and support both survivors and perpetrators.

MARVOW’s consortium consists of six partner organisations, including two European networks, from four countries (Austria, Estonia, Greece and Germany). These include the coordinating organisation - the Association of Austrian Autonomous Women’s Shelters (AÖF); Women’s Support and Information Centre (WISC); The University of Tartu (UT); The Union of



Women Associations of Heraklion Prefecture (UWAH); The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN); and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE).

MARVOW Best Practices Deliverable

The purpose of this deliverable is to describe several best practices that were identified during the course of the project. This starts with the MARVOW model itself, which is described in the next section. Following this, the model use cases and other promising practices are identified.



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MARVOW Multi-agency model

The MARVOW model links together system wide Coordinated Community Response (CCR) models with client-focused Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) so that they reinforce and improve upon each other. At the same time, they incorporate considerations of specific aspects that arise in cases of elder abuse. This model is depicted in the figure below. Individual case conferencing involves all relevant front-line workers from the region. They should represent criminal justice; perpetrator interventions; domestic violence support providers; and senior support services. Within conferences, participants can respond to actual cases to identify intervention strategies or archetypal cases of ‘victim personas’ that reflect different elder abuse scenarios (spousal, child to parent, caregiver to patient, etc.) In working through these cases, gaps in services and workarounds are identified and documented. These conferences should occur more frequently – at least monthly. Individual cases in turn feed into the system-wide meetings, that should involve key decision-makers from relevant agencies. These system-wide meetings should occur less frequently (perhaps quarterly) but must result in concrete action items that can be followed up on. This requires that responsibilities for each action item be clearly identified as well as timetables for their completion be set.

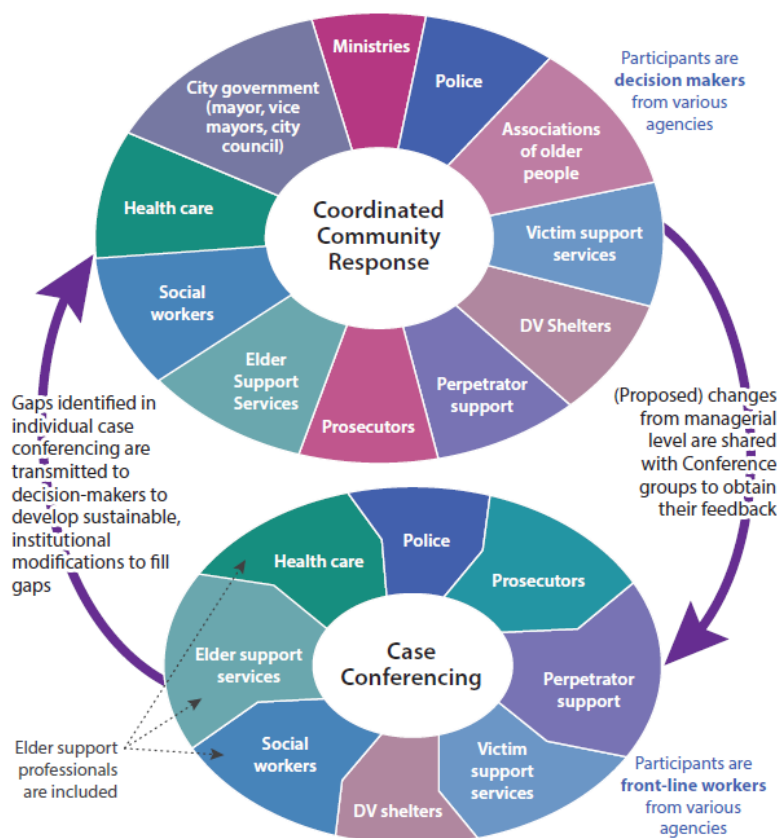


Figure MARVOW Model (taken from MARVOW Deliverable 2.5)

MARVOW Case Studies

A key element of the MARVOW model was the development of 32 use case studies to help guide discussions during MARVOW meetings. 8 came from Austria, 8 from Estonia and 16 from Greece.



These cases, both fabricated and based upon real-world cases helped participants to identify where system-wide gaps existed and should be addressed. To increase their efficacy for doing so, cases were identified/developed to represent both a diversity of circumstances and their presence in different combinations. Cases were varied based upon 11 different variables, including:

1. the age of the victim
2. who the perpetrator was (i.e. child or spouse)
3. and 4. the health/dependency status of both the victim and perpetrator
5. The onset of violence
6. The type of abuse
7. The Living Situation of victim and abuser
8. Presence of Substance Abuse by either
9. Previous Convictions
10. Support providers if any
11. Actions previously taken or not

These anonymized cases are detailed in MARVOW deliverable D3.5

Other MARVOW Best Practices Identified

The MARVOW project managed to create an incentive among the stakeholders to deliver better services to older women. After cooperation meetings, WSIC, AÖF and UWAH conducted roundtables with key stakeholders. During the follow-up meetings, stakeholders and partners created an agenda for future cooperation, which addressed several critical elements of multi-agency cooperation such as:



- Establishing the cooperation - creating protocols, terms of references, guidelines and service co-ordination channels;
- Updating and enhancing a better data flow between agencies by digital solutions;
- Strengthening the victim support services;
- Addressing the perpetrator accountability issue in the services to older women of survivors.

The observations showed that there were several solutions and areas of cooperation that were occurring across all participating countries. These include the following:

Good Practices in Establishing cooperation

- Partners designated a point of reference in different agencies and nominated contact points in each partner organization to improve response and referrals when cases occur.
- Regular meetings were established to discuss individual cases and general improvement points.
- Protocols governing collaboration and establishing formal mutual agreements of collaboration should be sought.
- Inclusion of more victim organizations in the collaboration and giving them more power.

Good Practices in Updating and enhancing data flow between agencies

- Update existing data-sharing platforms and creating new ones to increase the flow of information about the survivor which, in return, will help to provide better coordinated referrals and follow-ups.
- Establish data-sharing systems which complies with the GDPR regulation on personal data protection.

Good Practices in Strengthening victim support services

- Integrating the training on violence against older women into the introductory course for all specialists who have direct and potential contact with victims.
- Conducting a large-scale study on the prevalence of violence against older women.
- Increasing knowledge on violence against older women among family nurses and assistants who are first to come in contact with older women.
- Conducting regular training for local government staff, voluntary civil rescuers, the elderly, and the general public as the more people are aware of the phenomenon of elder abuse, the more they are willing to intervene and report.
- Expand telephone and other available counselling services for violence against elderly people.

Good Practices in Addressing perpetrator accountability

- Improving the responsibility-based perpetrator programs.
- Establishing the regular exchange between victim protection organizations and perpetrator counselling centers.

One of the critical outcomes of the MARVOW project was different stakeholders recognizing the gaps in existing cooperation and acknowledging the need to provide better coordinated services to older women survivors of violence.

